

Two Religious Thinkers of the Early Eastern Jin: Gan Bao and Ge Hong in Multiple Contexts

The *other world* will be admirable for Congruities.

Benjamin Whichcote¹

OPENING

China during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 AD), as during the previous Western Jin (265–317), is often portrayed as a time in which “dark learning” (*xuanxue* 玄學), “pure conversation” (*qingtan* 清談), and reclusion were the universal norm. Such iconic cultural figures as Tao Qian 陶潛 (365?–427), Sun Chuo 孫綽 (ca. 300–380), and Shi Daoan 釋道安 (312–385) are often suggested to have exclusively set the tone for intellectual life. In the following essay I want to complicate our picture of this dynastic period by presenting an interpretation of the religious thought of two authors from its early years, Gan Bao 干寶 (d. 336) and Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343).² How to proceed in such an undertaking is by no means self-evident. Much will depend on the framing, terminology, and questions, and so these must be considered carefully at the outset.

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¹ Benjamin Whichcote (1609–1683), *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* (London: Elkin Mathews & Marrot, 1930), p. 101. I am grateful to Anthony C. Yu for bringing to my attention this aphorism (no. 905) of the Anglican divine and Cambridge Platonist; see epigraph to Yu, “‘Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit!’ Ghosts in Traditional Chinese Prose Fiction,” *HJAS* 47 (1987), pp. 397–434.

² On Ge Hong’s dates, see Nathan Sivin, “On the *Pao P’u Tzu Nei P’ien* and the Life of Ko Hung (283–343),” *Isis* 60 (1969), pp. 388–91, and Gary Arbuckle, “When Did Ge Hong Die?” *B. C. Asian Review* 2 (1988), pp. 1–7. On the date of Gan Bao’s death, see *Jiankang shilu* 建康實錄 (SKQS zhenben liuji edn.) 7, p. 25b; my thanks to Stephen R. Bokenkamp for this reference, which, among other things, has prompted me to revise the estimate of the dates of composition of Gan’s *Soushen ji* as stated in Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly*

First, it is necessary to recognize that religious, intellectual, and cultural “traditions,” as we sometimes like to call them, are not entities; they are, to borrow Benedict Anderson’s phrase, “imagined communities,” with emphasis on “imagined.”³ Nor are they pure, unitary wholes. Consider these lines from an essay by Jonathan Z. Smith:

The traditional vague terminology of “Early Christianity,” “Jewish,” “Gentile,” “Pagan,” “Greco-Oriental,” etc. will not suffice. Each of these generic terms denote[s] complex plural phenomena. For purposes of comparison, they must be disaggregated and each component compared with respect to some larger topic of scholarly interest. That is to say, *with respect to this or that feature, modes of Christianity may differ more significantly between themselves than between some mode of one or another Late Antique religion.* The presupposition of “holism” is not “phenomenological,” it is a major, conservative, theoretical presupposition which has done much mischief in the study of religious materials.⁴

The point applies to early-medieval China as much as the late-antique West. I am therefore determined to avoid describing elements of the Eastern Jin cultural scene in terms of how they related to one or another of the familiar “isms,” because I do not think it is either heuristically helpful or historically (or ontologically) accurate to describe them this way.

Secondly, individuals and texts do not “belong to” one or another tradition in any simple, essentialized way. Traditions are not containers of people or texts. There lingers a stubbornly persistent conceit according to which it ought to be possible to decide, once and for all, from the surviving writings of a literate figure whether he at bottom belonged to this or to that tradition, or simply was, as we like to say, a this rather than a that.⁵ It would make sense on this model, for in-

Accounts in Early Medieval China (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 55.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2d edn. (London: Versa, 1991), pp. 6–7.

⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1990), pp. 117–18, emphasis added. For more on this and the following points, see my “On the Very Idea of Religions (in the Modern West and in Early Medieval China),” *History of Religions* 42 (2003), pp. 287–319.

⁵ A perfect exemplar of this hopelessly flawed approach, applied to Tao Qian, appeared in print just a few years ago: Donald Holzman, “A Dialogue with the Ancients: Tao Qian’s Interrogation of Confucius,” in S. Pearce, A. Spiro, and P. Ebrey, eds., *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2001), pp. 75–98. The essay is further flawed in its attempt to determine the container to which Tao Qian truly belonged by means of counting up the number of his references to texts belonging to one or another container.

stance, to ask whether Ge Hong was really a Daoist or a Confucian, since he left evidence to suggest either or both. But there are much more sophisticated and true-to-life models for characterizing how people participate in and relate to traditions of thought and practice. The best such model is that of multiple repertoires from which people select items useful for particular purposes or to which they refer when doing intellectual work or making religious claims.⁶ Ann Swidler has shown that people relate to elements of their culture in this way as they negotiate their lives. Questions for research include not only what is in a given repertoire but also how and in what circumstances individuals appropriate elements of each. Different repertoires work well in different situations, and individuals often avail themselves of multiple, even contradictory repertoires at different times – indeed, even in the same conversation. If this is empirically true of contemporary American culture, with its legacy of the Protestant model of exclusivist denominational allegiance, it must have been even more deeply true of a culture like that of the Eastern Jin, in which no exclusivist paradigm of religious participation existed despite the presence of multiple religious repertoires on the scene. When characterizing the relations of individuals and texts to imagined communities, then, this model of repertoires is the one I will use. Nor were China's traditions unitary or uniform essences, each with a core identity; the loose assemblage of repertoires, lineages, ideas, values, figures, and texts that we facetiously label "Daoism" was by 317 AD extremely variegated and complex, as Nathan Sivin argued decades ago.⁷

None of this is to deny, on the other hand, that some in early-medieval China had strong preferences and allegiances to what they perceived as a uniquely authoritative tradition. It is rather to suggest that we will find on close inspection that even in such cases the traditions to which they expressed adherence, and the ways in which they did so, included elements from multiple cultural repertoires.

Third, despite the current preference for recovering emic categories and concerns and using these to characterize individuals and their relations to traditions, I continue to find etic categories useful as well. One particular etic perspective that will prove crucial to my argument will be introduced in the next section; here I simply want to defend the usefulness of etic categories. When used skillfully, they allow us to see aspects of the scene that would remain invisible were we to render it

⁶ See Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2001).

⁷ "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity," *History of Religions* 17 (1978), pp. 303–30.

merely in emic terms. They do not require that we ignore what people thought, and they are certainly not ends in themselves; rather, when used well, they are ways of seeing more clearly what people thought, or re-seeing familiar materials in new ways. In any case, if we are writing in the twenty-first century, and in English, there is no alternative: the notion that we could somehow describe Eastern Jin persons and habits of thought strictly in their own terms, simply translating without remainder, is a fantasy, in part because translation itself is not transcription but interpretation and therefore forces emic statements into etic frameworks. We cannot shirk the responsibility and hard choices of interpretation, and, when it comes to a culture as remote in time as the Eastern Jin, what we are interpreting will always remain to some extent opaque to us. The question is not *whether* we will interpret, and interpret in terms of categories brought to (not recovered from) the scene, but *how*.

Finally, even when interpreting in ways that are sensitive to emic viewpoints, as any good historian does, we do well to recall that those viewpoints were situated in multiple contexts. Statements made and positions taken in texts were responses to recent or contemporary interlocutors, claims staked against alternate, competing positions. As Michael Puett has shown,⁸ intellectual choices made in a text take on new significance when viewed, not in isolation or according to the internal dynamics of one or another tradition or lineage (real or perceived), but as alternatives to contemporary competing ideas. They are not simply assertions made in a vacuum, or reports of assumptions, but arguments. This view of cultures, societies, and religious traditions sees them as the contestational fields upon which agents assert claims and attempt to persuade others to their points of view. Distinctions, generalizations, prescriptions, narratives, and other features of texts are, among other things, tactical deployments of taxonomies undertaken in light of definite sets of interests on the part of texts' makers, disseminators, and audience. They are socially situated *acts*, not contextless structures or idle entertainments.⁹

⁸ See Michael J. Puett: "Nature and Artifice: Debates in Late Warring States China concerning the Creation of Culture," *HJAS* 57 (1997), pp. 471-518; "Sages, Ministers, and Rebels: Narratives from Early China Concerning the Initial Creation of the State," *HJAS* 58 (1998), pp. 425-79; *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2001); and *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2002).

⁹ On this point see especially Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), pp. 209-39, and Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1999), pp. 149-50. The scope or scale of the relevant context, and hence the locating of the competing positions involved, is

I eschew, then, picturing the Eastern Jin cultural and religious scene as dominated by the familiar isms, both because such purported entities did not in fact exist in the ways we often metaphorically (and sometimes literally) construe them to have existed and, ironically, because these isms and the ways in which we often talk about them may in fact be etic impositions (and often rather unhelpful ones at that) – their status as emic labels being a topic still in need of careful historical analysis. I also eschew the misguided attempt to fit Ge Hong and Gan Bao once and for all into one of these containers. Picturing Eastern Jin culture as constituted by messily coexisting, competing, partly contradictory or even incommensurable repertoires of ideas, values, narrative tropes, and other resources, I attempt to trace these two men’s maneuverings across and among these repertoires. For the purpose of describing those repertoires and the values they promoted, I use any categories that may help illuminate salient similarities and differences. As I do this, I will ask after the competing ideas and values to which their own assertions were situated as responses. Particularly for this latter purpose, one etic distinction will prove indispensable.

Locative vs. Utopian

In response to Mircea Eliade’s one-size-fits-all concept of the function of cosmogonic myth, Jonathan Z. Smith has developed a binary typology of styles of religion. Smith worked out this model in a series of essays beginning in 1970, and would later label the two types “locative” and “utopian.”¹⁰ He did not propose to characterize all religions, but merely to delineate two contrastive tendencies that may be seen at work in some religions and cultures at some times.

He first enunciated the typology in the following terms, without yet naming it locative/utopian: “One finds in many archaic cultures a profound faith in the cosmos as ordered in the beginning and a joyous celebration of the primordial act of ordering as well as a deep sense of responsibility for the maintenance of that order through repetition of the [cosmogonic] myth, through ritual, through norms of conduct, or through taxonomy.” (This describes what he would later term the

an open question for historical research. Some of Puett’s interpretations have been questioned on the grounds that, in the cases of some texts of uncertain date and provenance, one group may not necessarily have been responding to the other one argued by Puett to have been its interlocutor; e.g., Lothar von Falkenhausen’s review of *To Become a God*, *HJAS* 64.2 (December 2004), pp. 465–79.

¹⁰ The following discussion relies heavily on Smith’s recent retrospective essay “When the Chips Are Down,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2004), pp. 14–19.

locative style.) On the other hand, “in some cultures the structure of order, the gods that won or ordained it, creation itself, are discovered to be evil and oppressive. In such circumstances, one will rebel against the paradigms and seek to reverse their power, frequently employing ... the very same ritual techniques which had maintained the original order.” Smith cites as examples of this style, which he would later term utopian, yogic escape from Brahmanic ritual order and Hellenistic gnosticism’s rejection of the inherited gods and cosmology. With such rejection, “liminality becomes the supreme goal rather than a moment in a rite of passage.”¹¹

In another 1970 essay, Smith further articulated the locative type,¹² using as examples the hero-that-failed, as seen in Gilgamesh and Orpheus. In the locative type, the world is seen as a bounded environment; “order is produced by walling, channeling, and confining” the vastness of waters or deserts. By contrast, in the utopian type, “the structures of order are perceived to have been reversed. Rather than the positive limits they were meant to be, they have become oppressive. Man is no longer defined by the degree to which he harmonizes himself and his society to the cosmic patterns of order; but rather by the degree to which he can escape the patterns. Rather than the hero-that-failed of the locative world-view, the paradigm here is the hero-that-succeeded ... in escaping the tyrannical order ... The man of wisdom is no longer the sage but the savior – he who knows the escape routes.”¹³ Smith warns against reading the typology in evolutionary or sequential terms, with the locative always preceding the utopian, or with the locative always “archaic” and the utopian always “modern.”¹⁴

Finally, Smith introduced “social situation” into the model—a further departure from Eliade. Here he warns that the very success of modern scholarship in limning locative worldviews should make us cautious, because such studies often represent hierarchical societies whose “most persuasive witnesses” are the views produced by “organized, self-conscious scribal elites who had a deep vested interest in restricting mobility and valuing place.” He warns that such views “ought not to be generalized into the universal pattern of religious experience and expression.”¹⁵

¹¹ Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 151–52, 169–70; these lines appear in the essay “Birth Upside Down or Rightside Up?” first published in 1970.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 134; from the essay “The Influence of Symbols upon Social Change: A Place on Which to Stand.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101; from the 1972 essay “The Wobbling Pivot.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 293; from the seminal 1978 essay “Map Is Not Territory.”

The three most appealing aspects of Smith's typology are:

1. the focus on how people situate themselves and what they imagine as their own traditions vis-à-vis others, rather than seeing them as isolated, self-contained units that somehow develop on their own;
2. the focus on a usually unremarked aspect of traditions, namely, people's stance toward order, showing us (against the commonplace structuralist and functionalist notion that all religions are always essentially about maintaining order) that there are moments when the rebellion against or escape from order becomes religiously valued; and
3. its cutting across traditional isms, Chinese and otherwise.

On the last point, with respect to the locative/utopian distinction, we have karmic texts in the Buddhist canon and notions of cross-generational merit in the *Taiping jing* and in Celestial Master and Shangqing texts that resemble each other more than the former resembles Perfection of Wisdom texts or the latter the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*. Smith's typology is also far superior to the tired categories of "rationalist" vs. "superstitious" that are often invoked in studies of the kind of material I examine in this essay. Nor is the locative/utopian distinction entirely without indigenous analogues: some early medieval Chinese writers used a vocabulary of *mingjiao* 名教 ("the teaching of names") versus *ziran* 自然 ("naturalness"), a distinction which may be seen as approximating Smith's typology.¹⁶ The locative/utopian typology would still be potentially useful, however, even if this were not so.

I now turn to the two early Eastern Jin figures on whom the remainder of the paper will focus.

CLOSE, LIKE-MINDED CONTEMPORARIES: AN INITIAL LOOK AT GAN BAO AND GE HONG

According to *Jin shu* 晉書, Gan Bao and Ge Hong were close friends.¹⁷ In 331 Gan recommended Ge for two court appointments, one of them as a court historian, but Ge declined these so as to be able to journey south toward Jiaozhi in search of elixir ingredients. Both men performed valuable military service to the late Western Jin, helping to put down rebellions (Ge in 303, Gan between 311 and 315). After the southward transfer of the Jin capital, both men benefited from the patronage of the

¹⁶ For a brief discussion, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 278–79, 357–58.

¹⁷ *Jin shu* (hereafter, *JS*) 72, p. 1911, biog. of Ge Hong: "干寶深相親友, 薦洪才堪國史, 選爲散騎常侍, 領大著作, 洪固辭不就。" This and all other dynastic histories, as well as Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi*, are cited by chapter and page number in the modern, punctuated editions published by the Zhonghua shuju in Beijing.

powerful Wang Dao 王導, (276–339 AD), cousin of the general Wang Dun 王敦 (266–324); it was on Wang Dao's recommendation that Gan became head of the Eastern Jin history bureau (probably in 317 or 318) and that Ge was appointed to rather high court posts in 326 (and perhaps later as well).¹⁸ Ge Hong left behind an autobiographical essay and many other scattered statements about his life, times, and training under the master of esoteric arts Zheng Yin 鄭隱;¹⁹ much less first-person discourse survives from Gan Bao, but we have a few compelling stories about his family background that are discussed below.

Both Ge and Gan were, of course, noted literary figures. Ge circulated fifty essays on politics, education, and social criticism (*Baopuzi waipian* 抱朴子外篇); twenty essays on the pursuit of transcendence (*Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇);²⁰ a collection of over a hundred hagiographies of successful transcendents, *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, which was still “circulating widely in the world” around 429 AD and still being chanted in the Tang;²¹ a now-lost collection of biographies of recluses; a treatise on mourning attire; and apparently several works on divination methods and a few other minor works.²² Gan wrote a highly esteemed *Jin Annals* 晉紀 on the Western Jin; most of it is unfortunately lost, but valuable fragments remain, one of which will figure in my discussion, below. He also compiled a massive collection of anomaly accounts, *Soushen ji* 搜神記, of which almost 500 discrete entries survive, and which, often imitated, became the paragon of the early *zhiguai* 志怪 genre; a book of elaborations on narratives in the *Zuo zhuan*; commentaries on the *Yijing*, *Zhouli*, and *Zhouguan*, scattered quotations from all of which survive; and a few other minor works.²³

¹⁸ Earlier, Ge Hong also benefited from the recommendation of Hua Tan 花譚 around 313; see *JSS* 52, p. 1543. Wang Dao appears as a character in one of Gan's *Soushen ji* stories, delivering a legal opinion on a case in which a woman, having promised she would wed one man, is married to another while the former man is away at war, then dies, then is recovered alive from the coffin. Wang Dao reportedly awarded her to the first man, who was the one to rescue her from her tomb. See item 2 in chapter 15 (hereafter cited in the following pattern: 15.2).

¹⁹ For a summary, see Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2002), pp. 13–17.

²⁰ When citing these works in the notes, I use *WP* and *NP*, respectively, by chapter and page numbers in the following editions: Yang Mingzhao 楊明照, ed., *Baopuzi waipian jiaojian* 抱朴子外篇校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), and Wang Ming 王明, ed., *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

²¹ See *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 63, p. 1428, and John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2003), p. 132, respectively.

²² This based on listings in the *Sui shu* 隋書 bibliographic catalog and on Ge's autobiographical chapter. I do not consider *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 to be correctly attributed to Ge Hong.

²³ Based on his own biog., *JSS* 82, pp. 2149–51, and on other mentions in the standard his-

While I do not intend to suggest that there were no differences between the two men's outlooks, we might preliminarily observe that the bodies of work they left behind have several significant things in common:

1. enough interest in the rites to have written treatises or commentaries on ritual matters;
2. enough interest in matters of spirits and transcendentals to have generated voluminous compendia of narratives of particular cases (Ge's work includes plenty of spirits, Gan's plenty of transcendentals and other adepts of esoteric arts);
3. a pronounced interest in divination – both authored works on the subject and Gan Bao, as will be seen below, left additional traces of his engagement in it;
4. a striking near-silence on particular, regionally and contemporaneously prominent, religious phenomena of which they must surely have been aware, most notably any of a variety of doctrines, practices, texts, and figures associated with a. the Buddha and those who followed his path and translated his scriptures in southeastern China, and b. the Celestial Masters, recently arrived in Jiangnan (or at least such is the current scholarly consensus) from the north.²⁴

And there is one other commonality over which I will here linger for a moment:

5. a pointed, repeatedly voiced opposition to the entire repertoire of ideas, practices, narratives, and personages that had come to be associated with the by then loaded expressions *xuanxue* 玄學 and *qingtan* 清談. Significantly for my purposes, it is against this complex of values that both Gan Bao and Ge Hong set their own.

In fascicle 25 of his *Baopuzi waipian*, for example, Ge Hong laments phenomena he seems to have understood as mutually related: women going about freely in public, mingling with men, staying overnight at

tories. His *Zhou li* commentary, e.g., is not mentioned in his biography but is cited repeatedly in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書. For a thorough and fairly recent listing of works attributed to Gan, see Jian Boxian 簡博賢, *Wei Jin sijia Yi yanjiu* 魏晉四家易研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe xue jicheng, 1986), pp. 137–41.

²⁴ I do not know of a single mention of either of these topics in Gan Bao's extant works, except for the story of the "man of the path 道人" from the Western region explaining the ash found during the excavation of the lake at Kunming (*Soushen ji* 13.10), a story also collected in several other *zhiguai* texts. Ge Hong's mentions are surprisingly rare; his apparent references to Celestial Master phenomena have been treated in my *To Live* and a rare reference to Buddhist temples will be mentioned below. On the social background of the arrival in the south of Celestial Master practitioners and texts, see Michel Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy," *TP* 63 (1977), pp. 1–64, and Peter Nickerson, "The Southern Celestial Masters," in Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), pp. 256–82.

friends' homes and visiting Buddhist temples;²⁵ men placing the "citing of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* above following their responsibilities [to the effect that] 'greater conduct does not scrutinize ritual niceties' and 'the utmost man is not subject to restraint,' talking and behaving freely and doing as they please, saying that this is 'embodying the Dao';²⁶ and men who "cleave to emptiness and embrace the void" 懷空抱虛.²⁷

In the last-mentioned passage he goes on to complain that if you were to ask such a supposed "utmost person" about a list of matters Ge clearly regards as fundamental, he would simply be lost and confused; Ge is here clearly drawing a sharp contrast between two clusters of values. And here is the list of what the "embracer of emptiness" would be confused about: "the subtle sayings of the *Tombs* and *Cords* 墳, 索之微言," referring to early esoteric works on divination;²⁸ "the essentials and dispositions of ghosts and spirits 鬼神之情狀," here using language drawn from the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳, a text which, I have argued previously (and would still argue today), was clearly appropriated by collectors of anomalies as a warrant for their enterprise, whether or not the *Xici* author(s) would have approved;²⁹ "the transformations of the myriad things 萬物之變化"; "the oddities and marvels of distant quarters 殊方之奇怪"; "the great rites of the ancestral hall of the court 朝廷宗廟之大禮"; "the protocols and goods in the *jiao*, *si*, *di*, and *xia* sacrifices 郊祀禘禘之儀品"; "the origins of the three rectifications and the four beginnings 三正四始之原本," referring elliptically to calendrico-dynastic science (the beginnings of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou new year days on different dates) and thorough knowledge of the implicitly dynastic/political and correlative way in which the text of the *Odes* was arranged, purportedly by Confucius, according to some Han weft texts;³⁰ "the ways and measures of yin, yang, and regulating the calendar 陰陽律歷之道度"; "the canons and forms of military command and of [rites at] the national altars to the gods of soil and grain 軍國社稷之典式";³¹ and "the correspondences and alterations, differences and similarities between past and present 古今因革之異同."³² Not only does Ge here set up a fundamental oppo-

²⁵ WP 25, p. 618.

²⁶ WP 25, p. 632.

²⁷ WP 25, p. 633.

²⁸ See Campany, *To Live*, pp. 234-35, n. 378.

²⁹ See Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 344-50.

³⁰ See, for example, the passages cited in Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde, 2d edn. (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1952) 2, pp. 124-26.

³¹ Probably here paired together since the site where the dynastic *zongmiao* and *sheji* stood side by side was the point from which officially sanctioned military campaigns were ritually launched; see Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY P., 1990), p. 23.

³² WP 25, p. 635.

sition between “embracers of emptiness” and these other values; he also lumps together in the latter group a significantly diverse group of concerns – concerns that modern historians often split across distinct isms: divination, ghosts and spirits, transformations across kinds, the collection of marvels, court rituals in the service of spiritual others of several kinds (both ancestral and celestial/terrestrial), calendrical science, and knowledge of the *Odes*. If there is one common thread running through this list of domains, I would argue, it is that they presuppose a locative worldview.³³

But who were these unrestrained types, these citers of *Lao* and *Zhuang*, embracers of emptiness? They must surely be the likes of Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263 AD) and Dai Liang 戴良 (fl. mid-first c. AD) and of the “Four Unobstructed and Eight Untrammelled Ones” (*sitong bada* 四通八達) recalled from the third century, as well as their contemporary imitators; these are named by Ge. Ge criticizes by name as well as by description the exemplars of these values – people who went naked and wore their hair down in public, urinated before others, ate alone in the presence of guests, and otherwise behaved contrary to propriety so as to demonstrate their being “free and unrestrained, above the crowd 傲俗自放.”³⁴

Now, Dai Liang was a noted recluse and has a biography in the recluse section of the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書; that biography contains a story of how Dai Liang violated mourning protocols after his mother’s death, an anecdote that probably accounts for Ge Hong’s disapproval.³⁵ As for the famous Ruan Ji, he drew the ire of Gan Bao as well.³⁶ It is Ruan Ji whom Gan Bao singles out, in the preface to his *Jin Annals*, as heralding the collapse of the rites and thus of the Western Jin; in fact, he takes Ruan’s behavior as a portent of the impending fall of the northern capital. In the same discussion he attacks those in the previ-

³³ Some, such as knowledge of the *Odes*, seem neutral in this respect; but the way of interpreting that text that is implied in Ge’s phraseology here is, I would argue, a locative enterprise. Attention to spirits, ghosts, and demons, of course, needn’t be locative, but I will argue below that both Ge Hong and Gan Bao understood it locatively.

³⁴ *WP* 27, pp. 29–32. On the Eight Untrammelled Ones of Luoyang in the 280s and 290s, see Audrey Spiro, *Contemplating the Ancients: Aesthetic and Social Issues in Early Chinese Portraiture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 93, 116, and David R. Knechtges, “Sweet-Peel Orange or Southern Gold? Regional Identity in Western Jin Literature,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History*, ed. Paul Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003), p. 53.

³⁵ *Hou Han shu* 83, pp. 2772–75; see also Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2000), p. 113, and Knechtges, “Sweet-Peel Orange,” p. 59.

³⁶ On Ruan Ji, see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1976); on his anti-ritualism, see esp. pp. 73–87.

ous decades who preferred contemplating the void to diligent attention to affairs of state, preferring *Zhuang* and *Lao* to the Six Classics, and here he names Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), among others.³⁷ For both Ge Hong and Gan Bao, then, these earlier figures stand for most everything they wish to oppose.

Let us pause to consider what these opponents – notably including the well known Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove – represented in literature, in collective memory, and apparently still in contemporary social practice in the time of Ge Hong and Gan Bao. A few vivid anecdotes preserved in the early-fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 will suffice to make my point, which concerns not the historicity of these figures but the sorts of statements and behavior they were remembered for.

On many occasions Liu Ling 劉伶,³⁸ under the influence of ale, would be completely free and uninhibited 放達, sometimes taking off his clothes and sitting naked in his room. Once when some persons saw him and chided him for it, Ling retorted, “I take Heaven and Earth for my pillars and roof, and the rooms of my house for my pants and coat. What are you gentlemen doing in my pants?”³⁹

Elsewhere we find this telling comment of Liu Ling: “He indulged his fancy 肆意 and let himself go 放蕩. He always considered the universe too confining.”⁴⁰ In both passages we have imagery of spatial,

³⁷ The passage is preserved in *Wen xuan* 文選 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977) 49, pp. 689b–93b and in *JS* 5, pp. 132 ff. Gan expresses the same sentiment in a passage in his *Yijing* commentary (on which see below); see *Zhouyi jijie* 週易集解 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1991), p. 349. The charge that these 3d-c. thinkers and free spirits – typified by He Yan 何晏, Wang Bi (both d. 249), and the so-called Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove – were the ones responsible for the downfall of the Western Jin soon became a standard polemical trope, taken up, for example, by Fan Ning 范甯 (339–401); for a translation of Fan’s treatise on the subject and a discussion of its context, see Rudolf G. Wagner, *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 22–26. On their thought, one of the best introductions remains Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 2d edn. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 86–95. See also Kong Fan 孔繁, *Wei Jin xuantan* 魏晉玄談 (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992).

³⁸ Elsewhere his name is written homophonically but in different graphs, as is common for personal names in the period.

³⁹ *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1982) 23, p. 455; anthologized in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992) 845, p. 4b; trans. slightly adjusted from that of Richard B. Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 374, where another version of the story is also given. The passage is translated and discussed in Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1964), p. 239.

⁴⁰ *Shishuo xinyu* cites this statement from a passage in Liang Zuo’s *Wei guo tong* 魏國統 14, p.387; cf. Mather, *New Account*, p. 311.

indeed cosmic, expansiveness used to express Liu's breaking out of conventional limits and borders. Other stories make the same point by focusing on these men's violation of ritual norms. Consider this well known story about Ruan Ji:

When Ruan Ji was in mourning for his mother, Pei Kai went to pay him a visit of condolence. Ruan was drunk at the time, sitting with disheveled hair, his legs sprawled apart, not weeping. When Pei arrived he put down a mat for himself on the floor, and, after his weeping and words of condolence were completed, he departed.

Someone asked Pei, "Generally when one offers condolences, it is the host who weeps; the guest simply pays his respects. Why did *you* weep, although Ruan did not?"

Pei replied, "Ruan is a man who is beyond the realm 方外之人, and therefore pays no homage to the rules of ritual propriety. People like us are still within the realm of custom 俗眾人, so we live our lives after the pattern set by etiquette 以儀軌自居." Others at the time sighed in admiration of how both men had found their centers.⁴¹

Here the expression I have translated "the pattern set by etiquette" is a striking metaphor, literally "the cart-tracks made by etiquette"; social rules of propriety are imagined as a carriage whose wheel ruts mark the bounds of behavior within which ordinary people are content to live. The language of *fangwai/fangnei*, traceable to the *Zhuangzi* Inner Chapters (chapter 6), came to summarize a distinction between two realms and styles of being, a distinction that relativized the rites and norms as merely conventional, no longer grounded in cosmic reality.⁴² Etiquette is for *fangnei*-dwellers, those who live in particular places or stations "within the realm." *Fangwai*, literally "beyond the realm," "beyond the quarter(s)," or "beyond [any] place," might almost be rendered directly as "utopian." Those who course in *fangwai*, modeling themselves on *Zhuangzi* (surely the famous story in chapter 18 of the received text of the *Zhuangzi* of his highly anti- [not merely un-]conventional reaction to his wife's death hovers in the background here), can safely ignore etiquette, and their resulting behavior indicates their elevated *fangwai* status.

⁴¹ *Shishuo xinyu* 23, p. 457; trans. following but modifying Mather, *New Account*, p. 375. Versions of the anecdote appear in Ruan Ji's *Ji* biog. (49, p. 1361) and in *Mingshi zhuan* 名士傳 passage collected in the commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu* passage mentioned just above.

⁴² See the text in *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement 20 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1956), ch. 6, lines 66–67.

One more tale will suffice to make my point:

Liu Ling was once suffering from a hangover. Parched with thirst, he asked his wife for some ale. His wife, who had emptied all the ale and smashed the vessels, pleaded with tears in her eyes, saying, “You’re drinking far too much. It’s no way to preserve your life 協生之道. You must stop.”

Ling replied, “A very good idea. But I’m unable to stop by myself. It can only be done if I make an invocation to the ghosts and spirits and take an oath that I’ll stop 唯當祝鬼神自誓斷之耳. So you may prepare the ale and meat [for the sacrifice].” His wife said, “As you wish,” and setting ale and meat before the spirits requested Ling to make his invocation and swear his oath. Ling knelt down and prayed, “Heaven produced Liu Ling / And made “ale” his name./ At one gulp he downs a quart,/ Five dipperfuls ease the hangover./ As for his wife’s complaint,/ Take care not to listen.”

Whereupon he drained the ale and set into the meat, and before he knew it he was drunk again.⁴³

Even to us, at such far remove from the era and culture in question, this remains a shocking and poignant tale, albeit also a humorous one. Liu goes through the motions of swearing a sacred oath before the gods, but then himself devours the sacrificial offerings by which the oath was to be sealed – a deed many contemporaries would have regarded as dangerously impious and on a par with the nefarious workings of offering-stealing demons and wayward spirits of the dead (not to mention his being unfeeling toward his long-suffering wife!). Only a person who considered himself not bound by the normal structures of reciprocal obligation between humans and spirits (and thus impervious to divine punishment) would dare behave thus.

In short, and without developing the point further here, I would suggest that these third-century figures and the current of anti-ritual *xuan-xue* their behaviors exemplified are paradigmatic cases of what Smith has termed utopian movements, and that the *Zhuangzi* text in particular, on which these figures drew for inspiration and on which some of them wrote commentaries, was the inaugural utopian voice in China.

If it is granted that the major ideological opponent both Gan Bao and Ge Hong targeted is aptly characterizable as utopian in Smith’s sense – and I think a very strong case can be made, though I will not

⁴³ *Shishuo xinyu* 23, p. 454, largely following Mather, *New Account*, pp. 372–73. Cf. *JS* 49, p. 1376.

argue it further here – can their own stances be accurately seen as locative? If so, to what extent would such a characterization help us understand their writings more clearly or in a new way?

GAN BAO

Gan Bao on Divination and as a Diviner

Most early-medieval techniques of divination,⁴⁴ it seems to me, presupposed a locative worldview. Many of them consisted of methods for interpreting observed anomalies, and anomalies are visible as such only against a presumed background of order – of regularities, patterns, fixed categories. When something breaks out of this implicit order – “loses its nature,” as Gan Bao comments in one case (see below) – then interpretation is possible, for such breaks are understood as coded messages, signs of something else. Other techniques, such as *Yijing* divinations, involved the manipulation of objects to obtain messages that were then “read” according to a fixed, immutable framework of meanings – again presupposing a locative worldview insofar as the diviner has confidence in the correspondence of messages and their textually revealed meanings, and also insofar as the *Yijing* posits regularity in the cycles and patterns of change.

It is telling, then, that Gan Bao wrote a commentary on the *Yijing* that worked within the correlative tradition of Jing Fang’s 京房 (d. 37 BC) commentary (a text Gan Bao knew well, citing it in quite a few portent-related anecdotes of his *Soushen ji*, as we will see shortly); a good many of its passages have come down to us.⁴⁵ It is equally telling that Gan named Wang Bi in his criticism of the ethos of the Western Jin, in the wake of a related passage in which he suggestively laments the slippage of names from things and the coming untied of the net of heaven 名實犯錯, 天綱解紐, for Wang Bi had written a *xuanxue*-style commentary on the *Book of Change* that preserved the mysteries in the work and attacked Jing Fang’s Five-Phases, correlative hermeneutic – the sort of hermeneutic of the work (and, as we will see shortly, of historical events and anomalies) that Gan Bao sought to revive and preserve, as

⁴⁴ As opposed to spirit-mediumship, which seems to me to be neutral on the locative/utopian vector.

⁴⁵ Available, e.g., in *Zhouyi jijie*; passages are also collected and extensively analyzed in Huang Qingxuan 黃慶萱, *Wei Jin nanbeichao Yi xue shu kaoyi* 魏晉南北朝易學書考佚 (Taipei: Youshi wenhua shiye gongsi, 1975), pp. 301–496. Other studies of Gan Bao’s *Yi* commentary include Lin Zhongjun 林忠軍, “Gan Bao *Yi*xue yanjiu” 干寶易學研究, *Zhou Yi yanjiu* 30 (1996.4), pp. 12–24; Lin Zhongjun, *Xiangshu Yi xue fazhan shi* 象數易學發展史 (Ji’nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1998) 2, pp. 49–71; Zhu Yuanqing 朱淵清, “Gan Bao de *Zhou Yi* gushi guan” 干寶的周易古史觀, *Zhou Yi yanjiu* 50 (2001.4), pp. 26–36; and Jian, *Wei Jin sijia Yi yanjiu*, pp. 137–60.

astutely noted by Nishino Teiji over six decades ago.⁴⁶ Gan Bao's special interest in divination – and, in particular, in modes of divination based on Han-style correlative thought – is also remarked upon in his *Jin shu* biography: “By nature he was fond of yin-yang and the numeric [divination] arts. He gave careful thought to the biographies of Jing Fang, Xiahou Sheng 夏侯勝, and others.”⁴⁷ In the biography of a skilled Jin-era diviner, Han You 韓友, it is reported that Gan Bao asked him on one occasion why his technique was so effective;⁴⁸ two anecdotes preserved in Gan's *Soushen ji* emphasize Han You's prowess in divination and show him applying the same one-for-one-correspondence style of divinatory “readings” of phenomena that are attributed elsewhere to Gan Bao himself.⁴⁹ Furthermore, as discussed in more detail below, at least 171 (or around 37 percent) of the 464 items comprised in modern editions of Gan's *Soushen ji* directly concern divination. The intricacies of Gan Bao's *Yi* commentary are of no direct relevance to my discussion; what is relevant is its foundation in correlative thought (a style of thought that is thoroughly locative) and its use of historical examples to illustrate interpretive points.

In the “Five Phases” section of the received *Jin shu*, compiled between 644 and 646,⁵⁰ a great many of Gan Bao's interpretations of omens are recorded. Nowhere is the title of a work by Gan cited in these passages. In many cases Gan's interpretations are presented alongside those of other authorities on the *Yijing*, such as Jing Fang.⁵¹ This suggests that some of these lines were drawn from now-lost portions of Gan's

⁴⁶ See *Wen xuan* 689b-90a; *JŚ* 5, p. 134; also Nishino Teiji 西野貞治, “Sōshinki kō” 搜神記考, *Jinbun kenkyū* 人文研究 4.8 (1943): 81-82; Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1983), pp. 12-13. Richard John Lynn has translated Wang's commentary in *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1994). The clash between Han-era correlative commentaries and Wang Bi's utopianist, *xuanxue* commentary is dramatized in a *zhiguai* tale from a slightly later text of a locative persuasion, the *Youming lu* 幽冥錄 (attrib. Liu Yiqing 劉義慶); see item 99 in Lu Xun's collection *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說勾沉 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1954), pp. 267-68, in which Wang is portrayed as laughing at Zheng Xuan's commentary and is then confronted by Zheng's ghost, whose anger, the story implies, causes Wang to succumb to an epidemic soon thereafter.

⁴⁷ These were noted diviners of the Han period; Jing Fang, along with other noted diviners such as Guan Lu and Hua Tuo, as well as Gan's own younger contemporary Guo Pu (whom Gan reportedly once admonished about his excessive drinking and sex – see *JŚ* 72, p. 1905), figure as major characters in the collection of stories of skilled diviners now gathered into chapter 3 of *Soushen ji*. Jing Fang is featured in 3.19, Guan Lu in 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8.

⁴⁸ *JŚ* 95, p. 2477. Han reportedly died at the end of the Yongjia period.

⁴⁹ *Soushen ji* 2.7, 3.19, both gripping tales.

⁵⁰ See Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), p. 22, n. 67.

⁵¹ In the divinatory portions of his *Soushen ji*, Gan Bao himself also frequently quotes Jing Fang's commentary to the *Yi*.

commentary on the *Yijing*, from now-lost Jin court records – Gan was, after all, a court historian under the Eastern Jin – from passages in his *Jin Annals* (which covered the Western Jin only), or from his *Soushen ji*. They do in fact resemble the entries on portents in chapters 6 and 7 of the extant *Soushen ji*, and there are overlaps between passages in these chapters and the *Jin shu* entries.⁵² Some of the events on which Gan comments occurred during his lifetime; others preceded his life, and he seems in these passages to be noting patterns and correspondences evidenced in historical events and records from the Three Kingdoms and early Western Jin periods, and then in some cases applying these precedents to more recent phenomena. At least one event on which he is represented as commenting postdated his death by around sixty years, so at least in this passage (on Sima Daozi 司馬道子, prince of Kuaiji [364–402]), and perhaps others as well, it was clearly the early-Tang compilers of *Jin shu* and not Gan Bao who placed in juxtaposition the notion that a certain sort of behavior or event correlates with a certain predicted outcome, on the one hand, and, on the other, a particular historical case. I here provide a few summaries as examples, with brief comments:

1. A strange flower appears while Wang Dun and his army are encamped at Wuchang 武昌. “This plant departed from its nature 此木失其性.” (This must have been before Wang Dun moved on the capital in 322, but is clearly after the establishment of the Eastern Jin, so the events in question must have fallen between 318 and 322.) Gan Bao interprets this anomaly as presaging Wang Dun’s fall; and he was indeed soon executed.⁵³
2. During the Yuankang era of emperor Hui (291–300), women took to wearing weapon belts (?) and fashioning jewelry into the shape of weapons. Gan Bao opined that “the distinction between men and women is a great norm 節 of the nation; this is why their clothing is different (recall Ge Hong’s complaint, noted above, regarding women mingling with men and visiting monasteries)... . Now, with women wearing weapons as ornaments, this is an extreme case of an ‘anomaly of women 婦人妖.’ Thereupon, there consequently was the affair of Jia Hou 賈后,” which ended up destroying the world. (This last refers to events in 291, when empress Jia was acting as regent for the young Jin emperor.⁵⁴)

⁵² Nishitani Toshichirō 西谷登七郎 has examined this topic in “Gogyōshi to nijū-kanbon Sōshinki” 五行志と二十卷本搜神記, *Hiroshima Daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 廣島大學文學部紀要 1.1 (1951), pp. 115–27.

⁵³ *JŚ* 27, p. 802; this entry overlaps with *Soushen ji* 7.46.

⁵⁴ See Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 58. The passage appears in *JŚ* 27, p. 824, and overlaps with *Soushen ji* 7.15.

3. On a particular day of the fourth month of Taian 1 (302), a man entered the palace by a certain gate, faced north, bowed, and said, “I should be a Gentleman of the Secretariat.” He was seized and executed. Gan Bao considered, “The Forbidden Palace is a venerated and sacred place. Now, when a thief is able to sneak in through the gates without being noticed by the guards, it is an omen indicating that the palace will be vacated and lesser men will climb up into it.” Afterward the capitals at Ye and Chang’an were lost and the palaces there vacated.⁵⁵

A shared characteristic in the above, and something seen as well in the omen interpretations attributed to Gan Bao both in the “Five Phases” section of *Jin shu* and in chapters six and seven of his *Soushen ji*, is the one-to-one correspondence between an anomaly and a specific meaning. This characteristic assumes a locative procedure for interpreting omens, though the details of the procedure by which these meanings were arrived at are only roughly explained.

Soushen ji: *A Locative Text?*

On its face, the notion that *Soushen ji* presents and commends a locative worldview to its readers might seem highly unlikely. How could an assemblage of tales of ghosts, poltergeists, demons, wonder-working adepts, transformations, and other marvels express a worldview emphasizing taxonomic and ritual order? The answer lies not in the subject matter per se but in how – by what range of story types – it is approached, something that can be discerned not from a handful of entries but only after a careful motif-analysis of the entire text. It is in light of such an analysis that *Soushen ji*'s locative agenda, I would argue, becomes evident.

Here, for reference, is a rough chapter-by-chapter summary of the subject matter of the tales in their received arrangement.⁵⁶

1. Celestial gods and transcendents (31 items)
2. *Fangshi* and spirit-mediums (17 items)

⁵⁵ JS 29, p. 908, overlapping with *Soushen ji* 7.25.

⁵⁶ In some chapters there are items that do not conform to the chapter's apparent overall theme. Unfortunately for those such as Rémi Mathieu (*Démons et merveilles dans la littérature chinoise des Six Dynasties: Le fantastique et l'anecdotique dans le Soushen ji de Gan Bao* [Paris: Éditions You-Feng, 2002], p. 19), who persist in trying to extract inferences on Gan Bao's thought from the arrangement of stories in the extant text, that arrangement, as I and others have pointed out, is an artifact of the process by which late-Ming redactors reassembled quotations found in the early-Song *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. I have used the edition of the *Soushen ji* text published by Shijie shuju 世界書局 (Taipei, 1982), but have also consulted the textual notes in Huang Diming 黃添明, ed., *Soushen ji quanyi* 搜神記全議 (n.p.: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1991), and in Huang Jun 黃鈞 and Chen Manming 陳滿銘, eds., *Xinyi Soushen ji* 新譯搜神記 (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 1996).

3. *Fangshi* adepts in divination and medicine (22 items)
4. Encounters with gods (mostly local and regional) and visits to their temples (21 items)
5. Encounters with local gods and accounts of the founding of their shrines; otherworldly messengers and summonses (10 items)
6. Political portents from the Shang period to Sun Hao (77 items)
7. Political portents during the Jin dynasty (48 items)
8. Examples of omens drawn from ancient writings (10 items)
9. Omens pertaining to individuals' fortunes, and their interpretation (14 items)
10. Dreams; their confirmation and real effects in waking life (12 items)
11. Extreme virtue; its power to call forth anomalous responses from Heaven and Earth (37 items)
12. Monstrous creatures and transformations (19 items)
13. Marvels at particular places and how places got their names (items 1-12); marvelous creatures (especially lowly ones, 13-17); remarkable objects (18-21)
14. Ancient legends concerning the origins of clans and tribes and their founding ancestors (items 1-10); mythological fragments concerning the origin of sericulture and Chang E (11-12); transformations of humans into plants (13) and animals (14-19)
15. Cases of return from death (items 1-11) and openings of tombs (12-16)
16. Ghost narratives (24 items)
17. Narratives of ghosts and demons (13 items)
18. Spirits of objects (items 1-2), trees (3-6), and mammals (7-26)
19. Snake and fish spirits (items 1-6); miscellaneous tales (7-9)
20. Rewards and retributions by animals (16 items)

In what ways does this large body of mostly narrative material possibly argue for or presume a worldview that could be called locative? Below, I make five points, arguing in the positive.

First of all, as discussed above, the items dealing with portents and divination are locative in that they presuppose an ordered world in which things that slip out of place do not do so randomly or gratuitously; rather, these slippages carry meanings which may be reliably decoded. For Gan Bao, the meanings of portents are legible on the basis of one-to-one correspondences between phenomena and their significations (although in some cases he outlines more complex mechanisms of interpretation, as seen, for example, in the speeches attributed to the diviner Guan Lu 管輅 [209-256] in item 3.5). Even odd clothing styles may be “read” in this way: the fashion that took hold after Sun Xiu 孫

休 (235–264; ruler of Wu, 258–264) of wearing garments that were long and multi-layered on the top but short and thin-layered on the bottom, for example, indicated – or, to use Gan Bao’s language, “was an image 象 of” the fact – that those in the upper echelons of society had too much, while those below had too little (item 6.77). Not only anomalies that portend large-scale trends in political fortunes and social welfare but also those that indicate the impending fate of individuals are treated in this manner in *Soushen ji*. Four entire chapters (6–9) consist of lists of social portents and individual omens and their meanings – lists not of general rules of interpretation but of specific historical instances; two more chapters (2 and 3) document the impressive results obtained by skilled diviners and masters of other esoteric arts (or *fangshi* 方士), including methods of healing based on the type of correlative cosmology developed beginning around 250 BC. In these stories, successful cures, accurate predictions, and the anomalous symptoms and signs upon which they are based are not simply presented to the reader as inexplicable wonders. Rather, the universe is implied to be orderly despite its apparent disorder. Anomalies are explicable and interpretable given the correct cosmological understanding and the mastery of esoteric methods allowing practitioners to read signs correctly.

Or, as Gan Bao put it in an item that probably served as the theoretical frame for his collection of historical cases of portents:

Aberrations and anomalies 妖怪 generally occur when essence and *qi* impinge on objects 依物. When its *qi* is disordered within, the object will transform without; its form, spirit, *qi*, and substance are the outward and inward functions [of such disorder]. [Aberrations and anomalies] are rooted in the Five Phases and are connected to the five circumstances.⁵⁷ Although they may expand and contract, rise and fall, and undergo a myriad transformations and movements, insofar as they are indicators of good or ill fortune, we may in all cases obtain a place from which to analyze them 皆可得域而論矣. (6.1)

Second, we consider chapters 12, 13, and portions of 14, which deal with various strange and monstrous creatures, marvelous objects, and transformations. Again, at first blush these topics seem unlikely as a basis for a locative worldview. And indeed in the hands of other authors these very same topics had been appealed to in the service of ar-

⁵⁷ These are listed in the *Hongfan* 洪範 as facial expression 貌, speech 言, sight 視, hearing 聽, and thought 思; presumably these properties here are understood as applying to the anomalous object, not to its observer, though this is not entirely clear to me.

guments for a utopian worldview; one thinks of the marvelous creatures in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 1, and of the passage on transformations in chapter 18 of the same work, echoed and slightly modified in the first chapter of *Liezi* 列子, itself probably a Jin work.⁵⁸ The marvels in *Zhuangzi* 1 are not there to be explained or interpreted, much less encompassed into any taxonomic system or bounded order. They serve as things interlocutors can point to as escaping all known taxa and boundaries, breaking out of limitations normally assumed to be inviolable and soaring beyond familiar categories. Their rhetorical function is to disturb and mock the complacency of readers snugly nestled in their limited, locative worldviews. Similarly, the series of transformations in *Zhuangzi* 18/*Liezi* 1 argues that things of one kind change into things of another, and this nexus of cross-kind transformations pointedly includes human-kind; the rhetorical effect is to relativize species distinctions, to blur the boundaries between the human and other kinds, and to underscore the fundamental teaching that even what we know as “death” is just another in the ongoing sequence of changes.

In the *Soushen ji* anecdotes, marvelous creatures and phenomena are described to very different effect. While the texts of *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi* only mention in passing the names of such creatures and changelings, *Soushen ji* provides correct names, along with crucial features, as a main burden of each textual entry; most especially, the uses to which the creature or object may be put, or the secret commands or gestures that allow it to be controlled, are indicated. Often this information is provided by an authoritative figure or quoted from an old text. Even Confucius, who famously declined to speak of such matters, is enlisted (12.2, based on a passage in the *Guo yu* 國語, *Lu yu* B), here looking very much like a master of esoterica 方士, and this text’s entire attitude toward anomalous beings in fact closely resembles that of the esoteric arts and masters (and chapter 17 of Ge Hong’s *Baopuzi*, a point to which I return below), and its “Confucius” resembles the one seen in the Han weft texts. Even the most bizarre things that may confront us have names and fixed descriptions, vulnerabilities and

⁵⁸ See A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 183–84 (though Graham’s facile comparison with Western notions of evolution is a red herring), and A.C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, 2d edn. (New York: Columbia U.P., 1990), pp. 20–22. The operative term in this passage, the instigator of transformations, is *ji* 機, which is not used in this sense by Gan Bao and which, so far as I am aware, is used only once (and perhaps not in the same sense) by Ge Hong – tellingly, in chapter one of *Baopuzi neipian*, which, as we will see below, is a context in which Ge invokes utopian terminology and imagery. 玄, the primordial and generative principle of the universe, and an epithet for the Dao, is here characterized as the 靈機 of all the world’s processes, *NP* 1, p. 1.

uses; it is simply a matter of commanding a broad enough body of expertise to be able to recognize them and respond accordingly. During the Wu period, for example, Zhuge Ke 諸葛恪 (203–253 AD),⁵⁹ while serving as *taishou* of Danyang, was leading a hunting party when they came across a creature resembling a child, beckoning them to follow; it then led them to the place where it had lived, and promptly expired. Zhuge's assistant asked what it was, opining that it must be a divine being 神明. Zhuge quoted an ancient manual on anomalous creatures, the *Charts of the Boze* 白澤圖,⁶⁰ on the spot; he was thus able to explain that the phenomenon, a manifestation of the essence of mountains, is properly termed a *xi'nang* 係囊 and that such beings typically die once they have pointed out where they live. The *taishou's* calm conclusion: "You needn't be astonished by it and call it a divine being; it's simply something you'd never seen before" (12.4).

In short, what we find in these chapters is not a fascination with anomalous beings for their own sakes so much as the confident expression of people's ability to recognize, name, and master them. They are not – at least in any ultimate sense – category breakers, though they at first seem to be. Each of them, initially strange, falls after all into its proper category; there exist authoritative bodies of knowledge about them that may be consulted with profit. This confidence is due ultimately, once again, to the correlative cosmological framework within which Gan Bao places this list of anecdotes. Item 12.1 is a lengthy theoretical statement that begins by invoking the "five (types of) *qi*" and moves on to quote several old sources, prominently including *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and 12.10 also concludes with a significant theoretical statement on how anomalous creatures come into being along with us humans and take on the distinct properties they do on account of their allotments of *qi* and their environments, again just as we humans do. Though the results strike us as strange, the underlying processes are intelligible and characterizable in terms of known categories; knowledge of these matters yields mastery. Or, as the conclusion to 12.1 puts it, "Among the transformations of the myriad things, each has its reason. The farmer can control the transformation of wheat straw by steeping it in lime

⁵⁹ He is well attested in the *Sanguo zhi* and held high court office; on his way up the ladder, he also held the office he is here mentioned as occupying, the *Sanguo zhi* confirms.

⁶⁰ On this text, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, p. 42; Donald Harper, "A Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.," *HJAS* 45 (195), pp. 491–93; and Lin Congming 林聰明, "Balizang Dunhuang ben 'Boze jingguai tu' ji 'Dunhuang ershi yong' kaoshu" 巴黎藏敦煌本白澤精怪圖及敦煌二十詠考述, *Dong Wu wenshi xuebao* 東吳文史學報 2 (1977), pp. 97–116, among others.

water; is the sage any different when he regulates the transformations of the myriad things, succoring them by means of the Dao?"

My third point takes up dream narratives, which, once again, had already been deployed in utopian arguments, most notably in the story of Zhuangzi's butterfly dream in chapter 7 of his eponymous text. Zhuangzi wished to undermine confidence in the distinction between the dreamer and what is dreamt, the dreaming self and the dreamt self (or at least to undermine certainty as to which is which).⁶¹ The dream has no other meaning, and it is impossible to imagine Zhuangzi offering a reliable method or set of correspondences for extracting fixed meanings from dreams. *Soushen ji* uses dream narratives to very different ends. First, here dreams, like portents, have definite meanings that may be divined 占 by those with the requisite knowledge or skill. Dreaming of ascending to the sky and sucking from a breast-shaped aperture on its underside is greatly auspicious (10.1); dreaming of being in the palace is an image 形象 of office, and dreaming of securing millet, then losing it, is a sign of official salary since the characters 禾 and 失 combined yield 秩 (10.3); for a pregnant woman to dream that the sun or moon enters her is a greatly auspicious sign of her offspring's future fortunes (10.2); and so on. This concept of dreams is again familiar from books of esoterica and from the various ancient and medieval manuals of oneiromancy.⁶²

Another theme running through the *Soushen ji*'s dream narratives is precisely the opposite of the point of Zhuangzi's butterfly dream: that there is continuity between the waking and dreaming worlds, that dreams involve real contact with other beings and places and are not the mere play of imagination. What is learned in dreams has real, often profound, consequences for life. In each case in which a dream's meaning is divined, the narrative goes on to confirm that the prediction was in fact borne out by events. (Often this is simply implied; the reader knows, for example, that Sun Jian's wife, the pregnant dreamer of 10.2, would give birth to none other than Sun Ce and Sun Quan, persons whose achievements did not need to be spelled out.) Objects bestowed on dreamers are found by their bedsides when they wake (10.6). A man who dreams that a lizard dropped into his belly from the

⁶¹ Chapter 3 of the *Liezi* continued to explore the utopian possibilities of dreaming and dream-narratives.

⁶² For introductions to this material, see Michel Strickmann, "Dreamwork of Psycho-Sinologists: Doctors, Taoists, Monks," in Carolyn T. Brown, ed., *Psycho-Sinology: The Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1988), pp. 25-46, and Donald Harper, "Wang Yen-shou's Nightmare Poem," *HJAS* 47 (1987), pp. 239-83.

ceiling develops severe stomach cramps (10.7). The Eastern Han emperor Ling dreams of a previous emperor reproaching him for unjust executions, and on waking is afraid, and soon dies (10.9). Two stories in chapter 10 show the real, life-and-death effects of dreams about the otherworldly workings of the bureaus of lifespan enforcement (10.4 and 10.12).⁶³ A similar tale follows:

During the Wu period, Xu Boshi 徐伯始 fell ill. He had master of the Dao 道士 Lü Shi 呂石 set up an altar 安神座 for him. Shi had two disciples, Dai Ben and Wang Si; the three of them lived in Haiyan. Boshi invited the disciples to assist Shi. During a nap, however, Shi dreamed that he ascended to the Northern Dipper in the heavens, where he saw attendants saddling three horses outside, saying, “Tomorrow we’ll use one of these to welcome Shi, one for Ben, and one for Si.” When Shi woke from his dream, he said to Ben and Si, “Since the time of our deaths has arrived, go home quickly and take leave of your families!” They all dropped what they were doing and departed. Boshi thought it strange and tried to detain them, but [Shi] said, “I fear we will not be able to see our families!” Within the space of one day, all three men died at the same time (10.10).

Another tale of this type uses the device of two people dreaming the same dream: both this oneiric intersubjectivity and subsequent events confirm the dream’s reality. Xie Feng 謝奉 (fl. ca. 340–360 AD) dreamed that his friend, Guo Boyou 郭伯猷,⁶⁴ was gambling at dice on the Zhe River (also known as the Qiantang River) and argued over money; this angered the river god, who caused Guo to fall into the river and drown, and in the dream Xie saw himself managing Guo’s funeral. On waking, Xie went to see Guo and, over a game of chess, told him of his dream; but Guo had had a similar dream, and in a moment Guo collapsed in his privy and died. Xie managed the funeral, just as he had dreamed he would (10.11).

Fourth, we take up frameworks. So far we have seen a sometimes implicit cosmological – perhaps we might say metaphysical and epistemological – framework within which anomalies are emplaced in *Soushen ji*, a framework that occasionally rises to the level of explicit articulation. But there is another sort of framework that, like the cosmological

⁶³ These are summarized and discussed in Robert Ford Campany, “Living Off the Books: Fifty Ways to Dodge *Ming* in Early Medieval China,” in C. Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2005), pp. 129–33.

⁶⁴ Xie is mentioned several times in *JS*; I find no record of Guo.

one, renders initially strange phenomena into ultimately intelligible, regular, inductively retrievable patterns. This other framework is not so much metaphysical as moral. Large portions of *Soushen ji* argue, with case after narrative case, that human beings are bound in relationships of a moral and ritual character with other classes of beings – heaven and earth, local gods, ghosts of the human dead, and even animals and some demons. Significantly, and unlike quite a few other *zhiguai* collections soon to be assembled, the language of karma and rebirth that had been introduced in Buddhist texts and that one might expect to see deployed in these stories is nowhere glimpsed. Instead, the key operative concept is the indigenous one of *bao* 報, that is, moral/ritual reciprocity. Chapters 4 and 5 explore this theme (among others) with respect to gods, chapter 17 with respect to ghosts and demons, chapter 16 with respect to ghosts, and chapter 15 with regard to those who die and then return to life and also ghosts of the dead who guard the precincts of their tombs.⁶⁵ Chapter 11 collects 37 stories of people whose virtue attracts auspicious responses from heaven and earth, as well as other tales illustrating what we might call the cosmic power of human will and emotion. Among them are three tales of the *xiangsi* 相思 type, wherein natural phenomena come to embody the powerful emotions of people, such as trees that, planted over the graves of a devoted married couple, intertwine (11.32; cf. 11.33 and 11.37). Also in this chapter are several tales of extreme filial devotion. Again we see the argument that the person who understands such phenomena will know how to deal with them and will not even regard them as strange. In a story that was taken up by several other early *zhiguai* collections,⁶⁶ Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 is traveling with Western Han emperor Wu when they meet a strange creature on the road. Shuo pours ale over it, dissolving it, and explains to the puzzled emperor, “This creature is called ‘distress’ and is produced by the *qi* of worry 此名爲患, 憂氣之所生也. This place must have been the site of one of the prisons of Qin, or else it was where accused criminals and conscript laborers were gathered. Since ale causes the forgetting of troubles, I was able to dissolve the creature” (11.8).

The upshot of these stories is that the behaviors of even such beings as local gods, ghosts, and demons are predictable, intelligible, even in many cases moral. The dead and the gods not only exist; they have claims on the living, and the rites apply to them and may not be disre-

⁶⁵ I have explored this theme in Campany, *Strange Writing*, chap. 8.

⁶⁶ Including *Youming lu* 263; *Zhiguai*, by Cao Pi, item 1; and the miscellany assembled by Lu Xun titled *Za guishen zhiguai* 雜鬼神志怪, item 3. On Dongfang Shuo in the early *zhiguai* genre, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 318–21.

garded. The physical world, composed of *qi*, after all, is so attuned to human emotion and will (themselves also composed of *qi*) that it alters itself accordingly, and in ways recognizable by those of sufficiently broad outlook and training. One of the ideologically opposed positions these stories are meant to attack is explicitly named in some of the ghost stories: namely, the argument that ghosts do not exist 無鬼論, which some agents are depicted as maintaining before being defeated in argument (and sometimes injured or killed) by ghosts who have come to object to their stance.⁶⁷

My last point is that in the pages of *Soushen ji* there remain, of course, beings that escape locative order; their actions remain inexplicable, or people find no recourse against their demonic deprivations. This should not surprise us, since any locative worldview acknowledges the persistence of disorder, of that which lies outside the borders. This sort of chaos is the engine that keeps the task of maintaining order an urgent imperative. Locative schemes need disorder to order. As Stuart Clark observed some years ago regarding witchcraft in early-modern Europe, “Each detailed manifestation of demonism presupposed the orderliness and legitimacy of its direct opposite, just as, conversely, the effectiveness of exorcism ... in actually nullifying magical powers confirmed the grounds of authority of the priest.”⁶⁸

Such, in brief, would be my reading of the contents of *Soushen ji* in light of the locative/utopian distinction. From Gan Bao’s *Jin shu* biography we learn something of what was represented as having motivated him to collect and circulate these sorts of stories.

Bao’s father had previously had a favorite female servant of whom Bao’s mother was extremely jealous; when the father came to die, the mother pushed the servant alive into the grave. Bao and his siblings were still young at the time and did not know of this. More than ten years later their mother died, and when the grave was opened the female servant was found lying over the coffin as though still alive; so she was taken back, and after several days she revived. She said that their father always brought her food and drink, and had shown affection for her just as when he was

⁶⁷ On the “ghostly apologue” as a story type in early medieval *zhiguai* narratives, see Robert Ford Campany, “Ghosts Matter: The Culture of Ghosts in Six Dynasties *Zhiguai*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 13 (1991), pp. 23–25. Two such tales are included in Gan Bao’s *Soushen ji* (items 16.3 and 16.4).

⁶⁸ Stuart Clark, “Inversion, Misrule, and the Meaning of Witchcraft,” *Past and Present* 87 (1980), p. 125, quoted in William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1994), p. 210.

alive, and had told her of auspicious and unfortunate events in the household which when checked all proved accurate; and she said she had not found it unpleasant to be underground. They arranged for her marriage, and she bore sons.

In addition, Bao's older brother once stopped breathing due to illness. For several days he did not grow cold, and later he regained consciousness and spoke of seeing the affairs of the ghosts and spirits of Heaven and Earth; he said it felt as though he were in a dream, and he did not know that he was dead.

Because of these [events], 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 [the work] *An Inquest into the Spirit-Realm* (*Soushen ji*), thirty chapters in all.⁶⁹

These purported incidents in Gan Bao's family, as well as two others mentioned in the *Soushen ji* concerning relatives' encounters with *gu* 蠱 or black magic (12.17 and 12.18), may well have sparked Gan's interest in such matters. But the language of his *Soushen ji* preface sets forth a less personal justification for the project – a justification that jibes well with the implicit arguments I have extracted above from the text.

As for what I have here collected, when it sets forth what has been received from earlier accounts, any fault that might be found is not my own; if there are vacuous or erroneous places in what has been garnered from inquiries 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 should still suffice to make clear that the way of spirits is not a fabrication 亦足以明神道之不誣也. The mass of words of the hundred schools are too many to be read in their entirety; what one receives through one's own ears and eyes is too much to be set down completely. But what I have roughly chosen here will at least satisfy my aim of developing an 'eighth category' even if making only an obscure explanation of it 今粗取足以演八略之旨, 成其微 說而已. I will be fortunate if future curious gentlemen take note of its basic substance and if there is that in it which sets their minds wandering and captures their attention, and if I am not reproached for this.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ JS 82, p. 2150.

⁷⁰ JS 82, pp. 2150–51.

The overriding tone here is defensive – understandably so, when we consider that Gan (and his readers) took the court-defined canon of texts very seriously, must have been aware of their supposed indifference to the matters *Soushen ji* engages (although his own work of compilation shows that that was a one-sided view of the “classics”), and must therefore have anticipated criticism. The gist of the first sentence is clearly that Gan cannot be reproached if his sources are inaccurate; he is, after all, not making his stories up but is compiling them from accounts of the distant and more recent past, just as he is also following the example of earlier texts such as those known as *Guizang* 歸藏 and *Suoyu* 瑣語, the latter of which had been recovered from an early-fourth-century BC tomb in 281 AD (an event that no doubt stimulated interest in *zhiguai* collections).⁷¹ It is Gan’s ensuing statements that are of greater significance here, however. I would now argue that the sense of “to make clear that the way of spirits is not a fabrication” is at once stronger and more specific than “to counter skepticism about spirits’ existence.”⁷² I believe what Gan here means is that he has compiled evidence for the proposition that, perhaps despite contrary appearances, there is a *dao* that the world’s many spirits follow, that their activities are not capricious, haphazard, or inscrutable but instead follow a discernable, ultimately intelligible path. As for “developing an ‘eighth category’ even if making only an obscure explanation of it,” Gan must mean that he is adding an additional category to the canonical way of taxonomizing books and thought established in Liu Xin’s Han-era *Qi lue* 七略, with the connotation that he saw himself as attempting to bring narratives of the “way of spirits” into the canonical sphere as a legitimate subject for historical and perhaps metaphysical inquiry.

GE HONG

Opening

As noted above, Ge Hong complained about third-century “embracers of emptiness” such as Ruan Ji and Wang Bi; against such a stance he listed divination, ghosts and spirits, transformations across kinds, the collection of marvels (precisely the mandate his friend Gan Bao so voluminously fulfilled with his *Soushen ji*), court rituals in the service of spiritual others of several kinds (both ancestral and celestial/terrestrial), calendrical science, and knowledge of the esoteric structure of the *Odes* as essential matters such “unrestrained” men lamentably do not grasp.

⁷¹ See Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 33–34 and 37.

⁷² Going beyond what I said on the matter in Campany, *Strange Writing*, pp. 149–50.

In other passages in his large corpus he roundly rejects the attitude, based on what he considers a facile reading of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* texts but bandied about in fashionable *xuanxue* salons, that we should simply, following Zhuangzi's bidding, "rejoice in Heaven and acknowledge our allotted lifespan" 樂天知命 and that we should accept "the theory that death and life should be looked upon with equanimity" 齊死生之論. He notes wryly: "Nowadays I observe that people who talk this way rush off for acupuncture and moxa when taken ill, and when confronted with danger are quite afraid to die"; and he points out that Zhuang Zhou, after all, counseled non-involvement in political affairs for the sake of self-preservation and was himself unable to regard death and life as the same.⁷³ Ge Hong could be quite scathing in attacking figures and texts of these persuasions:

The *Text of Five Thousand Words* (the *Daode jing*), although it comes from Laozi, is all floating theories, approximations, and summaries. Nowhere in it is [Laozi] willing to expound on the matter [of transcendence arts] in a way that is complete and able to be received and relied upon. Merely to recite this text benightedly⁷⁴ without obtaining an essential *dao* (that is, a *dao* of transcendence) is useless labor. And even more so when it comes to lesser texts! As for the writings of Master Wen, Zhuangzi, Keeper of the Pass Yin Xi, and others of their ilk, although they treat the Yellow [Thearch] and Lao[zi] as ancestral and continue [in their tradition] 祖述黃老, giving pride of place to the dark and the empty 憲章玄虛, they only speak in generalities and never come close to definitive words. Some of them furthermore treat death and life as the same 齊死生, saying that there is no difference between them, or taking life to be toil and death to be repose,⁷⁵ but in this they depart an astronomical distance from divine transcendence. How are they even worth toying with? Their allegories and similes 其寓言譬喻 can be garnered as rubble to fill deficiencies, but when things get to the point that the eloquent scoundrels and out-of-line blackguards of these latter days are able to use the *Lao* and *Zhuang* to shelter under, isn't it a pity?⁷⁶

⁷³ *NP* 14, pp. 253–54. Compare his (and his teacher's) interpretation of the *Laozi's* injunction against valuing things that are hard to get in *NP* 16, p. 286.

⁷⁴ Recitation of this text was a regular practice of Celestial Master communities.

⁷⁵ *Huainanzi*, "Chuzhen pian" 俶真篇, cites what Wang Ming says is a lost from passage from the *Zhuangzi* with this last phrase.

⁷⁶ *NP* 8, p. 151.

The bleakness of death – “in the endless night deep beneath the Nine Springs, first becoming food for crickets and ants and finally merging one’s body with dust and dirt” – should spur us to “abandon our non-urgent affairs and cultivate the mystic, wondrous enterprise,”⁷⁷ that is, the path toward transcendence.

Ge Hong clearly, then, saw the utopian outlook of followers of Zhuangzi as inhospitable to the quest for transcendence. But, did he portray this quest in locative or in utopian terms?

At first blush, it would seem impossible to see the quest for transcendence as anything other than a purely utopian striving to slip the shackles of mortality and all the other limitations of human existence. There seems to be nothing locative in it whatsoever. And indeed, in some periods, some authors and some fashioners of cultural images of transcendents portrayed this quest in terms utterly utopian. All graphic images of transcendents that I know of – whether on the walls of tombs or on grave goods such as mirrors, censers, coffins, or paintings – picture them flying unconstrained through the atmosphere, cavorting with strange beasts, grasping stalks of longevity-conferring plants, often winged or feathered, scarcely human; even when shown standing in attendance in the court of the Queen Mother of the West, with official seals or banners, they are not dressed in what counted (in our world at least) as court attire, this difference in sartorial code seemingly to remind viewers of their difference from mortal courtiers. In such guises transcendents were represented as subject neither to the spatial, geographic, physical bounds within which ordinary persons dwell nor to the ritual and customary regulations that ordered mortals’ lives. They were off the map; they were of another world. To turn to texts, the well known *Chuci* 楚辭 poem titled “Yuanyou” 遠遊, perhaps dating to the second century BC, opens with a lament about the world and the time. The poem then tells of how its protagonist responds by fleeing upward, escaping this world and eventually even his own body, adopting an alternate cuisine, feeding on *qi* and auroras and the springwaters of Kunlun. Aerially touring the known cosmos, then exiting beyond its horizontal borders, leaving behind heaven, earth, sights, and sounds, he ends up “sharing in the Grand Antecedence, having become its neighbor 與泰初而為鄰.”⁷⁸ This is about as utopian a narrative as it is possible to imagine, as are almost all poetic portrayals of transcendence of

⁷⁷ *NP* 14, p. 254.

⁷⁸ Benefiting from the fine annotated translation and discussion in Paul W. Kroll, “A Poem of Mystical Excursion,” in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1996), pp. 155–65.

which I am aware,⁷⁹ and if we understand its speaker's destination to be a version of transcendence or *xian*-hood – and its many allusions to previous well-known transcendents and to the technical vocabulary of longevity arts suggest that we were meant to – then we must say that this is an utterly utopian account both of the process of becoming a transcendent and of the nature of the goal of transcendence.

Invoking the language of this and similar accounts of transcendence, Ge Hong, in chapter one of *Baopuzi neipian* (called *Neipian* for short), erects a clearly utopian aegis over the essays to follow. The chapter opens with an account of the Obscure or the Mystery 玄, an epithet for the Dao and a term dear to the “embracers of emptiness” he elsewhere castigates. The Mystery is beyond categories, boundaries, and distinctions, yet gives rise to a world full of these. Having established this rhetorical beginning, the text, in high language, embarks on a chain of reasoning: the presence of Mystery brings life, its absence, death; it is therefore only with Mystery (the Dao) that permanence is possible; “those who employ the Dao become divine, while those who forget it become mere vessels”; from talk of “employing” the Dao we move to talk of the possibility of “getting” or “attaining 得” the Dao. The rest of the chapter describes (in soaring, lyrical terms reminiscent of the “Yuanyou”) the “utmost people” who achieve this, who “attain it” (the Dao), as well as a second-best option, those who “truly know how to be satisfied” (from the *Laozi*) and thus stand outside entanglements and attachments to external things, having become one with the “fashioner of things” (from the *Zhuangzi*). “Nobody recognizes him; he is far removed, aloof” – and thus chapter 1 ends. If this were all Ge had written on the subject, he would seem to be writing in the Zhuangzian vein of third-century *xuanxue*.

But we have seen his disdain, expressed elsewhere, for those predecessors. And on the next page Ge begins defending the reality of transcendents and their avoidance of death (since the Dao is life and it is possible to “get” the Dao), and we do not get far into chapter 2 without encountering talk of specific methods – methods whose locativeness or utopianness will be considered below. The discourse has shifted from rhapsodizing about the ineffability of the Dao and the soaring wanderings of those who obtain it to the palpable minutiae and lifelong vigilant labor involved in rendering the human biospiritual or-

⁷⁹ For a recent study of transcendence as a poetic topos, see Rania Huntington, “Crossing Boundaries: Transcendents and Aesthetics in the Six Dynasties,” in Zong-qi Cai, ed., *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2004), pp. 191–221.

ganism deathless. “Getting the Dao” turns out to be an extraordinarily complicated, arduous business, no mere “apophatic meditation,”⁸⁰ and, what is more, there seem to be hundreds of ways of proceeding, each of them complex. Almost all of the rest of the work is an examination of these multiple ways from various angles.

At one other point Ge returns to discussing the Dao directly, and even complains of how naming, describing, and dividing it in countless ways leads us away from it. “The common person cannot recognize its rootedness in Grand Antecedence (here appropriating the language of the last line of ‘Yuanyou’), but instead cultivates its outflows into the mere branches.” If a person can remain quiet, indifferent, detached, and calm, he can dispel bad fortune and attract good, because “lifespan resides within us, with no entanglements in externals; it is in this that the Dao resides, with no attending upon a that.” But, Ge notes, few can do this.⁸¹ And the chapter then takes a surprising turn. Having begun with these utopian lines that would not seem out of place in *Zhuangzi*’s Inner Chapters, where he implies that it is really our preferences and attitudes, not our lifespans, that we must work on,⁸² Ge Hong moves on to note that those who are unable to cultivate the recommended mental detachment often turn to sacrificial offerings and exorcisms, and the rest of the chapter is a critique of these. We thus have an odd pairing: the opening discourse on the Dao and mental cultivation, then a critique of ordinary people’s attempts to win happiness by (from Ge’s perspective) bribing the gods. The first seems to serve the rhetorical function of making the second seem paltry by comparison. Insofar as Ge Hong elsewhere (including other passages in the *Neipian*) roundly mocks those who merely cultivate mental detachment and equanimity, and insofar as he repeatedly argues the urgency of the quest for lifespan-enhancing and transcendence-attaining practices and rehearses the details and variety of such practices throughout the rest of the twenty *Neipian* and massively documents their effectiveness in his *Shenxian zhuan*, he moves a long way indeed from Grand Antecedence.

To this point we might summarize as follows. When it suits his purposes, Ge Hong invokes elements of the repertoire of utopian discourse first ventured in *Zhuangzi* in particular (as well as *Laozi*, less so) and augmented in early sections of *Huainanzi* and even used by third-

⁸⁰ See Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1999).

⁸¹ *NP* 9, p. 170.

⁸² An implied view that, as noted above, Ge Hong associated with *Zhuangzi* and one that he elsewhere roundly condemned.

century *xuanxue* writers. He does this even though he more than once savagely criticizes those “free spirits” who draw inspiration from these same sources, and even though he elsewhere criticizes the *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi* texts themselves for their lack of methods and Zhuangzi as a figure for his failure to practice the equanimity he preached.

Here I would pause to recall Smith’s warning (above) that “with respect to this or that feature, modes of Christianity may differ more significantly between themselves than between some mode of one or another Late Antique religion.” That Ge Hong sometimes used vocabulary seen in “Yuanyou” and other utopian versions of transcendence (as well as vocabulary from the *Zhuangzi* Inner Chapters and from *Laozi*, for that matter, though these do not yet seem to know of transcendents), and that we so routinely lump them and much else besides into the holistic category “Daoist” and then struggle to reconcile elements so fundamentally different with respect to this or that feature,⁸³ must not blind us to Ge’s locative renderings of transcendence if they are there to find. With respect to the locative/utopian distinction, in other words, modes of (or authors in the tradition of) what customarily passes for “Daoism” may differ more significantly between themselves than from aspects of other bodies of early-medieval Chinese religious thought or practice.

As we sift the textual evidence, it will be helpful to distinguish between Ge Hong’s portrayals of three things: methods of transcendence, the nature of the goal of transcendence, and patterns of behavior of adepts deemed to have achieved transcendence or to be on the path toward it. In each of these cases, Ge was the inheritor and collector of practices, narratives, and understandings from diverse sources; on the other hand, through his selections and portrayals he reshaped the many (and sometimes competing) ways and portrayals of transcendence in directions he himself preferred, though his shaping (like that of any author) was partially constrained by precedent and by audience expectations.

The figure of Ji Kang 嵇康 (d. 262) as represented in Ge Hong’s works exemplifies the complexity, multiplicity, and dense intertextuality of such literary reshapings. Although associated with the utopian values ascendant in the third century,⁸⁴ he is nowhere (to my knowl-

⁸³ As Robinet did in her otherwise admirable *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1997), for example.

⁸⁴ See Spiro, *Contemplating the Ancients*, pp. 76 ff.; Donald Holzman, *La vie et la pensée de Hi K’ang* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957); Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China: The Essays of Hsi K’ang* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1983).

edge) linked to them by Ge Hong when Ge sets about criticizing those values. We know that Ge befriended Ji's nephew, Ji Han 含, in 306.⁸⁵ The *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography of Ge's father-in-law, Bao Jing, which may not be from Ge Hong's hand, contains a passage implying that Ji Kang, although apparently executed in 262 for having been implicated in a political affair, was in fact still alive, skillfully strumming his zither in Bao's own company.⁸⁶ This implies that Ji's previous "execution" had been an instance of *bingjie* 兵解 or "martial escape," an event staged to fool both worldly and otherworldly authorities so that the practitioner could go on living "off the books" of those fated to die.⁸⁷ This much would suggest a rehabilitation of Ji Kang's reputation and a coopting of this figure by proponents of transcendence arts, a maneuver aided by the fact that Ji left an essay on cold-food powder and argued for the feasibility of transcendence (despite the lack of any evidence that Ji practiced its methods). This rehabilitation and cooptation may have been carried out by Ge Hong himself, or it may be the work of other, intervening, agents, whose work Ge was then picking up and responding to. On the other hand, Ji Kang is also mentioned in two other settings in extant passages attributed to *Shenxian zhuan* that (once again) may or may not be from Ge's hand but that nevertheless suggest the complex fashionings and refashionings of reputations that were accomplished in Eastern Jin texts. And these refashionings are less complimentary. The first represents Ji as having obtained an interview with Sun Deng 孫登, only to be put down by the future transcendent with the judgment, "Young man, you have excellent talent, but you lack knowledge of how to preserve the body. How will you avoid harm?" and furthermore decisively bettered by Sun's superior talent on the zither – a particularly damning detail, given Ji's reputation for prowess on the instrument.⁸⁸ The second tells of how the adept Wang Lie 王烈 found first a source of strange, numinous mud, then a scripture of esoteric arts, deep in the mountains; both discoveries, however, ended up being compromised by the involvement of Wang's friend Ji Kang, due to the fact, confided by Wang to a disciple, that "Ji had not yet become fit to attain the Way."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ See Campany, *To Live*, pp. 15, 340 n.184.

⁸⁶ For translation and discussion, see *ibid.*, *To Live*, pp. 295–97.

⁸⁷ For more on this topic, see *ibid.*, pp. 47–60, and Campany, "Living off the Books."

⁸⁸ Campany, *To Live*, p. 336.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 338–41.

Methods

Ge Hong inherited a great many methods supposedly conducive to transcendence, methods that had been crafted by different predecessors over several centuries and in different regions and subcultures. From the point of view of the locative/utopian distinction, the methods discussed and evaluated by Ge Hong show variety as well as complexity.

Consider, first, the ubiquitous avoidance of “grains” (usually standing for the entirety of mainstream, agriculture-based cuisine) and its replacement by an alternate diet of *qi*, whether mediated through non-cultivated plants gathered on mountains and at the cosmic periphery or inhaled directly as breath. This was not one method but a genus containing many species; it is also the oldest documented sort of method of extreme longevity and transcendence. It is a type of method many of the adepts in Ge’s *Traditions of Divine Transcendents* are depicted as employing. As I have argued elsewhere in detail,⁹⁰ in their essentials all such methods were utopian in that they amounted to an exiting of networks of feeding/eating, agricultural production in settled communities, and political authority – networks that were deeply locative in character. The adept gave up food produced by a locative system of social arrangements in favor of a diet based on *formless qi* associated with the primordium. Seen in terms of the locative/utopian distinction, grain-avoidance coupled with *qi*-ingestion seems to be the only transcendence method that is strictly and simply utopian: no locative categories are here used in the transcending of locative categories. Other methods differ in this respect.

Techniques of *shijie* 尸解 or “escape by means of a simulated corpse,” for example, explicitly enable the adept to escape a locative system of otherworldly name-and-residence registration and divine lifespan-limit enforcement, an unmistakably utopian end. But they do so by manipulating the very procedures of the locative systems they work to subvert.⁹¹ Similar in this respect are methods of self-concealment (in hagiographies usually invoked by adepts in order to avoid harm or capture by hostiles) known as *dunjia* 遁甲, in which protective spirits are

⁹⁰ Robert Ford Campany, “Eating Better than Gods and Ancestors,” in Roel Sterckx, ed., *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2005), pp. 96–122, and Campany, “The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China,” *TP* 91 (2005), pp. 126–82.

⁹¹ On these methods, see Campany, *To Live*, pp. 47–60; Campany, “Living off the Books”; and Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Corpse Deliverance, Substitute Bodies, Name Change, and Feigned Death: Aspects of Metamorphosis and Immortality in Early Medieval China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001), pp. 1–68.

called down by means of a manipulation of the divisions and symbols of time; some accounts of such methods suggest that the adept is able to temporarily slip through an opening in the cycle of time, thus becoming invisible to beings in this dimension.⁹² More straightforward divination techniques, on the other hand, seem entirely locative: whether the adept used numerological, mechanical, or other procedures, or whether, on the other hand, he divined by directly summoning prescient spirits to directly inform him of the future (a type of method preferred by Ge Hong), he was working within the patterned structure of time and destiny to improve his situation.⁹³ On the other hand, such uses of divination (including *dunjia* techniques) are never, to my knowledge, claimed as routes to transcendence; they are merely discussed, like talismans, numinous swords, bamboo staves, medicines, incantations, and the like, as protective aids for practitioners.⁹⁴ Alchemy, like *shijie* and *dunjia*, essentially involved manipulations within locative systems of correspondence and relation in order to achieve a result that transcended those locative systems and was thus utopian. The alchemist worked his way back up the chain of cosmic devolution toward the non-differentiated primordium.⁹⁵

For Ge Hong and for some of his source texts, a practitioner of transcendence arts proper, whatever their nature, must first establish merit and eliminate faults.⁹⁶ Some procedures for accomplishing this – essentially the straightforward amassing of good deeds and avoidance of bad ones (as represented in the *Scripture of the Jade Seal*, for example, as quoted by Ge Hong⁹⁷) – were thoroughly locative, as was the divine ledger system that was pictured as keeping track of adepts’

⁹² See Campany, *To Live*, pp. 73–74, 231–32; Poul Andersen, “The Practice of Bugang,” *CEA* 5 (1990), pp. 15–53; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1997), pp. 328–29.

⁹³ On Ge Hong’s views on divination methods, see Campany, *To Live*, pp. 72–75.

⁹⁴ Similar to *dunjia* in this respect was the method of *fenxing* 分形 or “body division”: it was not a route to transcendence but rather simply a means of self-protection, and it used locative categories to transcend locative emplacement – in this case literally, since the adept appeared in multiple places at once.

⁹⁵ See further Campany, *To Live*, pp. 33–47.

⁹⁶ Again, however, this is usually portrayed as a necessary but hardly a sufficient condition for transcendence, as in this passage from the *Scripture of the Jade Seal* as quoted by Ge Hong: “Again the *Scripture* says: ‘If your accumulation of good deeds is not yet complete, then not even ingesting an elixir of transcendence will be of benefit. On the other hand, if one does not ingest an elixir of transcendence but practices good deeds, although one will not yet attain transcendence one will at least avoid a sudden [premature] death.’” Great merit was sometimes, however, sufficient at least to get one temporarily whisked up to the heavens, as in the hagiography of Shen Xi (even here, however, Shen’s merit is not claimed to have resulted solely or directly in his transcendence), on which see Campany, *To Live*, pp. 255–58.

⁹⁷ See Campany, *To Live*, p. 50.

standing, with its notation of “marks” and “counts” and its deductions from people’s “original number” for each infraction. The semi-divine, semi-demonic agents who reported the adept’s deeds to heaven dwelled in his very body. A strategically opposite response to the divine ledger system, then, was not to work within it to amass merit, as urged by the *Scripture of the Jade Seal* (which seems connected to Eastern Han weft-text traditions) and, even more explicitly, by a section of the *Taiping jing* 太平經,⁹⁸ but rather to expel the sin-reporting agents (the “three corpses 三尸”) from oneself and thus, as in *shijie* methods, escape the system altogether. We see, then, that with respect to a commonly held understanding of how the other world worked to keep track of individuals in this world – an understanding that pictured the other world in radically locative terms – there were some methods that worked within that locative system (with, in the case of the *Taiping jing*, explicit critiques of any attempt to skirt the system) and others that enabled the adept to escape it. Ge Hong discussed both sorts of methods and portrayed both as efficacious.

Finally, the various charms, talismans, herbs, and artifacts used by adepts to protect themselves against the dangers lurking in mountains – described in chapter 17 and elsewhere in *Neipian* – were all quintessentially locative techniques. They worked to control, tame, or neutralize the unruly forces of liminal zones. Essential to this controlling function was knowing and incanting the names of strange creatures, precisely as we have seen in the case of many *Soushen ji* entries. Again, however, such bodies of knowledge and practice are nowhere claimed to constitute a route to transcendence; they are portrayed as arts of self-protection, ancillary to methods by which the adept might achieve deathlessness and celestial ascent.

At this point I pause to note Ge Hong’s rankings and preferences in these matters, insofar as they can be discerned. He is on record as authoring several treatises on *dunjia* and other divination-based methods.⁹⁹ He consistently ranked *shijie* as the lowest of three types of paths to transcendence (though in doing so he also acknowledged its efficacy); on the other hand, he himself is alleged to have achieved transcendence by this route,¹⁰⁰ despite his possession and touting of alchemi-

⁹⁸ See Company, “Living off the Books,” 138–40.

⁹⁹ A number of such texts are attributed to him; notices of them are sprinkled throughout the bibliographic catalog of the *Sui shu*, for example. Of course, these could be misattributions, or the works in question could simply have been copies of chapters or portions of the *Inner Chapters*, sections of which deal with divination in detail.

¹⁰⁰ *JS* 72, p. 1913. The attribution of this method to Ge Hong could, of course, reflect not

cal scriptures in the Grand Purity tradition, his search for cinnabar in the south late in his life, and his clearly expressed relative disdain for *shijie* methods. As for methods for grain avoidance and *qi*-ingestion, including the use of herbal compounds, these he himself also practiced and saw as useful but as markedly less potent than alchemy.

Goals

In the *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography of Guangchengzi 廣成子, much of which is drawn straight from chapter 11 of *Zhuangzi*, the adept delivers these words to the Yellow Thearch, who, having been rebuked and dismissed for his haughtiness, has returned, this time in appropriate humility, for instruction:

The essence of the ultimate Way
Is dark and obscure.
It involves no seeing, no hearing,
But only embracing your spirit in quietude.
Your body will then correct itself
And will certainly become pure.
Do not egg on your body,
Do not disturb your essence,
And you may achieve long life.
Take care of what is within, and close yourself to what is without.
Know much, and you will suffer decay.
As for myself, I abide where [Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang]
are one,
So as to settle where they harmonize.
That is why I have reached the age of one thousand two hundred years
And yet my body has never grown decrepit.
He who obtains my way will ascend to become an august one;
He who loses my way will descend to become dust.
I am about to leave you now to pass through the gate of the
inexhaustible,
To wander about in the wilds with no bounds.
I will compare my light with that of the sun and moon;
I will last as long as Heaven and Earth.
When humankind has completely perished,
I alone will remain.¹⁰¹

Ge's own practice but rather a tactical maneuver on the part of agents wishing to posthumously mold his reputation in certain ways (perhaps not favorably).

¹⁰¹ Campany, *To Live*, pp. 159–60.

Master Guangcheng's method is apophatic, and the results, as he describes them, are utterly utopian, reminiscent of the conclusion of "Yuanyou." But it is significant to note that there is nothing else remotely like it in *Shenxian zhuan*. With the exception of two one-line textual fragments concerning Xu You 許由,¹⁰² Guangcheng's hagiography is also the only extant passage in *Shenxian zhuan* that draws figures or episodes from any part of the *Zhuangzi*. If this hagiography is accurately attributed to Ge Hong, he perhaps incorporated it into his collection because the meeting of Guangcheng and the Yellow Thearch is mentioned in a scripture he prized, the *Five Numinous Treasure Talismans*.¹⁰³

Much more typical of Ge Hong's portrayal of transcendence is the following account of the duties of the transcendent Wang Yuan 王遠, given by his disciple Cai Jing 蔡經:

He usually resides at Mount Kunlun, but he also travels back and forth to Mount Luofou and Mount Guancang. Atop each of these mountains is a palace from which Lord Wang oversees the affairs of the Celestial Courts. Every day he is in touch with Heaven Above a dozen or more times; in all matters of birth and death on earth, in [the several jurisdictions of] the Five Marchmounts, reports are made first of all to Lord Wang. When Lord Wang goes forth [from one of the palaces], he sometimes does not take his entire retinue of officials but only rides a yellow donkey and takes about a dozen attendants. Wherever he goes, maintaining an altitude of several thousand feet, the mountains and forests can be seen below; and at each place he arrives, the gods of mountains and waters come forth to greet, welcome, and do obeisance to him.¹⁰⁴

Preserved here is some of the soaring imagery of "Yuanyou" and other poetic and visual renderings of transcendence, but the overriding idiom is now decidedly bureaucratic. The final ascent to the heavens that caps many *Traditions* hagiographies amounts to a promotion to celestial office. Even the highest elixirs have this result, so that Peng Zu 彭祖 can remark, "If one wants to elevate one's form, ascend to heaven, and get promoted to a transcendent's office, one must employ gold and cinnabar. This is the means by which the Primal Sovereigness and the Grand Monad ascended into the skies in broad daylight."¹⁰⁵ Like

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 287–88.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 161; the scripture passage in question is found in text no. 388 of Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2004), chap. 3, p. 17 (recto), lines 10 ff.

¹⁰⁴ See Campany, *To Live*, p. 264, where annotations to the passage are provided.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 175.

any bureaucracy, this one had avenues of promotion and the constant threat of demotion. The transcendent Sire Gourd 壺公 confesses to his disciple Fei Changfang 費長房, “Formerly I was in charge of a celestial office, but because of my carelessness in an official matter I was found guilty and was therefore banished to the human realm.”¹⁰⁶ In Ge Hong’s pages, then, celestial transcendents escaped the underworld bureaus of death only to join purer, more exalted bureaus on high; they eluded one administration to join another.

It was apparently for this reason that some transcendents are on record as having preferred to remain here below rather than ascend to the bureaus above. In *Neipian* Ge Hong tells us why: “Peng Zu said that in the heavens above there are many venerable officers and great gods, and that new transcendents hold lowly ranks and are assigned numerous duties. He opined that it was all just more toil and suffering and that it was therefore not worthwhile to quest so urgently to ascend into the heavens. So he remained in the human realm for over eight hundred years.”¹⁰⁷ In *Traditions*, Peng Zu is portrayed as learning this preference for “earthbound transcendence” 地仙 from the even more ancient Master Whitestone 白石先生:

Peng Zu asked him, “Why do you not ingest drugs that would enable you to ascend to the heavens?” Master Whitestone replied, “Can one amuse oneself on high in the heavens more than in the human realm? I wish only to avoid growing old and dying. In the heavens above there are many venerable ones to be honored, and to serve them there would be harder than to remain in the human realm.” People of his time therefore called him the Concealed Transcendent. They did so because he was not anxious to ascend to the heavens to become a transcendent official, nor did he seek fame.¹⁰⁸

The sobriquet “Concealed Transcendent” 隱遁仙 underscores the obvious analogy: the earthbound transcendents of *Traditions* remind us of nothing so much as the recluses of the Eastern Jin and earlier, those who, out of loftiness of character or an unwillingness to be bothered, absented themselves from court and refused office.¹⁰⁹ Earthbound transcendents

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁷ *NP* 3, p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Campany, *To Live*, p. 294; the passage is not attested in pre-Song quotations of the text.

¹⁰⁹ On the recluse traditions, see Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, and Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Chinese U.P., 1990).

were the recluses of the celestial appointment system. Ge Hong, however, ranked this option beneath that of celestial transcendence.

One of the locative systems that transcendents escaped was the family, and earlier polemicists had objected to the quest for transcendence on the grounds that it was unfilial – that it would, if practiced by many, disrupt the cross-generational continuity of families and of their servicing the dead.¹¹⁰ Ge Hong's response to this challenge is telling. Not only would practitioners themselves accede to celestial status, he says, but further, "If the ghosts of the ancestors have consciousness, then they would share in one's glory, perhaps serving as advisers to the Five Thearchs, perhaps overseeing the hundred numina. They would receive such stations without requesting them. For food, they would dine on floriate rarities; for position, they would oversee [the dead in] Luofeng.... None among them would go hungry."¹¹¹ Thus, by a sort of transfer of merit, the transcendent's ancestors would continue to be honored and fed, though by new means; their status, for Ge Hong, would be not only preserved but improved, their promotion to celestial office and their access to celestial foods having been assured.

Ge Hong, then, portrayed the goal of transcendence in mostly locative, bureaucratic terms, while occasionally drawing on precedent utopian imagery to describe it. He also made room for an option that seems to have been developed in reaction against locativized transcendence, one that renewed and preserved the possibility of a utopian goal of transcendence arts, namely, the option of earthbound transcendence. If the realm of transcendents had been rendered locative, a second wave of practitioners and authors created an alternative to this locativized version of transcendence, that of the earthbound transcendent. Tellingly, however, Ge Hong, while acknowledging this option, consistently ranked it lower than celestial transcendence, and his own version of celestial transcendence, with almost no exceptions, was utterly bureaucratic and locative. I am not at all suggesting that Ge Hong originated this mostly locative portrayal of transcendence, but what is clear is that, with both locative and utopian understandings of transcendence apparently available in the cultural repertoire by his time, he distinctly preferred the locative.

¹¹⁰ For more on this, see Campany, "Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence," and a chapter in my forthcoming book on the transcendence quest, tentatively titled *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China*.

¹¹¹ *NP* 3, pp. 51–52; the special terms are explained in Campany, *To Live*, pp. 35 and 88–89.

Patterns of Behavior

In addition to the methods and goals of transcendence, we must consider the repertoire of ways in which adepts were narratively represented as behaving. To study Ge Hong's collection of narratives of adepts is to study a text that combines – by its content, its details, its selections and omissions, its modifications from earlier versions of the same stories – traces of his own predilections with social memories that were circulating widely, had been collectively shaped by others, and which Ge Hong collected and transmitted.¹¹² Here, as elsewhere, no simple composite portrait is possible, but certain patterns recur, patterns in a repertoire of behaviors that came to be expected of adepts, and some of these are relevant to our inquiry.

With respect to the locative/utopian distinction, we see a spectrum of behaviors on display. At one end are figures such as Luan Ba 樂巴, who, according to his *Traditions* hagiography, was nominated as a Filial and Incorrupt, appointed gentleman of the interior, and served as governor of Yuzhang before later being appointed to a court post. The bulk of his hagiography is taken up with a detailed narrative of his exorcism of the “god” in the temple at Lushan, a being that turned out to have the “true form” of a fox. The local populace, in gratitude to Luan for his having rid them of a burdensome spiritual parasite, established a temple to Luan while he was still living. This narrative shows the adept as a locative agent maintaining proper ritual and divine order. Even the subnarrative about Luan's long-distance extinguishing of a fire by spitting out ale served at a court ceremony, an act of apparent disrespect for which he is challenged but which he is able to explain satisfactorily (the explanation also confirmed by a report from the distant city of Chengdu in which the fire had been put out), shows that what seems to be unconventional behavior – even the sort of untrammelled behavior we might expect from *xuanxue* devotees, except that we would be surprised to see a Ruan Ji or a Liu Ling *spitting out* ale! – in fact serves social order.¹¹³

¹¹² I have expanded on this theme of the sources of hagiographies and the nature and scope of the hagiographer's “creativity” elsewhere and will do so again in my forthcoming book.

¹¹³ For translation and discussion see Campany, *To Live*, pp. 252–55. A closely similar long-distance extinguishing of a fire by spitting out ale at a ceremony is reported of another figure, Cheng Wuding 成武丁; see Campany, *To Live*, p. 362. Fan Ye's (398–446 AD) treatment of Luan Ba 樂巴 in his *History of the Latter Han* brings out the locative nature of Luan's activities even more clearly (*Hou Han shu* 57, pp. 1841–42). It stresses Luan's classical learning and his concern to promote education and standardize rites among the official class. Of his exorcistic activities it has this to say, after recording his promotion to the post of Governor of Yuzhang: “The terrain of that commandery held many demons and aberrations of mountains and riv-

At the other end of the spectrum are trickster-like figures such as Zuo Ci 左慈, who, in his *Traditions* hagiography, is shown making fools of the rulers Cao Cao and Sun Ce by turns, eluding their repeated attempts to capture him and performing amusing mantic exploits such as body division, transformations, and tricks involving gravity-defying ale cups deployed during royal banquets.¹¹⁴

Ge Hong's great-uncle Ge Xuan 葛玄 is hagiographically shown as combining these features, and the combination is an important clue for our purposes. When confronting unruly, overweening local gods or illness-causing demons, Ge Xuan reins in and executes these beings, deploying locative methods for locative ends; as the hagiography summarily puts it, "Ghosts and demons would all manifest their forms before him; some of these he would send off, others he would execute." On the other hand, when pressured to attend socially on his social superiors, Ge Xuan is shown violating conventions and etiquette – in this respect reminiscent of his third-century *xuanxue* contemporaries – using his mantic arts to escape from settings in which attendance on social superiors was obligatory: precisely the sorts of undesirable social situations Peng Zu and Master Whitestone had lamented with regard to the celestial courts. Sun Ce, for example, had pressured Ge to remain at court, despite Ge's having asked to be excused; so, during a royal boating expedition, Ge used his arts to disappear underwater for several days, drinking with Wu Zixu 伍子胥 rather than attending Sun. So as to avoid having to accept a burdensome social invitation, Ge used his arts to simulate his own death (complete with a smelly, dismembered "corpse" and streaming maggots).¹¹⁵

In short, adepts are consistently portrayed as behaving locatively toward unruly spiritual forces, wielding various instruments of command and control to put these beings (local gods, demons, ghosts) in their proper places. With respect to persons conventionally deemed

ers, and the common people often used up their capital on lavish offerings to them. Luan Ba had some knowledge of arts of the Dao and could command demons and spirits, so he tore down the shrines and abolished sacrifices, cutting back and controlling the activities of illicit shamans, and from then on aberrations and anomalies quieted down on their own." The biography continues by relating how, after the reigning emperor died, he was to be interred in a tumulus at a location that would require the destruction of many commoners' graves. The imperial household wanted to proceed, but Luan Ba bitterly protested. For this he was imprisoned by the prince, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to house arrest. Later, according to Fan Ye, he declined an appointment by Emperor Ling and submitted a memorial protesting the murder of two other officials. This angered the Emperor so much that he had Luan placed under guard; Luan killed himself. We see from this last element another case in which Ge Hong is rewriting rival accounts of an adept's demise.

¹¹⁴ See Campany, *To Live*, pp. 279–86.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–59.

to occupy higher social stations, on the other hand, adepts are just as consistently shown escaping the demands of etiquette and ritual and transcending the bounds of hierarchy. This latter feature is one of the ways in which Ge Hong (and other proponents of transcendence arts) argued for the autonomy and authority of the role of transcendent in relation to the normative political and ritual order. As we have seen, however, Ge Hong nevertheless understood and portrayed the goal of transcendence itself largely in locative terms – not an unrestrained cosmic roaming but service in another administrative hierarchy, this one celestial.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, both Gan Bao and Ge Hong clearly singled out individuals and values associated with third-century *xuanxue*, “naturalness,” and “the embracing of emptiness” as their chief ideological opponents. Both of these friends self-consciously positioned their own arguments against these historically, collectively remembered predecessors. It is, of course, quite possible that the figures of the third century were stand-ins for contemporaneous early Eastern Jin opponents Gan and Ge did not wish to name.

Both Gan Bao and Ge Hong dealt at length with topics on which both locative and utopian stances had already been staked out. For Gan, these included divination, marvelous creatures, dreams, the cosmological status of human emotion, gods, ghosts, and demons; for Ge, they included divination and other mantic arts and, most especially, the nature of transcendence. I have argued that when handling these topics, both of these friends opted for the locative, sometimes explicitly but usually only implicitly rejecting the utopian. Their preference for the locative takes on added, indeed poignant significance in the context of the political disunion, military instability, and social turmoil of their age. I would hesitate, however, to reduce their religious sensibilities to these social causes, and I would reject outright the tendency all too common among sinologists to see their religious predilections as coded expressions of merely political positions. Put another way, the political (as we might term it), for them as for their contemporaries, was (what we would term) religious, and the religious political.

If the case of Ge Hong’s portrayal of transcendence seems less clear cut – and it does – I would argue that this is because the quest for transcendence had a more predominantly utopian background and history than the topics on which Gan Bao focused, and because Ge

Hong in his own representations of this quest was limited to some extent by the legacy of understandings, methods, and narratives he inherited and collected. Gan Bao, too, was an inheritor and compiler, but the topics on which he amassed material had a much less utopian pedigree. I would nevertheless maintain that Ge portrayed transcendence as locatively as was possible in his time, and that the nature of his portrayal comes into sharp focus when juxtaposed against some earlier portrayals of which he was clearly aware but to which he chose to present alternatives.

Two intriguing matters await further investigation. One of these is the almost complete silence kept by both friends on the topic of the way of Buddha, its texts, values, cosmology, worldview, ideas, institutions, and followers. By the Eastern Jin, locative-leaning portrayals of this way had been offered in China, those focused primarily on karmic merit and the reciprocal logic of devotion to texts and images. On the other hand, utopian-leaning portraits had also been constructed, those focused on nirvana, on the “beyond-the-realm” character of monks, on the Perfection of Wisdom and the figure of Vimalakirti, and on emptiness. Why the silence of Gan and Ge? Perhaps the way of Buddha was simply still too new and foreign in the southeast to have registered with them as a significant phenomenon to be reckoned with. But I doubt this. Zhi Qian 支謙 (d. ca. 255) and Kang Senghui 康僧會 (d. 280), both China-born, thoroughly naturalized, Sanskrit-reading monks, had been active, visible translators and exegetes in the upper echelons of southeastern society and at the Wu court in the third century; Ge Hong’s grandfather must surely have known them through his court connections.¹¹⁶ Perhaps Gan Bao and Ge Hong kept silent on the way of Buddha because, although they knew of it, it did not yet jibe well with the worldview they both worked with and helped to construct; even the locative elements of the new path had not yet been cast in the predominantly bureaucratic idiom familiar for centuries in China.

Or perhaps the likeliest possibility is that they were primarily familiar with its utopian portrayals (as these had received far more attention) and thus disapproved of it, but were reticent to voice their disapproval because of the strong connections between their powerful patron, Wang Dao, and several noted contemporary practitioners of the path in the south. These included Shi Daobao 釋道寶, a younger brother of Wang Dao and a figure on whom relatively little is known; Zhu Daoqian 竺道潛, the younger brother of Wang Dun, known for his

¹¹⁶ See Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 46–55.

skill in explaining both the *Lotus* and the larger *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras and a very prominent priest in early Eastern Jin Jiankang, a fixture in the courts of emperors Yuan and Ming (both of whom, and especially the latter, are on record as sympathizing with the way of Buddha), where he was allowed to move about freely and styled “the gentleman from beyond the realm” 方外之士; and Zhu Fayi 竺法義, a disciple of Zhu Daoqian and, like him, a *Lotus sutra* specialist. As Erik Zürcher has pointed out, the “special connection between the Wang clan from Langye 瑯琊 [the clan of which Wang Dao and Wang Dun were members] and Buddhism is ... attested by the fact that at least two of its members – both belonging to the nearest relatives of the two leaders – were priests, an exceptional fact which in the fourth and early fifth century does not occur in any other of the great families.”¹¹⁷ It is even possible that this group of practitioners, particularly Zhu Daoqian, and the texts and values they stood for, were a primary but strictly implicit target of Gan’s and Ge’s disparagements of the earlier century’s Ruan Ji, Wang Bi, and the like, though this seems unlikely given the friends’ indebtedness to Wang Dao, his and Wang Dun’s immense power, and the consequent danger of being seen as attacking influential Wang relatives.

The other matter awaiting further investigation is Gan’s and Ge’s similar near-total silence on the way of the Celestial Master 天師道. Again, one possibility is that neither figure was very familiar with it, especially since it had presumably just arrived in the South with the great influx of northern émigrés. Yet, precisely because of the friends’ keen interest in matters religious, this possibility seems unlikely to me. I have also argued elsewhere that certain passages in Ge’s *Baopuzi neipian* and *Shenxian zhuan* indicate some awareness of the Tianshi dao.¹¹⁸

Further complicating the question is the overwhelmingly locative nature of Celestial Master cosmology and ritual. Given this, one might expect both Gan and Ge to have appropriated the newly arrived religious repertoire as a welcome ally against “embracers of emptiness.” That they did not do so (this much, at least, is clear from their near-complete silence) may be due to the Tianshi dao’s association with newly arrived northerners. Both Gan Bao and Ge Hong hailed from families with deep southern – more specifically Wu 吳 kingdom – roots. Gan Bao’s clan was registered at Xincai commandery 新蔡郡, an administra-

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97, silently emending the romanization; the previous discussion of the three named monks is based on *ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

¹¹⁸ See Campany, *To Live*, pp. 213–14, 216–18, 354–56.

tive unit established in or shortly after 317 by emperor Yuan under the aegis of Jiangzhou; the commandery was situated on the north bank of the Jiang River 江水 but squarely in territory controlled by the Eastern Jin.¹¹⁹ His paternal grandfather had served as a general and court official under the Wu regime, and his father, Gan Ying 瑩, is said to have served (presumably under the Western Jin) as assistant 丞 to the magistrate of Danyang 丹陽.¹²⁰ Ge Hong's clan was registered in Jurong district 句容縣, in Danyang commandery east-southeast of Jiankang. His paternal grandfather, Ge Xi 系, held high office at the Wu court, and his father, Ti 悌, served in a succession of offices under the Wu regime and then, after its capitulation, under the Western Jin as well. David Knechtges has recently argued persuasively that there existed in the late-third century – and, one might infer, still in the early-fourth – a distinct Wu culture that differed in important ways from the culture of the northern capital and whose literati members saw themselves as a distinct group with their own proud history and traditions.¹²¹ A chief feature of this regional identity was a firm, even in some cases extreme adherence to ritual propriety and a disdain of the anti-ritualism fashionable around Luoyang at the time. This and other facets of the Wu culture that Knechtges identifies in the writings of late-third-century figures such as Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) characterize the predilections of Gan Bao and Ge Hong as well.

Given their deep southern roots, Gan and Ge may have disdained the newly arrived Tianshi dao because of its northern associations. Their reticence to express disdain, on the other hand, would likely have been due to the longstanding association of the newly imported religious repertoire with the Langye Wang clan and its powerful Eastern Jin representatives.¹²² To repeat, Wang Dao was the two southern friends' most important political and social patron.

I conclude with a return to the matter with which I began, the question of how to proceed in an inquiry such as this.

Jonathan Smith has said that the cross-cultural study of religion involves redescribing religious phenomena in terms not native to them, then rectifying the non-native terms in light of what was learned by us-

¹¹⁹ See the historical map of the Eastern Jin territories and administrative units in Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, ed., *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1991), vol. 4, map 5–6. On the creation of the commandery by emperor Yuan, see *JSS* 15, p. 463.

¹²⁰ *JSS* 82, p. 2149. On the vagueness of *cheng* 丞 as an official title see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1985), p. 125.

¹²¹ "Sweet-Peel Orange," cited above, a fascinating and important article.

¹²² See, e.g., Nickerson, "Southern Celestial Masters," pp. 256–57.

ing them.¹²³ Here I have used Smith's locative/utopian typology as a vehicle for seeing the religious thought of Gan Bao and Ge Hong in new ways. By focusing on their fundamental approaches to and understandings of order, I hope I have been able to show a deep commonality in their thinking despite the fact that their respective texts on the surface level address different topics. (In stressing commonality in their thinking I do not, of course, mean to suggest that there are no differences between them; Ge Hong, for example, seems to have been much more attuned to observations and critiques of the social scene, while Gan Bao had much more of a historical bent; Ge Hong was an avid student and eventually a practitioner of transcendence arts, whereas Gan Bao does not seem to have practiced such arts.) I have also avoided the need to slot them into one of the prevailing isms by which we modern scholars habitually taxonomize religious history (Chinese and otherwise). And by adding to Smith's typology the notion of cultures as repertoires of values, gestures, images, topoi, and ideas, I have avoided the need to decide once and for all whether Ge and Gan "were" one thing rather than another; instead, they can be seen to have drawn on various repertoire items at various points to suit their rhetorical and persuasive aims. Nonetheless, their relative privileging of locative values is clear.

I also hope that this interpretation of the thought of these two figures has succeeded in illuminating some fundamental aspects of their writings, despite the fact that it has been conducted in terms they themselves would not have recognized. On the other hand, they would probably have recognized the regional bent I have just mentioned, and regional habits and loyalties may, unlike the locative/utopian typology I have deployed, go some way toward explaining their intellectual and religious predilections. I have not intended the typology to provide a causal explanation of their thought, but have used it as a heuristic means by which we may better understand some of its fundamental aspects.

In light of this analysis, useful though it has shown Smith's typology to be, some rectifications of that typology also seem to be called for.

1. Smith insists that the two types not be understood sequentially, with locative always preceding utopian historically.¹²⁴ But I find it difficult to imagine utopian religious productions without locative ones

¹²³ See, e.g., Smith's essay "Epilogue: The 'End' of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification," in Kimberly C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2000), although here Smith's program for comparison is actually more complicated than I indicate.

¹²⁴ See most recently *Relating Religion*, p. 16. Professor Smith has also confirmed this point in recent conversation.

already in place. If utopian productions are essentially attempts to break out of structures, those structures must already exist in the cultural imaginaire; moreover they must not simply exist but hold great authority in order for the act of escaping them to gain such power. Utopian religion needs structures to break free of, just as, for that matter, locative religion needs disorder to order.

2. Smith reminds us of the ideological dimensions of locative religion. For me, however, utopian religion and thought may be just as ideological, just as politically interested, a fact of which early-medieval China provides numerous examples.
3. The locative and utopian types sound clean cut. Smith at times writes as if whole “cultures” go locative or utopian by turns. But, at the level of what authors are actually doing in texts or what performers are doing in rituals, things can get much more complicated – and interesting. Looking at the writings of figures such as Gan Bao and Ge Hong, what we find is that they speak locatively of goals that are pictured utopically in other texts, but that, when it suits their rhetorical purposes, they also draw freely on precedent utopian imagery to describe aspects of their subjects. Furthermore, as I noted in discussing Ge Hong’s portrayal of transcendence, methods of self-cultivation that claim clearly utopian ends often worked by manipulating locative categories: if you can only get to the utopian goal by locative means, then we clearly have to deal with a more complex relationship between the two modes than one might anticipate from Smith’s discussions. Finally, in some respects it seems that locative and utopian are situational categories: that is, as I showed in the case of portrayals of transients, religious adepts may behave locatively toward certain classes of beings or in certain types of situations, and utopically toward other classes of beings or in other situations. The locative/utopian distinction, then, while helpful as a way of seeing a crucial difference between two types of worldview, isn’t always so helpful as a way of classifying authors or texts and can rarely be used to accurately characterize a whole “culture.” At the level of religious texts and performances, we need a more nuanced, supple model. Ann Swidler’s model of cultures as sets of repertoires is just such a model. I would say that, once locative and utopian options are on the table in a given culture, what we have is a big repertoire of terms, images, values, motifs, a repertoire of ways in which an author may paint the imaginaire he wants to paint, as he wants to paint it, for his own persuasive ends, though constrained by his audience’s expectations and his materials to some extent. He may use locative or utopian tones in a body of work that ultimately tilts one way or the other or balances precariously between the two viewpoints. This is all the more true in a literary culture as densely intertextual as that of early medieval China.

4. In Smith's account, the two constant exemplars of utopian religion are yogic movements in India and Hellenistic religions in the Mediterranean world. I think it is time to add several Chinese exemplars to this list. Perhaps this can help in the ongoing effort to bring Chinese materials into the broader conversation of the study of religions. Only when that happens will the study of Chinese religious history have fully come of age.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>JS</i>	<i>Jin shu</i> 晉書
<i>NP</i>	Wang Ming 王明, ed., <i>Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi</i> 抱朴子內篇校釋
<i>WP</i>	Yang Mingzhao 楊明照, ed., <i>Baopuzi waipian jiaojian</i> 抱朴子外篇校箋