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Theory of the Strange
Towards the Establishment of *Zhiguai* as a Genre

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The problem of the strange has exerted a powerful fascination on different literary traditions. In China, *zhiguai* (translated as "accounts of the strange") was produced in great number, ranging from administrative reports of drought and misrule to accounts of apparently supernatural events. What makes it even more intriguing is the involvement of Confucian literati; scholars who normally did not deign to discuss the extraordinary were actively engaged in compiling these accounts. Literary criticism on z*higuai* has also been a tenuous construction. *Zhiguai* shifts among different bibliographical categories, and was not recognized as a genre until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Even today there has never been scholarly consensus on its definition. *Zhiguai*, therefore, is strange in its content, compilation and criticism. What are these accounts? How shall we read them? By what criteria should we judge what is strange and what is not? My dissertation offers a theory of the strange by defining *zhiguai* as a genre. Tracing its development in

classical Chinese literature, I analyze how *zhiguai* challenges categorical dichotomies – history vs. fiction, natural vs. supernatural, and belief vs. disbelief – and occupies a liminal status in between. The result is a reassessment of what is normal, natural and real *vis-à-vis* what is anomalous, supernatural and fantastic. Devising a new ontological framework – this-world and other-world(s), I argue that it is the interaction between the two – the esoteric and/or exotic and our quotidian empirical experience – that defines the genre. The theoretical part of the dissertation is complemented with two case studies – *Shenxian zhuan* (*Traditions of Divine Transcendents*), a 4th-century *zhiguai* collection, and various examples in contemporary Chinese cultural production from television programs to internet gossip. Through a diachronic study as such can I uncover how the strange is woven into everyday life, and how this age-old Chinese literary genre that appears to be marginalized in its own time and nearly extinct in our modern world is still thriving today.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introducing the Strange

The problem of the strange has exerted a powerful fascination on different literary traditions. In China, *zhiguai* (志怪 accounts of the strange) was produced in great number in the Six Dynasties (220-589 AD), ranging from administrative reports of drought and misrule to accounts of apparently supernatural events, including foxes transformed into human form, a tribe whose heads could take independent flight at night, and encounters with the dead. What makes *zhiguai* especially intriguing is the involvement of Confucian literati; scholars who normally did not deign to discuss the extraordinary were actively engaged in compiling these accounts. Literary criticism on z*higuai* has been a tenuous construction. It was not recognized as a genre until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and even today there has never been scholarly consensus on its definition. Western scholars have attempted to impose such labels as myth, fantasy, and folklore on them, but the problems of these categories are obvious.

Zhiguai, therefore, is strange in its content, compilation and criticism. Then what are these stories? Should we read these texts as aspects of actual life or authorial creations? By what criteria should we judge what counts as strange and what does not? In my dissertation, I offer a theory of the strange by defining *zhiguai* as a genre. Tracing its development in classical Chinese literary criticism, I analyze how *zhiguai* challenges categorical dichotomies such as history and fiction, natural and supernatural, and belief and disbelief. The result is a reassessment of what is normal, natural and real *vis-à-vis*

what is anomalous, supernatural and fantastic. I complement the theoretical part of the dissertation with two case studies – a 4th century hagiography and miscellaneous cases from contemporary Chinese cultural production. Through such a diachronic study can I uncover how the strange is woven into quotidian life, and how this age-old Chinese literary mode that appears to be marginalized in its own time and nearly extinct in our modern world is still thriving today.

Before embarking on the journey, I would like to raise three questions to prepare us for the epistemological challenges that *zhiguai* poses. First of all, what is *guai*? What counts as strange? *Zhiguai* texts deal with strange events, strange persons, strange places, and strange things. They may include tales of prodigies, freaks of nature, bizarre births, and metamorphosis, most of which are believed to be improbable, but possible in real life, but is there a more rigorous critical approach to the question? Tzvetan Todorov, in his influential study of fantastic literature, distinguishes three basic genres: the marvelous, the fantastic, and the uncanny. If the narrated events accord with the laws of post-Enlightenment scientific commonsense, we are in the realm of the uncanny; if they contradict these laws, we have entered the realm of the marvelous. Only when the reader hesitates between these two alternatives are we in the realm of the fantastic.[1] But the problem with the application of this schema is that we cannot assume that the same "laws" of commonsense reality are always operant in other cultures or during other historical periods. Robert Campany proposes that the strange may be understood as whatever arouses amazement by being anomalous with respect to a writer's or a reader's

[1] Todorov, 1970, 41-52.

expectation.[2] This is still not a perfect definition, but the key point that Campany insightfully proposes is that the strange is a cultural construct and a psychological effect, rather than a natural category.

Secondly, how are we going to approach the texts? Is there reason to take everything in the texts as aspects of actual life at the time of writing? Or are these narratives better seen as creations of the author's own imagination, written in a metaphorical, ironic, or purely fanciful mode, intended to muse or inspire not by virtue of their mimesis but rather by their very distance from the familiar patterns of life? Lu Xun 魯迅[3] and Kenneth DeWoskin[4] treat *zhiguai* as the birth of Chinese fiction, while scholars such as Robert Campany, Glen Dudbrigde, Alister Inglis and Leo Tak-hung Chan regard *zhiguai* texts from different time periods more as reliable historical records of what people experienced and believed.[5] Here, when applying the modern western dualism of fiction vs. history to Chinese literature, as Andrew H. Plaks has noted, one would have to admit that the demarcation is blurred in Chinese narratives, which may be said to lie in the *transmission* of known facts. According to Plaks, the necessary assumption of such transmission is that every given narrative is in some sense a faithful

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[2] Campany, 1996, 232-5.
[3] Lu Xun, in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, delineates the development of Chinese fiction from the early myths and legends, through the *zhiguai* stories of the Six Dynasties, the *chuanqi* stories of the Tang and Song, the vernacular short stories of the subsequent dynasties, and to the novels of the late Qing period. The perception of *zhiguai* being the birth of fiction is implied, though not explicitly stated. See Lu, 1973.
[4] DeWoskin, in response to Victor Mair's claim that Chinese drama and fiction would not have risen without intellectual stimulus from Indian philosophy and thematic borrowing from Indian sources, argues that traditional Chinese narrative has never lacked creative elements. See Mair, 1983, 1-27 and DeWoskin, 1983, 29-35.
[5] Campany, 1996; Dudbridge, 1995; Inglis, 2006; Chan, 1998.

representation of what did, or what typically does, happen in human experience. In other words, in narrative transmission, the facts in question are true – either true to fact or true to life, despite the obvious untruths of hyperbole, supernatural detail, or ideological distortion.[6] To further clarify Plaks's proposal, his claim that there is no clear line between history and fiction does not suggest that people in premodern China were incapable of or indifferent to what is true or what is false. The modern notions of fiction and history are only two idealized polarities on a continuum of narrative possibilities in which Chinese literature or literature in general is situated. *Zhiguai* is a type of literature that problematizes the clash of extremes, questions binary thinking, and introduces a crisis that generates a new epistemological framework.

Thirdly, what critical advantage do we gain by establishing *zhiguai* as a genre of its own? What different epistemological scenario does it bring about? In the enormous body of western criticism on fantastic literature,[7] there is an underlying but well-established distinction between fictionality and reality. In other words, fantastic literature portrays an alternative universe, the extrapolation of which makes it unmistakably different from reality, and requires suspension of disbelief from the readers in the reading process. Yet one wonders whether the borderline between primary world and alternative universe is really that clear cut. Lance Olsen responds to early structural attempts

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[6] Plaks, 1977, 312-3.

[7] Contrary to our conventional understanding of the fantastic as inferior to the realistic literary tradition, criticisms of the fantastic are actually intertwined with many seminal concepts in the history of western criticism in general, such as the Mimesis (Plato), the Sublime (Kant), and the Uncanny (Freud). They are also closely associated with movements in literary and cultural studies, such as Romanticism, Structuralism and Poststructuralism. For more information on western criticism of fantastic literature, see Sander, 2004.

(following Todorov) that too easily claim a difference between reality and the marvelous by declaring the fantastic to be poststructural by definition.[8] Making connections between the fantastic and postmodern theories of course is a very useful approach, but the conclusion he draws, which builds upon nearly the entire history of fantastic criticism, is unnecessarily onerous. Therefore, I propose to shift our critical focus to the premodern period, when the fantastic is in continuum with the mimetic. In classical Chinese literature, the demarcation between fictionality and historicity, as noted above, is not clear, especially in *zhiguai* stories. *Zhiguai* literature exists in a liminal state betwixt and between the realms of the natural and supernatural, and between fiction and history. From this position, it demands of its readers something between, or beyond, the dichotomy of belief and disbelief.

Following the introduction to the strange, Chapters Two and Three review the *zhiguai* in Chinese literary history, from its sporadic appearance in the Pre-Qin period (-221 BC) to its systematic occurrence in book titles in the Six Dynasties, from its location in bibliographical treatises and catalogues in the Tang-Song period (618-1276 AD) to prefaces of *zhiguai* collections in Ming-Qing (1368-1911 AD). The followings are a few of my observations that prepare the ground for my definition of *zhiguai* in the subsequent chapter: Firstly, in terms of the relationship among the author, the reader and the work, rather than fabricating, the writer claims to collect "true" stories from informants. The focus of authorial intention shifts from complementing official history to interest in the strangeness and playfulness of the *zhiguai*. Secondly, what is recorded as "guai" can be

[8] Olsen, 1987, 274-92.

either esoteric or exotic in nature, and it is the intrusion of a secondary world (a cosmologically supernatural or a geographically peripheral world) into the primary world (our quotidian empirical experience) that constitutes as the main content of *zhiguai*.

Chapter Four stands out of the tradition of Chinese criticism by introducing modern conceptual categories -- such as history vs. fiction, natural vs. supernatural, belief vs. disbelief – into the reading of *zhiguai*. By situating *zhiguai* in a liminal status between the abovementioned categories, it eliminates what is not *zhiguai*, and then proceeds to discuss what it is. It devises a new conceptual framework – this-world and other-world(s) – which locates the epistemology of the strange as the defining characteristic of the genre.

Zhiguai, as has been said of the "monster" in the West, is "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place."[9] By unpacking a *zhiguai* text, we can not only understand the epistemology of the strangeness, but also uncover the hidden philosophies and unconscious ideologies that circumscribe a category of strange things. What is made especially strange tends to be differences in terms of culture, politics, race, and gender. Chapter Five provides a close reading of the *Shenxian zhuan* (神仙傳 *Traditions of Divine Transcendents*), examines how women in the 4th century China were portrayed in the *zhiguai* work, and therefore uncovers the way *zhiguai* is folded into everyday life experiences.

The last chapter furthers the study of *zhiguai* by applying it to the contemporary Chinese cultural production. The sources materials I collected are are television programs

[9] Cohen, 1996, 4.

and internet gossip (gathered from blogs and forums). Like their antecedents in the late imperial period, government-sponsored television programs, taking the form of legal documentary (*fazhi jiemu* 法制節目), often attributes case-solving to some supernatural power. Meanwhile, online gossip takes the form of contemporary compendia from the blogsphere, such as paranormal gazetteers of modern metropolises (*lingyi fangzhi* 靈異方志) and accounts of mythical creatures (*shenshou* 神獸) composed by netizens. These discourses suggest how *zhiguai* is employed in an encrypted manner to speak the otherwise unspeakable. The penetration of *zhiguai* into modern discourses, both official and unofficial, testifies its vitality. The complexity of the study of *zhiguai* in contemporary Chinese cultural production goes beyond this dissertation, but points to the direction of my future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Truthfulness in the Strange
Philology of *Zhiguai* from Pre-Qin to Six Dynasties

> In its [a certain Chinese encyclopaedia, entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*] remote pages, it is written that the animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges[10]

The passage, quoted in the epigraph, was supposedly taken from a "certain Chinese encyclopaedia," in which we find a most eerie way of animal classification. How can we respond to this seemingly arbitrary, nearly incomprehensible way of ordering, except an irrepressible laughter? Michel Foucault takes the "certain Chinese encyclopaedia" seriously, and interprets it as a demonstration of "the exotic charm of another system of thought" and "the limitation of our own." It is the "wonderment of this taxonomy" that gives rise to his *The Order of Things*.[11] Foucault may not be aware that the so-called *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* is nonexistent except in Borges's invention, and the passage is nothing more than a good-natured joke, a fictitious representation of fictitious writing itself, but Foucault does notice that the encyclopaedia "distinguishes carefully between the very real animals…. And those that reside solely in

[10] Borges, 1964, 101.
[11] Foucault, 1994, xv-xvi.

the imagination," putting "them into categories of their own" ("sirens", "fabulous"), a move that "localizes their powers of contagion."[12]

In the various classificatory systems of Chinese bibliographies, we sometimes do find *zhiguai* 志怪 gathered into such categories: designations that always already presume a set of normative boundaries – history and fiction, natural and supernatural, belief and disbelief – and a cultural imaginary in which such distinctions have meaning. But there are also spaces of mutual contagion, moments during which such boundaries are not so clearly distinguished and the division between fantastic and real is not recognizable (or desirable) as a marker of difference. My aim is the eventual establishment of *zhiguai* as a separate category, and the epistemological shift that it entails.

This chapter delineates the evolution of the term, *zhiguai,* in the Chinese literary tradition. It begins with a philological study of its sporadic use in the pre-Qin texts and moves on to its systematic appearance in book titles in the Six Dynasties. I address the following questions: (1) what are the original meanings of "*zhi* 志" and "*guai* 怪" in the pre-Qin texts? (2) What type of history is *zhiguai* when it was catalogued as a branch of history in bibliographical catalogues in the Six Dynasties? (3) What are the implications of the separation between *zhiguai* 志怪 tradition and *zhiren* 志人 tradition in the Six

[12] In the wake of Foucault's interpretation, Borges's list has become an almost clichéd example of an incomprehensibly alien mode of thinking, but Zhang Longxi insightfully points out that the so-called *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* represents "a Western fantasy of the Other", which "turns out to be no other than the Self" (Zhang, 1988, 111-3). Borges himself hints at the ambiguity of his reference, describing the Chinese encyclopaedist as "unknown (or apocryphal)" (Borges, 1964, 104).

Dynasties? These questions should shed light on our understanding of the later development of *zhiguai* as a genre, and prepare the ground for the following chapter.

I. *Zhiguai* in Texts in the Pre-Qin Period

The earliest usage of the term *zhiguai*, to our knowledge, can be traced to a cryptic tale in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the definition of which is cross-referenced with two other names – Qi Xie 齊諧 and Yijian 夷堅, both of which are commonly incorporated into titles for *zhiguai* works in the later ages.[13] The circular definition among *zhiguai*, Qi Xie and Yijian, to some extent, illustrates the origin of term. I also investigate the usages of *guai* 怪 (*cf. yi* 異) in contemporary pre-Qin texts as well as later commentaries in order to limit the general parameters of the genre.

1. *Zhiguai*, Qi Xie, and Yijian

We find the earliest reference to *zhiguai* in the chapter of "*Xiaoyaoyou* (逍遙遊 Free and Easy Wandering)" in the *Zhuangzi*. The passage is a tale of gigantically proportioned animals – in this case a huge fish, the *kun* 鯤, that changes into a huge bird, the *peng* 鵬:

> Qi Xie was a recorder of the strange; according to Xie, "When the *peng* travels to the South Ocean, the wake it thrashes on the water is three thousand miles long, it mounts spiraling on the whirlwind ninety thousand miles high, and is gone six months before it is out of breath."

[13] Incorporating "Qi Xie:" *Qi Xie ji* 齊諧記 by Dongyang Wuyi 東陽無疑 and *Xu Qi Xie ji* 續齊諧記 by Wu Jun 吳均 in the Six Dynasties. Incorporating "Yijian:" *Yijian zhi* 夷監志 by Hong Mai 洪邁 in the Song Dynasty.

> 齊諧者志怪者也。諧之言曰：「鵬之徙於南冥也，水擊三千里，摶扶搖而上者九萬里，去以六月息者也。」[14]

Zhiguai, in the passage, is used to define Qi Xie (齊諧者志怪者也). Whether Qi Xie is the name of a book or an author is a subject that is never agreed upon among scholars in later commentaries and translations,[15] but the syntax of "according to Xie (諧之言曰)" suggests that Qi Xie is the name of a person, for a book title cannot be shortened as such.

A passage from the chapter of "*Tangwen* (湯問 Questions of Tang)" in *Liezi* 列子 tells the same tale of *kun* and *peng*, but changes the name of the recorder from Qi Xie to Yijian 夷堅, who recorded the deeds of the legendary sage-king Yu – deeds he did not personally witness. Below is a translation of the relevant section:

> To the north of the utmost North, there is an ocean, the Lake of Heaven. There is a fish there, several thousand miles broad and long in proportion, named the kun. There is a bird there named peng, with wings like clouds hanging from the sky, and a body big in proportion. "How is the world to know that such things exist?" That Great Yu traveled and saw them; Boyi knew of them and named them; Yijian heard of them and recorded them.

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[14] *Zhuangzi*, 1:1-4. The translation is modified from Burton Watson (Watson, 1968, 29), A.C. Graham (Graham, 1981, 43), Victor Mair (Mair, 1998, 3) and Brook Ziporyn (Ziporyn, 2009, 3).

[15] In the commentary tradition, those who take Qi Xie to be an author include Sima Biao 司馬彪 and Cui Yin 崔駰 in the Han Dynasty, Ge Hong 葛洪 in the Jin Dynasty, Yu Yue 俞樾 in Qing Dynasty, and etc., while those who take Qi Xie to be a book title include Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝 in the Jin Dynasty, Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 of the Tang Dynasty, and etc. (Wang, 1986, 1; Guo, 1986, 3). All three English translators of *Zhuangzi* take Qi Xie to be the name of a book (*Universal Harmony* per Burton, *Tall Stories of Qi* per Graham, *Drolleries of Qi* per Mair, and *Equalizing Jokebook* per Ziporyn), instead of an author, but Campany holds the opposite view (Campany, 1996, 151).

> 有溟海者，天池也，有魚焉，其廣數千里，其長稱焉，其名為鯤。有鳥焉，其名為鵬，翼若垂天之雲，其體稱焉。世豈知有此物哉？大禹行而見之，伯益知而名之，夷堅聞而志之。[16]

These two passages about the *kun* and the *peng* open up the philosophical problem of what things are like outside the realms of familiarity and give expression to a sense of the magnificence of the world. The *Liezi* passage, more interestingly, has a telltale line – "How does the world know about these creatures?" – that transforms the metaphysical concern into an epistemological one. The answer to the question entails three sage figures, serving three different functions in the processing of the strange: Yu witnesses the strange; Boyi possesses esoteric knowledge and gives proper names to the strange;[17] Yijian learns only from hearsay and keeps a record of the strange. The role that Yijian plays in the processing of the strange is identical to the role that the compiler of later *zhiguai* works plays, or at least purportedly plays. No wonder Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 in the Ming Dynasty traced the whole *zhiguai* tradition to Qi Xie and Yijian, by commenting,

> The *zhiguai xiaoshuo* texts, ancient or recent, are all modeled on the Yijian and the Qi Xie, while the latter is Zhuangzi and former is Liezi.
>
> 古今志怪小說，率以祖夷堅、齊諧，然齊諧即莊，夷堅即列耳。[18]

In summary, *zhiguai* is used in *Zhuangzi* to define Qi Xie, whose role in the processing of the strange is interchangeable with Yijian in the *Liezi*, who does not

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[16] *Liezi*, 5:6a. The translation is modified from A.C. Graham's (Graham, 1960, 68).
[17] Containing the strange by naming the strange is almost a universal trop in folkloric studies.
[18] Hu, 20.1a. Translation mine. Laura Hua Wu takes the Yijian (i.e., Liezi), Qi Xie (i.e. Zhuangzi) as book titles, while I understand them as names of authors (Wu, 1995, 348).

personally experience the strange, or participate in the recognition of the strange, but merely records the strange. Herein, I would argue in the following chapter in more detail, lies one of the defining features of *zhiguai* in terms of the relation between the author and the work: rather than fabricating, as would a modern Western writer of fiction, the recorder of the strange claims to collect "true" stories from informants; he does not use the *zhiguai* work as a vehicle for allegory or self-expression, except for legitimizing the strange. The questions that follow are: What kind of recording is *zhi*? What type of strange is *guai*?

2. *Guai* vs. *Yi*

The term *zhiguai* comprises two components, the character *zhi* and *guai* respectively. The former can be translated as either a verb meaning "to record" or a noun meaning "record."[19] It is later used in generic titles for orthodox literary genres – particularly historical works such as local gazetteers and the bibliographical treatises of dynastic histories. Thus, the prefix *zhi* indicates conformity to established form as an essential criterion to membership of this genre reflecting its early affiliation with history writing. Campany has argued that the term acted as an intersexual device, which signaled the presence of *zhiguai* material to the prospective readership.[20] Then there is the *guai*

[19] In Lu Deming's 陸德明 commentary to *Zhuangzi*, he used *ji* 記 to define *zhi* (志，記也), both meaning "to record" (Guo, 1986, 3). There are also two examples of *zhi* being used as "to record" in the *Guliang Commentary to the Chunqiu* 春秋谷梁傳 (The 15th Year of Duke Xuan 宣公十五年), and the *Zuo Commentary to Chunqiu* 春秋左傳 (The 4th Year to Duke Zhao 昭公四年), respectively.

[20] Campany, 1996, 28. Taking *zhi* to mean "record" associates *zhiguai* with the tradition of historical writing, but there exists a less popular interpretation of *zhi* meaning "to

component. Since *zhiguai* texts were distinguished from other literary genre primarily due to their focus on motifs containing or embodying *guai* elements, an examination of the precise meaning of this term is crucial to the task at hand.

According to the etymological *Shuowen jiezi* (說文解字 *Explaining Written language and Analyzing Characters*), *guai* corresponds to *yi* 異 whose meaning approximates difference.[21] Yet it leads to a problem of reference – how is "difference" to be defined and to what is it different? It is indeed very helpful if we think of these two terms in conjunction with their most frequent polar oppsites: *guai* (怪 aberrant) / *chang* (常 normative) and *yi* (different 異) / *tong* (same 同).

Guai is a confusing term, partially because it combines two different connotations: esoteric and exotic. There is one example of *guai* in the "Luyu 魯語" chapter of *Guoyu* 國語:

> *Guai* of rocks and plants are called *kui* and *wangliang*; *guai* of waterways are called dragons and *wangxiang*; *guai* of soil are called *fenyang*.
>
> 木石之怪，曰夔、蜽蜩；水之怪，曰龍、罔象；土之怪，曰羵羊。[22]

For the *guai* creatures in the passage: the *Shuowen* defines *kui* as a one-legged, financially-destructive ghost;[23] the *wangliang* is, according to the Wei Zhao 韋昭 commentary to the *Guoyu*, *shanjing* (山精 mountain spirits), capable of mimicking

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memorize," "to record", and "to embrace," which ties it with the poetic tradition of *shiyanzhi* (詩言志 the Odes articulates the aims) (Zhu, 1947, 2).
[21] Xu, 81:10:b:27.
[22] *Guoyu*, 5:7b. Translation mine.
[23] Xu, ch. 5, 112.

human voices for the purpose of entrapment.[24] *Wangxiang* is thought to be a type of sea deity and are mentioned in the "Sea Rhapsody 海賦" of the *Wenxuan* 文選.[25] Another passage in the "Luyu" section of the *Guoyu* talks of a goat spirit found in a jar in the ground, which was identified as a *fenyang*, or a *fen* goat. This would seem to refer to a special type of animistic spirit.[26] To summarize, *guai*, from the perspective of modern readers, seems to refer to phenomena of a cosmological nature and include ghosts, deities, animistic spirits, legendary creatures, and "supernatural" entities in general – in short, matters which post-Enlightenment, Western-trained scholars would understand as paranormal. However, there is a simple yet revealing explanation in the Wei Zhao commentary on the dragon – the *guai* of waterways, "it is not commonly seen, and therefore *guai* 非常見，故曰怪."[27]

There are also usages of *guai* in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經. For example, in the "Nanshan jing 南山經" section, it is written,

> Three hundred and eighty *li* farther east is Yuanyi (ape wings) Mountain, where many *guai* beasts live. In the streams *guai* fish abound.
>
> 又東三百八十里曰猨翼之山。其中多怪獸，水多怪魚。[28]

The usages of *guai* in the *Shanghai jing* tie to another ramification of the meaning of *guai*: rare objects and customs, especially at the periphery of the "civilized" pre-Han world. Campany argues that the rise of the *zhiguai* writing in the Six Dynasties was linked to

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[24] *Guoyu*, 5:7b.
[25] *Wenxuan*, ch. 12.
[26] *Guoyu*, 5:7b.
[27] Ibid. Translation mine.
[28] Yuan, 1980, 3. Translation mine.

tours of inspection made by the ruler of the political center to its periphery, in addition to the tribute system as discussed in such works as *Yu's Tribute* (*Yugong* 禹貢). According to this, governance of the civilized center in ancient China depended on collecting "the periphery": that is, its anomalous and exotic objects, customs, creatures, songs, events and the like. And, once having collected them, the recording of these little-known items thus civilized the periphery not only through heightened awareness, but also through quantification and standardization, in short, by objectifying the periphery.[29] Once again, the explanation by Guo Pu 郭璞 on the *Shanhai jing* passage is much simpler, "Whatever is *guai* all has extraordinary features which are not common. 凡言怪者皆謂貌狀倔奇不常也"[30]

The two ramifications of *guai* from the perspective of modern readers, one being "esoteric" as illustrated in the *Guoyu* passage, one being "exotic" as in the *Shanhai jing*, are actually reconciled in the early commentary traditions. What they share in common is simply something that is beyond quotidian empirical experience. What lies behind the reconciliation, which is another defining feature of *zhiguai* work that I elaborate in the following chapter, is a different epistemological framework that is constructed through a primary world (our quotidian empirical experience) and a secondary world (a cosmologically supernatural or a geographically peripheral world). The intrusion of paranormal phenomena into the mundane world – such as ghostly apparitions and the like

[29] Campany, 1996, 102-26.
[30] Yuan, 1980, 3. Translation mine.

– obviously is *guai*, but on the other hand, non-paranormal phenomena – such as unusual rocks or little-known objects from the periphery – could also be considered *guai*.

Now let us move on to the most famous quote on *guai* from the *Analects*:

> The Master did not discuss anomalies, strengths, disorders, or the supernatural.
>
> 子不語怪力亂神。[31]

Wang Bi 王弼 illustrates the four categories with examples:

> "*Guai*" refers to strange or unusual events; "strengths" refer to things like Ao's ability to handle warships or Wu Huo being able to lift a thousand pounds; "disorders" refers to a minister killing his lord, or a son killing his father and the "the supernatural" refers to the service of the ghosts and spirits. These things either have nothing contribute to one's moral education, or are simply things the master found distasteful to talk about.
>
> 怪，怪異也; 力，謂若羿蕩舟、烏獲舉千鈞之屬; 亂，謂臣弒君子弒父; 神，謂鬼神之事。或無益於教化，或所不忍言。[32]

Zhu Xi 朱熹 further clarifies them through their antonyms, *chang* (常 norms) / *guai* (怪 abnormalities), *de* (德 morality) / *li* (力 strength), *zhi* (治 order) / *luan* (亂 disorder), and *ren* (人 the natural) / shen (神 the supernatural). Zhu Xi continues to define the differences between *guai* and *yi*. He categorizes natural, but rare phenomena – such as eclipses, earthquakes, and landslides – as *yi*, and therefore justifies how *Chunqiu*, given

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[31] *Analects*, 7:21. Translation mine. There are multiple translations: "The subjects on which the master did not talk were extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder and spiritual beings (Legge, 1960, 201);" "The Master never talked of prodigies, feats of strengths, disorders or spirits (Waley, 1971, 127);" "The topics that the Master dis not speak of were prodigies, force, disorder and gods (Lau, 1979, 88);" "The Master did not discuss prodigies, feats of strength, disorderly conduct, or the supernatural (Slingerland, 2003, 71)."

[32] Slingerland, 2003, 71.

its canonical status in Confucian tradition, records these *yi* phenomena, but not the *guai* ones.[33] Another usage of *yi* in the *Analects* also elucidates the difference between *yi* and *guai*.

> Ji Ziran asked, "Could Zilu nad Ran Qiu be considered great ministers?" The Master replied, "I thought you were going to ask about some exceptional individuals, but instead you always ask about Zilu and Ran Qiu! ..."
>
> 季子然問：「仲由、冉求，可謂大臣與？」子曰：「吾以子為異之問，曾由與求之問？」[34]

This passage, though about humans rather than about events, corroborates our understanding of the differences between *yi* and *guai*, the former being the rare and extraordinary phenomena in our empirical experience, while the latter being intrusion from the peripheral world.

II. *Zhiguai* in the Book Titles in the Six Dynasties

During the Six Dynasties, one notes the frequent recurrence of the term *zhiguai* in book titles. Many of these books are no longer extant in their complete forms, but the titles of some survive to us bibliographic treatises in contemporary dynastic histories, and some are partially recompiled from quotations in early commentaries and in Tang and Song collectanea.[35] *Suishu jingjizhi* 隋書經籍志 lists *Zhishi zhiguaiji* 殖氏志怪記,

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[33] For example, *the Guliang Commentary to the Chunqiu* 春秋谷梁傳 ("The 16th year of Duke Cheng 成公十六年") and *the Gongyang Commentary to the Chunqiu* 春秋公羊傳 ("The 3rd year of Duke Yin 隱公三年") record a few *yi* phenomena.

[34] *Analects*, 11:24. Slingerland, 2003, 121.

[35] The work of recompilation, begun late in the Yuan period, saw its heyday in the middle and late Ming, a period of intense antiquarian assembling and printing of old texts; it

Kongshi zhiguai 孔氏志怪, *Zu Taizhi zhiguai* 祖台之志怪; *Bu Jinshu yiwenzhi* 補晉書藝文志 lists *Cao Pi zhiguai* 曹毗志怪. *Yuzhu Baodian* 玉燭寶典 quotes from *Zhiguai* 志怪 and *Za guiguai zhi* 雜鬼怪志; *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 quotes from *Zhiguai zhuan* 志怪傳; *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 has quoted from *Zhiguaiji* 志怪集; *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 quotes from *zhiguai* 志怪, *zhiguai ji* 志怪集, and *Xushi zhiguai* 許氏志怪. From what survives to us, the content of these works takes two forms:[36] (1) descriptions of the anomalous deities, fauna, and flora associated with specific sites on the land (both domestic and distant), arranged in topographically organized lists; (2) narratives of the exploits of mythical figures, sages, rulers, shamans, and specialists of esoteric arts, either in a chronological form or in a biographical form.

The repeated use of the term *zhiguai* over time by consecutive authors in titles for books that share similar content suggests that it has amounted to a generic label. Although the term was not widely used as a designation for a literary genre until the late Ming, I argue that Six Dynasties authors and critics had already systematically used the term in a way approximating a generic label.[37] The question that follows is: what kind of

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continued throughout the Qing, with gradually improving care in the notation of sources, and culminated early in the Republican period with the completion of Lu Xun's monumental *Guxiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沈*,* which has 15 entries from *Zu Taizhi zhiguai* 祖台之志怪 (Lu, 1997, 128-13), 10 entries from *Kongshi zhiguai* 孔氏志怪 (Lu, 1997, 132-35), 2 entries from *Zhishi zhiguaiji* 殖氏志怪記 (Lu, 1997, 210), 1 entry from *Cao Pi zhiguai* 曹毗志怪 (Lu, 1997, 242).

[36] For an overview of the terrain of the *zhiguai* works in the Six Dynasties, see Campany, 1996, 46-99.

[37] For example, Kao asserts that Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 in was the first to use the term to refer to a literary genre (Kao, 1985, 4). DeWoskin was also under this impression (DeWoskin, 1977, 22). Campany, however, has pointed out that it was the poet, painter,

epistemological change lies underneath the shift in the usage of *zhiguai* from its sporadic appearance in Pre-Qin texts to being a generic label in book titles in the Six Dynasties?

1. *Zhiguai* and *Shi* (史)

This sections explores in way in which bibliographers in the Six Dynasties classifies *zhiguai*. Doing so will yield insight into how medieval literati viewed and justified the genre in relation to other genres.

Unfortunately, most bibliographic catalogues compiled during the Six Dynasties have not survived, but the preface to Ruan Xiaoxu's 阮孝緒 (479-536) *Qilu* 七錄 is preserved in *the Guang hongmingji* 廣弘明集.[38] The bulk of core *zhiguai* works were listed under *Guishen* (鬼神 Ghosts and Immortals) in the *Jizhuanlu* (記傳錄 Records and Biographies), together with *Guoshi* (國史 Dynastic Histories), *Zhuli* (注歷 Imperial Diaries), *Jiushi* (舊事 Affairs of Antiquity), *Zhiguan* (職官 State Offices), *Yidian* (儀典 State Rituals), *Fazhi* (法制 Law Canons), *Weishi* (偽史 Histories of Usurpatorious Dynasties), *Zazhuan* (雜傳 Miscellaneous Accounts), *Tudi* (土地 Geography), *Puzhuang* (譜狀 Family Registers), and *Bulu* (簿錄 Notes). Also, in the *Suishu jingjizhi* (隋書經籍

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calligrapher, and Taoist Gu Kuang 顧況 (c.725 – c.814) who first used the term in his preface to Dai Fu's 戴孚 *Guangyi ji* 廣異記 in the Ming Dynasty (Campany, 1996, 29).

[38] *Qilu* is divided into "*Neipian* (內篇 Inner Chapter)" and "*Waipian* (外篇 Outer Chapter)," with the former further divided into five categories, namely (1) *Jingdianlu* (經典錄 Record of Confucian Classis), (2) *Jizhuanlu* (記傳錄 Record of Biographies), (3) *Zibinglu* (子兵錄 Record of Masters and Military Strategists), (4) *Wenjilu* (文集錄 Record of Belles-Lettres and Anthologies), and (5) *Shujilu* (術技錄 Mathematical and Mantic Treatises); the latter further divided into two categories, namely (1) *Fofalu* (佛法錄 Record of Buddhist Writings), and (2) *Xiandaolu* 仙道錄 (Record of Daoist Writings).

志 Bibliographic Treatise of the History of the Sui Dynasty),[39] the same *zhiguai* works were mostly listed under *Zazhuan* (雜傳 Miscellaneous Accounts) in the *Shi* (史 histories) category, together with *Zhengshi* (正史 Official Dynastic Histories), *Gushi* (古史 Histories of Antiquity), *Zashi* (雜史 Miscellaneous Histories), *Bashi* (霸史 Histories of Competitive States), *Qiju zhu* (起居注 Imperial Diaries), *Jiushi* (舊事 Affairs of Antiquity), *Zhiguan* (職官 State Offices), *Yizhu* (儀注 State Rituals), *Xingfa* (刑法 Laws), *Dili* (地理 Geography), *Puxi* (譜系 Family Registers), and *Bulu* (簿錄 Notes).

In his comments to the *Zazhuan* category in the *Suishu jingjizhi*, Wei Zheng refers explicitly to the ancient cosmographic tradition of peripheral reports to the center, and traces the origin of these texts to "lesser affairs to the Offices of Historians 史官之末事." These texts are comprised of two kinds: (1) those that "tell the tales of saints and sages 敘聖賢之風," such as *Hainei xianxian zhuan* (海內先賢傳 Accounts of Worthy Men of the Past Within the Seas), *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Women), *Xiaozi zhuan* 孝子傳 (Biographies of Filial Exemplars), *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳 (Biographies of Eminent Gentlemen), and *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 (Biographies of Immortals);[40] (2) those

[39] It is true that the *Suishu* was presented to the throne in 656 in the Tang Dynasty, but from its preface written by Wei Zheng 魏徵, we know that the compilers of the bibliographic catalogues at the Wei and Jin courts developed the now familiar four-part classification to replace the seven-part Han system; and it is these four rubrics – *jing* (經 classics), *shi* (史 histories), *zi* (子 masters) and *ji* (集 collections) – that Wei Zheng used in the *Suishu jingjizhi*.

[40] It is curious how the biographies of immortals are grouped with those of exemplary women and filial exemplars, rather than with the ghostly and the strange affairs. I argue that this is illustrative of the literati attitudes toward the *lienü* and *xiaozi* stories.

that "describe the events of the ghostly and the strange 敘鬼物奇怪之書," such as *Lieyi zhuan* (列異傳 Arrayed Marvels), *Soushenji* (搜神記 Records of Inquests into the Spirit-Realm), *Zhiguai* (志怪 Anomaly Accounts), and *Qixie ji* (齊諧記 Records of Qi Xie). The former manifests the features of *yi* as discussed in the previous section, and corresponds to the *Zazhuan* in *Qilu*, while the latter displays *guai* and corresponds to *Guishen* in *Qilu*. Though Wei Zheng traces *zazhuan* to ancient precedents, he disapproves of authors whose ambition drove them to include affairs "not in the canonical histories 不在正史", as well as of texts that are "laced with false, absurd, aberrant sayings 雜以虛誕怪妄之說." Thus, while Wei Zheng seems to acutely conscious of – and troubled by – this category, in the *Suishu jingjizhi*, we find the merging of the strange (*guai*) with the exemplary (*yi*) under the umbrella of *shi* (history).

What further illuminates the understanding of the relation between *zhiguai* and history can be found in Gan Bao's biography in the *Jinshu* (*History of the Jin Dynasty*, compiled in the Tang Dynasty). After telling of his imperial appointment as historian and his compilation of the well-received *Jinji* (*Jin Annals*), Gan's Biography continues:

> … Because of these events [i.e., unusual occurrences within Gan Bao's immediate family circle], Bao compiled and collected cases of gods and spirits, numinous anomalies of humans and other creatures, and extraordinary transformations from past and present times, calling it *Record of Inquests into the Spiritual Realm*, thirty fascicles in all. He showed it to Liu Tan, and Tan responded, "You are what might be called the Dong Hu of the ghostly world."[41] Now since, Gan Bao had widely

[41] The joke turns on an allusion to a *Zuozhuan* passage in which the historian Dong Hu recorded that a certain minister "murdered his lord" because he failed to avenge his lord's death; the passage includes Confucius praise of Dong Hu as "a good historian; his rule for writing was not to conceal." See "The 2nd year of Duke Xuan" of *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*.

selected materials both deviating from and in accordance with [canonical texts?], he had intermixed the spurious with the actual; and because of this he wrote a preface to set for this aim. It read:

Although we can examine what was formerly set down in records and collect excluded fragments that have come down to the present, I suppose these are not matters which were heard and seen with one person's own eyes and ears. Even in these cases, how would one dare say there are no departures from the actual? … If one insists that each event be reported only one way and that where be no differences between verbal descriptions of it, or else one will not believe an account, then former historians will also certainly be found wanting. Yet the state has not seen fit to eliminate offices charged with commenting on historical records, nor have scholars stopped their work of reciting and reading texts. Is this not because that by which these texts fall short is slight, while that which they have preserved is great? As for what I have herewith collected, when it sets forth what has been received form earlier account, any fault that might be found is not my own; if there are vacuous or erroneous places in what has been garnered from inquires into more recent events, then I would wish to share the ridicule and criticism with former worthies and scholars. Even so, when it comes to what is set down here, it suffices to make clear that the way of spirits is not a fabrication.

……寶以此遂撰集古今神祇靈異人物變化，名為《搜神記》凡三十卷，以示劉惔，惔曰：「卿可謂鬼之董狐！」寶既博採異同遂混虛實，因作序以陳其志曰：

「雖考先志於載籍，收遺逸於當時，蓋非一耳一目之所親聞睹也，又安敢謂無失實者哉？……將使事不二跡，言無異途，然後為信者，固亦前史之所病；然而國家不廢注記之官，學士不絕誦覽之業，豈不以其所失者小，所存者大乎？今之所集，設有承於前載者，則非余之罪也。若使採訪近世之事，苟有虛錯，願與先賢前儒，分其譏謗。及其著述，亦足以發明神道之不誣也。」[42]

What is particularly noteworthy in the passage is the difference in the understandings of the *Soushen ji* in the biography and Gan Bao's self-description. The first paragraph from the biography pinpointed the nature of *Soushen ji* as a mixture of "the spurious with the actual 遂混虛實," which corresponds to Wei Zheng's comment to the *zazhuan* category

[42] *Jinshi*, 82: 2150-51. The translation is modified upon DeWoskin 1974, 15-21, DeWoskin, 1977, 32-33, and Campany, 1996, 146-149.

being “laced with false, absurd, aberrant sayings 雜以虛誕怪妄之說.” Gan Bao’s interlocutor’s jocular praise of him as the Dong Hu of the ghostly world suggests that he understands Gan Bao’s authorial role not to be a historian in the regular sense of the world, but a historian of the supernatural. This comment is in line with Wei Zheng’s understanding of *zhiguai* as the “lesser affairs of the Offices of Historians 史官之末事.” The thrust of Gan Bao’s argument in his preface, however, is that, since historical accounts of events are not eye-witness reports and since even a first-person narrative must select some features of experience while omitting others, departures from actuality beset all history-writing, not just his own. Hence, he downplays the exclusively anomalous content of his text, seeking to minimize the difference between it and any other writings about actual events, past or present. He does not present *Soushen ji* side by side with history, but wants this work to be judged as history.

Gan Bao’s justification of the *zhiguai* is that we cannot base our understanding of the strange on our own empirical experience because the latter is far too limited. This echoes his contemporary view on the *guai*. Xiao Yi (蕭繹508-554), later Emperor Yuan of the Liang (r. 552-554), included a chapter of *zhiguai* in his *Jinlouzi* 金樓子. The Emperor opens with his thesis – “Now as for the view that outside the ears and eyes there is no ‘strangeness, I consider it not so夫耳目之外，無有怪者。余以為不然也” – and follows it with a series of examples, first of natural transformations from one extreme to another or exceptions to apparent regularities of nature (e.g. “heavy things should sink, but there is a ‘Floating Stone Mountain’” 重者應沈而有浮石之山), then of cross-species

transformations. He concludes by saying "on account of this I have made a chapter on strangeness". His is, then, a metaphysical justification for strange records: certain types of strange events, at least, are not only real but also intrinsically strange, so writing about them is permissible.[43]

Guo Pu 郭璞, in his influential preface to the *Shanhai jing*, further turns the problem of *guai* into an epistemological one. He begins by noting that readers of that text typically doubted its contents because of "its vast absurdities and twisted exaggerations, its many strange and unconventional words 閎誕迂誇，多奇怪俶儻之言." He then defends the strange matters of the text in a rather unusual, Zhuangzian fashion by arguing the relativity of "strangeness" as a category of judgment:

> Consider what people call strange: no one knows how this strangeness comes about. Consider what people call not strange; no one knows how this nonstrangeness comes about. How can this be? A thing is not strange in itself. It awaits the "I": only then is it strange: The strangeness is really in the "I", and it is not the thing that is strange…
>
> 世之所謂異，未知其所以異；世之所謂不異，未知其所以不異。何者?物不自異，待我而後異，異果在我，非物異也。[44]

Through the metaphysical and epistemological justifications of the *guai*, we see how *zhiguai* would be listed as a minor branch of history, if not the same as any type of history. But is there no differentiation between *zhiguai* and other types of history as Lu Xun 魯迅 has claimed, "they recorded these tales of the supernatural in the same way as anecdotes about men and women, not viewing the former as fiction and the latter as fact

[43] *Jinlouzi*, *pian* 12 (*juan* 5.14b-27a).
[44] Yuan, 1992, 541-544. Translation by Chen, 1985.

敘述異事，與記載人間常事，自視固無誡妄之別"?[45]

2. *Zhiguai* and *Zhiren* (志人)

Zhiren (志人 records of personalities) as a generic label was invented by Lu Xun to describe classified collection of anecdotes about alleged words and deeds of historical personalities, in contrast with *zhiguai* (records of anomalies), anecdotes about strange events, people, creatures, and places. A paradigmatic example of this genre is the 5th-cnetury collection, *Shishuo xinyu* (世說新語 A New Account of Tales of the World) compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-44). This collection comprises more than a thousand anecdotes divided into thirty-six categories of human behavior and personality types, which are classified in a moral hierarchy beginning with "Virtuous Conduct (*Dexing* 德行)" and "Speech and Conversation (*Yanyu* 言語)" and ends with "Blind Infatuations (*Huoni* 惑溺)" and "Hostility and Alienation (*Chouxi* 仇隙)."[46] According to Nanxiu Qian's study of the *Shishuo xinyu* and its later imitations in China and Japan, the *Shishuo ti* (世說體 *Shishuo* style) is a product of the prevailing Wei-Jin practice of "character appraisal (*renlun jianshi* 人倫鑑識)," in which literary representations of human speech, bodies and personal material possessions were used to project a character's mind and intent.[47]

Lu Xun's differentiation between *zhiguai* and *zhiren* is a retroactive application to the Six Dynasties' texts, but not anachronistic. The contemporary bibliographic treatises

[45] Lu Xun, 1927, 37. The Yangs, trans., 1982, 42-3.
[46] I follow the translations of *Shishuo* chapter titles by Richard B. Mather (Mather, 1976).
[47] Qian, 2001, 47.

and catalogues did see the *zhiguai* and *zhiren* texts as different, and put them in different categories. In Ruan Xiaoxu's *Qilu*, *zhiren* texts were placed in the "*xiaoshuo* (小說)" category under the "*Zibinglu* (子兵部 Record of Masters and Military Strategists)," while the zhiguai texts were listed under *Guishen* (鬼神 Ghosts and Immortals) in the *Jizhuanlu* (記傳錄 Records and Biographies). Similarly, they are found in the "*xiaoshuo* (小說)" subcategory in the "*Zi* (子 masters)" category in *Suishu jingjizhi*, while *zhiguai* works were mostly listed under *Zazhuan* (雜傳 Miscellaneous Accounts) in the *Shi* (史 histories) category.

If one adopts the modern framework of *xiaoshuo* being literary and fictive whereas *shi* being historical and factual, it is highly curious how records of personalities are listed under *xiaoshuo* and accounts of anomalies are listed under *shi*. However, the definition of what constitutes history and what constitutes fiction obliges us to consider the process by which these genres came into existence, rather than its content, to be of germinal importance.

The understanding of *xiaoshuo*, from the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, remained to be "brief and fragmentary prose in form, spurious and expository discourse in nature, marginal yet of some value in pragmatic terms."[48] Even though *zhiren* works like the *Shishuo xinyu* establishes "a taxonomy of human nature"[49] and reflects the intellectual ethos of the time, it was criticized by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 in the Tang Dynasty to be excessively concerned with "humor and petty persuasions." It fits more with the

[48] Wu, 1995, 340.
[49] Qian, 2001, 47.

classical definition of *xiaoshuo* that we find in Ban Gu's *Hanshu Yiwenzhi* (漢書藝文志 *Bibliographical Treatise in the History of the Han Dynasty*):

> The *Xiaoshuo* School probably evolved from local officials. The works were created by conversations along the streets and stories of the alleys being picked up and retold along the streets. Confucius said, "Although it is a lesser path, there must be something to be seen in it. But if one goes too far, there is the fear of getting bogged down. So it is not something the superior man does." Still, they are not simply to be discarded. Being something upon which the neighborhood corner philosophers touched, they were collected and not forgotten on the chance they might contain a useful phrase or two. They are really the discourses of bumpkins and fools.
>
> 小說家者流，蓋出於稗官，街談巷語，道聽塗說者之所造也。孔子曰：「雖小道，必有可觀者焉，致遠恐泥，是以君子弗為也。」然亦弗滅也。閭里小知者之所及，亦使綴而不忘。如或一言可采，此亦芻蕘狂夫之議也。[50]

Zhiguai as a form of historical writing, on the other hand, brings in worlds that lie beyond our quotidian empirical experience, either exotic or esoteric, neither of which was understood to be a fabrication. The collectors of *zhiguai* in the Six Dynasties did earnestly believe in the factual veracity of the stories in their collection. In fact, they were appropriating an older tradition of imperial cosmographic collecting, in which by presenting the exotic from all corners of the land, dominance of the capital over the provincial and colonial margins was affirmed. The Six Dynasties collectors of *zhiguai* adopted the imperial practice to advance their own personal agendas. Various bibliographical catalogues and treatises have shown that *zhiguai* did mount to the level of history of the exotic and the esoteric, if not on the same level of all other types of history.

[50] DeWoskin trans. (DeWoskin, 1977, 195-196).

In summary, for the Six Dynasties bibliographers, they saw the *zhiguai* tradition as a branch of history, dedicated to preserving endangered fragments of historical accounts and recording popular customs, justified by appeal to ancient cosmographic precedent. Even critics of *zhiguai* charged their collectors with "absurdity" and "falsehood," as shown in Gan Bao's biography and Wei Zheng's comment, but not with simply "making up" their narratives. Such an understanding would gradually change in the Tang and Song periods.

CHAPTER THREE

Playfulness in the Strange
Bibliography of *Zhiguai* from Tang-Song to Ming-Qing

Zhiguai collections in the Six Dynasties formed a branch of history, albeit one of questionable value and status; they were understood and explained as stemming from the ancient traditions of cosmographic collecting. Tang scholars such as Wei Zheng 魏徵 and Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 treated *zhiguai* in much the same way, but the criticism against the reliability of its content was increasingly stronger. During the Northern Song in the 11th century, with Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 *Xin Tangshu* (新唐書 *A New History of the Tang Dynasty*), *zhiguai* were systematically split off from history and related to the *xiaoshuo* category of the masters division; at the same time, many of these works, by now fragmented, were collected in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. The "*guang*" in this title, meaning "broad", ironically reflects a narrowed sense of history, form which *zhiguai* works were increasingly expunged. This section traces the shift in the bibliographical catalogues and treatises, and explores the change of authorial attitudes in the prefaces to *zhiguai* collections in the Tang and Song Dynasties.

As discussed in the previous section, Wei Zheng, in the *Suishu jingjizhi*, treated *zhiguai* as a Brach of history, but dismissed the texts "as lesser affairs to the Offices of Historians" due to its being "laced with false, absurd, aberrant sayings." Around seventy year after *Suishu jingjizhi*, the first Chinese work of historiographical criticism entitled *Shitong* (史通 General Principles of History) by the Tang scholar Liu Zhiji (劉知幾 661-

721) appeared. From a historian's perspective, he separates unofficial forms of historical writing 偏記小說, *zhiguai* being one of its subcategories, from official forms 正史,[51] and argues for the inclusion of *zhiguai* materials as long as they teach ways to "achieve longevity, censure vice, and promote good deeds 益壽延年，懲惡勸善." [52] Liu Zhiji's standards for classification hinge upon ideological and social effects. His argument for the inclusion of *pianji xiaoshuo* (偏記小說 unofficial record and petty talk) into *zhengshi* (正史 official history) suggests a more sophisticated understanding of official historical writing than the fantasy of absolute factuality, but it also suggests that the movement of *zhiguai* materials from the *shi* category to the *zi* category was ongoing as early as the age of Liu Zhiji.

The bibliography in the *Xin Tangshu* (新唐書 New History of the Tang Dynasty), compiled in the Song dynasty by Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修 1007-1072), marks a further development in bibliography compilation, and suggests a paradigm shift in genre criticism concerning *zhiguai*. With many new titles added, the *xiaoshuo* list in the *Xin Tangshu Yiwenzhi* (新唐書藝文志 Bibliographical Treatise of the New History of the

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[51] Liu Zhiji classifies *zhengshi* (正史 official history) into six schools according to forms and style, and expulsed *pianji xiaoshuo* (偏記小說 unofficial record and petty talk) from it because of its "lack of reason" and "distortion of truth." He divides the latter into ten groups: *pianji* (偏記 biased records), *xiaolu* (小錄 minor records), *yishi* (逸事 anecodtes), *suoyan* (瑣言 notes on trivial matters), *junshu* (郡書 local chronicles), *jiashi* (家史 family history), *biezhuan* (別傳 anecdotal biographies), *zaji* (雜記 miscellaneous records), *dilishu* (地理書 local conventions and customs), and *duyibu* (都邑簿 chronicles of the imperial city). However, he admitted that "*pianji xiaoshuo* form a school of their own and can be consulted and circulated alongside the official history 偏記小說，自成一家，能與正史參行."

[52] Liu, 1985, 352-367.

Tang Dynasty) is increased to thirty-nine works, far long than Ban Bu's 班固 list of fifteen works, Wei Zheng's 魏徵 list of twenty-five, and Liu Xu's 劉煦 list of thirteen. Among those newly added to the *xiaoshuo* list are twenty-four *zhiguai* works dating form the 3rd to 6th century, which had been categorized as belong to the *zazhuan* section of the *shi* category in the *Suishu jingjizhi* 隋書經籍志 and *Jiu Tangshu jingjizhi* 舊唐書經籍志. Of the twenty-four *zhiguai* works, fifteen of them are devoted to accounts of ghosts and spirits, such as *Lieyizhuan* (列異傳 Accounts of Marvels), *Zhenyizhuan* (甄異傳 Accounts of Identified Marvels), and *Xu Qi Xie ji* (續齊諧記 A Sequel to Records of Qi Xie); nine of them to karmic retribution, such as *Ganyingji* (感應記 Records of Divine Retributions), and *Jingyiji* (旌異記 Tales Exemplifying Marvels). This arrangement build up for the first time a close link between *zhiguai* and *xiaoshuo* in traditional Chinese bibliography,[53] and resulted in a *xiaoshuo* section that contained "predominantly imaginative narratives of the sort we comfortably recognize as fiction."[54]

I. *Zhiguai* in the Tang and Song Dynasties

The bibliographical reshuffling is less motivated by revolutionary thinking about the nature of the *xiaoshuo* than by Ouyang Xiu's desire to distinguish *zashi* from *zhengshi* and to purge unreliable materials from the historical parts in his bibliography. It does, however, reflect a change in the contemporary perception of *zhiguai*: (1) from works restricted in the *zashi* category to works that are scattered across generic

[53] Wu, 1995, 341; Zhao, 2005, 167.
[54] DeWoskin, 1986, 424.

boundaries; (2) from being a vehicle for "cosmological reflection and religious persuasion,"[55] as in the Six Dynasties, to emphasizing more on the aesthetic and recreational aspects.

1. Blurring Generic Boundaries

In the preface, written by Gu Kuang (顧況 ca. 725-ca. 814), a noted painter, poet, calligrapher, and Daoist, for a collection of *zhiguai* works titled *Guangyiji* 廣異記, written by Gu's acquaintance, Dai Fu 戴孚 in the Tang Dynasty, Gu lists a cascade of authors and books which were household names for *zhiguai* literature in the Tang period. There are two particularly interesting points about the list. Firstly, this group of titles answers to one general description – *zhiguai zhishi* (志怪之士 men who recorded strange things), which, according to Campany, is the first usage of the term as a generic label.[56] Secondly, it is tempting to wave aside this cascade of titles and names as a mere gesture of extravagant citation, and it would scarcely be wise to seek too much significance in its sequence and groupings. But this remains an interesting list:

> The men who recorded strange things: Liu Zizheng's *Biographies of illustrious immortals* and Ge Zhichuan's *Biographies of gods and immortals*; Wang Zinian's *Records of neglected things gathered up* and Dongfang Shuo's *Scripture of gods and marvels*; Zhang Maoxian's *Records of manifold knowledge* and Guo Ziheng's *The record of Emperor Wu of Han's insights into obscurity*; Yan Huangmen's *Rhapsody on scrutiny of the superhuman* and Hou Junsu's *Tales Exemplifying Marvels*. Among them, some spiritual and profound: Master Gu's *Declarations of the perfected* and Zhou's *A record of Zhou's communications with the unseen world*. And as for the *Assembly of marvels* and the *Records of spirits searched out*, the *Scriptures of mountains and seas* and the *Transcripts of the other world*, the *Records of the ancients of Xiangyang*

[55] Campany, 1996, x.
[56] Campany, 1996, 29.

> and the *Biographies and eulogies of the former worthies of Chu*, the *Universal principles of manners and customs* and the *Records of seasonal observances in Chu*, *Records of Wuxing* and *A record of the characteristics of Yangxian*, *Account of Southern Yue* and *Miscellaneous notes from the Western Capital*, *Glosses upon things ancient and modern* and writings entitled *Disorder and distress on the Huai and the ocean*, Pei Songzhi and Sheng Hongzhi, Lu Daozhan, etc. – all these produced testimony in a luxuriant, unending abundance. Under our own dynasty – *Tale of the fur gentlemen of Liang*, Tang Lin's *Records of retribution from the other world* and Wang Du's *Memoir concerning an ancient mirror*, Kong Shengyen's *Records of gods and demons* and Zhao Ziqin's *Records of destiny preordained*; and then the likes of Li Yucheng and Zhang Xiaoju – they pass the testimony on, one to another.
>
> 志怪之士，劉子政之《列仙》，葛稚川之《神仙》，王子年之《拾遺》，東方朔之《神異》，張茂先之《博物》，郭子横之《洞冥》，顏黃門之《稽聖》，侯君素之《旌異》，其中神奧，陶君之《真誥》，周氏之《冥通》。而《異苑》、《搜神》，《山海》之經，《幽冥》之錄；襄陽之《耆舊》，楚國之《先賢》，《風俗》所通，《歲時》所記；《吳興》《陽羨》，《南越》西京；注引《古今》，辭標《淮海》。裴松之、盛宏之、陸道瞻等，諸家之說，蔓延無窮。國朝燕公《梁四公傳》，唐臨《冥報記》，王度《古鏡記》，孔慎言《神怪志》，趙自勤《定命錄》，至如李庚成、張孝舉之徒，互相傳說。[57]

So ends this dense and stimulating section of the preface, with its detailed contextual statement. But more interesting is the broad generic sweep of these few selected works. They include a traditional collection of exotic marvels, a more forward-looking narrative treatment of a magic object, two titles devoted to specialized themes of predestination and retribution, as well as two collections of hauntings. Gu Kuang adopts a more deeply conservative style. For him no clear line divides historical and geographical writing from records of gods and spirits: the charting of supernatural agencies and the survey of the world's regions blend in a single historical continuum.

2. Playfulness and Strangeness

[57] Dong, 1987, 2377.

In addition to the broad generic sweep, *zhiguai* compilers in the Tang-Song period not only endeavor to establish the strangeness of their content, but also the playfulness of their style. Unlike their predecessors who often claim the significance of their *zhiguai* works either because their work recover fragments of ancient textual tradition and preserve contemporary phenomena or because they provide glimpses into the otherwise mysterious world of the spirits, *zhiguai* compilers of this period start to emphasize their aim at providing entertainment for their readers during leisure hours. For example, in Duan Chengshi's (段成式 803-863) preface to his *Youyang zazu* (酉陽雜俎 *Miscellaneous morsels from Youyang*), he wrote:

> The *Book of Changes* speaks of the "carriage of ghosts," which are close to being strange; the poets in the *Book of Odes* use the simile of the constellation of the Winnowing Basket, which is close to being playful. So for a person who wears a gentleman's gown to casually write of the strange and the playful, it does not undermine his role as a Confucian. Unlike the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents* that can be compared to the flavor of bland meat stew, history is like sacrificial meat and philosophy is rather seasoned meat paste. But if one has only heavy meat dishes, such as roasted owl and small turtles, how could one start eating? Therefore, what I have laboring over without apology is a work of *zhiguai xiaoshuo*[58] as a side dish. My knowledge is limited, and my writing is long and I have not given the work any deep thoughts. I do not have the talent of Cui Yin who provoked the admiration of a real dragon, and I can be laughed at for being like Kong Zhang who failed to draw the likeness of a tiger. Taking the time when I have a full stomach, I jot down things I have remembered and call them *Youyang zazu*, which includes thirty *pian* and is divided into twenty *juan*, but I fail to record their flavor.

[58] It is noteworthy that Duan officially declares his work to be a book of *zhiguai* and associates with the highly ambiguous term *xiaoshuo* for the first time in the history of Chinese narrative. Such an explicit claim is especially intriguing because the official connection between *zhiguai* and *xiaoshuo* in the traditional Chinese bibliography was not established until centuries later with the completion of the *Xin Tangshu* in 1060.

> 夫《易》象一車之言，近於怪也；詩人南箕之興，近乎戲也。固服逢掖者肆筆之餘，及怪及戲，無侵於儒。無若詩書之味大羹，史為折俎，子為醯醢也。炙鴞羞鼈，豈容下箸乎？固役而不恥者，抑志怪小說之書也。成式學落詞曼，未嘗覃思，無崔駰真龍之嘆，有孔璋畫虎之譏。飽食之暇，偶錄記憶，號《酉陽雜俎》，凡三十篇，為二十卷，不以此間錄味也。[59]

Duan was not the first one who used flavors of food as metaphors for writings, nor was he the first one who advocated for recreational writing. The distinguished Tang literatus Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元 773-819) who lived about 30 year before Duan argued in an essay that the sages did not condemn light-hearted writing because such literature is a necessary form of relaxation and diversion for scholars who were involved in tedious research. The relationship between classics and playful works is similar to the relationship between the main course of meat and delicacies. While the main course constitutes the core of the mail provides the basic nourishment, the delicacies enrich the meal with a variety of flavors.[60] Liu Zongyuan's view, according to William Nienhauser, was more concerned with the pleasure of writing itself than the allegorical meaning and didactic significance it carried.[61] The fact that Duan inherited Liu's flavor metaphor to justify his own writing suggests that Duan adopted Li's attitudes towards recreational writing in general. *Zhiguai* works bring amusement and pleasure to the otherwise bland experience of reading and writing and are entertaining both to the reader and to the writer. The relationship among the writer, the reader and the work of a *zhiguai* collection is further explained in Hong Mai's（洪邁 1123-1202) preface to one of his volume in the *Yijianzhi* 夷監志:

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[59] Duan, 1981, 1. Translated by Wang (Wang, 2012, 60-1).
[60] Liu, 2004, 16-17.
[61] Nienhauser, 1976, 172.

> Due to my interest in the extraordinary and veneration of the strange, people from far and wide send me details whenever they hear of such a story. Therefore, the amount of material I have received these last five years is comparable to what I had previous collected… As for the anomalies of Qi Xie and the reciprocity of Zhuangzi, they are but illusive and insubstantial and cannot be questioned. Moreover, Gan Bao's *Record of the Search for Spirits*, Niu Sengru's *Anomalies of the Recondite,* Gu Shenzi's *Broad Expanse of the Extraordinary*, *the East of the River*, *the Record of the Dark Chamber*, *the Examining Spirits* – these works cannot be without some allegorical content. My book, however, having some about within a cycle of no more than sixty years, has utilized both my eyes and ears – and the stories within are all based on factual sources. If one does not believe me, they may go to Mr. Nobody and ask him.
>
> 《夷堅初志》成，士大夫或傳之……任意予好奇尚異也，每得一說，或千里寄聲，於是五年間又得卷軼多寡與前編等……夫齊諧之志怪，莊周之談天，虛無幻茫，不可致詰。逮干寶之《搜身》，奇章公之《玄怪》，谷神子之《博異》，《河東》之記，《宣室》之志，《稽神》之錄，皆不能無寓言於其間。若予是書，遠不過一甲子，耳目相接，皆表表有據依者。謂予不信，其往見烏有先生而問之。[62]

The preface starts with Hong Mai's self-proclaimed interest in the strange. He then contrasts his own work with the archetypal work of the *zhiguai* genre by claiming that his is not allegorical. In the final comment to this preface, Hong directs any doubt about sources or reliability to Mr. Nobody, a character from Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 "Zixufu" (子虛賦 Rhapsody of Sir Fantasy) in the Han Dynasty. This can be read as an ambiguous disclaimer to his stated factuality. Since he asks the skeptic to verify the stories from someone who does not exist, he observes that there can be no satisfactory verification.

To summarize, the reshuffling of the *zhiguai* work from the category of "*zi*" to "*xiaoshuo*" in the bibliographical catalogues also witnesses the change in the perception of *zhiguai*: compared with the understanding of *zhiguai* in the Six Dynasties, the Tang-

[62] Hong, 2006, 185. Trans. Inglis, 2006, 24,

Song period emphasizes more on its strangeness and *playfulness* than its ideological function and historical veracity. In Gu Kuang's preface to *Guangyiji*, we see the generic boundaries established in the official bibliographical treatises being blurred. This, to me, reflects the nature of *zhiguai* works, but to some others, is a sloppy practice that left the compartmentalization of texts a mess. The house-cleaning operation was finally carried out in the last quarter of the sixteenth century by Hu Yinglin (胡應麟 1551-1602).

II. *Zhiguai* in the Ming-Qing Period

Since Ouyang Xiu's *Xin Tangshu Yiwenzhi*, the bulk of *zhiguai* texts have been lodged in the *xiaoshuo* category. The effort to further classify *xiaoshuo*, in the same way as *shi* was classified in *Suishu jingjizhi* and *Shitong*, did not start until Hu Yingling. It is also Hu who formally established the term *zhiguai* as a generic designation:

> The *xiaoshuo* group is further divided into several subgroups. The first is called "records of anomalies", which contains works such as the *Soushen*, *Shuyi*, *Xuanshi*, and *Youyang*. The second is called "tales of the remarkable", which contains such stories as those about Feiyan, Taizhen, Yingying, and Xiaoyu. The third is called "miscellaneous accounts of anecdotes", which contains collections such as the *Shishuo*, *Yulin*, *suoyan*, and *Yinhua*. The fourth is called "miscellaneous notes", into which are put such works as the *Rongzhai*, *Mengxi*, *Donggu*, and *Daoshan*. The fifth is called "evidential research", in which are found books such as the *Shupu*, *Jilei*, *Zixia*, and *Bianyi*. The last is called "moral admonitions", in which there are such titles as the *Jiaxun*, *Shifan*, *Quanshan* 勸善錄, and *Xingxin*. The two subgenres of "miscellaneous notes" and "miscellaneous accounts of anecdotes" intermingle easily, and they often share certain features with the other four subgenres. However, the other four kinds tend to be self-contained, and thus cannot incorporate the notes and anecdotes. As for the "records of anomalies" and "tales of the remarkable," they belong to extremely fluid genres and readily move from one category to the other. [For example,] in some cases there are both types of tales in one work. And in other cases, there are features befitting both genres in one tale.

> [When classifying them, we] should preferably recognize what [feature] takes dominance.
>
> 小說家一類又自分數種：一曰志怪，《搜神》、《述異》、《宣室》、《酉陽》之類是也；一曰傳奇，《飛燕》、《太真》、《崔鶯》、《霍玉》之類是也；一曰雜錄，《世說》、《語林》、《瑣言》、《因話》是也；一曰叢談，《容齋》、《夢溪》、《東谷》、《道山》之類是也；一曰辨訂，《鼠璞》、《雞肋》、《資暇》、《辨疑》之類是也；一曰箴規，《家訓》、《世範》、《勸善》、《省心》之類是也。談從、雜錄二類最易相紊，又往往兼有四種，而四家類多獨行，不可攙入二類者。至於志怪、傳奇，尤易出入，或一書之中二事並載，一事之內兩端具存，姑舉其重而已。[63]

Hu Yinglin has often been chastised for setting up critical distinctions that are blurry and confusing. This classification of *xiaoshuo* is conducted more from a bibliographical point of view than from a perspective of genre theory. The six types of *xiaoshuo* cover an extremely wide range of writings, but as indicated by the titles attached to each of the six sub-categories of *xiaoshuo*, only the first three are narratives possessing fictional elements while the last three are *basically* non-narrative items. But he provided, as nobody before him had, useful genre discriminations based essentially on a consideration of content. He insisted on distinguishing between the *zhiguai* and the *chuanqi* 傳奇, even though the two modes overlap and co-exist not just in one book but in the same tale. Hu implied that *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* are two stylistic forms that exist at two ends of a continuum, and that if placed on a scale; each tale would "weigh heavily" either in one direction or the other.

During the reign of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆 1736-17965) of the Qing Dynasty, Ji Yun (紀昀 1724-1805) was put in charge of editing *Siku quanshu* (四庫全書 The

[63] Hu, 2001, 362. Translation is modified from Wu, 1995, 352-353.

Complete Library of the Four Treasures). As part of the project, a bibliographic treatise entitled *Siku quanshu zongmu tigao* (四庫全書總目提要 A General Annotated Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasures) was compiled by Ji Yun. The *xiaoshuo* section is organized around the tripartite classificatory system of: (1) miscellania (*zashi* 雜事); (2) reports of anomalies (*yiwen* 異聞); (3) idle chatter (*suoyu* 瑣語). The second category is primarily devoted to reviews of *zhiguai* works. Some *zhiguai* narratives also figure amongst the "miscellania," though this category includes primarily quasi-historical materials that are, for one reason or another, not included in the section on standard histories. *Zhiguai* works are almost totally absent from the "idle chatter" subdivision. Dominating this category are collections of folk sayings, conversations by noted historical figures like Su Shi, fables and humorous vignettes, accounts of local customs, offhand remarks, and popular tales in particular regions of the country. The three-fold division does at times appear arbitrary, for included in it are compilations of a polymorphous nature that can be placed in more than one category. Ji Yun, being the compiler of *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記, ironically holds a traditional view towards *zhiguai*, which is more akin to Wei Zheng and Liu Zhiji in their criticism on its being laced with "false, absurd, aberrant sayings." He justifies his own writing stories of the strange on the grounds that it takes place not only at his leisure, but also in his old age:

> Before I was thirty, I indulged in evidential research. Wherever I sat, I was surrounded by books set out like fish left on the bank by the otter. When I was past thirty, I competed with all under heaven with my essays. I frequently spent sleepless nights preparing and structuring my writings. After the age of fifty I took charge of editorial work on rare texts, thereby reverting to evidential investigations. Now that I am old, the enthusiasms

> of days gone by are no more. With ink on paper I write of old recollections, just to pass the idle moments.
>
> 三十以前，講考證之學，所坐之處，典籍環繞入獺祭。三十以後，以文章與天下相馳騁，抽黃對白，恆徹夜構思。五十以後，領修秘籍，負折而講考證。今老矣，無復當年之異之意興，惟時拈紙墨，追錄舊聞，姑以消遣歲月而已。[64]

Chapters Two and Three have reviewed the usage of the *zhiguai* in Chinese literary history, from its sporadic appearance in the Pre-Qin period to its systematic occurrence in book titles in the Six Dynasties, from its location in bibliographical treatises and catalogues to prefaces of *zhiguai* collections. Here are a few concluding remarks:

Firstly, in terms of the relationship among the author, the reader and the work, rather than fabricating, the writer claims to collect "true" stories from informants. The focus of authorial intention shifts from complementing official history to interest in the strangeness and playfulness of the *zhiguai*. Secondly, what is recorded as "guai" can be either esoteric or exotic in nature, and it is the interaction between an other-world or other-worlds (a cosmologically supernatural or a geographically peripheral world) and this-world (our quotidian empirical experience) that constitutes as the main content of *zhiguai*. The following chapter elaborates on these two points and gives my own definition of *zhiguai* as a genre.

[64] Ji, 1980, 359. Translation is based on Chan, 1998, 34.

CHAPTER FOUR

This-World and Other-World(s): Theory of *Zhiguai*

Chapters Two and Three has demonstrated that the history of *zhiguai* in traditional Chinese bibliographical taxonomy and literary criticism is very much the history of efforts to describe and define it. No satisfactory scholarly consensus has been reached partially due to two reasons. Firstly, the subject matters of *zhiguai* – ranging from administrative reports of drought and misrule to accounts of apparently supernatural events, such as foxes transformed into human form, a tribe whose heads could take independent flight at night, and encounters with the dead – defy established regimes of knowledge, and remain inexplicable. Secondly, the critical terminologies – such as epistemological categories like *qi* 奇 (marvelous), *yi* 異 (different) and *guai* 怪 (strange),[65] and generic labels like *yeshi* 野史 (unofficial history), *yishi* 逸史 (leftover history) and *xiaoshuo* 小說 (petty talk) – are always interdependent within the self-contained system of Chinese thought, and hence form circular reasoning from time to time.

This chapter, therefore, intends to stand out of the tradition of Chinese criticism by introducing modern conceptual categories -- such as history vs. fiction, natural vs. supernatural, belief vs. disbelief – into the reading of *zhiguai*. By situating *zhiguai* in a liminal status between the abovementioned categories, it eliminates what is not *zhiguai*,

[65] "Anthing *qiyi* and out of ordinary is called *guai*" is a typical case of circular definition of the three epistemological terminologies. It is from a Tang dictionary, *Yiqie jing yinyi* 一切經音義, compiled by the Buddhist monk Xuanying 玄應 (? - 649-661), *juan* 6; cited by Li Jianguo in *Tangqian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (Li, 1984, 12).

and then proceeds to discuss what it is. Following a literature review of the current scholarship, it devises a new conceptual framework – this-world and other-world(s) – which locates the epistemology of the strange as the defining characteristic of the genre, and prepares the ground for the subsequent case study in the following chapter.

I. Liminality: What is Not *Zhiguai*

The notion of liminality, or the state "betwixt and between," has been gaining increasing critical attention in recent scholarship. Both anthropologists and historians have emphasized the significance of the "betwixt and between" for the study of culture. Mary Douglas, for example, in her *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, gives special importance to the boundary-crossing animals and spirits in assuring social and moral order. She argues that in a given society, what is perceived to be ambiguous and marginal tends to be regarded as ritually unclean, hence defiling established principles. The marginality of such beings discharges both danger and power to the dominant patterns of the existing social structure.[66] Victor Turner further elaborates on the symbolism of marginality and ritual. He contends that rituals are organized around certain key symbols that simultaneously encompass many different meanings. Only by relating the ritual symbols to social experience can one decipher their multivocality. Turner also develops the concept of marginality:

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremony. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize

[66] Douglas, 1966.

> social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.[67]

In other words, the "betwixt and between" represents a liminal phase, an ambiguous and paradoxical sate of being neither this nor that – or being both. It is a ritual state that allows people to change from one state to another, and thereby to reorder the world and to gain new power to deal with life. Liminal situations and roles tend to be conceived as dangerous, inauspicious, or polluting to people, objects, events, and relationship that have not been incorporated into the liminal context. In popular culture and folk literature, they are likened to marginal groups, such as shamans, mediums, magicians, and jesters, who usually come from the bottom of society, yet are endowed with the ritual power of the weak to reverse established social structures and express cultural oppositions.

From the theoretical discussion of liminality, one would not fail to recognize that the content, the form, as well as the ideological agendas of *zhiguai* coincide with the abovementioned description of the state "betwixt and between." From different angles, these scholars have provided us with theoretical tools with which to go beyond the conventional boundaries between history and fiction, the natural and supernatural, as well as belief and disbelief, and study *zhiguai* as a liminal category in the history of Chinese literature and religions.

1. History vs. Fiction

[67] Turner, 1992, 23.

Zhiguai texts document all kinds of anomalous things. The immediate question that faces modern readers is how we are going to approach them. To answer this question, scholars have explored in two directions.

The first examines the question of "true or false" in the general patterns of traditional Chinese narratives in contrast to their modern western counterparts. Andrew H. Plaks, in his "Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative," as mentioned above, notices the insufficiency of the modern/western distinction of fiction and history as an analytical category to classical Chinese literature.[68] Following a similar thread of thought, Judith T. Zeitlin, in her study of *Lizhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, notices an intriguing difference concerning "truth" between "classical tales" (文言小說 *wenyan xiaoshuo*) and "vernacular fiction" (通俗小說 *tongsu xiaoshuo*). Unlike vernacular stories, which arguably unfold in a space clearly demarcated as fictional, *Liaozhai* tales are told in the language that is adapted to record official history, and therefore are not set in a fictional framework. They deliberately straddle the border between fictional and historical discourses and are indeed predicated in part on the ensuing ambiguity.[69]

The second direction in scholarship specifically compares *zhiguai* with other forms of history writing, and investigates historiography in its public and private forms. This group of scholars usually starts with the allegedly Confucian censorship on "prodigies, feats of strength, disorders or spirits" (怪力亂神 *guai-li-luan-shen*).[70]

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[68] Plaks, 1977, 312-3.
[69] Zeitlin, 1993, 4.
[70] See *Analects* 7.21: "The Master did not discuss prodigies, feats of strength, disorderly conduct or the supernatural. 子不語怪力亂神" *Confucius Analects: With Selections from*

Because of the topics about which Confucius does not speak and the literati's fascination with the strange, there emerges a private form of historiography that does not deal with state affairs or eminent political figures, but ghosts, fox spirits and abnormal human experiences. This is a problematic argument on the grounds that Confucius's attitude towards the anomaly is too ambivalent and ambiguous to be summarized as such and that elements of the strange are nearly prevalent in official history such as the *Shiji* 史記. Yet it is also partially correct in that there are literatures, such as *waishi* (外史 unofficial history) and *yishi* (佚史 leftover history), that lie outside of the Confucian canon.

Alongside the same logic, Robert F. Campany, in his groundbreaking study on early medieval *zhiguai* stories, shakes the conventional idea that *zhiguai* are fictional creations and argues that they were complied as verifiable historical accounts to fulfill different religious and political agendas.[71] Edward L. Davis maintains that the anecdotes in the Southern Song collection of *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 are not folktales, but primarily a record of subjective experiences, a document of private life that contrasts with such public documents as historical biographies, eulogies, and grave inscriptions.[72] Based on *Yijian zhi*, Robert Hymes argues that *biji* (筆記 miscellaneous notes) and *zhiguai* are a special form of historiography providing the literati a means to discuss matters regarding gods, spirits, and other miscellaneous topics unsuitable for formal genres.[73]

Traditional Commentaries. Translated by Edward Slingerland. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett, 2003.

[71] Campany, 1996, 273-363.

[72] Davis, 2001, 19.

[73] Hymes, 2002.

If we step outside of the field of *zhiguai*, we will find that same question on whether a piece of work belongs to history or fiction is perennially pervasive in Chinese literary criticism. It is customary to speak of the developmental dependence of prose fiction on history, or more precisely, on historiographic writing.[74] Although the generic name of fiction is thought to be the small talk or idle rumor (*xiaoshuo* 小說) of the streets and alleys supposedly gathered by minor officials (*baiguan* 稗官) as a kind of sociological report, according to the *Yiwenzhi* 藝文志 of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (ch. 30), its designation by the later nomenclature of "unofficial or fragmented history" (*yeshi* 野史 or *baishi* 稗史) points already to the unmistakable supremacy of the original model and the deviant nature of its imitator. If Hayden White finds all history to be fictional,[75] Chinese fiction is highly historical. It is the unrivalled importance of historical discourse that lends cogency to a modern scholar's claim: "the world implied in the bulk of classical Chinese fiction is one in which everything 'means' as long as it is related to a historical context. The problem of anachronism in language, costuming, manners and morals, and so forth, though frequently occurring in the narrative of Chinese fiction, is seldom taken seriously by the writer/storyteller and his reader, because more often than not historical data serve mainly as a reminder alerting readers to some a-temporal

[74] Thus Andrew H. Plaks, in "Towards A Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative," wrote, "[A]ny theoretical inquiry into the nature of Chinese narrative must take its starting point in the acknowledgement of the immense importance of historiography and, in a certain sense, 'historicism' in the total aggregate of the culture. In fact, the question of how to define the narrative category in Chinese literature eventually boils down to whether or not there did exist within the traditional civilization a sense of the inherent commensurability of its two major forms: historiography and fiction." (Plaks, 1977, 311)
[75] White, 1978, 107.

significance of moral mechanism, thereby highlighting a fundamental premise of classical Chinese historiography."[76]

Considering the theoretical discussion of the notion of liminality, I would like to claim that *zhiguai* is in the space betwixt and between history and fiction, both of which are idealized impossibilities either per Hayden White's notion of history or Chinese notion of fiction. Neither private historiography nor classical tale perfectly categorizes the *zhiguai* texts. They may be historical recordings of the strange but simultaneously are also intended for entertainment purposes. They may not happen in a fictional framework as in vernacular stories but setting is also not quite the same as ours. This liminality is not only applicable to genre studies of *zhiguai*, but also to its content.

2. Natural vs. Supernatural[77]

The content of *zhiguai* is very difficult to delineate. The themes could vary from sober reports of drought and misrule, to accounts of foxes transformed into human form, a tribe whose heads could take independent flight at night, and encounters with the dead. Natural disasters in *zhiguai* are actually supernatural since they are visitations and prodigies, which are reprimands or warnings from the Heaven. Supernatural encounters

[76] Wang, 1985, 65-66.

[77] Although it is understood that the term "supernatural" as deriving from Western concepts of the "natural" could not be applied without qualification to the Chinese context, the term is used here to denote categorically that which relates to the otherworldly realm. The Chinese have numerous terms for what is considered to be "supernatural." To focus particular attention on the *guai*, the strange, is appropriate because *guai* is both a category of spiritual beings and denotes uncanny phenomena not explicable with reference to natural laws. I prefer the term "supernatural," because it covers the entire subject of otherworldly activities and phenomena as they figured in the premodern elite discourse. For a discussion of the origins and development of the term "supernatural," see Saler, 1977, 31-53.

with ghosts and spirits are indeed natural when they are presented as historical recordings. Here, the modern dichotomy between the natural and supernatural stumbles in its approach to *zhiguai*.

Tzvetan Todorov's schema – the marvelous, the fantastic, and the uncanny – is problematic because, as mentioned above, what is real to us might not be real to others, and vice versa. Therefore, it might be a better strategy to return to premodern Chinese categories to explain the anomalies in *zhiguai*. Judith T. Zeitlin found three Chinese characters that were used by Chinese literati to denote the anomalies that *zhiguai* describes. They are, respectively, "*yi*" (異 different), "*guai*" (怪 anomalous) and "*qi*" (奇 marvelous). They form a hermeneutical circle in that they are similar in meaning and are often to define one another, but fortunately, the semantic ranges and connotations of each character are not completely identical. Of the three, "*yi*" is the broadest in range and most flexible in usage. Its primary meaning is "difference" or "to differentiate," with the consequent implications of extraordinary, outstanding, foreign, heterodox, eccentric – whatever differs from the norm. "*Guai*" has the narrowest span of meanings – weird, uncanny, freakish, abnormal, and unfathomable -- and carries the most pejorative flavor. "*Qi*" has enjoyed the most constituent history as a term of aesthetic appraisal, covers the area of rare, original, fantastic, amazing and odd. It might be more helpful to think of each of these three terms in conjunction with its most frequent polar opposites: *yi*/*tong* (

异同 different/same), *guai*/*chang* (怪常 aberrant/normative), *qi*/*zheng* (奇正 exceptional/canonical).[78]

From Zeitlin's explanation of the three Chinese categories, it seems that the content of *zhiguai* is whatever goes in the opposite direction of the norm. The categories of the natural and supernatural never appears in the consideration of Chinese literati's understanding of the anomaly. As Wai-yee Li has argued, the presence of what we consider as supernatural elements doe not ultimately determine the status of a narrative as fiction or history in Chinese literature.[79] Robert F. Campany proposes the anomaly in the *zhiguai* as whatever arouses amazement by being anomalous with respect to a writer's or reader's expectations.[80] Although his study hinges on the argument of the anomalous as a cultural rather than natural category, it still begs the question: what are *zhiguai* writer's or reader's expectations?

I would like to propose that *zhiguai* is supernatural in the sense it involves the other-world(s), be it Buddhist, Daoist or vernacular, but natural in the sense that that what happens in the storytelling – such as retribution and metamorphosis – accords with what Needham has termed "organic naturalism" in Chinese philosophy,[81] that is, by the attempt to correlate or align the affairs and culture of the human world with the dyadic principles of yin and yang and the posited elemental forces, powers, or "phasal energetics" (*wuxing*

[78] Zeitlin, 1993, 6.
[79] Li, 1987, 9.
[80] Campany, 1996, 232-5.
[81] Rubin, 1976, 95-104; Schwartz, 1985, 350-82.

wude 五行五德) of earth, wood, mental, fire, and water. The supernatural, therefore, is moralized, and naturalized.

3. Belief vs. Disbelief

Considering *zhiguai* as lodged somewhere in betwixt and between of history and fiction, and anomalies that it describes as beyond the realms of the natural and supernatural, *zhiguai* demands a very unique form of "faith" from its writers and readers. Current scholarship on *zhiguai* in religious studies has viewed the literature as a vehicle for religious persuasion. Robert F. Campany has detected several perspectives in the *zhiguai* discourse of the so-called "strange persuasions," covering *fangshi* (方士 master of esoterica), *tianren* (天人 correspondence between Heaven and Humanity), Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian perspectives.[82] This way of analysis is helpful to understand the development of different schools of thoughts in the formative period of Chinese religions, but does the "strange persuasions" have a coherent agenda of its own?

According to Leo Tak-hung Chan's understanding, *zhiguai* writers "tell stories either to provide empirical confirmation of their belief or to persuade disbelievers of the reality of the supernatural."[83] In short, according to Leo Chan, the coherent message -- whether Confucian, Buddhist or Daoist -- is the existence of spirits. Yet one story in the *Soushen ji* (搜神記 *In Search of the Supernatural: A Written Record*), favored by the PRC, belies the statement:

> Zhang Zhu from Nandun was in his field planting corps when he came upon a plum pit he wanted to save. He looked about and spied a mulberry

[82] Campany, 1996, 273-363.
[83] Chan, 1998, 78.

> tree with a hollow hold in which some earth had collected, and he put the plum pit there. He emptied his water-bottle on it as well.
>
> Afterward, people saw a mulberry tree unexpectedly bearing plums and remarked to each other about it. One day someone with a painful eye disease rested in the shade of that tree and cried out, "Oh, Lord of the Plums, make my eyes better, and I will sacrifice a shoat to you in gratitude." His eye trouble was actually a minor disorder and later cleared up by itself.
>
> However, as with dogs barking, each person excited another with the story of the blind having sight restored, until there were often thousands of horses and carriages about the tree, and wine and meat sacrifices rained down on it.
>
> A little more than a year later Zhang Zhu returned from a distant journey and witnessed all this. Startled, he cried, "There is no deity here," said he, "I planted this myself!" Thereupon he cut the tree down.[84]
>
> 南頓張助，于田中種禾，見李核，欲持去，顧見空桑，中有土，因植種，以余漿溉灌。後人見桑中反复生李，轉相告語，有病目痛者，息蔭下，言："李君令我目愈，謝以一豚。"目痛小疾，亦行自愈。衆犬吠聲，盲者得視，遠近翕赫，其下車騎常數千百。酒肉滂沱。間一歲余，張助遠出來還，見之，驚云："此有何神，乃我所種耳。"因就斫之。

The story is of course not advocating the existence of spirits. It is, instead, banishing superstitions, but there are also many other stories in the *Soushen ji*, verifying the reality of the otherworld through empirical evidences. Then the question is: what is the authorial/editorial position in the *zhiguai* literature? In other words, are the authors/compilers themselves believers or skeptics of the "strange persuasions"?

To answer this question, we need to go back to the notion of history or historian in the *zhiguai* tradition. In the preface to *Soushen ji*, Gan Bao 干寶 labels himself as the "Dong Hu [a well-known historian from antiquity] for the ghosts" (鬼之董狐 *gui zhi*

[84] See *Soushen ji*, 5:100. Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J.I. Crump, Jr., trans. *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 60.

Donghu). Similarly, Pu Songling 蒲松齡 gives himself the epithet, "Historian of the Strange" (異史氏 *yishi shi*), which is clearly reminiscent of Sima Qian 司馬遷, the Grand Historian (太史公 *taishi gong*). Scholars have taken them as evidence to argue that the writers of *zhiguai* are believers who endeavor to record the anomalous as history.[85] However, as we have already demonstrated, *zhiguai* is neither history nor fiction. *Zhiguai* writers do not necessarily believe in all the stories that they collected. Gao Bao's preface to the *Soushen ji* is simply a justification of his interest in the strange. The thrust of his argument is that since historical accounts of events are not eye-witness reports, departures from actuality beset all history-writing. Here are two underlying messages: firstly, no one could criticize his piece of work for exaggerating or fabricating the events that he reports. Secondly, more pertinent to our current discussion, Gao Bao acknowledges that his own *Soushen ji*, as a history of the strange, inevitably shares the departures from actuality as all history-writing does.

Furthermore, the idea of belief per se is ambiguously figured. The idea of "in-between believing" has recently been taken up by philosophers of mind like Eric Schwitzgebel, who makes "the case that philosophers and cognitive scientists interested in belief would profit greatly from an account of belief that allows us to talk intelligently about such in-between states of believing."[86] In twenty-first-century American culture, we can clearly observe in-betweenness in the way, for example, the question of whether one believes in ghosts or UFOs or Bigfoot often elicits an answer more complex than a

[85] Campany, 1996, 149 & 158.
[86] Schwitzgebel, 2001, 76-82.

simple affirmative or negative. A person may refuse to profess certainty about something but also refuse to deny its possibility. Zhiguai may function through the ironic imagination, a concept that helps us think about, for example, the fact that enthusiasts of Sherlock Holmes are aware of his fictionality but persist in treating him as a real person – even to the point of publishing biographies. "Enchantment," the cultural historian Michael Saler explains, "are enjoyed as constructs in which one can become immersed but not submerged. Rationalist skepticism is held in abeyance, yet complete belief is undercut by an ironic awareness that one is holding skepticism at bay."[87] This is indeed reminiscent of Yuan Mei's preface to his *zhiguai* collection:

> I have few hobbies, and am not at all good at drinking, song-composition, gambling, or other similar social activities. Besides my studies in literature and history I have no other entertainments but collecting stories that delight the heart and shock the ear. These tall tales are to be taken as tall tales and are preserved for the record, not because I believe them. A comparison may be made to a culinary connoisseur who, having been fed up with all "the eight delicacies," would have a dull palate if he does not broaden his taste to include ant egg sauce and picked sunflower. Another comparison is a musical connoisseur who, having become thoroughly familiar with the classical hymns of *xian* and *shao*, would have very limited knowledge in music if he does not bother to listen to barbaric folk songs. To dispel mediocrity with boldness, and to transcend inertia with horror – are not these things as enjoyable as chess and gambling? The virtue of writing and reading these stories may even be compared to Pi Chen contemplating political strategies on pleasure outings.
>
> 余生平寡嗜好，凡飲酒、度曲、搰蒲，可以接群居之歡者，一无能焉，文史外无以自娛，乃广采游心駭耳之事，妄言妄听，記而存之，非有所惑也。譬如嗜味者餍八珍矣，而不广尝夫蚳醢葵菹则脾困；嗜音者备《咸》、《韶》矣，而不旁及于侏离僸末则耳狹。以妄驱庸，以骇起惰，不有博弈者乎？为之犹贤，是亦裨谌适野之一乐也。[88]

[87] Saler, 2003, 599-622.
[88] Yuan, 1987, 1-2. Translated by Chan (Chan, 1998, 25).

To sum up, the *zhiguai* literature, basing on its liminal status between history and fiction, between natural and supernatural, does not demand either belief or disbelief from its writers and readers. The whole tradition of the debate between believers and skeptics that Leo Tak-hung Chan traces in his *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*[89] is literati's concern over local cults, rather than *zhiguai* literature. Unlike the Christian gospels, Buddhist hagiographies or Daoist scripture, it is not necessarily a vehicle for religious persuasion, as Robert F. Campany has argued.[90] It is also not a form of imaginative literature, whose actuality can be completely dismissed. It is a record of subjective experiences, which sometimes serves as topics for local gossip, and invokes a more playful and ambiguous attitude that is contained in the dichotomy of either belief or disbelief.

II. This-world and Other-world(s): What Is *Zhiguai*

Pursuing a similar aim to pin down historical reality through *zhiguai*, some scholars read them as written products of casual storytelling, in opposite to professional storytelling, which is understood to have given rise to vernacular fiction in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This section introduces the study of storytelling in late imperial China, and situates *zhiguai* against the general framework, so as to examine the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

In literary and folklore studies, the oral fiction narrated by professional storytellers in traditional china has recently won a well-deserved recognition. Often

[89] Chan, "Questions of Belief and Disbelief," 1998, 77-110.
[90] Campany, "Strange Persuasions," 1996, 273-263.

called *shuoshu* (說書 book-telling), such narration has formed a continuous tradition lasting until the present day. Its beginnings can be traced to times as old as the Zhou Dynasty, although clear written references to the activities of the professional artists are found only from Tang times. In the opinion of an overwhelming number of literary scholars, such storytelling activity strongly influenced the vernacular fiction that flourished in the late Ming, since writers borrowed freely from both the form and content of the oral tales. However, it has also been recognized that an alternative tradition of casual storytelling exists, a tradition to which classical literary tales (*wenyan* 文言 tales: tales written in the classical language) were indebted. Thus Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202), one of the masters of the *wenyan* tale, mentions in his *Yijian zhi* (夷堅志 *Records of Yijian*) that his stories originated in a variety of contexts, including occasions of amateur (as opposed to professional) storytelling.

Patrick Hanan, author of a distinguished study of the vernacular short stories from the twelfth to the seventieth century, remains one of the few critics to stress the importance of this "casual fiction" and note its impact on the development of Chinese narrative. Jaroslav Prusek, another acknowledged authority on the vernacular short story in China, makes brief reference to the two kinds of oral storytelling in traditional China; in his opinion the "professional" tales gave rise to an "epic folk literature," while the casual tales contributed to an "upper class folklore" recorded in miscellaneous writings and anecdotal literature. His bias, however, is reflected in his decision to regard only the former as "true" folklore, and to devote the main portion of his scholarly work to elaborating on the contributions of professional storytellers to the narrative tradition.

Such privileging of professional storytelling helps explain why certain literary historians have paid little attention to classical literary tales, which are regarded, at best, as sources for the vernacular story. Some scholars even argue that the storytellers' tales exerted a pervasive influence on every variety of Chinese fiction in traditional times, including the full-length novel of the later imperial ear. Andrew H. Plaks has taken such scholars to task, critiquing the simplistic view that Ming novels are nothing more than accretions of popular lore. It is high time that we reside the intricate relationship between *wenyan* (literary language) narratives and *baihua* (vernacular language) narratives, as well the link of both forms to oral storytelling traditions, casual and professional.

Leo Tak-hung Chan, influenced by communication theory – gossip study in particular, have adopted a utilitarian approach to zhiguai, and insists that they serve special fucntioncs related to the particular circumstances of its telling, political, moral-didactic, or psychological. He takes literally the convention of framing zhiguai as the actual experience of the narrator, of an acquiatance, or of an acquitance of an acquaintance, and argues that they insist on the reliability or authenticity of their stories, and it is not feasible that such statements are no more feasible that such statement are no more than excuses for fictionalizing, or that everybody is simply playing along. It does fill the blank in the scholarship of storytelling, and connects the relationship between professional storytelling generated among the lower classes and vernacular short stories, and between casual storytelling among the upper class and wenyan tales. It also brings a highly instructive perception that the zhiguai collectors are simultaneously the tellers and the listeners. Yet, such an approach (1) takes the framing conventions too literally, (2)

takes zhiguai as individual pieces as vehicles for expressing the unexpressable on an individual level (3) does not shed any light on our current project to explain why it is the strange that interests the literati more than any other gossip.

Ever since Mencius divided mankind into the rulers and the ruled, the feeders and the fed, analysts of Chinese society have delighted in the use of paired antithetical categories. Matching concepts – such as north and south, center and provinces, city and countryside, aristocrats and bureaucrats, elite culture and popular culture, so on and so forth – lurk beneath the routine discourses of Chinese Studies, *zhiguai* studies included of course. This section explores another set of concepts – this-world and other-world(s)[91] –

[91] For the concepts of this-world and other-world(s), I am indebted to the works of Karl S. Y. Kao and Glen Dudbridge, as well as Ying-Shih Yü and Joseph Needham. Kao first used the terms – "inner story" (private experience) and "outer story" (public observation) – to analyze a story in his "Introduction" to *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic* (Kao, 1985, 32), but they only function as a paragraphing device that is not contributive to a critical reading of *zhiguai*. Dudbridge – ultimately a historian of religions, rather than a literary critic – explored the different levels of externality in distinguishing inner story from outer story, and redefined the former as reported public experience and the latter as the context of the reporting in order to pin down local cults through *zhiguai* tales (Dudbridge, 2005, 113-133; 1995, 1-17; 1990, 27-49). In addition to using the concept as a structural device as Kao did, I also adopt them on the level of narrative ontology. Therefore, I modify "inner story" and "outer story" to "this-world" and "other-world(s)," for they represent the religious worldviews of *zhiguai* tales. My focus, furthermore, is on the interaction between the two worlds, a point unmentioned in both Kao and Dudbridge. The separated but interactive nature of the relationship between this-world and other-world(s) in *zhiguai* tales is also illustrated in the argument between Ying-shih Yü and Joseph Needham. Needham took issue with the distinction between "this-worldly" and "otherworldly" modes of immortality that Yü proposed in "Life and Immortality in the Mind of Han Chinese" (Yü, 1965), and argued, "there was no such thing as an 'other world' in ancient Chinese thought at all… all was natural and within Nature" in pre-Buddhist China (Needham, 1974, 98, note C). I think it is definitely an overstatement to suggest that there is no "other world" and no heaven or hell, but it is true that comparing with the conceptions of different peoples (Indo-Iranian, Christian, Islamic, etc), the contrast between "this-world" and "other- world(s)" was not as sharp,

in the analysis of *zhiguai* tales. I argue that it is not only a pair of antitheses as many *zhiguai* protagonists proclaim, but also forms a dialectical synthesis on both the structural and ontological levels. Most pertinently to my project, it is exactly the synthesis – the traffic between the this-world and other-world(s) – that generates the strange (*guai*) as a psychological effect and cultural phenomenon, which can be applied cross-historically (Chapter 4) and cross-culturally (Chapter 5) and further defines *zhiguai* as a genre and distinguishes it from other types of tales that involve the supernatural and/or the fantastic.

1. Narrative Ontology

The dualism between this-world and other-world(s) is easier to define when one of them can be pinned down before the other, at least for the sake of convenience. If we define this-world as a mode of quotidian existence shared among us –modern readers, *zhiguai* collectors and their informants, as well as the non-participating characters in the *zhiguai* tales, the other-world(s) is anything beyond it. It is not a singular ideological or cosmological mode that can be labeled as Confucian, Buddhist, or Daoist as Campany has attempted,[92] but a miscellaneous collection of rarities and oddities[93] that are improbable, if not impossible, in our mundane experience. Furthermore, the various

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and the frequent interaction between the two in *zhiguai* tales makes the demarcation even more blurry.

[92] Campany, 1996, 273-363.

[93] I borrow the term "rarities and oddities" from Kenneth DeWoskin and J. I. Crump in their introduction to the translation of *Soushen ji*, where they explained the peak of *zhiguai* development in Medieval China in an intriguing but highly instructive fashion: "At the zenith of that powerful dynasty [Han], rulers like the emperor Wu brought inhabitants, creatures, and goods representative of the mighty and cosmopolitan Han empire to his capital and confined them in his palaces and parks: after the collapse it was as though all these rarities and oddities had escaped from the emperor's great amusement parks and suddenly become factors in Chinese *Realpolitik*." (DeWoskin and Crump, 1996, xxiii)

worlds of the Other are deeply intertwined, or of a kind, in many zhiguai tales by virtue of their shared non-human nature.[94]

If we situate this mode of analysis against traditional Chinese framework, as in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, we can see that our conventionally accepted *zhiguai* tales concentrate heavily in sections headed "Ghosts" (*gui* 鬼),[95] "Return to life" (*zaisheng* 再生),[96] "Karmic retribution" (*baoying* 報應),[97] "Gods" (*shen* 神),[98] and "Dreams" (*meng* 夢).[99] Substantial groups of stories also appear under "Foxes," "Tigers," and "Snakes."[100] They scatter more thinly through such categories as "Divine Immortals" (*shenxian* 神仙),

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[94] The inter-connectedness of the different worlds of the Other can be illustrated through many *zhiguai* tales. For example, in "Nanke Taishou zhuan" 南柯太守傳 by Li Gongzuo 李公佐(c. 770 – c. 848), Chunyu Fen 淳于棼, the protagonist in a drunken dream enters a parallel world of anthropomorphized ants and lives an entire lifetime within a *huai* 槐 tree. Upon his exit from this extraordinary experience, he discovers his other-worldly lifetime has been nothing but a dream, but that it has been, at the same time, tangibly real. What is always missing in the criticism of the famous story is that the protagonist is able to communicate with his dead father through letters when he is the world of ants. Sarah M. Allen mentions a story that makes a clear connection between the world of the foxes and the world of the dead – when visiting with the transformed foxes, a scholar meets up with his dead brother-in-law (Allen, 2003, 264). One can recall many *zhiguai* tales that situate the encounter with the world of animals (foxes in particular) in human graves.

[95] These stories deal chiefly with dead people in communication with the living world: possessions, hauntings by spirits bearing some grudge, matings with the female dead, activity by men freshly laid in their coffin, underworld office holders and the like.

[96] They deal mostly with premature summons to the underworld, where varied adventures end with permission to return among the living.

[97] They deal almost exclusively with the fruits of *sūtra* piety: devout recitation of certain Buddhist texts, particularly the *Vajracchedikā*, earns merit and brings benefits in this world and the next.

[98] They deal mostly with temple cults dedicated to famous mountains.

[99] This group includes omens, warnings, premonitions, and cures, but also communications from the dead and abortive descents to the underworld.

[100] These are stories of afflictions, possessions or transformations, drawing humans into relation with the animal world.

"Female Immortals," "Yakṣas," "Demons" (*yaoguai* 妖怪 and *jingguai* 精怪), "Mounds and tombs," "Thunders," "Treasures," ""Plants," "Birds," "Watery tribe" (*shuizu* 水族).[101] Many stories could be moved about among these overlapping categories, and indeed some appear twice in different places. On the other hand, the large number and wide range of categories in *Taiping guangji* carry nothing at all from *zhiguai* works. Chapters 164-217 of that collection explore secular human characteristics and activities – remonstrance, avarice, chivalry, percipience, precocity, as well as institutional matters such as imperial examinations, official positions, military command and the marks of elite culture – essay writing, music, calligraphy, painting, divination. No *zhiguai* tale shows up there, nor does it in later sections on food and drink, friendship, extravagance, deceit, flattery, humor and cruelty, women and servants. Therefore, the separation between the *zhiren* and *zhiguai* traditions proposed Lu Xun[102] is not an anachronistic imposition, but has a long tradition. The broad implication is clear: *zhiguai* compilers paid little direct attention to the affairs limited in secular society – this-world. Their interest lay rather in its contact with presences beyond normal secular consciousness – the other-world(s).

Drawing upon a proverbial saying from many *zhiguai* works, we can propose an even simpler scheme than those discussed above: a single great division between this

[101] Crude as it might seem, the framework adopted by *Taiping guangji* reflects the miscellaneous nature of the other-world(s). It is interesting, however, to see its similarities to the taxonomy of the Borgesian encyclopedia that Foucault cites at the Preface to his *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1994, xv).
[102] Lu, 1925.

world and other-world(s),[103] each unfolding its own mass of complexity. Although the sayings have a proverbial, formulaic character, they represent more than a literary mannerism. It has good claim to stay at the center of our thoughts as we read *zhiguai* tales: it speaks out repeatedly through the mouths of the *zhiguai* participants themselves, the only general theoretical principle to find expression there. Time and again they appeal to a saying which in various forms defines and limits their situation: "Men and spirits go different ways" (*renshen daoshu* 人神道殊); "men and ghosts go different roads" (*rengui lushu* 人鬼路殊); "shade and brightness are separate in principle" (*youming lishu* 幽明理殊); "the shady path is beyond reach" (*youtu buda* 幽途不達).

These loud proclamations about the difference between this-world and other-world(s) show up two paradoxical dynamics running through all *zhiguai* stories. First, as Anthony C. Yu has noted, "the variegated experiences of the world of light are transplanted wholesale into the world of darkness,"[104] considering the tales of drunkard ghosts, jealous wives and concubines, corrupt officials, ghosts desperate to pass civil service examinations, and incorrigible gamblers whose legal problems endure even in hell. Secondly, while those proverbial sayings affirm a solid, stable separation of this-world and other-world(s), they come up precisely when the two worlds have abnormal

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[103] Glen Dudbridge refers to them as "a seen world and an unseen world," which I do not think fits *zhiguai*, because the visuality of the demonstrations from the Chinese other-world(s) – ghosts, gods or demons -- is a very important feature. See Dudbridge, 1995, 48.

[104] Yu, 1987, 432. Yu refers to them as "world of light" and "world of darkness" as equivalents to the Chinese *youming* 幽明 dualism, but he deals primarily with ghost stories, while *zhiguai* convers a wider range including contacts with spirits and deities, which is not necessarily "dark."

traffic together. They are heard at moments of first contact across the great divide, testing the possibility of the traffic to follow, or at moments of parting, when contact across the divide comes to a necessary end; they remind the *zhiguai* participants that physical contact across the divide is restricted or prescribe conditions of physical separation once contact is established; they express regret that contact across the divide is so hard to achieve to give reassurance that bonds in this world carry no force in the other. Many stories analyzed in this section show how practices and institutions set up to regulate contacts with the other-world(s) – funeral rites, temple cults, prescribed acts of piety – fail to control irregular outbursts and interventions striking through directly at vulnerable human beings without routine mediation. This-world needs and seeks an ordered relationship with the other-world(s): when the relationship runs out of control, society's members appeal to that order and strive to restore it. Proverbial sayings on the theme of "different paths" are a sign of this mechanism at work. But their appearance in *zhiguai* also confirms that zhiguai compilers' characteristic interest lies in irregularity and disorder, as demonstrated in the abnormal traffic between this-world and other-world(s).

2. Narrative Structure

Following a discussion of the existence of the dualism between this-world and other-world(s) on the level of narrative ontology in *zhiguai* tales, this section is going to adopt the dualism as an analytical device into the narrative structure. Other-world(s) is where we can locate the private and subjective experience of an individual who embarks on, or is caught up in, an adventure on the other side – whether a visit to the underworld, an encounter with a demon, or as here a meeting with a known goddess. It is often

characterized as a dream, trance or vision of a kind that separates the subject from his surroundings. It sometimes has picturesque otherworldly details that no doubt formed the main point of interest for early raconteurs, collectors and casual readers. This-world represents what we would ourselves have seen and heard if we had been present on the scene – or more exactly, what would be reported to us by spectators, whether friends, family, neighbors or general public. It is of course inherent in the situation that onlookers of that historical period, their minds equipped since childhood with a characteristic religious culture, would perceive and report events in their own way. This has the effect of refocusing, but not really neutralizing, the narrative's historical value: it becomes like the value we attach to oral history, which lies not in any documentary precision, but much more in registering an authentic sense of how events in the past were perceived by those who took part in them. I begin with a story about an amorous ghost in the *Soushen ji* (see Appendix I).

The temporal and spatial settings of this-world and other-world(s) in the story seems to be the same, but "this-world" of the story is set explicitly in a "historical background" in the reign of Fu Chai, the King of Wu (495-473 BC), while the plot is marked by a movement from "this-world" to the "other-world" in Purple Jade's tomb. Participants in the other-world include the commutual pair, of which the one from the "other-world" is a female (*yin* element) who also acts as an agent in taking the initiative to bring about the supernatural union. Her presentation of the gift of a pearl seems to make her a benefactor, but seen from the logic of the events, the gift is to serve as the *connector* to this-world; it is not as a *consequence* of the union that Han Chong is given

the pearl. Besides the main characters, another participant of significance is the king, who, in obstructing the marriage, is an obstacle that blocks the way for a normal consummation of love (thereby driving the couple to seek consummation in an abnormal manner). This is a role commonly featured in this type of story. Han Chong's parents, on the other hand, are atypical in their mediation for the relationship and need not receive role assignment. The story with the other-world ends n a typical return of the male human character to this-world of men after a brief sojourn in the other-world of the dead, bringing back with him "evidence" (the gift) of his unusual experience.

From the perspective of this-world, which puts the necromantic story in a new context, the king and the lovers can be construed on the surface as representing two sets of characters pitted against each other in an antagonistic relationship. This is not because the king is the cause of his daughter's death, but because his belief is in conflict with that represented by the young lovers in the experience of their union. The events on this level are related in a competitive manner as a conflict of beliefs regarding matters of the supernatural which ends in the conversation (defeat) of the king by the supernatural "evidence" – the manifestation of Purple Jade's spirit and her account of the marriage inside the tomb. That is to say, besides the restoration of human order, there is a change of the state of affairs in terms of the altered attitude toward the supernatural. Such a change of attitude (from disbelief to belief of the supernatural) is typical of this kind of necromantic *guai*. This story is also an apt example of *zhiguai* presented as "data" gathered in support of the reality of the spirits. It uses a "testimonial structure" in its presentation of the necromantic marriage (other-world) as a fact; its facticity is then

brought to confront the non-believer and presumably effects a conversion at the end (in this-world). In this sense, the story already shows a simple but subtle processing of the material on the structural level.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stranger than the Strange
A Case Study of *Zhiguai*

> On the distant mountain of Guyi a numinous man dwells. His skin and flesh are like ice and snow. He is gentle as a virgin. He does not eat the five grains but rather sucks wind and drinks dew. He rides the pneumas of clouds and mounts dragons, roaming beyond the four seas. When the spirits in him congeal, this causes creatures to be free from plagues and the year's grain crops to ripen.
>
> 藐姑射之山，有神人居焉。肌膚若冰雪，淖約若處子。不食五穀，吸風飲露。乘雲氣，禦飛龍，而遊乎四海之外。其神凝，使物不疵癘而年穀熟。
>
> *Zhuangzi* 1.5[105]

Zhiguai, as has been said of the "monster" in the West, is "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place."[106] By unpacking a zhiguai text, we can not only understand the epistemology of the strangeness, but we can also uncover the hidden philosophies and unconscious ideologies that circumscribe a category of strange things. What is made especially strange tends to be differences in terms of culture, politics, race, and gender. This chapter provides a close reading of the *Shenxian zhuan* (神仙傳 *Traditions of Divine Transcendents*), examines how women in the 4th century China were portrayed in the *zhiguai* work, and therefore uncovers the way *zhiguai* is folded into everyday life experiences.

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[105] Graham, A. C., trans. *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book of Chuang-tzu*. London: Allen &Unwin, 1981. 46.
[106] Cohen, 1996, 4.

The epigraph from the first chapter of *Zhuangzi* is one of the earliest depictions of transcendents, in which they are invariably portrayed as anomalous, only partially human, sometimes theriomorphic beings who flit about in the air or dwell on distant mountains or isles. With what Ying-shih Yu terms as the "worldly transformation" of *xian*-immortality,[107] transcendents in third- and early-fourth-century China came down from the skies and mountains and became ambient in the social world. *Shenxian zhuan* (神仙傳 *Traditions of Divine Transcendents*) by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343), culminating the transformation, bears abundant witness to the tension between Daoist adepts' self-cultivation and their relationship with family, community and polity in early medieval China.

Scholars have done extensive research in the *shenxian* tradition, but attention has rarely been paid to the description of female transcendents' social interactions in comparison with those of their male counterparts. This paper, therefore, intends to speculate about gender differences in the paths to transcendence through a reconstruction of doctrines, interactions, and imageries of transcendence-seekers in the *Shenxian zhuan*. It begins with an exploration into the religious thoughts and principles of the *shenxian* tradition, then discusses the social dimension of the quest for transcendence, and ends with a study of the portrayal of adepts' post-ascension appearance of eternal youth. It argues that despite the tone of gender egalitarianism of the *shenxian* tradition, the power of female adepts in *Shenxian zhuan* is largely contained by the *nei-wai* spatial ideology. Even those who successfully break the boundary of their inner chambers, fall into another

[107] Yu, 1964-1965, 80-122.

trap of the eroticization of their images in male fantasy. Through the study of this collection of hagiographies, which is both descriptive and prescriptive in nature, I am hoping my work can shed some light onto our understanding of female transcendence-seekers in the formative period of Chinese religions.

Although there are different versions of *Shenxian zhuan*, I will be using the *Guang Han Wei congshu* 廣漢魏叢書 as my primary text, supplemented by critical notes on the difference between this and the version included in the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 collection. Unless otherwise noted, all of the English translations are taken from Robert Ford Campany's carefully annoted translation of the *Shenxian zhuan*, included in his book, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*. The six hagiographies with female transcendents as protagonists in *Shenxian zhuan* are included in the appendices at the end of the paper.

I. Ge Hong and the *Shenxian zhuan*

The *Shenxian zhuan,* in its original form, is the work of the aristocratic scholar-official and religious practitioner Ge Hong (283-343), member of an important clan in the southeastern state of Wu. He also wrote a series of polemical essays arguing for the efficacy and to some extent explaining principles and procedures of a wide range of longevity and immorality techniques practiced down to his time, which were collectively titled *Baopuzi neipian* (抱樸子內篇 *Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity*). Ge Hong started his own quest for transcendence at the age of fourteen or fifteen, when he entered the tutelage of Zheng Yin 鄭隱, a formidable classical scholar

who also commanded an array of esoteric techniques. After years of collecting materials from such sources as "scriptures on transcendence and books of dietetic methods (仙經服食方 *xianjing fushi fang*), books of the hundred lineages (百家之書 *baijia zhi shu*), the discourse of [his] former teacher (先師之說 *xianshi zhi shuo*), and things discussed by seasoned scholars (耆儒所論 *qiru suo lun*),"[108] he completed the *Shenxian zhuan* and the *Baopuzi neipian* by 317. In the last years of his life, Ge Hong, in a manner much like the adepts whose biographies he himself recorded, declined a high position in the Jin administration, and set up residence on Mount Luofu 羅浮, where he remained in retirement for twelve years, purportedly engaged in self-cultivation, alchemical labors and some additional unspecified writing, before he "escaped by means of a simulated corpse" as recorded in his official biography in the *Book of Jin*.[109]

On the grounds of the booking-making process by which Ge Hong "transcribed and collected (抄集 *chaoji*)"[110] earlier texts and the fact that he himself was a serious seeker of religious transcendence, I take *Shenxian zhuan* as a collection of hagiographies designed to serve both a "model of" and "model for" religious life. Precisely because hagiography intends to "inspire belief, venerations, and perhaps emulation,"[111] the protagonists, as representing either extreme of the most admired and detested in society,

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[108] Campany, 2002, 102; 序言.
[109] For more information on Ge Hong, see Campany, 2005, 202-224; Campany, 2002, 13-17; as well as Sailey, Jay. *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity: A Study of the Philosopher Ko Hung, A.D. 283-343*. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center. Inc., 1978.
[110] Campany, 2002, 102; 序言.
[111] *Ibid*., 116.

may be interpreted as kind of "precipitate of the collective hopes and anxieties of an age."[112] My attempt to reconstruct the religious practices of female adepts in the *Shenxian zhuan* in the following pages is based on what we know and what we can speculate regarding the gender distinctions in the paths to transcendence in early medieval China.

II. Gender Egalitarianism in Doctrine

One of the most important features of Ge Hong's discourse is the contention that transcendence is not something absolutely unobtainable or unreachable to humans. Instead, everyone can become a transcendent and achieve a prolonged life. The egalitarianism of the *shenxian* tradition has its roots in the significance of the notion of *qi* (character? translation?) in the Chinese worldview, according to which all things are made of *qi*, exist in it, and share it. Despite the great range of qualities exhibited by *qi* in various forms, everything is consubstantial. There is no fundamental difference between transcendents and lesser beings. Thus even Lord Lao, an already deified god before and during Ge Hong's life-time,[113] is depicted in the *Shenxian zhuan* as an ordinary man who is particularly advanced in his attainment of the Dao.[114] Transcendents are not a special species. Simply by means of self-cultivation, any individual—regardless of class and

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[112] Tsai, 2008, 193.

[113] Kohn, 1998, 41-62.

[114] Campany, 2002, 196-197. "Laozi was someone who was indeed particularly advanced in his attainment of the Dao, but he was not of another kind of being than we… If you maintain that Laozi was someone who attained the Dao, then people will exert themselves to imitate him. If you maintain that he was a deity or numen, of a kind different from us, then his example is not one that can be emulated by practice." 老子蓋得道之猶精者，非異類也……若謂老子是得道者，則人必勉力競慕，若謂是神靈異類，則非可學也。（卷一）Even the adept whom Peng Zu holds up for emulation, Master Azure Essence, is "merely someone who has attained the Way, not a divine man." (Slightly modified from Campany, 2002, 176) 青精先生得道者耳，非仙人也。（卷一）

gender—can attain liberation from the this-worldly enslavement and enter the utopia of immortality. Even chickens and dogs could ascend to heaven in broad daylight.[115]

It is true that in order to reach their goal, adepts had to undertake various procedures, including dietary control, pneumatic exercise, meditation, and searching for elixir ingredients, which could have been an arduous task. Yet in the *Shenxian zhuan*, the difficult nature of the quest for transcendence is not particularly emphasized. Personal efforts are appreciated, yet not as much as good fortune—such as Wang Lie's discovery of "stony marrow" in an avalanche,[116] or Lü Gong's encounter with a transcendent who is willing to teach him simply because they share the same family name[117]—which is largely determined by one's bones and physiognomy (骨相 *guxiang*).[118] Cai Jing,[119] Liu Gen[120] and Yan Qing,[121] without any laborious efforts in cultivating esoteric arts or performing good deeds for their communities, receive the Way of Heaven merely

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[115] *Ibid*., 237-238. Legend has it that, as Liu An was in the process of departing as a transcendent, there was a bit of his medicinal compound left over in a basin in the court. His chickens and dogs pecked at or licked out the basin and they all flew upward as well." 時人傳八公安臨去時，餘藥器置在中庭，雞犬舐啄之，盡得升天。(卷四)

[116] *Ibid*., 338. "He suddenly heard an avalanche on the mountain's northeast side…he went to look…In the rock was a hole, about a foot square, from which green mud was running forth like bone marrow." 忽聞山東崩地……往視之……中有青泥流出如髓。（卷六）

[117] *Ibid*., 251. "Since you are of the same surname as I, sir, and since your style is half the same as mine, it must be that you are destined to meet with long life." 公既與我同姓，又字得吾半支，此是公命當應長生也。（卷六）

[118] Smith, 1991, 187-201.

[119] Campany, 2002, 260. "Cai Jing was only a peasant, but his bones and physiognomy indicated that he was fit for eventual transcendence. Wang Yuan realized this, and that is why he went to his home." 蔡經者，小民耳，而骨相當仙。遠知之，故住其家。（卷二）

[120] *Ibid*., 243. "You must have the bones of a transcendent; that is why you were able to see me." 汝有仙骨，故得見吾耳。(卷三)

[121] *Ibid*., 346. "Once he suddenly met a transcendent there who said to him, 'Judging by your bones and physiognomy, you are fit to become a transcendent.'" 忽遇仙人云：“汝骨相合仙。”(卷七)

because they have "immortal bones;" while on the other hand, Cheng Wei's quest for transcendence is permanently hindered because of deficiency of his physiognomic features.[122]

Even though it is said in the *Shenxian zhuan* that anyone who loves the Dao can attain it,[123] the path to transcendence actually is not open to everyone. Yet, the prerequisite for achieving immortality, *i.e.*, *guxiang*, is never gender-specific.[124] Men could be denied the access to salvation for their unfavorable bones and physiognomy or even a "perverse heart" in the case of Commander Chen,[125] while there are female adepts described in the *Shenxian zhuan* who follow the path of self-cultivation and ascend to heaven in broad daylight. There is not the slightest hint in the *shenxian* tradition that women are deprived of the possibility of transcendence merely because they are women. They are equally able to attain immortality and use the same methods. Zhuan He, the Woman of Grand Mystery, is even greatly lauded for her magical powers:

> After practicing the arts of Jade Master for years, she could enter water without getting wet. In the depths of winter, she could sit on ice for days wearing only a single garment, and her complexion would not change and her body warm. She could transport offices and palaces, towns and houses,

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[122] *Ibid*., 139. "Cheng Wei wanted to receive methods from her, but he never succeeded in doing so; she said that, according to his bones and physiognomy, he ought not to receive them." 偉欲從之受方，終不能得，云偉骨相不應得。(卷七)

[123] *Ibid*., 310. Witnessing the wonders performed by Huang Chuping, Chuqi asked, "If you've obtained divine powers like these, might I study them as well?" Chuping replied, "You need only love the Dao and you can obtain them." 初起曰："弟獨得仙道如此，吾可學乎？"初平曰："唯好道便可得知耳。"（卷二）

[124] For a whole list of conditions for achieving immortality, see Poo, 1995, 178-180.

[125] Campany, 2002, 263. "Wang told [Commander Chen] to stand facing the sun for a moment; while he did so, Want regarded him from behind. Then Wang pronounced: 'Whew! Your heart is perverse and not correct. You will never be able to be taught the Way of transcendence…'" 王曰："君且向日而立。"遠從後觀之，曰："噫！君心邪不正，終未可教以仙道。"（卷二）

and make them disappear simply by pointing her finger. By doing so, she could also open the locks of doors and windows, of caskets and closets. Mountains could be toppled, and trees could be broken in the same way; but when she pointed again, they would become as before. When she was traveling with her disciples in the mountain, at sunset she would knock a rock with her staff and there would appear a door. Inside there would be walls and ceiling, sheets and quilts, curtains and canopies, as well as food and beverage. She could always find this place of residence wherever she went. She could make small things as big as a house and big things as small as a prickle. She could spit flames out of her mouth upward toward the sky and put them off simply in a puff. She could sit in scorching fire, with neither her clothes nor her shoes singed by the flames. In an instant, she could transform herself into whatever she pleased, an old man, a young lad, or even a horse and a carriage. There was not sort of transformation she could not accomplish. Performing thirty-six arts effectively, she resuscitated the dead and saved innumerable lives. No one knew what she ingested, not did anyone receive her arts of transcendence. She reverted to a youthful appearance with pitch black temple hair and ascended to heaven in broad daylight.

行之累年，遂能入水不濡。盛雪寒時，單衣冰上，而顏色不變，身體溫煖，可至積日。又能徙官府宮殿城市屋宅於他處，視之無異，指之即失其所在。門戶櫝櫃有關鑰者，指之即開。指山山摧，指樹樹折，更指之，即複如故。將弟子行山間，日暮以杖叩石，即開門戶，入其中，屋宇床褥帷帳廩供酒食如常，雖行萬里，所在常而。能令小物忽大如屋，大物忽小如毫芒。或吐火張天，噓之即滅。又能坐炎火之中，衣履不燃。須臾之間，或化老翁，或為小兒，或為車馬，無所不為。行三十六術甚效，起死回生，救人無數。不知其何所服食，亦無得其術者。顏色益少，鬢髮如鴉，忽白日升天而去。

(Translation mine, 卷七)

This account presents the esoteric arts mastered by the Woman of Grand Mystery after following an immortal master and undergoing extensive training over several years. She is able to control her inner *qi* to the point of exerting total control over herself and her environment. Her magical powers are not inferior to those attained by the greatest male transcendents, such as the omnipotent Eight Sires:

> One of us can sit and summon wind and rain, stand and call up clouds and fog, draw on the ground to form rivers, and pile up soil to form mountains. One of us can topple mountains, plug up springs, tame tigers and leopards, summon dragons and krackens, and dispatch sprits and ghosts. One of us can divide himself into multiple bodies, alter his countenance, appear and disappear at will, conceal the six types of troops, and bring on darkness in broad daylight. One of us can ride in emptiness, pace the void, cross over the ocean waves, enter and exit where there is no open space, and go a thousand *li* in a single breath. One of us can enter fire without being burned, enter water without getting wet, take knife blows without being cut, get shot at without being pierced, not feel cold in the depths of winter and not sweat in the height of summer. One of us can transform himself in myriad ways, become whatever he pleases, turn into a bird, beast, plant, or tree in an instant, move all manner of creatures and land formations at will, and transport palaces and houses. One of us can quell fires, rescue others from danger, avoid all manner of calamities, extend his years, and lengthen his life span to reach long life. And one of us can decoct clay to form gold, distill lead to form mercury, refine the eight minerals, fly aloft with the "flowing pearl," ride dragons hitched to cloud-carriages, and drift and wander about in the Heaven of Grant Purity.
>
> 一人能坐致風雨，立起雲霧，劃地為江河，撮土為山嶽。一人能崩高山，塞深泉，收束虎豹，召至蛟龍，役使鬼神。一人能分形易貌，坐存立亡，隱蔽六軍，白日為暝。一人能乘雲步虛，越海淩波，出入無間，呼吸千里。一人能入火不灼，入水不濡，刃射不中，冬凍不寒，夏曝不汗。一人能千變萬化，恣意所為，禽獸草木，萬物立成，移山駐流，行宮易室。一人能煎泥成金，凝鉛為銀，水煉八石，飛騰流珠，乘雲駕龍，浮於太清之上。
>
> （Campany, 2002, 236-237; 卷四）

The types of esoteric arts that the Eight Sires are capable of encompass nearly all the wonders that a transcendent can perform. Yet the Woman of Grand Mystery masters them all. Moreover, her ascension to Heaven in broad daylight makes her a celestial transcendent, which is the highest level of attainment in the *shenxian* tradition.[126] Her

[126] Ware, 1966, 47-48. "According to scriptures on transcendence, superior practitioners who rise up in their bodies and ascend into the void are termed celestial transcendents (天仙 *tianxian*). Middle-level practitioners who wander among noted mountains are termed

hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan* is a strong representative of women's equal, if not superior, competence in the immortal arts.

Ge Hong's account of the Woman of Grand Mystery elaborates on the conditional egalitarianism of the *shenxian* tradition, according to which women, in their quest for transcendence, are as competent and equal to their male counterparts in potential, methods, powers, and levels of attainment. This does not mean, however, that there is no gender difference in the path to immortality. Suzanne Cahill, in her study of Daoist women in medieval China, perceptively notices the importance of gender distinctions reflected in the separate collection of women transcendents' hagiographies compiled by the Tang dynasty Du Guangting.[127] Similarly, in the case of *Shenxian zhuan*, the statistical fact—that only six out of a total of ninety-two hagiographies have female adepts as protagonists—deserves a more penetrating look, especially in relation to the transcendents' ties to the earthly world.

III. *Nei-wai* Restriction in Practice

Scholars of Daoism have discussed in great length the nature of the immortal. Their main efforts, however, have been concentrated on the explication of the physical nature of the immortals and their domains, the ways in which they are said to achieve immortality through special exercise and medicine, or the inner/outer-alchemical

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earthbound transcendents (地仙 *dixian*). Lesser practitioner who first 'die' and then slough off (先死後蛻 *xiansi houtui*) are termed 'escape-by-means-of-a-corpse-simulacrum transcendents." (屍解仙 *shijian xian*)."

[127] Cahill, 1990, 36.

experiments of Daoist devotees.[128] Yet in an attempt to establish a "sociology of esoteric culture" in religious studies,[129] scholars recently have been gradually shifting their focus to the social status of the immortals before they reach immorality, and to the social implications of their deeds after they reach immortality.[130] The sociological dimension of the quest for transcendence in early medieval China is, I believe, of great importance in the study of the *Shenxian zhuan* in that the collection of hagiographies represents the early medieval Chinese culmination of the "worldly transformation" of the *xian* ideal—from an individualized, otherworldly quest to one that is more congruent with social concerns.[131] This momentous change is reflected in Peng Zu's account of his expectations of transcendence:

> As for transcendents, there are some who ascend bodily into the clouds, flying without wings; there are some who ride cloud-chariots hitched to dragons, and arrive thus at the steps of heaven; there are some who transform into birds and beasts, and wander about in the azure clouds; and there are some who travel the rivers and seas underwater, or fly among noted mountains. Some eat primal pneuma, others roots, mushrooms and herbs; some come and go among humans, unrecognized as transcendents by them, others conceal themselves and are seen by no one. In their faces grow unusual bones structures, and on their bodies there is strange hair. Most of them prefer deep seclusion, having no intercourse with ordinary people. But although these sorts have deathless longevity, they absent themselves from human feelings and distance themselves from honor and pleasure. There is that in them which resembles a sparrow or a pheasant transmuting into a mollusk: they have lost their true identity, exchanging it for an alien pneuma. With my stupid heart I cannot bring myself to desire this. Those who have entered the Way should be able to eat tasty food, wear decent clothes, have sex, and hold office. Their bones and sinews

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[128] *E.g.* Kohn, Livia, ed. *Taosit Meditation and Longevity Techniques*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.
[129] See Tiryakian, Edward A., ed. *On the Margin of the Visible*. New York: Wiley, 1974,
[130] Cahill, 1990, 23-42; Campany, 2006, 291-336; Poo, 1995, 172-196; Tsai, 2008, 193-220.
[131] Yu, 1964-1965, 80-122.

> firm, their complexions smooth, they grown old but do not physically age; extending their years, they long remain in the world. Cold, heat, aridity, and humidity cannot injure them; ghosts, sprits, and sprites do not dare attack them. Neither weapons nor noxious creatures can approach them; anger, joy, failure, and fame cannot entangle them, yet it is they who are worthy of esteem.
> 仙人者，或竦身入雲，無翅而飛；或駕龍乘雲，上造天階；或化為鳥獸，游浮青雲；或潛行江海，口翔名山；或食元氣，或茹芝草；或出入人間而人不識，或隱其身而莫之見；面生異骨，體有奇毛；率好深僻，不交俗流。然此等雖有不死之壽，去人情，遠榮樂，有若雀化為蛤，雉化為蜃，失其本真，更守異氣。余之愚心未願此。已入道當食甘旨，服輕麗，通陰陽；處官秩耳，骨節堅強，顏色和澤，老而不衰，延年久視，長在世間；寒溫風濕不能傷，鬼神眾精莫敢犯，五兵白蟲不可近，嗔喜毀譽不為累，乃可為貴耳。
>
> (Campany, 2002, 176; 卷一)[132]

Given the significance of social implications of the *shenxian* tradition, it is worthwhile to try to explore gender differences in the paths to transcendence through the observation of the male and female adepts' interactions with their family, community and polity.

Generally, the quest for transcendence entails tensions, if not flagrant contradictions, with the most basic Chinese societal structure: the patrilineal family, including the ancient religiosocial institution of the ancestor cult. Ge Hong confronts this challenge in the voice of Lord Mao who explains his decision to embark on the quest for immortality to his angry parents as follows:

> "I have received a command to ascend to Heaven. This means that I am to attain the Way. I could not follow two paths of service at once. But although I have been lax in my support of you, and although the days have

[132] Robert Campany, in his comments to the quoted passage (182-183), over-interprets it, in my opinion, as Peng Zu's limited benefits despite his extreme longevity. I read this account as a piece of evidence that highlights the difference in two forms of transcendents and conveys the egalitarian idea that transcendents are not a different species.

> been many when you received no benefit from me, I am now in a position to bring peace and security to our household."
>
> 某受命上天，當應得道。事不兩遂，違遠供養，雖日多無益，今乃能使家門平安，父母壽考。
>
> （Campany, 2002, 326-327; 卷九）

The incompatible demands of social order and the quest for transcendence are handled in the *Shenxian zhuan* in multiple ways. Some male adepts manage to link their families to their self-cultivation, although the integration is never smooth. Dong Feng leaves his wife and daughter behind on his departure, but tigers still protect Dong's apricot grove so that his wife and daughter can sell apricots to procure their living necessities;\.[133] After four decades of searching, Huang Chuqi finally finds his brother, and joins him in the quest for transcendence, while leaving their relatives behind.[134] Wei Shuqing, traced by his son to Mount Hua after his departure from home, transmits an alchemical method to his son, who in turn leaves it behind for subsequent descendents.[135] Lü Gong, although trained by transcendent tutors for two hundred years, returns to his native village, locates his descendant and transmits his method to him.[136]

There are even more records of male adepts who simply leave spouses and children behind to practice self-cultivation or to make their final ascent. Some of them perform "escape-by-means-of-a-simulated-corpse" (屍解 *shijie*), which allows them to avoid not only the death-registration process,[137] but also the family lineage system that

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[133] Campany, 2002,141; 卷六.
[134] *Ibid*., 309; 卷二
[135] *Ibid*., 271; 卷八.
[136] *Ibid*., 250; 卷六
[137] *Ibid*., 52-60.

forms the spine of Chinese society.[138] Some of them bid farewell to their families and friends before they leave,[139] while most male adepts' departures are usually summarized in one sentence that reads: "They abandoned their wives and children (委妻子 *wei qizi*)."[140] Only in one hagiography has the emotional tension entailed in the departure scene been elaborated:

> A hundred days later, on another rainy night, Wang suddenly began packing. For some time he had had a light linen garment and a linen kerchief. In over fifty years he had never once worn them, but on this night he took out and donned them. His wife asked, "Do you mean to abandon me and leave?" Wang answered, "It's only for a short trip." "Aren't you taking Qian with you?" she asked. "No, I'm going alone." With that, his wife wept and said, "Can you stay a little longer?" "I'll be back soon." With that, he himself shouldered the bamboo box and departed. He never returned.
>
> 遙還家百日，天複雨，遙夜忽大治裝。遙先有葛單衣及葛布巾，已五十餘年未嘗著，此夜皆取著之。其妻即問曰："欲舍我去乎？"遙曰："暫行耳。"妻曰："當將錢去不？"遙曰："獨去耳。"妻乃涕泣曰："為且複少留。"遙曰："如是還耳。"因自擔篋而去之，遂不復還。
>
> （Campany, 2002, 343; 卷三）

In the ninety-two accounts included in the *Shenxian zhuan*, twenty-seven out of some eighty-six hagiographies with male transcendents or transcendents-to-be as protagonists mention the tension between the duties to patrilineage and emotional bonds to family, on the one hand, and the demands of self-cultivation, on the other. No matter how poignant the tension is, however, male adepts' conflict with their families is almost

[138] Adepts who perform this wonder include Fei Changfang (162), Cheng Wuding (361), Ling Shouguang (233) and Li Changzai's two disciples (317).
[139] Ge Yuan (303), Lu Nüsheng (323), Dongguo Yan (300), and Luan Ba (252) are claimed to have done so.
[140] Such as Wei Boyang (368), Huang Chuqi (309) and Kong Yuanfang (314).

never the focus of their hagiographies. The emphasis, instead, is their relationship with their communities, which earns them veneration, admiration and devotion of the people. Robert Campany has neatly summarized the several types of service provided by male adepts to people with whom they have dealings:

> Many adepts in [*Shenxian zhuan*] are shown healing the sick by a variety of means; this is by far the most common sort of help adepts provide in the pages of the work. In a few cases adepts successfully resuscitate the dead. Not a few adepts distribute largesse to the poor. Some obtain or accurately predict rain in times of drought. Some intervene in an unruly temple cult on behalf of local population, chastising overweening gods and their spirit mediums.[141]

This litany of services gives us a sense of how transcendence seekers functioned as holy men in early medieval Chinese society, wielding their hard-won, divinely sanctioned powers for the benefit of their followers, who responded with material support for adepts; in some cases, this support continued after the adepts' departure in the form of temples and shrines dedicated to them.

It is an interplay of hidden arts and observed wonders that facilitates the practitioners' accruement of power and prestige. The detailed methods of the esoteric arts and the texts in which they were transmitted remained hidden form public view, but the wondrous effect so these arts and the reputations of those who wielded them were "socially displayed, socially sought after and supported, socially discussed, and socially consumed."[142] In other words, it is his social role that earns the master of esoterica or seeker of transcendence an entry in the collection of hagiographies.

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[141] Campany, 2002, 93.
[142] Campany, 2006, 295.

Compared to the loudly and colorfully advertised community services in the biographies of male adepts, the six hagiographies in the *Shenxian zhuan* which are dedicated to women transcendents are exclusively contained in a family context.[143] First, we get a glimpse of two cases in which husband and wife both practice arts of transcendence, although in both cases, described in the hagiographies of Lady Fan and Cheng Wei's wife, what we see is not domestic harmony, but rather competition between spouses, the women emerging superior.

The entry of Lady Fan is a humorous account of contests of esoteric arts.[144] In one instance, Lady Fan and her husband, Liu Gang, engage in pronouncing spells over two peach trees in their courtyard until the tree which Liu Gang incanted over flees across the fence. Then they exhale over a basin of water, using their *qi* to make it come to life. Liu manages to create a carp but his wife bests him by bringing forth an otter which eats the carp. Later they encounter a tiger during their travels and find that Liu is vulnerable to its attack. Lady Fan, on the other hand, easily seizes and binds the beast. Despite their continued competition, they ascend to heaven together, although not with equal grace. Liu Gang only manages to jump off into the clouds after climbing onto a tree, while Lady Fan simply sits on her mat and is elevated. The hagiography of Lady Fan certainly is another strong representative of women's equal, if not superior potential and power in the

[143] The six female transcendents/protagonists are the Woman of Grant Mystery (太玄女 *Taixuan nü*), Maiden of West River (西河少女 *Xihe shaonü*), Cheng Wei's Wife (程偉妻 *Cheng Wei qi*), Maid Ma (麻姑 *Ma gu*), Lady Fan (樊夫人 *Fan furen*), and the Holy Mother of Dongling (東陵聖母 *Dongling shengmu*). The complete version of their hagiographies are included in the appendices at the end of the paper in the order of their appearances in the original Chinese version.

[144] For a complete version of the hagiography of Lady Fan, see Appendix VI.

quest for transcendence. Compared to male transcendents' hagiographies, this narrative, however, is completely framed within familial relationships. No matter how capable she is in the arts of esoterica, she is never described as having crossed the boundary of her inner chamber before ascension, of having contributed to her community, or even of having shown off her skills in public as did many male adepts who by so doing accumulated social prestige and power.[145] On the contrary, Lady Fan's husband, who turns out to be much inferior to Lady Fan in practicing the Dao, is said to have brought benefit to the community by his non-action administration and his capabilities to avoid calamities.

The story of Cheng Wei's wife is a relatively more serious record of the competition between spouses.[146] We are told that when Cheng Wei finds that he does not own a set of proper clothes for his official duties, his wife magically conjures up a bolt of fine silk and creates a new gown for him. Instead of being grateful for his wife's skills, Cheng Wei starts pestering her for her secrets, wanting to acquire the power for himself. She consistently denies him access, and in the end has to flee from the relationship by shedding her mortal coil. The moral of the first half of the story certainly is not her being obedient and subservient to her husband and family so much as her prescient recognition from a great distance of her husband's distress, but her magical abilities are wielded in her hagiography only to perform her wifely duties. Household, as in the case of Lady Fan, is still the context of the narrative of Cheng Wei's wife.

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[145] See the conducts of those mischievous and mysterious conjurers and exorcists such as Ge Yuan (Campany, 2002, 152) and Jie Xiang (Campany, 2002, 189).
[146] For a complete version of the hagiography of Cheng Wei's wife, see Appendix IV.

Another woman with magical powers, and probably the most important female immortal described in the *Shenxian zhuan* is Maid Ma, a theriomorphic deity who gradually metamorphosed into a human being and finally into a full-fledged transcendent.[147] She is recorded to have attained immortality and traveled widely through the cosmos, taking time to sojourn in the paradises of Penglai and Kunlun, and living long enough to see the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields several times over. Her hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan* is in the form of a detailed account of a gathering at Cai Jing's home, at which Maid Ma is summoned by Wang Yuan, an important male transcendent in the heavenly bureaucracy. Campany links the gathering with the Chinese annual festival on the seventh day of the seventh month, and thus identifies Wang Yuan and Maid Ma with two astral deities—the Herder Boy and the Weaver Girl.[148] The implicitly erotic nature of their relationship is further supported by Campany's study of the textual history of Maid Ma's hagiography. No material from any period treats her in isolation from Wang Yuan, and she does not become the focus of her own hagiography until Du Guangting's *Yongcheng jixian lu* (墉城集仙錄 *Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City*), which of course is devoted to exclusively to hagiographies of women transcendents, in which she is still identified as his "second."[149] Against the semi-familial backdrop, Maid Ma is clearly subordinated to Wang Yuan in that her train of attendants is half the size of Wang's, and she bows to Wang, only rising after he has bidden her to do so. At the gathering of Cai Jing's home, she performs two magical feats.

[147] For a complete version of the hagiography of Maid Ma, see Appendix V.
[148] Campany, 2002, 266-267.
[149] *Ibid*., 456.

One is her calling of a travelling canteen. Though it takes great magical power to summon a supernatural banquet made up of the finesse delicacies of the empires and the heavens, the travelling canteen is clearly associated with wifely duty in the kitchen. The other magical feat she performs is a ritual of purification. She throws rice to the floor to dispel the unclean influences brought about by one of Cai Jing's female relatives who has given birth to a child only a few days earlier. This ritual of purification of childbirth is obviously connected with women. What is also noteworthy is that Maid Ma is not described has having had any any contact with the male members of Cai Jing's household. It is Wang Yuan who reads Cai Jing's mind who hopes to use Maid Ma's claw-like fingernails to have his back stretched. Therefore, even Maid Ma, the most powerful female deity with chthonic origins in the *Shenxian zhuan*, is subordinated to Wang Yuan as his transcendent consort and her power is largely contained in the narrative against the semi-familial background.

The hagiography dedicated to the Maiden of West River is also set in the context of the female transcendent/protagonist's connection with her family.[150] The niece of the respected immortal Bo Shanfu, a recluse on Mount Hua, she receives a wondrous elixir from him when he notices that she is often sick. Although already eighty years old at the time, she regains her youthful appearance and a radiant complexion. When she was 230 years old, she is observed hitting an old man with a stick, who turns out to to be her own son who could not keep up with her. She eventually enters the Mount Hua and departs. The Woman of Grand Mystery leaves home to practice the Dao after she is bereaved of

[150] For a complete version of the hagiography of Maiden of West River, see Appendix III.

her husband. In other words, she breaks the *nei-wai* boundary only after she has fulfilled her earthly duty as a woman.[151]

The only female adept who trespasses the inner/outer boundary is the Holy Mother of Dongling.[152] She studies the way of Liu Gang, the husband of Lady Fan, and masters arts of metamorphosis and healing. Her contact with—and therapeutic service to—nonfamily members outside the home enrages her husband, who files a complaint against her and has her imprisoned; she escapes both prison and marriage by flying out her cell window and soars high up into the clouds, leaving only a pair of slippers behind. She later returns to the community in the form of a blue bird that helps people find lost objects, thus temples and offering cults are finally established for her.

As mentioned earlier, only six out of Ge Hong's ninety-two hagiographies have female adepts as protagonists, all of which are confined in their family background before they leave the mundane world. Compared to male adepts' social interactions, Lady Fan and Chen Wei's wife have never stepped out of their inner chamber. They have gained their fame only through competition with their spouses. The Maiden of West River's hagiography is closely connected with her transcendent uncle, and there is no record of her social interactions. Even Maid Ma, the most powerful female deity in *Shenxian zhuan*, only performs magical feats that fulfill her wifely duties. It is only after she is no longer a woman can the Holy Mother of Dongling wields her magical powers for her

[151] For a complete version of the hagiography of the Woman of Grand Mystery, see Appendix II.
[152] For a complete version of the hagiography of the Holy Mother of Dongling, see Appendix VII.

community without any prohibitions, either from her jealous husband, or from what the society demands.

Robert Campany, in his study of the "simultaneous proclamation and concealment" of arts of esoterica in the quest for transcendence, perceptively captures the tension between hidden arts and observed wonders, between reclusion and recognition in *Shenxian zhuan*.[153] It is not only because of the practitioners' mystical behavior, but because of their relationship with the secular world that they receive veneration, admiration, and devotion. The *nei-wai* spatial restriction deprives the public dimension of female adepts' religious practices, contains their power and marginalizes them in the discourse of the *shenxian* tradition. As for women who follow their transcendence-seeking husbands,[154] we are never told whether they have eventually attained immortality or not. As for the very few women who successfully break the boundary of their inner chambers, the world of immortality is not necessarily a utopia of transcendence for them.

IV. Eroticization in Imagery

The achievement of longevity and youthfulness is a recurrent motif in the hagiographies of transcendents. Much research has been done regarding the various practices for extending one's years and forestalling one's death.[155] What remains relatively neglected, however, is the hagiographical portrayal of the nature of this

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[153] Campany, 2006, 293.
[154] Tang Gongfang's wife and three maidservants also passed Li Babai's examination, licking his disgusting sores (215); Yin Changsheng takes his wife and children on his travels (275); Shen Xi journeys to the heaven together with his wife (275).
[155] Campany, 2002, 18-47.

longevity, and how it is reflected in the physical appearance of the transcendent who achieves it. In this section, I will attempt to explore the hidden gender implications embedded in the physical description of transcendents, which I believe would belie the apparent egalitarianism within the *shenxian* tradition.

Several *Shenxian zhuan* hagiographies mention, for example, that their protagonists "accidentally" drop comments about how long they have lived, or related events that to their listeners confirmed their extreme longevity; thus when a ninety-year-old elder bows to Wang Lie, he remains seated and accepts the bow as would an elder accepting this gesture of respect from a younger person;[156] Li Shaojun displays his knowledge of an ancient bronze vessel which used to be in the chamber of Duke Huan of Qi more than five hundred years ago;[157] Maid Ma reminisces before a packed household of villagers about the three times she has seen the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields, implying that she has outlasted several geologic eons.[158]

Other entries in the *Shenxian zhuan* contain only one or two sentences depicting their subjects' youthfulness and immortality. The portrayal of the transcendents' non-

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[156] Campany, 2002, 340. "There was another case in which a certain Zhang Zidao, who was over ninety years of age, bowed to Wang Lie, and Wang simply remained seated and accepted the bow. Those seated nearby wondered at it. Zhang said to them, 'I saw him when I was eight or nine years old, and his appearance then was no different than it is now. Now I have grown old, but Master Wang still has a youthful countenance.'" 又張子道者，年九十餘拜烈，烈平坐受之，坐人恠之，子道曰："我年八九歲時，見顏色與今無異，吾今老矣，烈猶有少容。"（神仙傳，卷六）

[157] *Ibid*., 222. "Also, during Li's audience with Emperor Wu, he noticed an ancient bronze vessel nearby. Recognizing it, he remarked, 'Duke Huan of Qi (455-405 B.C.E) displayed this vessel in his chamber of repose.' The emperor checked his works against the inscription carved into the bronze, and it did indeed turn out to be an ancient Qi vessel. From this he realized the Li was several hundred years old." 少君又見武帝有故銅器，因識之曰："齊桓公常陳此器於寢座，帝按言觀其刻字，果齊之故器也，因以少君是數百歲人矣。"（卷六）

[158] *Ibid*., 262. "Maid Ma wanted to declare: 'Since I entered your service, I have seen the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields three times. As one proceeded across to Penglai, the water came only up to one's waist. I wonder whether it will turn to dry land once again.'" 麻姑自說云："接待以來，已見東海三為桑田，向到蓬萊，水淺淺於往者，會時略半也，豈將複還為陵陸乎？"（卷七）

aging appearance through hundreds of years is such a recurrent image that it could be underestimated as merely literary cliché. A close scrutiny, however, reveals gender implications beyond the conventional descriptions.

In the *Shenxian zhuan*, a male transcendent is usually depicted as having an overall appearance (*zhuang* 狀) of a middle-aged man but with a youthful countenance (*rong* 容, or *se* 色). The Old Man of Mountain Tai is portrayed as "a person of fifty-something, with the facial complexion of a youth and a glow of health that made him stand out from ordinary people."[159] Similarly, Peng Zu,[160] Lord of Yellow Mountain,[161] Liu Ping,[162] and Wang Lie[163] are said to "maintain a youthful visage" (*chang you shaorong* 常有少容), while Master Azure Essence,[164] Huang Chuping and Chuqi,[165] Zhao Qu,[166] Master of the Celestial Portal,[167] Liu Zheng,[168] and Kong Anguo[169] all "have the

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[159] *Ibid*., 337. "The man looked to be a person of fifty-something, with the facial complexion of a youth and a glow of health that made him stand out from ordinary people." 老人狀如五十許人，面有童子之色，肌膚光澤。(卷五)

[160] *Ibid*., 172. "He always maintained a youthful visage." 常有少容。（卷一）

[161] *Ibid*., 181. "[He] lived to be several hundred years old, and maintained a youthful complexion." 數百歲猶有少容。（卷一）

[162] *Ibid*., 319. "He lived to be over three hundred, yet retained a youthful countenance." 年三百餘歲，而又少容。（卷五）

[163] *Ibid*., 338. "At the age of two hundred thirty-eight, he still had a youthful countenance." 年三百三十八歲，猶有少容。（卷六）

[164] *Ibid*., 176. "There is a certain Master Azure Essence who is said to be a thousand years old. He has the coloration of a youth." 傳言千歲，色如童子。（卷一）

[165] *Ibid*., 311. "They had the complexions of youths." 而有童子之色。（卷二）

[166] *Ibid*., 279. "Within two years his facial complexion had reverted to youth, his skin was radiant and smooth, and he could walk as fast as a bird in flight." 在人間三百餘年，常如童子顏色。(卷三)

[167] *Ibid*., 367. "At the age of one hundred eighty, he had the complexion of a young girl." 年二百八十歲，猶有童子之色。（卷八）

[168] *Ibid*., 323. "He lived for more than one hundred eighty years, and his complexion was that of a youth." 年百八十餘歲，色如童子。(卷八)

[169] *Ibid*., 311. "He reached three hundred years of age and had the appearance of a boy." 年二百歲，色如童子。（卷九）

coloration of a youth" (*se ru tongzi* 色如童子) according to the *Traditions*. Interestingly, no matter how radiant a male adept's facial countenance is, his overall appearance remains that of a middle-aged man, which to some extent fits into the cultural image of a transcendent with "white hair and ruddy complexion" (*hefa tongyan* 鶴髮童顏).[170] Liu Gen has the facial complexion of a lad of fourteen or fifteen, but he also has a thick beard and temple hair, which are yellowed and are three-four inches long.[171] Li Shaojun has mouth and teeth like those of a youth, and smooth and radian flesh, but he looks to be around fifty.[172] Wei Shuqing,[173] Liu Jing[174] and Wangzhen[175] are recorded to remain in their thirties; Master Whitestone,[176] Kong Yuanfang[177] and Dong Feng[178] are men of about forty; Commoners of successive generations have noted that Li A[179] and Li Changzai[180]

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[170] The portrayal of the Master of Greater Yang is a more typical image of "white hair and ruddy complexion. "Although his hair had gone gray, his skin and flesh were plump and full, and his face and eyes were radiantly efflorescent." (Campany, 2002, 318) 雖鬢髮斑白，而肌膚豐盛，面目光華，三百餘歲，猶自不改。(卷十)

[171] *Ibid*., 240. 其顏色如十四五歲人，深目多須，鬢皆黃，長三四寸。(卷三)

[172] *Ibid*., 222. 視之如五十許人，面色肌膚，甚有光澤，口齒如童子。(卷六)

[173] *Ibid*., 271. 其人年可三十許，色如童子。（卷八）

[174] *Ibid*., 249. 百三十餘歲，視之如三十許人。(卷十)

[175] *Ibid*., 343. 魏武帝聞之，召相見，似三十許人。(卷十)

[176] *Ibid*., 292-293. "He was already more than two thousand years old by the time of Peng Zu…and his visage and appearance remained in his forties." 彭祖時已二千歲餘……色如四十許人。(卷二)

[177] *Ibid*., 314. "Already old, he reverted to a youth, his face resumed that of a man of about forty." 老而益少，容如四十許人。(卷六)

[178] *Ibid*., 143. "He saw that Dong looked to be forty-something… More than fifty years later… Dong's face and appearance were exactly as they had been the day he left." 見奉年四十餘……後五十餘年……而奉顏貌一如往日。（卷六）

[179] *Ibid*., 212. "Gu Qiang was then eighteen and Li A appeared to be around fifty. When Gu had passed eighty, Li had not changed at all." 強年十八，見阿年五十許，強年八十余，而阿猶然不異。(卷二)

[180] *Ibid*., 317. "For successive generations, commoners served him, and they calculated his age at four hundred or five hundred years; yet he did not visibly age, seeming to be around fifty." 計其年已四五百歲，而不老常如五十許人。(卷三)

always appear to be around fifty. The King of Yin keeps his breath and strength as vigorous as they have been when he was fifty.[181]

Compared to their male counterparts, female transcendents in the *Shenxian zhuan* are exclusively portrayed as beautiful young women in their late teens and early twenties. The wife of a certain Zhang He ingests an elixir at the age of fifty and reverts to the appearance of someone in her twenties.[182] The niece of Bo Shanfu, after taking an elixir at the age of eighty, reverts to a youthful appearance with her complexion like peach blossoms and gains her entry in the *Traditions* under the title of "Maiden of West River."[183] The harem lady who transmits the Ways of Peng Zuto the King of Yin is said to look fifteen or sixteen when she is 270 years old.[184] Liu Gen has seen in the Mount Huayin a divine personage followed by four jade maiden who are fifteen or sixteen years old.[185] The one who introduces the Way to Jie Xiang is a beautiful woman appearing to be fifteen or sixteen years old, and it is her extraordinary appearance and multicolored gown that reveal her identity as a divine transcendent to Jie Xiang.[186] Even Maid Ma, the only partially human figure, is described as a handsome woman of eighteen or nineteen.[187] The eroticization of female images cannot be more obvious than the description of Zhu Yi, the Woman of Greater Yang:

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[181] *Ibid*., 176. "[H]e did live to the age of 103, and his breath and strength remained as vigorous as they had been when he was fifty." 得壽三百歲……狀如五十時。（卷二）
[182] *Ibid*., 313. 又有張合妻，年五十，服之反如二十許人，一縣恠之。(卷九)
[183] *Ibid*., 297. [西河少女]女時年已七十，轉還少，色如桃花。(卷二)
[184] *Ibid*., 174. 又采女者……年二百七十歲，視之如十五六歲。（卷一）
[185] *Ibid*., 左右玉女四人……皆年十五六。(卷三)
[186] *Ibid*., 191. "[H]e turned back up the mountain, when he saw a beautiful woman appearing to be fifteen or sixteen years old, with an extraordinary appearance. She wore a multicolored gown. Thinking she must be a divine transcendent." 于山中見一美女，年十五六許，顏色非常，被服五彩，蓋神仙也。(卷九)
[187] *Ibid*., 261. [麻姑]是好女子，年可十八九許。(卷二)

> At the age of two hundred eighty, her face was like peach blossoms, her mouth cinnabar red, her skin vibrant and smooth, her eyebrows and hair as perfect as if painted on. Her radiant good looks were quite stunning. Looking at her, one would judge her to be seventeen or eighteen.
>
> 年二百八十歲，顏如桃花，口如含丹，肌膚充澤，眉鬢如畫，光彩射人，視之如十七八者。
>
> (Campany, 2002, 357; 卷四)

The depiction of female transcendents as being extraordinarily gorgeous young ladies betrays the male fantasy within the *shenxian* tradition. People may argue that the difference in the portrayal of physical appearance, with men staying in their middle age while women reverting to their mid-late teens, could be interpreted positively as a confirmation of the superiority of female magical power. One sub-narrative concerning with Eight Sires in the entry dedicated to Liu An, however, would deny the optimistic interpretation. It is said that there are eight old men with grey hair and white beard who go to visit Prince Liu An, but are denied entrance for being decrepit and thus not possessing the arts to forestall decline. As a response to the haughty and suspicious gatekeeper, they immediately transform into youths of fifteen with elaborately coiffed black hair and skin the color of peach blossoms, and change back into old men once their power is recognized.[188] Therefore, it is not that the eight sires do not have the capability to regain vigor and vitality as their female counterparts do, but that they simply do not bother to revert to and remain in their youth. Jiao Xian, another male transcendent-

[188] *Ibid*., 234-36. (卷四)

protagonist in the *Traditions*, is even witnessed by successive generations to move back and forth between vital youth and venerable old age for over two hundred years.[189]

Aside from the eroticized portrayal of female deities and adepts, another illustration of male fantasy is the ubiquity of jade maidens in the *Shenxian zhuan*. In Shen Xi's description of his journey to the heaven, there are hundreds of attendants in the celestial palace, including more who were girls and less who were young men.[190] Many female entertainers provide celestial music at the Lord Mao's farewell banquet.[191] Jade maidens, however, are not merely spirit-servants of transcendence quest and many Daoist adepts, appearing only in response to their summons,[192] but are beautiful young ladies that male parishioners aspire to have at their sides all the time.[193] Lu Nüsheng is seen riding a white deer followed by a train of thirty jade maidens after he achieves transcendence.[194] Zhao Qu also has two female beauties who appear to him in gradually larger forms and finally attend to his needs.[195] In Yin Changsheng's self-narrative of the

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[189] Ibid., 187. "At times he would suddenly seem to age, then just as suddenly he would seem to grow young again, and this went on for over two hundred years."或忽老忽少，如此二百餘歲。（卷六）

[190] *Ibid*., 257. 侍者數百人，多女少男。（卷八）

[191] *Ibid*., 327. 妓女音樂，金石俱奏，聲震天地，聞於數裏。（卷九）

[192] Erikson, 1994, 39-63.

[193] It is noteworthy that despite the pervasive presence of jade maidens in the hagiographies, there is no single record in the *Shenxian zhuan* depicting a female transcendent in company with a celestial lady.

[194] Campany, 2002, 324. 去後五十年，先相識者逢女生華山廟前，乘白鹿，從玉女三十人。（卷十）

[195] *Ibid*., 278. "[H]e noticed two persons on his face, each of them only three *cun* tall. They turned out to be beautiful women—all complete and proportioned, only of miniature size. They played about on his nose. This kept on happening, and gradually they grew bigger until they reached human size, at which point they were no longer on his face but went forth of him and to his sides. He would always hear string music, and happily they would enjoy themselves." 再見面上有二人，長三寸，乃美女也，甚端正，但小耳，戲其鼻上。如此二女稍長大，至如人，不復再面上，出在前側。常聞琴瑟之聲，欣然歡樂。（卷三）

immeasurable blessing from practicing the Way, the company of jade maidens is held as one of the ultimate goals of the quest for transcendence:

> My wife and children could extend their years,
> And take pleasure in immortality together with me.
> Carrying out the practices of yellow and white,
> I have billions of pieces of goods and cash at my disposal.
> Not only do I have power to dispatch ghosts and spirits,
> I am also accompanied by jade maidens at my service.
>
> 妻子延年，咸享無極，黃白已成，貨財千億，使役鬼神，玉女侍側。
> (Translation mine; 卷五)

V. Conclusion

The *Shenxian zhuan* provides us abundant information of the paths to transcendence in the early medieval China. In Six Dynasties when Confucianism was largely shattered, the picture of female transcendence portrayed in the paper is not as optimistic as what is described in Despeux and Kohn's chapter on ancient immortals.[196] Without a comparison between male and female transcendents, their case-study of female immortals only leads them to a conclusion that the *shenxian* tradition upholds the superiority of female power. What I discovered, however, is that the world of transcendence actually fails to completely transcend the earthly world. Despite the gender-egalitarianism in the doctrines of the *shenxian* tradition, female adepts seeking for immortality come to inhabit in a religious world in which the problematiques of the age, albeit transposed into a new key, are still operative, and eventually marginalize them into a double jeopardy. Women's pre-ascension self-cultivation and religious power were

[196] Despeux & Kohn, 2003, 83-103,

greatly restricted and contained by the *nei-wai* spatial ideology. Even for those who successfully break the boundary of inner chamber, their path to transcendence leads them to another trap of eroticization in the male fantasy.

CHAPTER SIX

Concluding the Strange or Not?
Past, Present, and Future

> Could it be that the ghosts of middle antiquity still exist in modern times? …… So what's so impossible about that? Since they could survive from prehistoric times into middle antiquity, then of course they can remain on into modern times. Would you dare state that bewitching phantoms don't exist in Shanghai?
>
> 難道中古時代的精靈都還生存在現代嗎？……這又有什麼不可能？他們既然能夠從上古留存到中古，那當然是可以再遺留到現代的。你敢說上海不會有這種妖媚嗎？
>
> Shi Zhecun, "Mo Dao" [197]

Tracing its development in classical Chinese literature, the previous chapters analyze how *zhiguai* challenges categorical dichotomies – history vs. fiction, natural vs. supernatural, and belief vs. disbelief – and occupies a liminal status in between. The result is a reassessment of what is normal, natural and real *vis-à-vis* what is anomalous, supernatural and fantastic. Devising a new ontological framework – this-world and other-world(s), I argue that it is the interaction between the two – the esoteric and/or exotic and our quotidian empirical experience – that defines the genre. The theoretical part of the dissertation is complemented with one case study – *Shenxian zhuan* (*Traditions of Divine Transcendents*), a 4th-century *zhiguai* collection. Yet, with the advent of the "modern age" – partially characterized by secularization in terms of governments' suppression of "superstition" – one would easily assume that *zhiguai* (志怪 anomaly accounts) is almost an extinct species for present-day cultural production. But to quote Derrida's famous

[197] Li, 1988, 102. Translated by Schaefer, 1998, 25.

statement in *Specter of Marx* that "each age has its own ghosts," I would like to argue that *zhiguai* motifs are vividly alive in contemporary discourses. Their presence – through preservation, transformation and manipulation – is shrouding, revealing and defying a reality that can hardly be expressed otherwise. Through a diachronic study as such can I uncover how the strange is woven into everyday life, and how this age-old Chinese literary genre that appears to be marginalized in its own time and nearly extinct in our modern world is still thriving today.

The sources that this paper investigates are television program and online gossip. An important category of Chinese TV program is legal documentary (*fazhi jiemu* 法制節目), with its purported aims to uphold morality, criticize criminality and dispel superstition. Curiously, it often attributes case-solving to some supernatural power such as "*tianwang huihui, shu er bulou* (天網恢恢，疏而不漏 The net of the Heaven is vast. It may not close in tight right away, but nothing will evade it forever)." The penetration of *zhiguai* into such official discourse testifies its vitality. Online gossip, on the other hand, suggests how *zhiguai* is employed in an encrypted manner, either conscious or unconscious, to speak the unspeakable. Firstly, gazetteers of the paranormal (靈異方誌 *lingyi fangzhi*) forms an urban landscape where various social concerns –class and regional conflicts, postcolonial memories, as well as tensions between modernization and preservation of local culture -- are intertwined with age-old *zhiguai* motifs. Secondly, mythical creatures (神獸 *shenshou*) created by netizens through the use of homonymy, such as "*hexie*" (which literally means "river crab", but the sound of which is almost the same as "harmony" in Chinese, referring to the official censorship that constantly

"harmonizes" dissident voices), to vent their dissatisfaction with official ideologies. With modern media as its vehicle, *zhiguai* is once again revived as one of the most important ways to record and circulate private knowledge and public sentiment.

I. Legal Documentary

At the prime time of local television broadcast in Shanghai, several series of criminal documentary are being shown on different channels after news report at 6:30 pm and before drama series at 7:30 pm. They are usually consisted of "factual" descriptions of real-life criminal activities, as well as interviews with criminals, victims and law enforcement officers. The message that these programs endeavor to convey is, as expected, very didactic – mainly to contain criminality and to uphold morality. Similar to legal dramas both in the East and West, the supernatural in these popularized juridical texts sometimes operates as a Hitchcockian "macguffin," a plot element that catches the audience's attention or drives the plot, and later would be revealed as completely fraudulent. By employing a plot device as such, the criminal documentary plays its role to dispel superstition, one of the key agendas of China's modernization drive.

Yet the agenda to dispel superstition may not always succeed in these officially supported and sanctioned documentaries, on the grounds of, I argue, the paradoxical nature of the use of the supernatural in official propaganda, and the vitality of the *zhiguai* narrative. For some episodes, the supernatural is being manipulated into proverbial wisdoms such as "*tianwang huihui, shu er bulou* 天网恢恢，疏而不漏" to explain final

solutions of difficult cases, which rests upon the traditional rhetoric of the cosmological power such as the Mandate of Heaven, which justifies the legitimacy of leadership. For some others, however, the supernatural creeps in and sometimes even completely subverts the intended message. The episode titled "終極對話：‘鬼’迷心竅 (Ultimate Dialogue: Possessed by a 'Ghost')" is a case in point.[198] In this episode, Chen, a young doctor in a small town, murdered a prostitute allegedly out of his superstition, and later disposed the corpse with the aids of his parents. This episode could have been perfectly centered on the tension between one's obligations to the state and protective feelings towards family members, but it chooses superstition as its focus. The doctor's narration of his understanding of the murder was constantly disrupted by the reporter's intention to convert the doctor from superstition to materialism. At the end, the doctor did yield to the reporter, whole-heartedly or not, but the story he told forms a perfect *zhiguai* text that is reinforced by the director's use of editing.

The followings are the main plot elements of the episode: Chen, a young doctor in a small town, did a divination at the beginning of his *benming nian* (本命年 birth-year), and was told that he was going to *mingfan taisui* (命犯太岁 to violate the Master of the Year of Earth) in this coming year. One day, Chen called in a prostitute. During the night, he saw, under dim lights, the woman with her long hair and in a long pink dress holding a knife in her hand. Immediately associating this image with the classical image of a female ghost and his earlier divination results, he panicked. He tried to talk to the woman,

[198] It was first aired on May 6, 2008. For a full video, see http://video.sina.com.nc/v/b/12949425-127580573.html#12947425 (Retrieved June 12, 2015).

but got no reply. He then hit the woman in the head, but the woman, according to him, did not either cry or fall down. Out of terror that this woman was really a ghost, he made more fatal hits. After he realized that the woman was dead, he put a heavy stone on her abdomen, following the doctrine of *panshi zhen yaomo* (磐石镇妖魔 a huge rock can suppress spirits and monsters). After disposing the corpse in river with the help of his parents, he did a divination again and was told that he was going to *fan guanfu* (犯官府 to provoke the authority).

The episode tries to stage the contesting points-of-view of the journalist and the culprit, and to draw a didactic conclusion that "Fate is always within your own control." Yet, the story of conversion from primitive belief in superstition to rational/scientific worldview is never convincing, in that the two sides of the interview are on different pages. The culprit keeps believing the validity of his perception of the event because it is proved by the two divinations before and after the event, while the only argument that the journalist has to shatter the culprit's perception is "how you, a good-looking young man born in the 80's and graduated from medical school, can hold primitive superstitions as such?"

What makes the episode more interesting is the director's editing, which, consciously or unconsciously, adopts many *zhiguai* motifs as well. Firstly, unlike other episodes, no matter how scandalous, that usually contain interviews with the victim's relatives or friends, no such information about the prostitute is revealed, which seems to suggest that she has no earthly bonds. Secondly, what is more curious is that instead of a photo of the victim or a shot of the dead body, a common narrative strategy in such

popularized juridical texts to suggest the preciousness of life and cruelty of crime, the episode is using a pair of blue calico shoes, which supposedly belong to the victim, as a metonymy for the prostitute. To use a pair of embroidered shoes as a metonymy for the female body is a constant motif in classical *zhiguai* stories, sometimes with an erotic connotation.

In this episode, the culprit's narrative, incorporating "superstitious beliefs and practices," is consistent and coherent, even supported by the director's editing, which cannot be easily shattered by the rational/scientific materialistic point-of-view from the journalist. The episode, which is supposed to teach a lesson to dispel superstition, turns out to be an affirmation of a *zhiguai* story. It is not within my academic interest to find out which version is true and which is false, but the discursive vitality of *zhiguai*, in its infiltration into official ideology, cannot be more obvious.

II. Gazetteers of the Paranormal and Mythical Creatures

The term *lingyi* (靈異 spiritual and anomalous), defined by Baidu Baike (a Chinese equivalent of wikipedia) as a subconscious strange and anomalous life form that is not yet to be discovered by human beings, is one of the highest grossing words in the Chinese cyberspace, from real-estate websites, tourist forums to the newly-emerged social-networking sites.[199] Such posts are functioning as a gazetteer recording various *zhiguai* discourses that are being circulated as a form of private knowledge infiltrated underneath the supposedly most metropolitan and urbanized landscape in China. A post

[199] http://baike.baidu.com/view/104252.htm (Retrieved June 12, 2015).

titled “Horror: The Top Ten *Lingyi* Buildings in Shanghai,” is very rich and tantalizing. The social concerns of contemporary China – such as class and region conflicts, postcolonial memories, as well as tensions between modernization and local culture -- are intertwined with age-old *zhiguai* motifs and narrative stories. With internet as its medium, *zhiguai*, a genre that used to be heavily dependent on oral traditions, is once again revived as one of the most important ways to record and circulate private knowledge and public sentiment.[200]

Meanwhile, a recent internet phenomenon in China was the creation of mythical creatures using nonsensical words that sound similar to abusive or indecent words in the Chinese language. “Cao Ni Ma” (草泥马 grass mud horse) has become the most influential of these newly created mythical creatures. It is a pun for an offensive Chinese phrase. Having the appearance of an alpaca, the Cao Ni Ma is said to be a gentle, courageous, tenacious, grass-eating mythical animal living a carefree life in the Ma Le Ge Bi desert 马勒隔壁, which sounds similar to another obscene Chinese phrase. According to its life story on Baidu Baike, the Cao Ni Ma emerged to fight the “He Xie” (河蟹 river crab), which sounds like harmony in Chinese language and refers to the “harmonious society’ that the Chinese leadership has promoted during the past few years. An entry was also created on Baidu Baike in early 2009 containing a list of ten mythical creatures on the Chinese Internet, which Cao Ni Ma listed as No. 1 creature.[201] Scholars

[200] For a complete list of the paranormal buildings, together with my translation and interpretation, see Appendix VIII.

[201] http://baike.baidu.com/view/43783.htm?fromtitle=%E8%8D%89%E6%B3%A5%E9%A9%AC&type=syn#9 (Retrieved June 12, 2015).

have noted the ingenuity of netizens in bypassing Internet censors by combing innocuous Chinese words to mean things that have subversive meaning,[202] but what is more interesting to this paper is the connection between ten mythical creatures on the internet and the ten mythical creatures in the *Shanhai jing* (山海经 The Classic of Mountains and Seas), a Confucian canon that mixes geography and mythology.[203] It is used as a guidebook to overseas geography or to the mythological elements that later penetrated into nearly everywhere of the corpus of Chinese literature. Now on the internet, we see how the descriptive anecdotal writing style of *Shanhai jing* is being borrowed to create mythical creatures, almost as a carnivalesque defiance against the censorship imposed by the authority. The complexity of the study of *zhiguai* in contemporary Chinese cultural production goes beyond this dissertation, but points to the direction of my future research.

[202] Herold, 2011, 1-19.
[203] For the list of the ten mythical creatures on the Chinese internet, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baidu_10_Mythical_Creatures (Retrived June 12, 2015). For a list of the ten mythical creatures from the Shanhai jing, see http://baike.baidu.com/view/2118734.htm?fromTaglist (Retrived June 12, 2015).

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APPENDIX I

King Fuchai's Daughter

King Fuchai of Wu had an eighteen-year-old daughter named Purple Jade who was intelligent and attractive. There was a nineteen-year-old youth by the name of Han Chong who was knowledgeable in Daoist arts. The girl liked him, and after secret meetings and an exchange of confidences, she agreed to marry him. Han was to study in the region of Qi and Lu, and as he was about to leave he requested his parents to ask for her hand in marriage.

The king was angry and refused to give his daughter. As a consequence, Purple Jade died from grief and was buried outside the main gate of the palace.

Three years passed and Han Chong returned. He inquired of his parents, and they told him, "The king was enraged, and the girl died from grief. She's been buried for some time."

Han Chong cried with great sorrow and, preparing to a sacrificial animal and some funerary paper money, went to mourn by her tomb. The soul of Purple Jade came out from the tomb and, seeing Han Chong, said in tears, "After you left, your parents came to ask the king for my hand. It seemed that we would certainly realize our wish. But who would have thought that after we parted I should meet my death. What is one to do?" She then turned her head to one side and sang,

> There is a crow in the southern mountain,
> And a net spread over the mountain in the north.
> But the crow flies away;
> What can that net do?
> It was my with to follow you,
> But slanderous talk was too much.
> Grief brought on an illness,
> And I ended my life beneath the Yellow Mound.
> That my fate was ill –
> Whose fault is this injustice?
>
> The finest of the feathered creature,
> Is known by the name of phoenix.
> If on one day the male is lost,
> It grieves for three full years.
> Though there are many other birds around,
> There is no one to be her mate.
> Thus I present a miserable appearance,
> To meet with you so resplendent.

So far apart, my heart is still with you.
How could I forget you even for a brief moment!

The song finished, she broke into sobs, and asked Han Chong to return to the tomb. “The dead and the living travel different paths,” Han said. “I fear I would be transgressing by doing so; I dare not agree to your request.” “The dead and the living travel different paths,” she said. “I too know that. But once we part today, we will never meet again. Do you fear that I will harm you as a ghost? I am sincere in my affection for you. Could it be that you don’t believe me?”

Moved by her words, Han Chong escorted her back to the tomb. There Purple Jade provided him with drink and feat, and he stayed for three days and nights, during which time they completed the rites of husband and wife. As Han was about to go, Purple Jade brought out a brilliant pearl a full inch in diameter to give him, saying, “Now my name has been sullied, and my wishes denied, what else is there to say? Take care of yourself thereafter. Should you happen to go by my home, give my respects to my father.”

When Han came out he did indeed go to see the king, to whom he told what had happened. In great anger the king said, “My daughter is already dead; Han Chong is but fabricating a lie to slander a departed soul! This is nothing more than opening the grave to steal the treasure, and then sheltering himself under the pretense of having seen ghosts and spirits!” The king made a quick move to arrest Han Chong, but he got away and went to Purple Jade’s tomb to tell her. “Don’t worry,” she said, “I’ll go now to explain to my father.”

The king was grooming himself when suddenly he saw Purple Jade. Startled and shocked, he was happy but also grieved. “How is it that you have come back to life?” he asked.

Kneeling, Purple Jade replied, “In the past the student Han Chong came to ask for my hand, but you refused. My name was sullied and my hopes dashed, finally resulting in my death. Han Chong returned from far wary, and hearing that I was already dead, brought gifts for the dead to my grave in the mourning. Moved by his deep sincerity, I appeared to him and subsequently presented the pearl to him. He did not break into the grave, and I hope that you do not prosecute him.”

The king’s wife overheard her daughter’s voice and came out to embrace her, but Purple Jade disappeared like smoke.

王夫差，小女，名曰紫玉，年十八，才貌俱美。童子韓重，年十九，有道術，女悅之，私交信問，許為之妻。重學於齊，魯之間，臨去，屬其父母使求婚。王怒、不與。女玉結氣死，葬閶門之外。

三年，重歸，詰其父母；父母曰：「王大怒，玉結氣死，已葬矣。」重哭泣

哀慟，具牲幣往弔於墓前。玉魂從墓出，見重流涕，謂曰：「昔爾行之後，令二親從王相求，度必克從大願；不圖別後遭命，奈何！」

玉乃左顧，宛頸而歌曰：「南山有烏，北山張羅；烏既高飛，羅將奈何！意欲從君，讒言孔多。悲結生疾，沒命黃墟。命之不造，冤如之何！羽族之長，名為鳳凰；一日失雄，三年感傷；雖有眾鳥，不為匹雙。故見鄙姿，逢君輝光。身遠心近，何當暫忘。」

歌畢，歔欷流涕，要重還冢。

重曰：「死生異路，懼有尤愆，不敢承命。」

玉曰：「死生異路，吾亦知之；然今一別，永無後期。子將畏我為鬼而禍子乎？欲誠所奉，寧不相信。」

重感其言，送之還冢。玉與之飲讌，留三日三夜，盡夫婦之禮。

臨出，取徑寸明珠以送重曰：「既毀其名，又□其願，復何言哉！時節自愛。若至吾家，致敬大王。」

重既出，遂詣王自說其事。王大怒曰：「吾女既死，而重造訛言，以玷穢亡靈，此不過發冢取物，託以鬼神。」

趣收重。重走脫，至玉墓所，訴之。

玉曰：「無憂。今歸白王。」

王粧梳，忽見玉，驚愕悲喜，問曰：「爾緣何生？」

玉跪而言曰：「昔諸生韓重來求玉，大王不許，玉名毀，義絕，自致身亡。重從遠還，聞玉已死，故齎牲幣，詣冢弔唁。感其篤，終輒與相見，因以珠遺之，不為發冢。願勿推治。」

夫人聞之，出而抱之。玉如煙然。[204]

[204] *Soushen ji, juan* 16. Translation is modified upon DeWoskin and Crump, 1996, 193-5.

APPENDIX II

The Woman of the Grand Mystery

The Woman of the Grand Mystery was surnamed Zhuan and named He. While still young, she was bereaved of her husband. Anyone who read the bones and physiognomies of hers and her son's said they would not live very long. Worrying about the transience of life, she said, "One cannot be reborn once he leaves the world. Now I am even told that my allotted life span is especially short, so I am going to practice the Dao, or there is no other way that can extend my years." Devoted herself to the quest for transcendence, she went to look for a well-known teacher, and finally mastered the arts of Jade Master. After practicing it for years, she could enter water without getting wet. In the depths of winter, she could sit on ice for days wearing only a single garment, and her complexion would not change and her body warm. She could transport offices and palaces, towns and houses, and make them disappear simply by pointing her finger. By doing so, she could also open the locks of doors and windows, of caskets and closets. Mountains could be toppled, and trees could be broken in the same way; but when she pointed again, they would become as before. When she was traveling with her disciples in the mountain, at sunset she would knock a rock with her staff and there would appear a door. Inside there would be walls and ceiling, sheets and quilts, curtains and canopies, as well as food and beverage. She could always find the place of residence wherever she went. She could make small things big as a house and big things as small as a prickle. She could spit flames out of her mouth upward toward the sky and put them off in a puff. She could sit in scorching fire, with neither her clothes nor her shoes singed by the flames. In an instant, she could transform herself into whatever she pleased, an old man, a young lad, or even a horse and a carriage, and there was not sort of transformation she could not accomplish. Performing thirty-six arts effectively, she resuscitated the dead and saved innumerable lives. No one knew what she ingested, not did anyone receive her arts of transcendence. She reverted to a youthful appearance with pitch black temple hair and ascended to heaven in broad daylight.

太元女，姓顓名和。少喪夫，或相其母子，皆曰不壽。惻然以為憂，常曰："人之處世，一失不可複生，況聞壽限之促，非修道不可以延生也。"遂行訪名師，洗心求道，得王子之術。行之累年，遂能入水不濡。盛雪寒時，單衣冰上，而顏色不變，身體溫煖，可至積日。又能徙官府宮殿城市屋宅於他處，視之無異，指之即失其所在。門戶櫝櫃有關鑰者，指之即開。指山山摧，指樹樹折，更指之，即複如故。將弟子行山間，日暮以杖叩石，即開門戶，入其中，屋宇床褥帷帳廩供酒食如常，雖行萬里，所在常而。能令小物忽大如屋，大物忽小如毫芒。或吐火張天，噓之即滅。又能坐炎火之中，衣履不燃。須臾之間，或化老翁，或為小兒，或為車馬，無所不為。行三十六術甚效，起死回生，救人無數。不知其何所服食，亦無得其術者。顏色益少，鬢髮如鴉，忽白日升天而去。[205]

[205] *Shenxian zhuan, juan* 7. Translation mine.

APPENDIX III

Maiden of West River

Maiden of West River was a nice of Bo Shanfu, the divine transcendent. Bo Shanfu was a native of Yongzhou. He entered Hua Mountain where he concentrated his thoughts and practiced a dietary regimen. From time to time he returned to his native village to look in on his relatives. This went on for two hundred years, during which time he did not age. Whenever he arrived at anyone's home, he would numerically divine their fortunes from past times onward, their good and bad deeds, successes and disasters; it was as if he had seen them himself. He also knew whether what was about to happen was auspicious or inauspicious; all that he spoke was accurate.

His niece was advanced in years and was often sick, so he gave her some medicine. At the time, the woman was already eighty years old, but now she reverted to a youthful appearance; [her complexion] was like peach blossoms.

Emperor Wu of the Han had sent out a messenger who was passing through Hedong when he suddenly noticed, to the west of the city wall, a girl whipping an old man. He bowed his head, knelt, and accepted the blows. Thinking this strange, the messenger inquired about it, and the girl replied, "This old man is my son. My uncle, Bo Shanfu, once instructed me in the use of divine medicines. I told my son to take them, but he was not rigorous, and so now he has become decrepit and old. When we walk, he cannot keep up with me, so I am beating him." The messenger asked the ages of the girl and the old man. She replied, "I am two hundred thirty years old; my son is only eighty."

Later she entered Hua Mountain and departed.

西河少女者，神仙伯山甫外甥也。山甫，雍州人。入華山學道，精思服食，時還鄉里省親族。二百餘年，容壯益少。入人家，即知其家先世已來善惡功過，有如目擊；又知將來吉凶，言無不效。

見其外甥女年少多病，與之藥。女服藥時已八十，稍稍還少，色如嬰兒。

漢遣使行徑西河，於城東見一女子笞一老翁，頭白如雪，跪而受杖。使者怪而問之。女子答曰："此是妾兒也。昔妾舅伯山甫得神仙之道，隱居華山之中，愍妾多病，以神藥授妾，漸複少壯。今此兒，妾令服藥不精，致此衰老，行不及妾，妾恚之，故因杖耳。"使者問女及兒年各幾許。女子答云："妾年二百三十歲，兒年八十矣。"

此女亦入華山而去。[206]

[206] *Shenxian zhuan*, *juan* 7. Translation is modified from Campany, 2002, 297 & 486.

APPENDIX IV

Cheng Wei's Wife

The wife of Cheng Wei, who was a Gate Guardsman under the Han, could communicate with spirits and perform transformations.

Once Cheng Wei was out on a mission and lacked clothing appropriate for the season. This troubled him greatly. Without prompting, his wife brought two items of clothing out to him.

Cheng Wei was fond of alchemical pursuits, but he repeatedly failed to complete [an elixir]. So his wife produced a bit of medicine from a pouch, which she added to the "liquid silver" mixture that was to be heated. Soon it formed silver.

Cheng Wei wanted to receive methods from her, but he never succeeded in doing so; she said that, according to his bones and physiognomy, he ought not to receive them. He relentlessly pressured her, so she "died," escaped by means of a simulated corpse, and departed.

漢期門郎程偉妻，得道者也，能神通變化，偉不甚異之。

偉當從駕出行，而服飾不備，甚以為憂。妻曰："止闕衣耳，何愁之甚耶？"即致兩匹縑，忽然自至。

偉亦好黃白之術，煉時即不成。妻乃出囊中藥少許，以器盛水銀，投藥而煎之，須臾成銀矣。

偉欲從之受方，終不能得。云偉骨相不應得。逼之不已，妻遂蹙然而死，屍解而去。[207]

[207] *Shenxian zhuan, juan* 7. Translated by Campany (Campany, 2002, 139-140).

APPENDIX V

Maid Ma

During the reign of Han Emperor Xiaohuan, Wang Yuan, styled Fangping, a divine transcendent, descended to the house of Cai Jing. In advance of his arrival, the sound of metal drums, pipes, men, and horses could be heard. Then, when the party arrived at Cai's house, his entire family saw Wang. He was wearing a "long-journey cap" and a crimson robe with tiger-head belt bag, a five colored sash, and a sword. He had a short yellow beard and was of medium stature. He was riding a feather-canopied chariot drawn by a team of five dragons, each of them a different color. To the front and rear, the banners, pennants, insignia, and the train of armed attendants were all similar to those of a great general when he rides out. Those who played pipes and drums descended from the sky, riding *kirin*, and hovered in midair over the courtyard. The attendants were all over teen feet high, and they did not walk as humans do.

When the entire train had arrived, all of the attendants suddenly vanished and only Wang Yuan remained visible, seated. Cai Jing's parents, siblings, and in-laws were brought and introduced. Then Wang dispatched someone to summon "Maid Ma". None of Cai's family knew who this Maid Ma was. The summons read: "Wang Fangping respectfully says: 'It has been a long time since I was in the human realm. I have come to this place today and was wondering whether the Maid would like to come and converse for a while.'" In a moment came a note in reply; the messenger was invisible, but the words of the note were read aloud, and they were these: "Maid Ma bows and says: 'Without our realizing it, more than five hundred years have passed since our last meeting! Noble and base have their proper order, so it is appropriate that I bow to you who are of superior rank. I am troubling your messenger to carry this to you for the moment, and I myself will arrive in the space of a meal. I must first carry out an order to stop by Penglai; I shall not be gone long, and as soon as I return I shall come to greet you personally. Pray do not leave until I have come.'"

Four hours later, Maid Ma arrived. In her case too, the sounds of men and horses were first heard; then they arrived. Her train of attendants was half the size of Wang's. When she arrived at Cai's home, his whole family saw her as well. She appeared to be a handsome woman of eighteen or nineteen; her hair was done up, and several loose strands hung down to her waist. Her gown had a pattern of colors, but it was not woven; it shimmered, dazzling the eyes, and was indescribable—it was not of this world. She approached and bowed to Wang, who bade her rise. When they were both seated, they called for the traveling canteen. The servings were piled up on gold patterns and in jade cups without limit. There were rare delicacies, many of them made from flowers and fruits, and their fragrance permeated the air inside Cai's home and out. When the meat was sliced and served, in flavor it resembled broiled *mo*, and was announced as *kirin* meat.

Maid Ma declared: "Since I entered your service, I have seen the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields three times. As one proceeded across to Penglai, the water came only up to one's waist. I wonder whether it will turn to dry land once again." Wang answered

with a sigh, “Oh, the sages all say that the Eastern Sea will once again become blowing dust.”

Maid Ma wanted to meet Cai Jing’s mother, wife, and other female members of the family. Now, at this time, Cai’s younger brother’s wife had given birth to a child only a few days earlier. As soon as Maid Ma saw the young woman, she said, “Whew! Stop there for a moment and don’t come any closer!” Then she asked that a small amount of uncooked rice be brought to her. When she got the rice, she threw it on the floor. When everyone looked down, the rice grains had all changed to pearls. Wang chuckled, “It’s simply because the Maid is young and I’m old that I no longer enjoy these sorts of monkeylike transformation tricks anymore.”

Wang Yuan then announced to Cai Jing’s family, “I wish to present you all with a gift of fine liquor. This liquor has just bee produced by the celestial kitchens. Its flavor is quite strong, so it is unfit for drinking by ordinary people; in fact, in some cases it has been known to burn people’s intestines. You should mix it with water, and you should not regard this as inappropriate.” With that, he added a *dou* of water to a *sheng* of liquor, stirred it, and presented it to the members of Cai Jing’s family. On drinking little more than a *sheng* of it each, they were all intoxicated. After a little while, the liquor was all gone. Wang dispatched attendants, saying, “There’s not enough. Go get some more.” He gave them a thousand in cash, instructing them to buy liquor from a certain old woman in Yuhang. In a short while, the attendants returned, saying, “We have secured one oilcloth bag’s worth, about five *dou* of liquor.” They also relayed a message from the old man in Yuhang: “I fear that this earthly liquor is not fit to be drunk by such eminences.”

Maid Ma’s fingernails resembled bird claws. When Cai Jing noticed them, he thought to himself, “My back itches. Wouldn’t it be great if I could get her to scratch my back with those nails?” Now, Wang Yuan knew what Cai was saying in his heart, so he ordered him bound and whipped, chiding, “Maid Ma is a divine personage. How dare you think that her nails could scratch you back!” The whip lashing Cai’s back was the only thing visible; no one was seen wielding it. Wang added, “My whippings are not given without cause.”

On the same day, Wang Yuan transmitted a talisman to Cai Jing. Commander Chen, Cai Jing’s neighbor, could round up and send off ghosts and demons, cure illness, and save people’s lives. Cai Jing later mastered the arts of “escape,” which was like sloughing off a cicada shell. He often followed Lord Wang, traveling among mountains and seas, and sometimes he temporarily returned home. Lord Wang also had letters sent to Commander Chen. The characters, mostly seal script, some Perfected Writ, were large and were widely spaced. Chen and his family preserved it for generations.

After the banquet, Wang Yuan and Maid Ma, riding their chariots, departed and ascended to Heaven. The sounds of pipes and drums, and the trains of armed attendants were the same as those when they arrived.

漢孝桓帝時，神仙王遠，字方平，降于蔡經家。將至一時頃，聞金鼓簫管人馬之聲。及舉家皆見王方平，帶遠遊冠，著朱衣，虎頭鞶囊，五色之綬，帶劍，少須

黃色，中形人也。乘羽車，駕五龍，龍各異色。麾節幡旗，前後導從，威儀奕奕，如大將軍。鼓吹皆乘麟從天而下，懸集於庭。從官皆長丈餘，不從道行。

既至，從官皆隱，不知所在，唯見方平與經父母兄弟相見。獨坐久之，即令人相訪，經家亦不知麻姑何人也。言曰：“王方平敬報姑，余久不在人間，今來在此，想姑能暫來語乎？”有頃，使者還。不見其使，但聞其語云：“麻姑再拜，不見忽已五百餘年，尊卑有敘，修敬無階，煩信來承在彼登山顛倒而先受命，當按行蓬萊，今便暫住，如是當還，還便親覲，願未即去。”

如此兩時間，麻姑至矣。來時亦先聞人馬簫鼓聲，既至，從官半于方平。麻姑至，蔡經亦舉家見之，是好女子，年十八九許，於頂中作髻，餘發垂至腰，其衣有文章而非錦綺，光彩耀目，不可名狀。入拜方平，方平為之起立。坐定，招進行廚，皆金盤玉杯，肴膳多是諸花果，而香氣達於內外，擘脯行之如柏靈，云是麟脯也。

麻姑自說云：“接待以來，已見東海三為桑田，向到蓬萊，水淺淺於往者，會時略半也，豈將複還為陵陸乎？”方平笑曰：“聖人皆言海中複揚塵也。”

姑欲見蔡經母及婦姪，時弟婦新產數十日，麻姑望見乃知之曰：“噫，且止勿前。”即求少許米，得米，便撒之擲地，視其米，皆成真珠矣。方平笑曰：“姑故年少，吾老矣，了不喜複作此狡獪變化也。”

方平語經家人曰：“吾欲賜汝輩酒，此酒乃出天廚，其味醇醲，非世人所宜飲，飲之或能爛腸，今當以水和之，汝輩勿恠也。”乃以一升酒、合水一鬥攪之，賜經家。飲一升許，良久酒盡。方平語左右曰：“不足，還取也。”以千錢于余杭姥，相聞求其沽酒。須臾信還，得一油囊酒五鬥許，信傳余杭姥答言“恐地上酒不中尊飲耳。”

又麻姑鳥爪，蔡經見之，心中念言：“背大癢時，得此爪以爬背，當佳。”平已知經心中所念。即使人牽經鞭之，謂曰：“麻姑神人也，汝何忽謂爪可爬背耶？”但見鞭著經背，亦不見有人持鞭者。方平告經曰：“吾鞭不可妄得也。”

是日又以一符傳授蔡經。鄰人陳尉，能檄召鬼魔，救人治疾。蔡經亦得解脫之道，如蛻蟬耳。經常從王君遊山海，或暫歸家。王君亦有書與陳尉，多是篆文或真書，字廓落而大，陳尉世世寶之。

宴畢，方平麻姑命駕升天而去，簫鼓道從如初焉。[208]

[208] *Shenxian zhuan, juan* 7. Translation is modified from Campany, 2002, 259-264.

APPENDIX VI

Lady Fan

Lady Fan was the wife of Liu Gang. Liu was a district magistrate of Shangyu, who also practiced the arts of Dao. He could summon ghosts and spirits and accomplish transformations. He cultivated himself in the arts of esoterica in quiet privacy, so that no one knew his practices and methods. He advocated tranquility and simplicity in administration, so people in Shangyu benefited from his policies. The district had never suffered from flood or drought, plague or beasts, but had bump harvest every year. Liu Gang and his wife both practiced arts of the Dao, and each of them claimed superiority over the other.

In the central courtyard of their home there were two large peach trees. The husband and wife each said an incantation on one of them, and the tress began to struggle with each other, until the tree that Liu Gang had incanted over fled across the fence.

Liu Gang exhaled over a basin of water, and a carp was formed. Lady Fan exhaled over the same basin of water, and on otter was formed, which ate the carp.

Liu Gang was out traveling when he encountered a tiger. [At first] it did not dare rise up, but then it attempted to seize and devour him. Lady Fan seized the tiger and pressed its face to the ground, so that it could not look at her. She bound it with twine and let it back to their home.

Whenever he tested his arts against hers, in each case Liu Gang was no match for Lady Fan.

The time came for them to ascend to Heaven. In the outer courtyard there was a large locust tree. Liu Gang climbed several dozen feet up it, and then, by dint of effort, he managed to take off. Lady Fan simply sat down on her mat, and then, even so lightly, she took off like a cloud of pneuma. They ascended together into the heavens and thus departed.

樊夫人者，劉綱妻也。綱仕為上虞令，有道術。能檄召鬼神，禁制變化之事。亦潛修密證，人莫能知。為理尚清靜簡易，而政令宣行，民受其惠，無水旱疫毒鷙暴之傷，歲歲大豐。暇日常與夫人較其術。

庭中兩株桃，夫妻各咒一株，使相斬擊，良久，綱所咒者，不知數走出籬外。

綱唾盤中即成鯉魚，夫人唾盤中成獺食魚。

綱與夫人入四明山，路阻虎，綱禁之，虎伏不敢動，適欲往，虎即滅之，夫人徑前，虎即面向地，不敢仰視，夫人以繩系虎於床腳下。綱每共試術，事事不勝。

將升天，縣廳側有大皂莢樹，綱升樹數丈，方能飛舉，夫人平坐，冉冉如雲氣之升，同升天而去。[209]

[209] *Shenxian zhuan*, *juan* 7. Translation is modified from Campany, 2002, 147.

APPENDIX VII

The Holy Mother of Dongling

The Holy Mother of Dongling was the wife of a man of the Du clan of Hailing in Guangling. She studied the way of Liu Gang. She could appear and disappear at will, change shapes, transform, and conceal herself from view so as to be nowhere in particular. Master Du did not believe in her or in the Dao and was often angry with her. The Holy Mother knew how to heal sicknesses and cure people and she visited some of them at their homes. This enraged Du even more, so he filed an official complaint against her, stating that she was lecherous and wicked and was not attending to her proper domestic role, so she was arrested and imprisoned. But the Holy Mother flew out the window and departed. Crowds could see her a great distance away as she soared high up into the clouds. She left beneath the window the pair of shoes she had been wearing. After this, people far and near built temples for her and made offerings, and their divine efficacy was great; whatever service people requested, it would occur immediately upon their making an offering. There were always blue birds at the places where offerings to her were made. If anyone lost an object, these blue birds would fly and collect over it, so that no one else picked up found objects along the roads.

For many years, her cult did not cease. And still today, no one can get away with wicked deeds or thefts in Hailing district. Serious offenders are drowned in storms at sea or killed by tigers and wolves; those who commit minor infractions fall ill.

東陵聖母，廣陵海陵人也。適杜氏，師劉綱學道，能易形變化，隱見無方。杜不通道，常怒之。東陵聖母理疾救人，或有所詣，杜恚之愈甚。訟之官云：“聖母奸妖，不理家務。”官收聖母付獄。頃之，已從獄窗中飛去，眾望見之，轉高入雲中，留所著履一雙在窗下。

於是遠近立廟祠之，民所奉事，禱之立效。常有一青鳥在祭所，人有失物者，乞問所在，青鳥即飛集盜物人之上。路不拾遺，歲月稍久，亦不復而。至今海陵縣中，不得為奸盜之事，大者即風波沒溺，虎狼殺之，小者即複病也。[210]

[210] *Shenxian zhuan, juan* 7. Translated by Campany (Campany, 2002, 146).

APPENDIX VIII

Horror: The Top Ten *Lingyi* Buildings in Shanghai[211]
Translations and Interpretations

1．东方路之坟墩路

谣传：东方路，从前叫文登路——听起来像“坟墩路（上海话）”，东方路和维坊路这从前是坟场。在东方路没改名字以前，每年这个十字路口都有两三个人被车压死，好惨的。

The rumor goes that Dongfang Road was called Wendeng in the past, which is similar in sound to “fendun” in Shanghainese, meaning graveyards, and this area was so. Before the change of name from Wendeng to Dongfang, every year two to three people will die at traffic accidents at the crossroads of Dongfang Road and Weifang Road. How sad it is. [212]

2．东海学院之白骨

谣传：上海闵行的东海学院在学校新造教学楼的时候，挖出来好几具白骨，当年学校就死了好几个学生，都是在学校门口莫名其妙被车子撞死的。其中一个女生死得 最离奇，她死的时候学校突然停电，几分钟后恢复，有一个寝室的男生在停电的时候看到一个穿白衣服的女生从楼面的一端飘到另一端，由于太邪，学校封锁了这件事情，但还是露出来了……

The rumor goes that several skeletons were found when Donghai College in Minhang District in Shanghai was constructing new buildings. In that same year, quite a few students died, all of traffic accidents beyond explanation at the school gate. The death of one girl was the most strange. When she died, the electric power of the school was cut off and restored after a few minutes. During the blackout, one male student in his dormitory saw a girl in white floating from one end of the building to another end.

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[211] http://www.cnwnews.com/html/soceity/cn_shqw/20150322/701690.html (Retrieved June 12, 2015). Translation mine.

[212] Here, the Confucian doctrine of *Zhengming* (正名 Rectification of Names) is allegedly effective in suppressing the ominous supernatural power inherited in name and history of the locality.

Because these incidents are too anomalous and perverse, they were censored by the school authority, but were later disclosed. [213]

3．恒隆广场之香炉造型

谣传：恒隆广场还有件事情或许大家也不是很清楚，就是目前上海有名的恒隆广场，卖最昂贵品牌的超级百货公司。听说，这块地方很妖的，以前在这里造楼，无论 怎么样弄，造到某一程度就也造不上去了。塌了又造，造了又塌。

The rumor goes that there is something about the Hanglung Plaza that people may not know. You are right! It is the famous Hanglung Plaza. It is the place that has the super department store which sells the most expensive brands. It is said that this place is very supernaturally evil. When they were trying to build the plaza there, no matter how they did, the building cannot exceed a certain height. It collapsed over and over. That is the reason why now the building is having an incense burner shape.[214]

4．华联超市总部之胎死腹中

谣传：隆昌路长阳路口的华联超市总部，据说在建造的时候死过 9 个民工。后来里面的女员工从来就没有顺利的生下小孩，不是胎死腹中就是生下来后不幸夭折，到现在已经死了 8 个了。如今里面的女员工根本就不敢要孩子！恐怖！

The rumor goes that when building the headquarter of Hualian Supermarket at the cross of Longchang Road and Changyang Road, nine migrant workers died during the construction. After that, one of the female workers in the headquarter has succeeded in

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[213] It seems that the supernatural power of the dead was unleashed when skeletons were being unearthed. One of the most "memorable" victims to it was a girl student, whose ghost was detected by a male, the storyline of which is reminiscent of those *zhiguai* stories in which women are more vulnerable to supernatural attacks that are not associated with revenge for wrongdoings, and the "knights in shining armor" who either recognize the supernatural cause or come to their rescue are male *fangshi*.
The other motif here is conspiracy theory that goes through urban legends like alien abduction stories, of how the authority withholds the information, which somehow is leaked into populace and circulated in the realm of private knowledge.

[214] This story is similar to Item #10, of how modernization construction fails in the face of local supernatural powers, and how modernization has to yield to the supernatural in one way or another. What might also be in play is class conflict. Hang Lung Plaza boasts the most luxurious brands, the price of which goes far beyond the income of average workers. This story could have been an expression of frustration from the grassroots against the financially, and by extension, politically and discursively, privileged.

giving birth to children. The infants either died aborning or prematurely after birth. Now the number has reached eight. The female workers there do not even dare to be pregnant. How horrible![215]

5．龙华寺之“阴阳河”

谣传：龙华有一个传说不知道你们知不知道，就是那条在龙华机场外的河，又名阴阳河，外面的龙华寺就是为了镇里面的恶鬼不外逃的。如果晚上去的话，阴气森森的.

As the rumor goes, do you know there is a legend of Longhua? It is about the river that is outside the Longhua Airport, which is also named Yinyang River. The Longhua Temple is built to contain the evil ghosts in the river. If you go there at night, you will feel the intense atmosphere of the netherworlds.[216]

6．梅龙镇广场之鬼打墙

谣传：梅龙镇广场，南京路，有人以前到客户那去，不高兴坐电梯，走的楼梯，在里面走了大概有半个小时都没找到出口，估计是迷路了，呵呵，反正我再也不会去那鬼地方了

The rumor goes that there are incidents of “ghost-building-walls” in the Westgate Mall on Nanjing Road in Shanghai. Some people went to see their customers in the Westgate Mall. They did not bother to take the elevator but used the stairway. They cannot find exit after walking inside the stairway for half an hour. They probably just lost their way, but, hehe, I will not go to that cursed place anyway.[217]

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[215] Again, class conflict between middle-class workers in the headquarter and low-class migrant workers and region conflict between local Shanghainese and migrant workers from other provinces are in play. Moreover, it seems that the ghosts of the dead migrant workers do not have enough power to exert their supernatural attack on those responsible for their death, but on women and infants, the ones who are much less powerful in the world and who are considered to be lodged in between of worlds.

[216] Similar to Item #1 in which a Confucian doctrine is used to contain the illegitimate supernatural power that does not uphold the morality of the society, here a Buddhist temple is constructed to perform the same function. This is also a river legend in which dubious deaths are connected with water.

[217] There is a Baidu Baike page on the belief of “ghost-building-walls” which even provided a scientific explanation for being unable to walk out of a circle during night or at countryside. Here, in this description, again, a highly luxurious place, the Westgate

7．普陀公园之阴阳街

谣传：普陀公园附近阴阳街 原普陀公圆边的一条路，长辈们称“阴阳街（界）”，解放前苏州河畔有许多“滚地笼”住着大批穷人，其中有许多人因没钱安葬就被人埋在此地，还有很多死婴被 丢在此地，因此叫“阴阳街（界）”。

The rumor goes that there is a Yin-Yang Street next to the Putuo Park. Older people call it Yin-Yang Area basing on the similar pronunciation. Before the Liberation, many poor people lived in the ghetto areas next to the Suzhou Creek. Many of them were buried here because they didn't have money for a graveyard, and many dead infants were also disposed here. There goes its name Yin-Yang Street.[218]

8．上大文学院之八卦花坛

谣传：三门路 661 号原上大文学院 上海大学文学院。上大文学院在嘉定校区，里面有个花坛，是八卦形的，上面和附近绿树苍翠，草叶茂密，都是绿油油的，即使在夏天 37 度的正午，从那里走过也 是寒气逼人，汗毛凌厉。 据上大文学院毕业的同事说，这下面是万人坑。记得当年清兵入关有过嘉定三屠，日军侵略时期在嘉定也有过大屠杀。

No. 661, Sanmen Road used to be the location of the School of Arts of Shanghai University. In its college in the Jiading District, there lies a flower terrace in the shape of the Eight Triagrams. The trees above and around are verdant and the grass luxuriantly green. Even at noon on a summer day of 37 degrees centigrade, one will feel the bristling chill. According to my colleagues who graduated from the School of Arts of Shanghai University, what lies underneath the flowerbed is a pit of ten thousand corpses. Jiading was slaughtered during the Manchurian invasion and later Japanese invasion.[219]

Mall, is at question. Also, nearly all the narrative follows the format starting from “the rumor goes that,” but in this case, the writer places him/herself into the narration.

[218] People of poverty and infants are believed to the cause of the supernatural nature of the setting. What is interesting is the emphasis on the difference before Communist liberation and after. It could have left the impression that the supernatural forces are contained by the anti-superstition movement of the newly built Communist government.

[219] Ethnic and national conflicts are invoked here. “Pit of ten thousand corpses,” a term that is specifically related to the Nanjing Massacre, is also invoked here. Luxuriant dense trees and grass are not associated with the vividness of life, but with death.

9．徐家汇太平洋广场之“宝贝对不起”

谣传：徐家汇太平洋广场。听说徐家汇太平洋的位置以前是个育婴堂，解放前有好多小婴儿在那里死掉的，太平洋百货刚刚造好的时候，那里的保安晚上老是听见有 小孩子在哭，在商场里找，却找不到小孩，后来那帮台湾人知道了，台湾人是很相信风水的，请来风水先生看过以后，说是不干净，破解之法就是天天在那里放着同 一歌－－宝贝对不起，放得耳朵都要出老茧了，就是放给那里的小鬼听的。是听在太平洋百货的工作人员说的。

The rumor goes that the location of the Pacific Department Store at Xujiahui used to be an orphanage. Before the Liberation, many infants died there. When the Store was first built up, the security guards there always heard the cry of little kids during night. They tried to look for the course, but cannot locate the kids. Later those Taiwanese, who believed in Fengshui, knew it and asked for Fengshui Masters to come to check it out. The Fengshui Master told them that the area is not clean, and the counter-magic is to play the same song, “Baby, I’m Sorry.” They play it so often that people even have callous in their ears. This song is for the little ghosts. I heard this from the people who work in the Pacific Department Store.[220]

10．　延安路高架之龙柱

谣传：高架延安东路黄陂南路口延安路高架，在黄陂路那的，有个龙的雕塑，据说是请高僧来看过的，流传的版本很多，有说龙脉，有说是恶鬼。据说，延安路高架 当年造的时候打桩怎么也打不下去，中国人外国人。后来叫了个高人来看了以后说是动了龙脉，所以打不下。叫他们在柱桩上刻上龙的样子来压，结果一打就直接打 进去了。所以现在延安路绿地那里的高架的柱子上有龙的浮雕在那里，而上海其他的高架好象都没有看到过有这种东西。高架的那根龙柱，还是出租车司机讲给我听 的，他说当初打桩的时候请老和尚来念了很多天的经后来不到半个月那个老和尚就圆寂了。 上海龙柱的传说 上海南北高架和延安高架交汇处有一根很粗的支柱，上面雕刻了几条龙，据说有个传说。我听了很多版本，而我现在说的这个是我收集了很多资料得出的。 上海南北高架和延安高架交汇处有一根很粗的支柱，上面用铜雕刻着盘龙浮雕，这个就是上海的龙柱，被其他几件事件一起被称为上海最玄的事件之一。

The rumor goes that there is a dragon sculpture on a column of the Yan’an Road Highway at the cross of East Yan’an Road and South Huangpi Road. It is said that they

[220] Without the cultural breakage caused by the Cultural Revolution, the Taiwanese are playing the role of the perceptive people who can ask a *fangshi* to solve the problem.

asked some senior monk to check this place out. There are many different versions of the story. Some said that this is a dragon vein, and some said there are some evil ghosts. It is said that when they were first building the Highway, they can never drive the pile into the earth here, no matter Chinese or foreigners. Later a senior monk was asked to come and he said the reason why the pile cannot be driven in is that the dragon vein was touched. He told them to inscribe a dragon onto the pile. And they made no more effort in pile driving. That is the reason why there is a dragon sculpture on the column there while we have never seen anything similar to this anywhere else. A taxi driver told me this story. He also said that they also asked the monk to chant scriptures for many days. The monk died within half a month of this incident. There are many different versions of the story, and this one that I'm telling here is gathered from many materials. This one, together with others, is considered one the most mysterious incidents in Shanghai.[221]

[221] The conflict between building Shanghai into a modernized urban space and the indigenous power inherent in the landscape is of key importance to this story. The monk presumably has the power to detect the problem, but was also punished by death for his releasing the heavenly secret. The writer of this item is also very aware of the different versions of the story.