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Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China (Sinica Leidensia)

Sing-Chen Lydia Chiang

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Chinese strange tale collections contain short stories about ghosts and animal spirits, supra-human heroes and freaks, exotic lands and haunted homes, earthquake and floods, and other perceived anomalies to accepted cosmic and social norms. As such, this body of literature is a rich repository of Chinese myths, folklore, and unofficial histories . These collections also reflect Chinese attitudes towards normalcy and strangeness, perceptions of civilization and barbarism, and fantasies about self and other. Inspired in part by Freud s theory of the uncanny, this book explores the emotive subtexts of late imperial strange tale collections to consider what these stories tell us about suppressed cultural anxieties, the construction of gender, and authorial self-identity."

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