Abstract: One fact about medieval prose writing often overlooked by contemporary scholars is that these texts represent communicative acts. The decisions authors made regarding which genres to use in recording their life experiences or those of others was thus significant: choices about genre influenced what aspects of lived experience were relevant or appropriate, the diction and rhetoric used in recording them, the audiences they might address, and the aims which they might used to realize. Genre thus seemed to play an important role in shaping how memories were constructed. In my paper, I will examine one case within the extant corpus of Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759-818) in which the author produced two distinct genres of commemorative text—a tomb epitaph inscription (墓誌銘) and a sacrificial prayer (祭文)—about the same subject, Zhang Jian 張薦 (744-804). In addition to demonstrating how the socially recognized conventions of these genres shaped Quan’s construction of their subjects’ identities and experiences, I will argue as well that Quan also used them to construct a particular representation of his own identity as an official, an intellectual, and a close friend of the deceased.

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