Chapter Four
Brick by Brick:
*Jinlouzi* and the Construction of a Textual Identity

4.0 The man in the tower

An anecdote in *Jinlouzi* describes a curious moment in the text’s own long period of development:¹

Once, before I had finished *Jinlouzi*, I returned from Jingzhou to the capital. At this time people were saying that I was forging real gold making towers, and they would come visit me. After paying their respects with a toast, one by one they would inquire after this “golden tower,” saying “Perhaps I might look it over? I’m sure it would be a great marvel.” Situations like this were so ludicrous.

余作《金樓子》未竟，從荊州還都。時有言是鍛真金為樓子者，來詣余。三爵之，後，往往乞借金樓子：“玩弄之，應大奇巧。”此則近可咍也。²

Here, *Jinlouzi* is a work-in-progress, mysterious and misunderstood, but not wholly concealed.

The project already has a reputation, albeit one that utterly distorts its true nature. Compiler Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–554) is uninterested in commenting on his guests’ reactions to the true nature of his “golden tower,” or even whether or not this truth was ever revealed. Elsewhere, however, the text articulates its own lofty purpose quite directly: To preserve in writing the discourse of its author and thus establish for him a kind of immortality in text, in the manner of Sima Qian, Cao Pi, and countless other monumental figures before him.³ If *Jinlouzi* was compiled with an audience in mind, it was not one made up of Xiao Yi’s peers, but for readers of subsequent generations.

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¹ *Jinlouzi* was a work in progress for virtually the entirety of its compiler’s adult life. Details in the text suggest its latest datable entry was added just months before Xiao Yi’s death. Zhong Shilun 鍾仕論, *Jinlouzi yanjiu* 金樓子研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 10–11.


³ JLZ, 1.
The text has not fulfilled this lofty ambition. When later readers have attempted to make sense of *Jinlouzi*, the text is often treated as another reason to condemn its controversial compiler. Xiao Yi’s participation in debates on literary style have earned him attention from scholars throughout history, but such appraisals of his role in literary culture are rarely able to ignore his historical reputation as a political and military failure. He is remembered primarily for his ruthless rise to political prominence during the Hou Jing uprising, his mismanagement of relations with the Northern Wei, and his ultimate failure to defend the Liang capital from their subsequent invasion. It was on the eve of this invasion by the Western Wei that Xiao Yi, then ruling as emperor of the Liang, committed what is certainly his most perplexing and thoroughly condemned act. Having realized that defeat at the hands of invading forces was inevitable, Xiao Yi set fire to his imperial library, destroying tens of thousands of texts. This bibliocaust has, like Qin Shihuang’s “burning of books and burying of scholars” before it, become a scapegoat for countless gaps in the textual record. *Jinlouzi*, the most substantial surviving work attributed to Xiao Yi, offers the tantalizing possibility of a psychological solution to the problem posed by his peculiar historical legacy. How could a self-professed lover of scholarship and literature, a son of the illustrious Liang Emperor Wu and brother of *Wen xuan* compiler Xiao Tong, so selfishly

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4 For more on Hou Jing’s rebellion, see Scott Pearce, “Who, and What, was Hou Jing?” *Early Medieval China* 6 (2000), 62–64.

5 The exact number varies considerably depending on the account. While *Sui shu* reports only 70,000 *juan* were lost, *Nan shi* records a loss of over 100,000 *juan*, and *Zizhi tongjian* claims that 140,000 *juan* were destroyed: The number seems to grow with time. See NS, 8.245, SS, 32.907, and Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), 165.5121.

6 These are the first and last items on Sui scholar Niu Hong’s 牛弘 (545–610) list of “Five Calamities” (*wu e* 五厄) discussed in a memorial to the Sui court sent as a request replenish its library by requisitioning texts from regional institutions and private collectors. See SS, 49.1297–300. For more on Niu Hong, see Lai Xinxia, *Gudian muluxe*, 135–36.
bring ruin to the regime’s largest library, and, ultimately, the regime itself? What character flaws could possibly counteract the innate dignity of the imperial line and a lifetime steeped in the classical tradition?

Many have combed through Jinlouzi for insight into Xiao Yi’s upbringing, character, and political philosophy. Reading selectively, some have used passages from Jinlouzi to illustrate his moral failings and provide an explanation for his failure to defend the Liang. Others have used the text to seek a basis for Xiao Yi’s rehabilitation, finding that the text articulates a defensible Ruist persona that stands in contrast to his characterization by historians as a scoundrel and villain. These attempts to mine Jinlouzi for autobiographical details have enabled a variety of nuanced perspectives on Xiao Yi as a historical personage and literary innovator, but they do so at the expense of an accurate representation of the true complexity of the text upon which they are based. This is because these autobiographical details, however informative they may be, constitute only a small portion of Jinlouzi’s contents. The tower that Xiao Yi’s visitors imagined him building, forged from molten gold, offers a fitting metaphor for the actual text. Jinlouzi is built from bits and pieces of other works, its textual pieces dislodged from their earlier positions, grafted together in new arrangements, and reshaped into a unique composite structure.

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7 Cao Daoheng, for example, pillories Xiao Yi as both a writer and a leader, arguing that the sordid details of his life mean that his Confucian leanings expressed in Jinlouzi should be treated as little more than a formal performance. Cao also discusses the complexity of Xiao Yi’s critical writings on literature, though he does not see this complexity embodied in Xiao Yi’s own poetry. Cao Daoheng 曹道衡, *Lanling Xiao shi yu Nanchao wenxue* 蘭陵蕭氏與南朝文學 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 218–19, 227.

Passages devoted to Xiao Yi’s personal experiences and thoughts appear only sporadically throughout each chapter of the work, where they are surrounded by numerous other brief anecdotes and essays that are drawn almost completely from other texts. Though readers of Jinlouzi have not failed to note the text’s reliance on citation, these features are often treated as additional points of evidence in the debate about the quality of Xiao Yi’s character. Qing scholar Tan Xian 譚廷獻 (1832–1901), for example, disparages the text as a derivative work: “[Jinlouzi] draws eclectically from the Masters and Histories, frequently excerpting from Huainanzi, and bearing occasional similarities to Wenxin diaolong and Shishuo xinyu—one can’t help but consider it to be the work of a huckster.”

In her study of popular Ming dynasty compendia and miscellanies, Yuming He points out that Qing dynasty critics frequently used the term baifan 稗販 to criticize texts that recycle contents from older works and pass them off as their own. I follow He in translating baifan as “huckster,” which captures its connotations of dubious profit-seeking. These critiques of Jinlouzi as plagiaristic and opportunistic, though, are thoroughly rooted in Qing perspectives on textual integrity, formed largely in opposition to the thriving commercial printing enterprises of the previous era that He describes. It is odd that this term is also used to describe Jinlouzi, a much older text, but reveals much about the perceived relationship between Jinlouzi’s dubious compilation methods and those practiced by unscrupulous commercial printers. Xiao Yi’s reputation as a problematic ruler makes it easier to dismiss Jinlouzi’s contents

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9 Xu Yimin records Tan’s comments in full in an appendix, in JLZ, 1386.

10 Yuming He, Home and the World: Editing the “Glorious Ming” in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 2–5, 140–42.
in this manner. Li Ciming 李慈銘 (1830–1895), another late Qing critic of the text, connects the citationality of Jinlouzi directly to the moral and political failings of its compiler: “Emperor Yuan [Xiao Yi] was frivolous, reckless, and ruthless in his avarice, his talents not extending beyond the composition of decadent poems and petty rhapsodies. The book is thus made up primarily of sayings plagiarized from the Masters and Histories. 元帝為人險薄忮忍，所長不過艷詩小賦，故此書大半剿襲子史中語. ¹¹ Xiao Yi’s tarnished reputation means that it is perhaps impossible to rehabilitate Jinlouzi as an unsung classic of the Liang dynasty. But if the questionable integrity of its compiler can be set aside momentarily, the text offers an invaluable perspective on the nature of textual compilation in the early medieval period.

For those reading the text hoping to find traces of Xiao Yi’s voice, unadulterated by the influence of other works, Jinlouzi’s frequent use of material that can easily be found in other familiar sources is indeed frustrating. Jinlouzi’s reliance on citation may be extreme, but the difference between Jinlouzi and other works is one of degree, and not kind. To critique Jinlouzi as derivative is to forgo serious consideration of Jinlouzi’s place in the culture of textual compilation in which it was produced and transmitted. The purpose of this chapter is to consider these features of Jinlouzi in light of what the previous chapters have revealed about how early medieval scholars coped with and made use of the great variety of texts to which they had access. The basic fact that much of its material is derived from easily recognizable sources does not itself distinguish the Jinlouzi, nor should it alone be a reason to disparage the text. In comparison with these other works, the citationality of the Jinlouzi remains unique both in form and content. What distinguishes the Jinlouzi from the citational practices used to compile other texts, from bibliographic treatises to leishu, histories, and their commentaries, is the sheer variety

¹¹ JLZ, 1386.
of citation techniques it employs, and the way this array of borrowed passages are situated within the text’s unique structure.

Even though the notions of authorship and commerce that underlie the concept of plagiarism did not exist in the manuscript culture of Xiao Yi’s time, not all forms of compilation were equally acceptable. Medieval critics might not have characterized Xiao Yi’s work as “hucksterish,” but they did recognize in it the same patterns of “miscellaneousness” evident in other problematic compiled works. The most effective treatments of Jinlouzi’s heavily citational nature have been those that analyze it in relation to this broader tradition of compilation and textual “mixing.” Bibliographically speaking, Jinlouzi falls squarely within the Masters tradition, reflected both in the convention followed by its title and in its categorization within the “Miscellaneous” subcategory of the Masters section of every major bibliographic treatise from Sui shu on. Xiaofei Tian elaborates on Jinlouzi’s status as a Masters text, showing that it, like other later Masters texts, articulates its compiler’s desire to “establish a discourse” (liyan 立言) of his own. However, Tian also complicates the picture by showing that Jinlouzi is a relatively late entry into the category, composed in a period in which the literary collection had already replaced the philosophical treatise as the primary way a writer could “leave behind an everlasting personal legacy” in textual form.12 Tian argues that, rather than stand as an anachronistic entry into an outmoded genre, the Jinlouzi’s indebtedness to pre-existing texts lends its compiler the status of a curator or arbiter of literary works, thus showing that the text can be understood as a “collection’ in zishu form.” The result is something that, in Tian’s reading, closely resembles the biji 筆記 (brush notes) genre that would flourish in later periods.13 If Jinlouzi is to be


considered a forerunner of *biji,* it is certainly one that relies much more heavily on material that can also be found in other extant sources than it does on the highly personal anecdotes and reminiscences that would come to define the most memorable examples of that genre. In other words, though in structure and contents *Jinlouzi* is a Masters text, its compilation strategy more closely resembles that of the literary anthology.

Zhong Shilun approaches the problem differently, relating *Jinlouzi* to the qualities attributed specifically to the so-called “Miscellaneous School” of Masters texts. Zhong’s discussion invokes not only the text’s categorization in bibliographic lists since the Sui treatise on, but also evaluations of the *Jinlouzi*’s philosophical alignment in more recent scholarship.\(^{14}\) These discussions of the “za-ness” of *Jinlouzi* rely on the assumption that philosophical works can, and should, be understood according to their relation to one or more of the Warring States intellectual lineages that provided the model for textual categories in the Han bibliographic treatise. As noted earlier, works that do not sufficiently adhere to the tenets of any one of these schools, then, were understood as hybrid texts made up by combining elements of multiple “schools,” and categorized as “Miscellaneous.” Though this is certainly a problematic model for understanding Masters texts whose origins predate the system’s codification in the Han dynasty, the potential for such a model to influence the production of texts in subsequent periods should not be discounted outright.

Indeed, Zhong cites a *Jinlouzi* passage that appears very much in line with the syncretic approach associated with the theorized “Miscellaneous School.” The passage begins with a complaint that the world is full of those who are adept at warfare but neglect ritual and civil

\(^{14}\) Zhong, *Jinlouzi yanjiu,* 85–86.
affairs, as well as to those who favor cultivating civil virtues at the expense of military expertise.

This is followed by a statement of preferences that reflect interest in multiple schools of thought:

> I use Sun and Wu as my fortifications,¹⁵ and the Duke of Zhou and Confucius as my ritual garments; I take Laozi and Zhuangzi as boisterous feasts, and the provisional and real as basic sustenance;¹⁶ Divination tools constitute my spirit, and the ordering of government forms my hands and feet.

> 余以孫吳為營壘，以周孔為冠帶，以老莊為歡宴，以權實為稻糧，以卜筮為神明，以政治為手足。¹⁷

Combined with the knowledge that the rest of the text draws from a host of earlier sources, it is easy to see how this passage can be read as a statement of deliberate philosophical syncretism.

Elsewhere, additional references to the most well-known “Miscellaneous” texts, the Lüshi chunqiu and Huainanzi, strengthen the notion that the Jinlouzi constitutes a deliberate attempt to construct a text informed by the “Miscellaneous” tradition, however manufactured the notion of that tradition’s historical existence may be. Most notably, the preface (xu 序) to Jinlouzi states that these works, or rather the desire to outdo them, provided the impetus for the text’s compilation: “I often laughed at the borrowed hands of Huainan, and sneered at Buwei’s hired men. Thus, from the year I ‘set my ambitions on study,’¹⁸ I began to personally search and compile [text] by myself, in order to craft the discourse of my household.”

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¹⁵ Based on the pattern of the rest of the passage, I follow Xu Yimin in reading “Sun Wu” 孫吳 as two individuals, most likely renown strategists Sun Wu 孫武 and Wu Qi 吳起, rather than as a reference to Three Kingdoms figure Sun Wu 孫吳. See JLZ, 856n6.

¹⁶ “Provisional and real” (quan shi 權實) refers to the Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism. Though Jinlouzi is occasionally characterized as a “Buddhist” text, this is one of the few overt references to Buddhism I have found in the text.

¹⁷ JLZ, 854.

¹⁸ i.e. fifteen suí, or fourteen years old.
What the text denounces here is not the fact that both *Huainanzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu* are compiled texts, composed of anecdotes located by combing through older sources, but that in both cases the task of compilation was carried out by a large staff of editors, rather than by the individual traditionally credited as the author-compiler of each work. In doing so, *Jinlouzi* articulates a relationship with *Huainanzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu* by presenting itself as a superior successor to those earlier compendia, one whose superiority stems from the fact that it was compiled entirely by a single editor rather than by committee. This makes it possible to envision *Jinlouzi* as a late addition not just to the Masters tradition, but to its more narrow “Miscellaneous” subdivision as well. In other words, in this reading the text is part of a conception of this category that envisions it as a legitimate philosophical tradition of eclecticism, with its own particular set of concepts and patterns that can be imitated, perhaps even superseded, by later participants.

A broader consideration of the contents of *Jinlouzi* suggests that if the text should be treated as a “Miscellaneous” work, it is more appropriate to consider the text in relation to the revised and enlarged version of that category that appears in the pages of the *Sui shu* bibliographic treatise, rather than the way it is contrived in the Han treatise. As I have noted, the “Miscellaneous” subcategory of the *Sui shu* treatise’s Masters section contains not only *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*, but also the “proto-leishu,” and a variety of other titles as well. Furthermore, the postfaces to other “Miscellaneous” subcategories of the Sui treatise share with this subcategory an emphasis on the potential negative consequences of unscrupulous compilation methods, a feature that sets them apart from the normative historiographic practices of the scribes. While the Han treatise conceives of their compilers’ deliberate, but dangerous,
attempts to combine elements of the other “schools” in order to create a new one, the Sui treatise first constructs an elaborate history of the scribal officials, and then establishes “za-ness” as a quality that arises in texts produced by compilers who stray from the ideal roles associated with these scribal traditions. This is accompanied by an expansion of the bibliographic boundaries of the subcategory that allows it to incorporate the aforementioned broader variety of compiled texts. This notion of za-ness as the product of deviation from normative scribal practices is also extended to the historiographic tradition, in the postfaces to the “Miscellaneous Histories” and “Miscellaneous Accounts” subcategories. This later conception of za’s bibliographic value remains a problematic location for Jinlouzi, one that is perhaps more derogatory than descriptive. But its recognition of compilation practices that do not limit their sources to texts produced within the bounds of Han intellectual lineages or the even the broader category of traditional Masters literature encourages a reconsideration of Jinlouzi’s composition and structure.

Noting the importance of literary taste in the self-fashioning enterprises of the Liang elite, Tian posits that the compiled nature of Jinlouzi is not at odds with the notion that the text is meant to fulfill the ambitions of the Masters tradition as the “establishment of a discourse,” preserving selfhood and crafting a kind of textual immortality. She also argues, however, that its reliance on the Masters format makes it an anachronism among Xiao Yi’s peers, who were so invested in the composition and curation of anthologies of poetry rather than plain prose.20 Xiao Yi’s own reputation as an inveterate collector of books encourages such a reading, suggesting the Jinlouzi may be viewed as further proof of Jean Baudrillard’s assertion that “what you really collect is always yourself.”21 If this is true, then, what can be said of the textual “self” that is

20 Tian, “Twilight,” 485.

established through this process of collection, reading, excerption, and editing? To understand Jinlouzi’s “collected self,” it is necessary to do more than comb Jinlouzi in search of unique passages that describe its author’s personality and beliefs, and consider instead how these contents exist both in concert with one another in the overall structure of the text, as well as in relation to the hundreds of other sources with which Jinlouzi shares content.

This focus on the citational craft of Jinlouzi offers only incremental gains in our understanding of the general philosophical or political identity of the text, which, at least in terms of the conceptual categories offered by the traditional bibliographic system, remains tenaciously “Miscellaneous.” What it does clarify is the way Jinlouzi offers an approach to the curation of a textual identity that is neither a generic anachronism reliant on the mimicry of Han philosophical discourse, nor an outlying harbinger of the rise of the biji in later periods. The identity constructed by Jinlouzi is indebted to the broader variety of prose texts in circulation in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, including a particular interest in the prose anecdotes and narratives found in texts located within the various types of text whose bibliographic taxonomy places them in various branches of the scribal/historiographic tradition. Furthermore, the manner in which these passages are treated within the text shows how they were manipulated and rewritten not just as unadorned and dispassionate vessels of information, but as deliberately crafted and composed, or perhaps “recomposed,” texts.

The breadth of Jinlouzi’s scope is apparent from its overarching organizational structure. In its preface the text may state that its overarching aim is to “establish a discourse” (liyan 立言), but this phrase is also borrowed as the title for one section of the text. The “Establishing a
Discourse” ("liyan") chapter is joined by twelve others, which each summarize their contents in a similar fashion.\textsuperscript{22}

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<td>12 志怪</td>
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<td>13 雜記</td>
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\textsuperscript{22} The text also has a preface and a postface. For alternative translations of these titles, see Tian “Twilight,” 480. Chapter titles marked with a * do not appear in the oldest extant list of the text’s content, the Song dynasty book catalog of Zhao Gongwu Junzhai dushu zhi, suggesting that they may be additions by overzealous transmitters, and not been part of the original version of the text. However, it is equally possible that the edition cataloged by Zhao was simply incomplete. The consequences of Jinlouzi’s complex textual history will be explored in greater detail below. Zhao Gongwu 晁公武 (1105–1180), Junzhai dushu zhi jiaoshi 郡齋讀書志校證, ed. Sun Mengxiao 孫猛校 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 516.

\textsuperscript{23} The Qing editors of the text note that only three entries are associated with this chapter, and all three are also found in the eighth chapter, “Shuo fan,” which is more broadly concerned with prominent rules of the pre-Qin eras. The Qing editors thus assert that the chapter is likely to have been added in error. Here the “Two Souths” (er nan 二南) is likely to refer to the Duke of Shao 召公 and the Duke of Zhou 周公, from their epithets Shaonan 召南 and Zhounan 周南, derived from the southern regions with which they were enfoeffed. The first two sections of the Shi jing’s “Airs of the States” also bear these titles. The “Five Hegemons” (wu ba 五霸) may refer to one of several configurations of five Xia, Zhou, and Spring and Autumn rulers, depending on context. The first three entries in the Shuo fan chapter discuss the Duke of Shao, Duke of Zhou, and the Spring and Autumn hegemon Huan of Qi, though it is not certain if these are indeed the passages that were cross-listed as belonging to both “Shuo fan” and “Er nan wu ba” chapters. See JLZ 549n1, 551–76
In this schema, the “establishment of a discourse” identified as the overarching goal of the entire work reappears in microcosm as just one of many topics to be addressed, joined by other chapters with their own connections to pre-existing textual categories. Several of these titles are reminiscent of types of writing and scholarship that were relatively popular in and around Xiao Yi’s time: There is persuasive evidence to suggest that the anomaly accounts contained in the “Documenting the Strange” (“Zhiguai” 志怪) should be considered a genre of their own;24 “Admonishing Sons” (“Jiezi” 戒子) can be understood in relation to various forms of family instruction popular in the early medieval period;25 and the title “Establishing a Discourse” (“Liyan” 立言) itself calls to mind values specific to Masters literature as articulated by scholars of the late Han and Three Kingdoms period.26 Although these chapter topics do not accord with the specific textual categories employed in the imperial bibliographic treatise, or the formal genres defined in Wen xuan or Wenxin diaolong, their correspondence to topics and themes that are highly visible in other extant early medieval texts suggest a concern for the categorization of text that parallels that of these bibliographic and anthological works, creating a collection of

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24 Zhiguai is also the term that is now used as the name of this genre, and when used in this manner I follow Campany in translating it as “anomaly accounts.” To distinguish the genre at large from this Jinlouzi chapter, I translate the chapter title as “Documenting the Strange,” which also reflects the verb-object structure used in several of Jinlouzi’s other chapters. See Campany, Strange Writing, 29n15.


26 Tian discusses the borrowing of this phrase from the Zuo zhuan and the writings of Sima Qian, and its use by Cao Pi and others in relation to Masters literature, in Tian, “Twilight,” 467–68.
categories to organize a corpus of text that these other classification systems largely ignore. The compiled, heavily citational nature of the text is not a shameful secret, but a central feature that governs the structure of the text. As the topic of a single chapter, the “establishment of a discourse” implies an imitation of the form and contents of Masters literature, narrowly defined. As an overarching concern of the entire text, however, the discourse Jinlouzi establishes, and the identity it crafts for itself, is one specifically concerned with collection and management of the textual resources to which its compiler had access.

The “Collecting Books” (“Jushu” 聚書) and “Composing Books” (“Zhushu” 著書) chapters present this concern for the bibliographic process from a different angle. Both chapters exhibit unique approaches to the creation and organization of a large corpus, but their ties to traditional bibliographic methods are clear. “Collecting Books” records information about books within Xiao Yi’s private collection in a list that has almost no formal resemblance to either the four or seven-part bibliographic systems employed in contemporaneous private and imperial

27 The “Composing Books” chapter as it exists today could perhaps be considered an invention of text’s Qing dynasty editors. Qing editions of the text bear a note at the beginning of this chapter that explains that the majority of its contents were found appended to the “Gathering Books” chapter. Based on their dissimilarity to the rest of the chapter, the editors reasoned that these entries could be a portion of the apparently lost contents of the “Composing Books” chapter, known only from descriptions of the text’s contents from later periods. Additionally, the Qing editors report that Yongle dadian 永樂大典 (Great canon of the Yongle period) contained two longer entries supposedly drawn from this chapter. These longer entries include summaries of the texts’ contents, and roughly correspond to portions of the Jinlouzi excerpted in the early Tang anthology Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚 (Gathered and categorized literary writings). To accompany these two Yongle dadian fragments, the Qing editors added a host of other Yiwen leiju citations of Jinlouzi that match the format of those the Yongle dadian fragments assign to the “Composing Books” chapter, in JLZ, 995. Though it is reasonable to assume that these entries were all drawn from the “original” Jinlouzi, both their association with this chapter and their sequence within that chapter is a product of much later editorial practice.
This chapter does not attempt to categorize the texts it records, nor does it offer any commentary about the contents of these works. It does, however, provide a host of information that contemporaneous bibliographic treatises, including brief comments on how and when many of the texts in the collection were acquired, and even a few remarks about the aesthetic qualities and readability of the calligraphy in certain texts—a feature that would not be adopted by mainstream bibliographies (and for entirely different reasons) until the popularization of the printing press. Nonetheless, as its contents are a list of titles and other details of books collected, borrowed, and copied, it is no less bibliographic in nature than its counterparts in the histories of the Han and Sui. “Composing Books” complements “Collecting Books” by recording a list of the titles for which Xiao Yi himself has personally performed as author, editor, commentator, or compiler. Though these tasks can be distinguished from one another, all fall under the auspices of zhu 著, with its multivalent connotations of exposition, creation, and documentation. Meanwhile, the format of this chapter more closely resembles a conventional bibliography, dividing its contents according to the four-part “jia yi bing ding” division proposed in the Jin, and providing the title of each work and its length. Though it utilizes several features

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28 For a translation and further discussion of this chapter, see Tian, “Book Collecting and Cataloging,” 307–13.

29 Zhao Rongwei 趙榮蔚, Zhongguo gudai wenxianxue 中國古代文獻學 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2005), 169.

30 As another example of the text’s concern for the material and organizational features of books, in this chapter Jinxhouzi records not only the scroll (juan 卷) count of each text listed, but also the number of zhi 秩. A variant for zhi, this refers to the cloth covers used to hold together several scrolls of a text (the same word would also come to be used for the cases used to hold volumes of a text in the age of bound books). The standard number of juan per zhi is ten. The texts recorded in this section of Jinxhouzi generally correspond to this norm. For more information on juan and zhi in pre-print era Chinese texts, see Tsien Tsuen-hsuin, Paper and Printing, Science and Civilization in China, edited by Joseph Needham, vol. 5, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 228–30.
of conventional bibliography, as a document of the textual output of an individual scholar performing a variety of authorial and editorial work, it is unique. The same is true of *Jinlouzi*’s other chapters, which borrow certain elements of their organizational structure from other textual forms, but use them to create new configurations of text uniquely situated within the overarching structure of *Jinlouzi* itself.

**4.1 The strange library: *Jinlouzi* and *zhiguai***

While “Collecting Books” and “Composing Books” show how Xiao Yi organized texts he collected, edited, and wrote, other chapters of *Jinlouzi* are the product of acts of textual gathering and arrangement. The “Documenting the Strange” chapter presents a particularly interesting case. To my knowledge, it is the only extant text from this period that presents a collection of anomaly accounts as a self-contained and clearly demarcated part of a larger textual whole. Several works of official historiography have treatises devoted to anomalous events of portentous significance, or the results of divination practices, but such works limit their scope to a single variety of anomaly account. Many geographic treatises incorporated this kind of account alongside other material related to the locations they document, but in these texts the “strangeness” of the anecdotes is not a factor in the overall organization of the text. Numerous other works, of course, are devoted exclusively to anomaly account collection, collecting both the types of accounts recorded in these historiographic treatises as well as a wide variety of other examples. Though these collections are quite distinct from other compiled texts, the bibliographers of the early Tang did not separate them into their own textual category, opting instead to include distribute these texts among several other bibliographic subcategories of History, including “Geographic Treatises,” “Miscellaneous Accounts,” and “Miscellaneous
Histories." The fact that the Jinlouzi chapter’s title matches the term that would later come to identify the genre may be a coincidence, but other details about the chapter and its contents show the ways Jinlouzi creates a space for the anomaly account as an independent textual genre.

The most notable features of the chapter are its first and last entries, which, though they are not formally labelled as such in any edition of the text, constitute the chapter’s preface and postface. These sections resemble one another more than they do the rest of the chapter’s entries in both form and content. Each entry between these textual bookends records a single anecdote in the plain prose style common in other zhiguai collections of the period, neither adorned with complex vocabulary nor conforming to a consistent parallel structure. The chapter’s bookends, on the other hand, comprise dozens of allusions, each condensed into a single short phrase and grouped together in stanzas of regular line lengths and syntactic patterns. These lists of examples are accompanied only by sparse commentary, making their argument less forceful than those found in the most famous discussions of the value of recording strange events. But consideration of the origins, phrasing, and arrangement of the components of these passages helps to uncover another layer of their significance, making them an important contribution to the debate on the value of documenting and cataloging unusual events.

The introductory passage is a brief 285 characters. It can be divided into eight stanzas based on shifts in line length and sentence pattern, which are occasionally interrupted by single-line comments. Each of the lines in a stanza is thematically related to the others: As is typical of parallel prose, when the sentence pattern changes, so does the content.\textsuperscript{32} The shifts in thematic

\textsuperscript{31} For more on the bibliographic categorization of anomaly account collections in the Sui treatise, see Campany, *Strange Writing*, 154–56.

\textsuperscript{32} JLZ, 1131–32. For a full translation and annotation of the text of this preface, see appendix B.
focus that accompany changes in line length and sentence structure follow a loose associative sequence. The passage begins by identifying geographically specific violations to commonly accepted rules of nature: Places in which what is normally cold becomes hot and vice versa, situations in which things that should normally sink may float, and those that should float sink. These exceptions to universal rules are followed by exceptional human talents, describing skilled manipulation of the bodies of humans and animals. These human-animal interactions afford a transition to the properties of exceptional plants and animals themselves. The concluding example in this sequence introduces the transformation of a pheasant into a great clam, and the subsequent passage follows up by listing seven more examples of unusual animal transformations. Here the transition to a new category of strangeness is formally seamless: The preceding four examples are each presented in two clauses, the first beginning “It is said” (wei 謂) and consisting of four characters, the second consists of another four character phrase surrounded by the conjunction er 而 and concluding with the final particle yan 焉. The pattern shifts slightly to signal the conclusion to this sequence, beginning instead with “Others say” (ruo 俄 謂), adding the lengthier claim that “those which inhale air each have a single form.” This serves not only to introduce the case of the pheasant that concludes this section, but also serves as a generalization that applies to the subsequent seven additional examples of animal transformation.

From here, the structure of the examples provided grows more complex. The focus returns to exceptional human talents, with the added theme of talents that humans have acquired through imitation and study of animals and plants. This sequence consists of three examples alluding to the animal-inspired accomplishments of well-known legendary figure from antiquity, and one final example describing Yao the Great’s development of timekeeping standards through
the observation of the regular growth of *mingjia* 蒼荏 grass. The next group shifts line lengths yet again, but uses this grass-related case to transition into a section on the behavior of unusual plants. Each of these unusual plant descriptions begins with the citation of a specific place name. In the final group of examples that follows, this specificity of place is matched with specificity of name and bureaucratic rank, trading legendary figures of antiquity for individuals introduced according to conventional historiographic norms. The examples provided in the preface meander through thematically associated categories of strangeness, employing transitional phrases and shifts in line pattern to signal the porous boundaries between these categories.

Throughout this sequence, multiple assertions are made that each example provided has been thoroughly documented and verified: “Each of these has its precedent,” “Are any of these not so?”, “These too would not draw suspicion from men,” and “Trustworthy cases are many indeed.” This is not just empty talk. Virtually all of the cases described in the preface have a precedent in at least one extant text. More importantly, the first several sections of the preface cite examples which can be found in the pages of classical, canonical texts—not in more recently produced collections and compilations more susceptible to critique and skepticism. These cases are reputable and trustworthy not just because they have been written down, but because they have been included in texts that are supposedly beyond reproach. This pattern changes for the last two groups of examples. Rather than refer to events of antiquity or descriptions drawn from classical documents, these passages allude to events either of unidentifiable origin, or those that are described only later works which much more closely resemble the anecdote collections in which early medieval anomaly accounts are typically found. These references to more recent texts are the lynchpin of the preface’s subtle argument about the importance of “strangeness” as
a textual category, and, indeed, to the significance of the “Documenting the Strange” chapter to the broader textual compilation project of Jinlouzi as a whole.

The preface links allusions drawn from the classical canon to examples more recent compilations, suggesting the reliance on an eclectic library of texts. However, the unmistakable influence of an intermediary source for many of the items on this list complicates this image of the preface’s citational structure. In spite of their origins in much earlier works, or indeed, the possibility that these references are used as commonplace tropes rather than allusions to specific texts, many of these sequences of examples are in fact drawn word-for-word from the pages of a text much closer in time and structure to Jinlouzi. The lists of the preface this can be linked quite conclusively to passages found in the Inner Chapters (nei pian 内篇) of Baopuzi 包朴子. Cases such as these are likely to have earned the text its reputation as base and plagiaristic. This is unfortunate, as it conceals the complex way that Jinlouzi manipulates and repurposes these “stolen” passages for its own purposes.

The text borrowed from Baopuzi is manipulated in a number of ways. Only passages already exhibiting some parallel structure are employed, and isolating these passages alongside one another creates a very different reading experience from the more varied style of their source. In Baopuzi groups of sentences of uniform length and parallel structure are interspersed among less strictly regulated passages, forming persuasive disquisitions that are provided in response to questions posed by an anonymous interlocutor. Jinlouzi appropriates fragments of these parallel passages and weaves them together with only sparse moments of argumentative


34 For Baopuzi’s role in the development of parallel prose style, see Jiang Shuge 姜書閣, Pianwen shilun 駢文史論 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1986), 342–43.

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commentary to create something that more closely resembles the group of formal prose genres associated with \textit{fu} “prose-poems.” It also alters the text in subtler ways, from minor adjustments of line length to the insertion of new examples not present in \textit{Baopuzi}. The evidence marshaled in \textit{Baopuzi} is repurposed for use in a new context, bringing the text into a different sort of discourse about the nature of the strange and the validity of anomaly account collection. While the resulting rhetoric is simpler and less explicit than \textit{Baopuzi}, the tightly organized structure of this section amplifies its subtle argument about the categorizability of “strangeness.” The nuances of this argument are most evident when contrasted with their earlier appearances in the responses of the Ge Hong, as the “Master who embraces simplicity” (\textit{Baopuzi}), to his anonymous interlocutor.

The sections drawn from \textit{Baopuzi}’s “Concerning Immortals” (“\textit{Lun xian} 論仙”) chapter each originally appear in a very long response to a question that casts doubt on the possibility of achieving immortality, which claims “everything that has a beginning must have an end, and everything that exists must perish” 夫有始者必有卒, 有存者必有亡.\footnote{BPZ, 2.12.} The interlocutor goes on to list a number of examples illustrating this principle. Ge Hong’s response provides evidence that contradicts this principle, and also challenges the very notion that the universe is governed by unbreakable principles. Within this lengthy response, \textit{Baopuzi} presents a series of commonsense propositions that fit the same pattern as the interlocutor’s initial statement (“That which lives must die”), and follows each with a bit of trivia that contradicts the statement:

It is said that in summer things must grow, and yet that is when chestnuts and wheat dry out. It is said that in winter things must wither, and yet that is when bamboo and cypress flourish. It is said that things with beginnings must have endings, and yet heaven and earth are inexhaustible. It is said that the living must die, and yet tortoises and cranes are
long-lived.

謂夏必長，而薺麥枯焉。謂冬必凋，而竹柏茂焉。謂始必終，而天地無窮焉。謂生必死，而龜鶴長存焉。³⁶

*Baopuzi* goes on to provide examples that counter expected properties of hot and cold things, and of heavy and light objects in the same fashion. Later, the text introduces propositions that are contradicted with multiple examples, with a particular emphasis on transformation. These examples all appear later in the “Documenting the Strange” preface, but there also are numerous other similarly structured cases that do not find their way into the *Jinlouzi* passage.

The brief passage drawn from the *Baopuzi*’s “Responses to Laymen” (“Dui su” 對俗) chapter cites textual precedents of a different nature. Rather than focus on perceived properties of nature, this passage is a list of allusions to tales about figures from classical history and their notable relationships with animals. In their original context in the *Baopuzi*, they are used as historical cases to show that humans have recognized extraordinary abilities in certain animals, and by studying those creatures have learned to imitate them. This is used to illustrate that the longevity of the tortoise and crane, too, can be recreated by people, because, according to Ge Hong, it is not simply an innate characteristic of the two animals but the product of activity that can be studied and replicated.³⁷ A similarly short segment of another *Baopuzi* chapter also finds its way into the “Documenting the Strange” chapter introduction. In this case, the examples all contain allusions to the extraordinary feats of celebrated medical practitioners. In *Baopuzi*, they function as an illustration of human intervention in a person’s naturally allotted lifespan. If mere

³⁶ BPZ, 2.13.

³⁷ BPZ, 3.49.
doctors are capable of interfering with the natural course of a person’s life, Ge Hong posits, there is no reason to doubt the possibility of achieving the same thing by other means.38

Though excerpts from these passages all appear in the “Documenting the Strange” chapter introduction, there they are stripped of their original context in the debate on immortality. When they are reconstituted alongside one another, they are bound together only with the understanding that each is an example of something “strange” (guai 怪), and proof that such phenomena exist in reputable sources rather than as tricks of the ears and eyes. This creates slight tension with the Baopuzi. Both texts insist upon the trustworthy nature of these cases, but Baopuzi employs these particular examples because they are meant for readers to recognize and regard as familiar, uncontroversial cases that lay a foundation for the more implausible claim of the possibility of human immortality. They are believable and familiar stories that are nevertheless analogous to aspects of the contentious subject of immortality, not outlandish tales to be marveled at for their own sake. Following the many examples of other animal abilities mentioned above, the Baopuzi concludes, “That the tortoise and crane have a particular understanding of cultivation practices is not worthy of being considered strange” 龜鶴偏解導養，不足怪也, a sentence that is not reproduced in Jinlouzi.39 This tension, between the familiarity of the texts and the outlandish events they contain, forms the basis of Jinlouzi’s distinctly textual approach to the location and definition of the “strange.”

The opening line, “I hold ‘beyond human perception, there is nothing strange’ to be false,” gives the entire preface a polemic tone, encouraging a reading of the subsequent list as an

38 BPZ, 5.112.
39 BPZ, 3.49
argument about the nature of the strange. It initially reads as a counter-argument to one posed by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) in the preface to his annotated edition of Shanhai jing 山海經.⁴⁰ In this piece, Guo Pu argues that things are only called strange because they are perceived as such by particular people. There is thus no point in dismissing study of strange things, in particular the Shanhai jing, as it is not possible to come to an agreement about the definition of the term itself. If the Jinlouzi preface is indeed meant as a rejection of Guo Pu’s approach, it follows that it is an argument in favor of the existence of “strange” as an innate and constant characteristic of certain things. Robert Campany posits that Jinlouzi offers an argument for the existence of things that are “intrinsically anomalous,” as opposed to strangeness as an arbitrary human designation.⁴¹ But the notion that strangeness is relative is also addressed in the eighth anecdote in body of the “Zhiguai” chapter. This piece describes an unusual creature living among the Yuezhi and Western Hu people:

The Great Yuezhi and the Western Hu have an ox that is called “Extended Days.” If today you slice off a piece of its flesh, tomorrow it will have already healed completely. So, when Han people visited his kingdom, the Western Hu presented them with this animal. The Han person said in response, “My land has an insect called the silkworm, it is used to make clothes for people. It eats mulberry leaves, and spits silk.” The foreign people simply could not believe there was such an insect.

大月支及西胡有牛，名曰日及。今日割取其肉，明日瘡即愈。故漢人有至其國者，西胡以此牛示之。漢人對曰“吾國有蟲，名曰蠶，為人衣，食桑葉而吐絲。”外國人復不信有蟲。⁴²

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⁴⁰ Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed. Shanhai jing jiaozhu 山海經校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 478–80. Henceforth, SHZ.

⁴¹ Campany, Strange Writing, 153.

⁴² JLZ, 1148–49.
A version of this anecdote also appears in *Yiwen leiju* and *Taiping yulan*, where it is identified as belonging to the lost anomaly account collection also attributed to Guo Pu, *Xuanzhong ji* (Record within the mysterious). Though this attribution may be questionable, the anecdote is also quite similar to an example Guo Pu uses in the *Shanhai jing* preface, in the very passage in which he explains strangeness as a relative concept:

> Objects are not innately unusual, they await myself, who deems them unusual. The unusual therefore resides with me, it is not things themselves that are unusual. Thus, when the Hu see cloth they are suspicious of the hemp, and when the Yue see knit garments they are terrified of the wool. People become accustomed to that which they see often, and think odd that which they scarcely encounter—this is a persistent shortcoming of human sentiment.

物不自異，待我而後異，異果在我，非物異也。故胡人見布而疑黂，越人見罽而駭毳。夫翫所習見而奇所希聞，此人情之常蔽也。

Guo Pu’s point that strangeness is in the eye of the beholder is repeated in the pages of *Jinlouzi*, a seeming refutation of the declaration made in its preface. Even if this anecdote was copied from *Xuanzhong ji* (or some other source) without any awareness of this irony, there is still more in the preface to suggest that its assertion of the existence of anomalies is less useful as an argument about the metaphysical nature of strangeness than it is as a label for a certain type of writing, and an approach to dealing with the texts that contain it.

A similar argument from *Yanshi jia xun*, composed by Xiao Yi’s occasional companion in the Liang court, Yan Zhitui 颜之推 (531–591), addresses the importance of unusual textual

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details more directly. The passage begins in a similar fashion to the “Documenting the Strange” preface, with a reference to the human senses. He claims, “Ordinary people all believe only their ears and eyes. *Outside of what is perceived by the ears and eyes, all incites their suspicion*” 凡人之信，唯耳與目。耳目之外，咸致疑焉.45 The text then cites examples of knowledge available through various written sources that can only rarely be observed firsthand, beginning with an assortment of cosmological theories unlikely to be supported by simple observation. The text then asks, “Why place trust in the personal convictions of the masses, while remaining baffled by the subtle teachings of the sages?” 何故信凡人之臆說，迷大聖之妙旨.46 This is followed by more examples that show that one would be foolish to confine one’s knowledge of the world only to that which can be confirmed through personal observation, where Yan Zhitui also uses the example of the foreigners’ incredulity of the silkworm. Here it is employed not to illustrate the relative nature of the strange, but to show that one should not cast doubt on something simply because it does not come from first-hand experience. This positioning of textual evidence over first-hand experience and supposed common sense reinforces the authority of the textual tradition. What is at stake here is not merely the received wisdom of the distant past, but the work of scholars and theorists operating in more recent history, and the potential of the written word to convey and store reliable information.

In Yan Zhitui’s usage of the term, the phrase “senses of the ears and eyes” refers specifically to personal experiences and observations, not the subjectivity of the senses as addressed by Guo Pu. Unlike Xiao Yi, Yan Zhitui makes no direct reference to strangeness. On


46 Ibid.
the contrary, his concern is the plausibility of information conveyed over great distances or from
the past to the present. As such his approach is aimed at dispelling the incredulousness and
disbelief that accompany the designation of something as “strange,” much like Guo Pu and even
Baopuzi. In contrast, the “Documenting the Strange” chapter insists on this label. Nevertheless,
in Jinlouzi the phrase “ears and eyes” can be understood, as in Yanshi jiaxun, as a reference to
the dichotomy between things seen and heard through direct experience and things learned by
reading texts, rather than between objective reality and the fallible senses. The allusive nature of
the majority of examples cited following this assertion suggests that Jinlouzi draws the same
distinction between personal experience and textual evidence, as do the following brief
comments inserted in the middle and end of the introduction’s list of borrowed examples. The
preface’s list of legendary historical figures and the products of their imitations of exceptional
animal abilities, is followed by “These, too, do not tend to be looked down upon by people.”
This is a subtle paraphrase of the Baopuzi’s “not worthy of being considered strange,” which
occurs only a few lines later in the passage from which the list is drawn. Though both comments
are alike in that they address the plausibility of the cases listed, Jinlouzi draws attention to the
authority and acceptability of the stories without denying that they are also strange. Second, the
preface concludes with the line, “The trustworthy are indeed many, and so I have composed the
‘Chapter on Documenting the Strange’” 論以多矣，故作志怪篇, again emphasizing the
acceptability of the anecdotes’ sources. These passages encourage a reading of “eyes and ears”
that is in line with Yanshi jiaxun’s usage, and make the entire preface an argument for the
presence of strange phenomena both in the realm of personal experience, which is singular and

47 JLZ, 1132.
irreproducible, as well as in the more authoritative, trustworthy world of the received textual record.

Viewed in this context, the preface’s opening statement becomes an affirmation of the presence of identifiably “strange” material throughout the written record. There is of course a precedent for the practice of locating anecdotes pertaining to anomalies, and gathering them together under the banner of the “strange:” The anomaly account genre itself. Though the term zhiguai was not widely used as a bibliographic category until the Ming, many collections of anomaly accounts establish affiliations with one another through similar patterns in their titles, which often call attention to the strangeness and outlandishness of their contents through the use of terms such as yi or guai.48 Furthermore, the notion that writing about anomalies should be considered a genre unto itself is not unprecedented in the Six Dynasties. The preface to the Eastern Jin anomaly account collection Soushen ji suggests that the compilation of anomaly accounts could effectively serve as an “eighth category” in the traditional seven category bibliographic system.49 While it would be a stretch to claim that the positioning of this chapter within the Jinlouzi is an equally explicit attempt to construct a formal bibliographic category for anomaly accounts, its position within this text (as opposed to existence as a discrete work) is still significant. It is a renewed articulation of the same statement made by earlier collections of anomaly accounts, that anecdotes about “strange” things can be identified and isolated from other types of writing, and are more appropriately understood in relation to one another than to the sources from which they are drawn. In reaffirming the validity of the practice, however, it

48 Campany, Strange Writing, 28n13.

49 The oldest source of the preface is Gan Bao’s Jin shu biography, but it is also included in many modern editions of Soushen ji. See JS, 82.2150–51; This passage is translated and discussed in Campany, Strange Writing, 146–50.

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illustrates the position that such anomaly accounts, though separate from other types of writing, still have a place within a compilation of personal and scholarly writing.

The preface’s subsequent examples—culled from the *Baopuzi*, where they had been selected precisely for to their presumed familiarity to readers—illustrate the presence of such material in a variety of respectable texts. The body of the chapter itself is composed of excerpts that can be traced to antecedents in an equally broad range of sources. The “Documenting the Strange” chapter reverses the relationship between text and reality, placing the textual nature of the material in a position of greater importance than the phenomena that they are describing. In the *Soushen ji* preface, the textual nature of anomaly accounts is a source of anxiety. Having been gathered from various other documents, they are not “matters that were seen and heard with one person’s own eyes and ears” 蓋非一耳一目之所親聞覩也. That text also explains that flaws and omissions inevitable in written texts of all kinds, and concludes that what can be gained from written texts far outweighs their potential to mislead. In contrast, *Jinlouzi* shares *Yanshi jiaxun*’s insistence on the validity of textual evidence to supplement or even contradict individual experience, treating “trustworthy” documented cases as superior to knowledge produced by mere observation. In this view, the dissemination of information via text does what individual experience cannot. However, *Jinlouzi* does not go as far as *Yanshi jiaxun* in claiming that textual evidence provides access to truth more reliably than personal experience, insisting only that the textual record contains numerous examples of the “strange.”

In essence, the position of *Jinlouzi*’s “Documenting the Strange” chapter is that the things that we perceive as “strange” are not merely confined to individual experience and perception, they have also been documented in distinguished, trustworthy sources. Furthermore, their

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50 *JS*, 82.2150.
presence throughout these trustworthy sources suggests that “strangeness” should be pursued as a
textual subject, rather than shunned or ignored. The task that it outlines, then, is the collection
and collation of these bits and pieces of arcane knowledge, not in order to overturn conceptions
of what should or should not be deigned strange, but to lend a sense of legitimacy to the ongoing
search for textual examples of events that seem to contradict the knowledge of individual
experience. This is further expressed in the way Jinlouzi draws from other texts to contribute
new items to the lists it borrows from Baopuzi, manipulating their contents to conform to the
patterns of the existing lists, while at the same time preserving certain aspects of the texts from
which the new examples are drawn. When Jinlouzi reproduces the list of famous doctors from
Baopuzi, it replaces references to Wen Zhi and Zhang Ji with feats performed by Yang Youji 養
由基 (d. 599 BCE) and Prince Dan 太子丹 of Yan 燕 (fl. ca. 3rd cent. BCE), heroes of the
Springs and Autumns period. This first major deviation from the pattern of the Baopuzi
expands the category to encompass uncanny human abilities to manipulate both animal and
human bodies, while ensuring that the new additions conform to the eight character lines of the
source material.

Later, Jinlouzi takes advantage of vocabulary repetition to link two otherwise unrelated
Baopuzi passages together. The phrase, “Others say breathing things each have one form”
appears as a segue between two lists of phenomena, the first relating to the natural world in

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51 As they pertain to events of a much earlier period, the exact textual origins of the anecdotes
about Yang Youji and Prince Dan are more difficult to track down, but the Taiping yulan and
Yiwen leiju both contain citations from Shizi 尸子 that tell the story of Yang Youji piercing the
dragonfly’s wing. See YWLJ, 74.1264, and TPYL 745.3440b, 945.4348a. Stories about Prince
Dan supposedly drawn from the text bearing his own name, the Yan Danzi, are cited throughout
the Yiwen leiju and Taiping yulan, but only the Yiwen leiju citations of that text make reference
to him provoking the crows of an entire flock of birds at once. See YWLJ, 6.102.
general and the second to uncanny animal abilities and transformations. The first list repeats the word wei 謂 (“It is said”) at the beginning of each pair of lines.\textsuperscript{52} This makes the connecting couplet’s ruo wei 若謂 (“Others say”) a natural fit to conclude this section. But the passage actually appears at the beginning of what in Baopuzi is an unrelated list of phenomena several paragraphs later.\textsuperscript{53} Even without making significant alterations to the source material, Jinlouzi reorganizes them in such a way that it appears as though they belong together. This creates the impression of a single, coherent document as opposed to a scattered assortment of randomly chosen excerpts. The actual list of transforming animals is not altered significantly in its transition from Baopuzi to the “Documenting the Strange” chapter introduction, except for one interesting exception. In the Baopuzi passage, one of the transformations listed is that of an alligator (tuo 鳄), transforming into a tiger.\textsuperscript{54} Though this transformation, like the others listed, likely has a precedent in some earlier text, I have been unable to locate it. On the other hand, the Jinlouzi version of this passage substitutes the tuo with a human (ren 人). There are several instances of humans transforming into tigers in texts written before Jinlouzi.\textsuperscript{55} It may be the case that the Jinlouzi version has been edited to provide readers with a more familiar instance of transformation to tie the passage more closely to writing extant in Xiao Yi’s time, a tactic that is employed much more explicitly in the final stanzas of the preface.

\textsuperscript{52} BPZ, 2.13
\textsuperscript{53} BPZ, 2.14
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} A likely candidate, for instance, is an incident attributed to Zhang Hua’s Bowu zhi in TPYL, 892.4092a.
The final sequence of examples in Jinlouzi departs from the influence of Baopuzi. Three of the four anecdotes referenced in this sequence do not have any connection to the text of Baopuzi, and the fourth bears only a tenuous relationship with it. Two make reference to texts that were composed after Baopuzi, and narrate events that could not have taken place during or before the life of its compiler. More importantly, though presented in the same condensed, parallel style as the preceding sections, each of the sentences in this segment of the passage also mimic the structure commonly seen in narrative anomaly accounts. Each item in this list opens with a specific place name, followed by a brief description of the strange event that occurred in that place. Geographic specificity is a frequently recurring component of the anomaly account, and the introduction of that and other practical details at the beginning of such anecdotes is part of what connects them to the historiographic style found in annals and geographic treatises. The items in this list preserve this feature, presenting the place name as the first detail in each sentence. Yet only the second and third items appear to refer to easily identifiable places.

Zhuangwu county was located in what is now Shandong province and, more importantly, was enfoeffed to Zhang Hua. Both the Jin shu and the Song shu record the transformation of mulberries into cypress trees. The incident of bamboo transforming into snakes in Runan can be found in the Liu-Song zhiguai collection, Yi yuan. It is possible that these anecdotes could also have been found in other collections circulating during Xiao Yi’s time, meaning Xiao Yi did

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56 JS 28.859, SS 32.959. Such treatises record and interpret unusual events as omens, and are often used as sources of anecdotes for anomaly account collections. This incident is also described in more detail in Zhang Hua’s Jin shu biography, where the transformation is interpreted as an omen of Zhang Hua’s untimely demise. See JS, 36.1074.

not necessarily draw from these particular sources, but it is clear that their appearance in the chapter preface are related to these longer preexisting versions of these anecdotes.

The other two items in this list are difficult to locate. The first describes how “The Xiaoyao domain’s onions transform, changing to leeks” 逍遙國葱，變而為韭, and the fourth and final line of this stanza recounts how “Yinyu vines mutate, changing to eels” 茵郁之藤，化而為鮫. 58 While there are some precedents for the events they describe, no known sources link those events to the places mentioned. It is possible that the guo 国 (“domain”) of the first line is misprinted, and should be yuan 園 (“garden”). If this is the case, the text may refer to an event from the life of Kumārajīva. Seng You’s 僧祐 (445–518) biography of Kumārajīva (334–413) in *Chu sanzang ji ji 出三藏記集* describes the transformation of onions into another type of allium (xie 薹) in the Xiaoyao Garden in Chang’an, and records that it was recognized as a good omen portending Kumārajīva’s arrival at the Later Qin capital. 59 If this is the case, it would strengthen the implied parallelism between it and the item that it precedes: The first omen of transformation foretells the arrival of a prominent historical figure, and the second predicts the departure of another. The fourth and final event in this sequence, in which vines transform into eels, is even more mysterious. A *Taiping yulan* citation of Baopuzi, missing from all transmitted versions of the text, does describe plants transforming into eels. 60 But the location of the transformation is not mentioned, nor do the types of plants listed include teng vines. Furthermore, the location

58 JLZ, 1132.

59 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, T.55 no. 2145, 14.101.

60 TPYL, 937.4298a.
mentioned in the truncated *Jinlouzi* version cannot be found in any other sources. Thus, its appearance in this text is a somewhat strange exception to the pattern established by the three other anecdotes listed. However, given the numerous texts of the era which are no longer extant, we should not discount the possibility that the source to which it refers has not been transmitted.

The two anecdotes referenced in the final pair of items in the preface describe the transformations of two individuals into birds. They are also found in sources other than the *Baopuzi*, and like the preceding lines, their pattern mimics a common *zhiguai* format. In this case, the first line of each couplet reveals the name of the anecdote’s protagonist and the bureaucratic position they held at the time the anecdote took place: “When Lu Dan was vice governor, he transformed into a pair of white swans. When Wang Qiao was the Director of Ye, he transformed into two flying ducks.”

Though *Nankang ji* is no longer extant, an anecdote about Lu Dan (dates unknown) is preserved in a citation of that text that is repeated four times in *Taiping yulan*. No version of the anecdote reports the number of birds. It may be possible that *Jinlouzi* refers to a different version of the text, but it is equally likely that the character *shuang* ("pair") has been added to improve the parallel with the following line. Accounts of Wang Qiao’s transformation, which do specify the number of birds, can be found in Gan Bao’s *Soushen ji* as

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61 JLZ, 1132.

62 TPYL, 29.266b, 263.1361b, 697.3241a, 916.4195b. *Nankang ji* is thought to have been compiled in the Jin Dynasty by the otherwise obscure Deng Deming 鄧德明. For more on *Nankang ji*, see Lu Jintang 鄧德明, *Taiping guangji yinshu kao* 太平廣記引書考, Gudian wenxian yanjiu jikan 古典文獻研究輯刊, ed. Pan Meiyue 潘美月 and Du Jiexiang 杜潔祥, series 3, vol. 2 (Yonghe, Taiwan: Hua Mulan chuban she, 2006), 76.
well as the Eastern Han text *Fengsu tongyi*. These allusions are more than just references to events recorded in other texts: They borrow the wording of these earlier works, transforming and condensing the plain prose of the antecedent text to match the parallel structure of the new list into which they are inserted. In doing so, the hallmark features of the anecdote are not only retained, but amplified. Like many anomaly accounts, the entries on this lists lead with references to historical individuals, known place names, and imperially granted titles and positions. These common patterns can easily be truncated into parallel prose, but the patterning of the subsequent anomalous events themselves requires a little more finesse. The events they describe may be “strange,” but their resemblance to one another proves that they are not unique—they are strange in precisely the same way.

When the introduction to the chapter concludes by stating that trustworthy examples of anomalous events are numerous, it implies that these more recent materials are also worthy of recognition, having been inserted at the end of a sequence that relies primarily upon much more familiar and orthodox texts. The inclusion of abbreviated imitations of the structural patterns of anecdotal literature in these final segments suggests an attention to the formal characteristics of the genre that transcends its utilitarian reputation, while the neat division of events into thematically related parallel sets reinforces their collective strangeness, and hints at the

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63 The received *Soushen ji* version of the story is the same as that recorded in *Fengsu tongyi*. According to Li Jianguo, *Shuijing zhu* attributes a slightly different version to *Soushen ji*, which also appears in Wang Qiao’s *Hou Han shu* biography. Li uses the *Shuijing zhu*/*Hou Han shu* version for his recompiled critical edition of *Soushen ji*. Both *Fengsu tongyi* and *Soushen ji* report that Wang Qiao was director of Ye, while an *Yiwen leiju* citation of *Fengsu tongyi* gives the variant Ye that appears in *Jinlouzi*. See Ying Shao 應劭 (140–206), *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, ed. Wang Liqi 王利器 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 81–82; Gan Bao, *Xin ji Soushen ji* 新輯搜神記, ed. Li Jianguo 李劍國 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 41–42; YWLJ, 91.1581.
possibility of further division of anomaly accounts into more specific subcategories according to patterns of form and content. The “Documenting the Strange” chapter’s unique statement about the value of writing that pertains to the strange is not made explicit, and it is clear that later bibliographers and critics did not share this evaluation. But through this subtle use of allusion and parallel structure, the introduction serves its purpose as a justification of the inclusion of collection of anomaly accounts in Jinlouzi, tracing a path from classical texts to the compilations and other documentary materials of more recent history. The contents of the chapter that follow the preface put this into practice, drawing their contents from an equally broad array of sources, but reproducing them without the same heavy editing and patterning of the preface.

The final entry of the chapter, though, shares the same dense parallel structure as the preface, using this format to present a compact survey of the more recent textual landscape. It contains forty-seven individual anecdotes, which are each condensed into a short line of between four and ten characters, and grouped into a sequence unrhymed parallel couplets according to theme or topic, with the exception of a slightly longer final entry with no parallel. As in the preface, this formal patterning is matched by thematic relationships among the entries. For example, the first four pairs of anecdotes are as follows:

When the woman of Huansha died, three mosquitos arrived at the place of her funeral, / When Dou Wu’s mother was being interred, a snake struck the front of her coffin. The fowl of Hantu could speak, / The hounds of the Western Zhou could understand language. / Hepu tong leaves flew to Luoyang, / Shixing wooden drums fled to Linwu. / In Gushi of Lean, dry bones whistled, / From the floating coffin of the Liao river, came the voice of a person.

浣紗女死，三蚊至葬所。竇武母窆，蛇擊柩前。含塗之雞能言，西周之犬解語。合浦桐葉，飛至洛陽；始興鼓木，奔至臨武。樂安故市，枯骨吟嘯。遼水浮棺，有人言語。64

64 JLZ, 1200.
The first pair describes unusual animals appearing before the deceased, the next relates tales of animals with uncanny linguistic skill, the third addresses inanimate objects that mysteriously travel long distances, and the fourth concerns communication from beyond the grave. The next nineteen pairs proceed in similar fashion, with each subsequent pair containing examples of familiar anomaly account plots: Spirits provide assistance to mortals; plants grow in the shape of prophetic words and images; unusual accidents presage the downfall of historical figures; extraordinary individuals open up wells and springs in unusual ways, and many more. Whereas the preface relies primarily on examples from classical history (mediated by Baopuzi) and punctuates its conclusion with cases drawn from later anomaly accounts, the postface is composed almost entirely from these relatively recent anecdotes.

All of the stories referenced in the postface have parallels in earlier sources, but it is difficult to determine exactly which texts served as the actual sources for this list. Instead, searching for the textual sources of the items on this list reveals patterns of citation that resemble those found in the body of the chapter: Most of these entries have an earlier parallel attributed to a known anomaly account collection, including Soushen ji, Youming lu, and their sequels. In some cases, the same anecdote is also associated with multiple roughly contemporaneous anomaly accounts or geographic treatises. They also draw from classical precedent, featuring numerous incidents that are recorded in texts like Zuo zhuan or Guo yu. Many of these pre-Han

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65 The corpus of extant anomaly account compilations is far from complete, and the leishu citations and later recompilations that preserve these fragments are full of mistaken attributions and variants. Moreover, the contents of extant collections suggest that, much like Jinlouzi itself, even the most stable texts frequently shared contents with other zhiguai collections, and also drew heavily from earlier historiographic compilations and treatises in other genres, so associating every anecdote with a single textual antecedent is an impossible task. Nevertheless, Xu Yimin identifies many passages from earlier texts that parallel events described in this section of Jinlouzi, occupying eighteen pages of notes to this entry. See JLZ, 1201–18.
incidents are also described in a later aggregate of omens and unusual occurrences, the *Han shu*’s “Treatise on the Five Phases” ("Wuxing zhi" 五行志). The postface is a microcosmic replication of the citational structure of the body of the chapter, reflecting both the compilation choices of the *Jinlouzi* compiler as well as the broader corpus of interrelated texts from which those selections were made.

The most fascinating aspect of the postface, however, is the manner in which these anecdotes are truncated in order to make them conform to the piece’s parallel structure. The concluding examples used in the preface mimic the general structure of a typical anecdote, squeezing all of the characteristic features of the form into a single line of text. Many lines of the postface omit integral pieces of the narrative in favor of a single image or detail that gives each line a thematic resonance with its counterpart in the couplet. This means that the “strange” or “supernatural” detail of the referent anecdote may be completely missing from its truncated version. For example, the tenth pair summarizes two anecdotes that share the common feature of animals adorned with human accessories: “A soft-shelled turtle adorned with a silver hairpin, / A pig with a golden bell around its arm” 龜頭戴銀釵，豬脾帶金鈴. Indeed, animals wearing human jewelry is certainly unusual, but this detail pales in comparison to the fantastical elements in the longer anecdotes to which these short lines refer.

The first case appears in Gan Bao’s *Soushen ji*:

During the time of Emperor Ling of the Han, a mother in the Jingxia Huang clan once took a bath in the Pan River. For quite some time she did not emerge, [and when she did] she had transformed into a giant soft-shelled turtle. Her servant was shocked, and ran to report it. By the time her family arrived, the tortoise had already descended into the depths. After this, she would surface again from time to time. She had worn a silver hairpin to bathe, and it was still on her head. From then on subsequent generations of

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66 JLZ, 1200. The *Zhi bu zu zhai* edition of the text gives *pi* 臀 ("hip"); I follow Xu Yimin and take it as a misprint of *bi* 臂 ("arm").
Huangs did not dare to eat soft-shelled turtle meat.

漢靈帝時，江夏黃氏之母，浴盤水中，久而不起，變為龜矣。婢驚走告。比家人來，龜轉入深淵。其後時時出見。初浴簪一銀釵，猶在其首。於是黃氏累世不敢吃龜

The single-line retelling of this story in *Jinlouzi* removes both the explicit discussion of the woman’s transformation as well as the story’s amusing conclusion, preserving only the image of a turtle with a silver hairpin as an emblem of her former humanity. The full narrative of the second incident in this pair is also much longer. It appears in citations of the otherwise lost text *Zhiguai* 志怪 in *Taiping yulan*:

An official from Wuzhong was once returning to the capital from vacation. When he had arrived at the shore of a pond in Qua, he met an incredibly beautiful woman. They spent the night together, and the gentleman untied a golden bell from his arm and tied it around hers. He told her to return in the evening, and yet she did not arrive. He sent someone to look for her, but there was no one of the sort to be found. As he was passing a pig pen, he saw a sow with a golden bell around its arm.

吳中有一士大夫，於都假還，至曲阿塘上，見一女子甚美。留其宿，士解臂金鈴繫女臂。令暮更來，遂不至。使人求，都無此色。過豬圈，見一母豬，臂上繫金鈴

In its full form, the anecdote is yet another example of a familiar plot, in which a young scholar has an amorous encounter with an entity eventually revealed to be an abject creature masquerading as a beautiful woman. These narrative details are omitted from the condensed

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67 Gan Bao, *Soushen ji*, 341. It also appears in *Fayuan zhulin* 法院珠林, where it is attributed to *Soushen ji*. T. 53 No. 2122, 32.531b. Interestingly enough, the same incident is also referenced in *Baopu* (Baopuzi). As in *Jinlouzi*, the narrative is condensed into a scant few characters and included in a list of other phenomena, yet *Baopu*’s wording is entirely different: “The old woman of Chu became a giant soft-shelled turtle, Zhili grew a willow, the lady of Qin turned to stone” and so on. See BPZ, 2.13.

68 TPYL, 903.4139a. Note that TPYL also contains a significantly different version of the same story, where the golden bell is replaced with a golden box, yet it is also attributed to the same text, another testament to the high frequency of variation in the transmission of anecdotes. See TPYL, 717.3311a–b.
Jinlouzi version, leaving only the golden bell as a counterpart to the silver hairpin of the preceding line.

Readers of this passage with no prior knowledge of the referent anecdotes would not necessarily understand the logic of relating all of the situations described as examples of strange affairs, yet those who had read broadly from the numerous collections in circulation at the time would certainly be able to make the connection. Here, anomaly accounts are treated not as frivolous nonsense to be ignored by serious scholars, but as elements of a shared corpus of knowledge. The breadth of such a list displays the compiler’s intimate familiarity with a wide variety of texts, while the pervasive elision of details presumes the same level of erudition among the text’s readers. This complements the preface’s claim that the examples it lists are all familiar and trustworthy. The preface grants this authority to recent anomaly accounts by including them in a sequence that includes references to the most authoritative classical texts, and the postface confirms it by rephrasing elements of these texts as allusions that anticipate the ability of readers to recognize their referents, even though many of the anecdotes described in the postface belong to much later and less canonical works. Once again, it is necessary to reconsider the apparent derivativeness of the “Documenting the Strange” chapter, and by extension the pervasive citationality of the text as a whole. Textual borrowing is not hidden from view. On the contrary, in this case understanding the text’s relationship to earlier works is a fundamental part of the reading process the text anticipates.

Strangeness is one of several criteria Jinlouzi uses to reorganize its borrowed parts into new patterns. In the case of the “Documenting the Strange” chapter, the polemic value of this activity remains vague. The postface concludes with a whimsical twist that calls into question any attempts to define strangeness as an inherent quality. The final line reads, “What indeed is
strange about these cases? Can one ever run out of portentous and ominous affairs to discuss?”

Such a comment plays with the dual valence of a term like *guai*: The events described in the chapter may indeed be considered curious and weird, but the frequency with which they appear in the corpus—the fact that makes such a collection possible—means that they cannot truly be considered rare and unusual. Recognition of strangeness as a shared feature of anecdotes may be enough to relate them to one another and distinguish them in a chapter or genre of their own, but it is a distinction that renders “strange” an inappropriate label for such contents. Despite this last-minute change of heart, however, “strangeness” remains important as an organizational tactic. True acceptance of the proposition that strangeness is in the eye of the beholder and may be dispelled with familiarity would render the chapter title, and the ties that bind its contents together, meaningless.

4.2 Parts of a whole: “Miscellaneous Records” and “Establishing a Discourse”

Though it lacks the parallel prose bookends of the “Zhiguai” chapter, the subsequent “Miscellaneous Records” (“Zaji” 雜記) section operates under a similarly paradoxical organizational structure. If things that we perceive as strange become less strange when we realize that they are quite similar to one another, does the equally vague category of “eclectic” or “miscellaneous” acquire a more concrete and intelligible form through patterns in the things assigned to it? This dilemma is not unique to *Jinlouzi*. For example, the Han dynasty compilation *Shuo yuan* 說苑 (Garden of tales) is composed of hundreds of short anecdotes that are grouped into chapters with titles suggestive of general themes. Like *Jinlouzi*, much of this content is derived from preexisting sources. It also features a za-prefixed chapter, “Miscellaneous Sayings”

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69 JLZ, 1200.
("Zayan" 雜言), which is used as a receptacle for content that has been deigned worthy of inclusion in the work, but is nevertheless neither compatible with any of the other topic-based chapter titles nor consistent enough to warrant a more specific title. In both cases, the creative efforts of the compiler are found not in the fabrication of unique content, but in the generation of unique categories, and the assignment of old content to those new categories.

In this case, the existence of za chapters in both texts seems to reveal a flaw in each text’s system of categories: As a prefix to a chapter title the term offers no suggestion of a thematic common ground for its contents other than their shared miscellaneousness. But this does not mean that the contents themselves lack any common features. As Cheng Xiang, the editor of a modern edition of the Shuo yuan, puts it, “The title of this juan is ‘Miscellaneous Sayings,’ but it is not actually miscellaneous. Its central concern is to express the qualities of a noble man.” In other words, in this reading of the chapter, whatever za-ness may be present in the “Miscellaneous Sayings” chapter does not violate the overarching Ruist organizational principle that binds the rest of the text together. It is presumably this consistent thematic focus that has allowed Shuo yuan to be recognized as a Rujia text, despite the fact that it shares much of its content with categorically non-Ruist texts like Han Feizi, Huainanzi, and others. In this sense, this chapter functions as a microcosm of the Shuo yuan as a whole. It is “miscellaneous” in

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70 Liu Xiang 劉向, Shuo yuan yi zhu 說苑譯注, edited by Cheng Xiang 程翔 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009), 429.

71 Shuo yuan’s identification as a Ruist work may be because of its association with Liu Xiang, whose reputation as a faithful steward (and organizer) of the classical textual tradition is perhaps the inverse of Xiao Yi’s infamous mistreatment of texts. As discussed in Chapter two of this dissertation, however, in the Sui shu treatise this reputation was not enough to earn a more reputable bibliographic position for Liu Xiang edition of Zhan’guo ce, whose formal dissimilarity to works of history like the Spring and Autumn Annals, Han shu, and Shi ji earned it a spot in the “Miscellaneous Histories” subcategory. See SS, 28.959; 28.962.
comparison to the *Shuo yuan*’s other chapters’ more clearly defined topics, but locating the limits of this *za*-ness helps to identify the boundaries that define entire text.

It is confounding, then, that a search for patterns in the contents of *Jinlouzi*’s own “Miscellaneous Records” chapter does not similarly bring to light a thematic focus of the entire *Jinlouzi*. This is not to say that no reading of the chapter could identify consistent interests or internal patterns, only that it is difficult to stretch these patterns into a generalization that can be applied to the all of the work’s other chapters. Once again, it is more fruitful to consider the possibility that, if *Jinlouzi* is consistently *about* anything, it is about the habits of collection, organization, and editing that brought it into existence. The most commonly recurring elements of the text are not thematic, but structural and procedural. Seen in this light, the “Miscellaneous Records” chapter makes an excellent microcosm of the work as a whole, because of the way its citational methods distill and refine a large corpus of gathered text, while simultaneously disrupting and redefining that corpus by rearranging and even rewriting these borrowed contents into new forms.

Just as the “Documenting the Strange” chapter does not limit itself to texts that exclusively contain anomaly accounts, “Miscellaneous Notes” does not limit itself to texts previously understood as “Miscellaneous.” The chapter draws liberally from works bibliographically categorized as “Miscellaneous” themselves, such as the *Jinlouzi*’s peers and rivals *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*. It also mimics those earlier compendia by curating its own selection of passages from the among the major pre-Qin Masters regardless of “school” affiliation, such as *Mengzi*, *Han Feizi*, *Xunzi* and *Zhuangzi*, and also includes elements associated with the lesser known Masters texts *Heguanzi* and *Liuzi*. But the chapter does not limit itself to the Han conception of the Masters’ tradition, including ample material
from the anomaly account collection *Youming lu*, anecdotes drawn from both *Sanguo zhi* and a handful of the texts cited in its Pei Songzhi commentary, and those found in *Shishuo xinyu*. This wide variety of sources that share content with this chapter may appear to justify the “miscellaneous” label, but in fact this range of contents is not dissimilar to that of other chapters. In their earlier appearances, these anecdotes form components of textual wholes: longer historical narratives, extended theoretical essays, or aggregations of content related to a single theme or place. By selecting them for inclusion in the “Miscellaneous Records” chapter, *Jinlouzi* strips them of these earlier contexts and renders them relatable only to one another.

This is done not merely through direct excerption, but through additional manipulation of the contents of these anecdotes. For example, an entry in the second half of the chapter recounts an anecdote that is first recorded in *Shi ji*:

> In the past, Deng Tong had a pattern on his face running from nose to mouth. A fortune teller said, “He will certainly die of starvation.” Han Emperor Wen said, “He that is able to make Tong wealthy is none other than I,” and bequeathed to him a copper mine. After this, indeed, he [Deng Tong] starved to death.

> 昔鄧通從理入口，相者曰：必餓死。漢文帝曰：能富通者我也。賜以銅山。其後果然餓死。72

In this distilled form, the anecdote is a parable about the inevitability of fate, in which even the will of the emperor is not enough to offset the destiny presaged by Deng Tong’s 鄧通 (fl. 2nd cent. BCE) disfigurement. There is also an implied critique of the hubris of Han Emperor Wen 漢文帝 (aka Liu Heng 劉恆, 203–157, r. 180–157 BCE), who appears here to lavish Deng Tong with cash simply to prove the fortune teller wrong. The version of this anecdote that appears in *Shi ji* is much longer, and the additional details help to make it an appropriate tale to lead off the

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72 JLZ, 1321.
biographical category devoted to male favorites of the emperor.\footnote{The chapter is titled “Ningxing” 娇幸, “Obtaining Favor through Flattery.” \textit{Shi ji} is clear in its implication that these male favorites were sexual partners of the emperor. The title of the chapter, however, reflects the fact that these individuals are important to the overall project of the \textit{Shi ji} biographies not for their sexual proclivities, but for the influence they were able to gain over their imperial suitors. The political consequences of these relationships, as well as the profound displays of devotion they often elicit, are the primary concern of these biographies. See SJ, 125.3192. Despite of frequently invoking negative terms connoting seduction, flattery, and promotion without providing practical value to the court in its descriptions of these figures, \textit{Shi ji} also recognizes the instructive value of their accomplishments. This ambivalence is expressed quite succinctly in the description of the chapter offered in the postface to \textit{Shi ji}: “Among those who serve lords, those who delight their ruler’s senses and accord with their desire for beautiful appearances and succeed in drawing them close do not do so through beauty and affection alone—each of them also has abilities in which they excelled. Thus, I have drafted the ‘Biographies of those who obtain favor through flattery,’” in SJ, 130.3318. For an extended analysis of these biographies, including an explanation of the term \textit{ningxing} and analysis of the major episodes within the chapter, see Bret Hinsch, \textit{Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 34–54.}} Here, the Emperor’s role in Deng Tong’s rise to good fortune is given a more detailed explanation, as are both his lack of qualification for service and his eventual decline.

\textit{Jinlouzi}’s account lacks any reference to Deng Tong’s status as a favorite of the Emperor. This overlooked element is in fact central to Deng Tong’s representation in \textit{Shi ji}. It establishes Deng Tong’s place within the text’s multiple biographical categories and provides the primary focus of his own life story. In that text, Deng Tong is introduced alongside two others favored by Emperor Wen, Zhao Tong 趙同 and Beigong Bozi 北宮伯子.\footnote{In \textit{Han shu}, Zhao Tong is referred to as Zhao Tan 諧. This is the only major difference between the \textit{Shi ji} and \textit{Han shu} biographies of Deng Tong; \textit{Shi ji} is a clear source of the \textit{Han shu} account, in HS, 93.3722–24.} While Zhao Tong attracts the attention of the emperor through his knowledge of celestial phenomena, and Beigong Bozi wins favor through his compassionate and affectionate nature, Deng Tong is described as being “without skill or talent” (\textit{wu jineng} 無技能).\footnote{SJ, 125.3192.} He catches the emperor’s eye through unusual and
suggestive circumstances: One night, the emperor dreams that he is moving towards the heavens, but cannot complete the ascent. A man in a yellow headscarf stands behind him, pushing him upwards. When the emperor turns to look at the man, he sees that his robes are open at the back. In the morning when he wakes, he goes off in search of a man with a yellow headscarf and the same opening in his robes, and finds that Deng Tong fits the exact description. Moreover, when the emperor hears Deng Tong’s name, he is delighted—perhaps because the name Deng Tong is a close pun for “completed ascent” (deng tong 登通). After this auspicious introduction, Deng Tong becomes a fixture in the emperor’s retinue and the affection between them grows.

It is only at this point, after having already earned the favor of the emperor, that Deng Tong visits the fortune teller who gives him the unfavorable prognostication. This section of the Shi ji narrative closely parallels the version of the anecdote in Jinlouzi, and in this both this later version and the Shi ji account the emperor makes the exact same pledge to save Deng Tong from poverty and starvation. What Jinlouzi suggests is a boastful attempt to thwart fate, Shi ji contextualizes as a display of devotion from an enchanted suitor. Jinlouzi treats Deng Tong’s eventual downfall as inevitable, but the Shi ji version again provides a more detailed explanation. Though Deng Tong is unable to contribute anything of value to the Han court, he becomes increasingly intimate with the emperor, to the extent that he is willing to regularly perform the unenviable task of sucking the pus from the emperor’s boils. The fact that the future Emperor Jing agrees to do so only grudgingly further endears Deng Tong to the Emperor Wen, but incurs the spite of the crown prince. When the prince succeeds his father as emperor, Deng Tong is stripped of his titles and ejected him from the capital. Eventually all of his wealth is confiscated by the court, leaving him live out his years in poverty.
These details are not recounted in detail in the Jinlouzi version. Thanks to their appearance in a text as central to the canon as Shi ji, they may very well have still been familiar to most Jinlouzi readers. Yet by reducing the story to its bare essentials, the Jinlouzi version draws attention away from Deng Tong’s intimacy with the emperor, and recasts the story’s conclusion as an example of the inexorability of fate. The Jinlouzi version even adds an extra detail in the form of the pattern on Deng Tong’s face that prompts the fortune teller’s prediction, reinforcing the notion that his future path had already been determined by forces more influential than the enormous wealth and power of the emperor. Indeed, even in its full form the story is a flawed illustration of either the negative effects of flattery and sycophancy or the potential for those who reach undeserved status to redeem themselves through virtuous service. Deng Tong has no ulterior motives, does not play an active role in seeking the emperor’s affection, and his presence in the Han court creates neither catastrophe or benefit for the state. The only consequence is the brief annoyance of the crown prince and Deng Tong’s own demise. At best, the story highlights the precarious nature of status earned without a foundation of great talent or exceptional wisdom, reinforced through the frequent references to Deng Tong’s lack of ability. These details, along with the extended discussion of Deng Tong’s intimate relationship with the emperor, reduce the role of the fortune teller’s remark to a catalyst that provides motive for the increased generosity of the emperor and a bit of foreshadowing. By centering the narrative around Deng Tong’s flawed physiognomy and what it portends for his future, the Jinlouzi version functions essentially as a commentary to the larger, older version of the same story, bringing to the fore underlying details that may otherwise have gone unnoticed to Shi ji readers.

76 The phrase cong li ru kou 從理入口 does not appear in this section of Shi ji, but elsewhere in that text it accompanies the same prediction of “death by starvation” for another person. See SJ, 57.2074.
Jinlouzi’s compiler may not be the one responsible for drafting this truncated version of Deng Tong’s tale. With such limited access to texts of the early medieval period, in this case as in others the possibility that the version in Jinlouzi was drawn directly from an intermediary source, or even a variant or incomplete edition of Shi ji itself, cannot be ruled out. Whatever the provenance of this anecdote, it is still significant that it appears in this form in this section of the text. What appeared in the past as a prominent component of Shi ji’s didactic biographical project is reduced—literally and figuratively—to a brief and trivial entry in Jinlouzi’s “Miscellaneous Records” chapter. Without a clearly articulated topical framework surrounding it, it is difficult even to declare that the way the anecdote calls attention to the workings of fate is a determining factor. Such a theme would not be out of place in the “Documenting the Strange” chapter, but “Miscellaneous Records” offers plenty of examples of anecdotes that display no influence of this particular plot. The sheer variety of the contents of the chapter make it difficult to develop comprehensive generalizations about shared thematic content.

However diverse their contents, the anecdotes within the two halves of the “Miscellaneous Records” chapter do share a number of common features. Most are roughly the same length, consisting of narratives that are limited in scope and feature a small number of characters. Even though they may allude to broader historical patterns or events, they remain self-contained: No details are introduced that are only intelligible with extensive outside knowledge (though at times the language of Jinlouzi version is so terse that longer parallel versions provide additional clarity). This is maintained even in the case of stories like that of Deng Tong, which in their preexisting forms are longer and interspersed with references to events and concepts that are only marginally related to the central narrative. When incorporated into the text of Jinlouzi, such narratives are reduced and modified to match the format of the
other anecdotes by which they are surrounded, a less extreme version of the same kind of rearrangement and rewriting that takes place in the passages of parallel prose bookending the “Documenting the Strange” chapter. Just as the “Miscellaneous Sayings” chapter of *Shuo yuan* conforms to, and even reveals, the text’s general Ruist outlook, the absence of a specific topic makes it possible to use the “Miscellaneous Records” chapter to get a sense of features that may be found throughout the entire text. Even though the specific project of the “Documenting the Strange” chapter is to collect and arrange examples of “strange” anecdotes found throughout a broad variety of works, the examples it elects to include must first adhere to the general formal standards of the text as a whole. If they do not, they can still be made to conform through editorial intervention, just as the items chosen for inclusion in the chapter’s preface and postface are truncated and edited to match the parallel structure of the piece that contains them.

A brief consideration of the contents of the “Establishing a Discourse” chapter provides a final perspective on the consequences of this process of decontextualization and reorganization. Whereas “Miscellaneous Records” removes pieces from their context in a wide variety of texts and recontextualizes them only as representatives of the vaguely defined, marginal category of “miscellaneous,” “Establishing a Discourse” draws from a similarly eclectic range of sources and assembles them together to form what should ostensibly represent the conceptual core of *Jinlouzi*. It is, after all, the chapter named for the what *Jinlouzi*’s preface asserts is the overarching goal of the text as a whole, to craft a work that will grant its compiler a kind of perpetual textual identity. Among cases in which probable original sources can be identified, there is a significant overlap between the corpora that provide source material for the both chapters; both draw very heavily from the same group of texts. In particular, the “Establishing a Discourse” chapter reveals another dimension of *Jinlouzi*’s close relationship with the seminal
“Miscellaneous” texts *Huainanzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu*, including many passages that have close parallels with text found in those works. Like “Miscellaneous Records,” however, it does not limit itself to this group of texts, pulling material from a variety of texts both old and recent. *Jinlouzi* shows that when preexisting works are treated as corpora of material from which new texts can be composed, bibliographic categories no longer offer meaningful boundaries. One element from an older text can be considered a fundamental component of the “discourse-building” project of a new text, while other pieces of the same older work can be dismissed as belonging only to the “miscellaneous” appendices. Between these two poles, *Jinlouzi*’s other chapters, “Documenting the Strange” among them, provide a variety of other new categories into which text from these same sources can be sorted and refined.

As a chapter title, “Establishing a Discourse” offers very few clues about the nature of the anecdotes it contains. In some ways, this chapter is the mirror image of “Miscellaneous Records.” Both reproduce the interests of the entire *Jinlouzi* in microcosm, “Miscellaneous Records” by proposing no organizational principles beyond those that also bind the rest of the work, and “Establishing a Discourse” by linking its contents to the same broad ambitions articulated in the preface to the entire text. The difference is essentially one of priority. The former dismisses its contents as miscellanea, while the latter privileges its assortment of anecdotes through its association with scholarly ambition. But without this assumption of the greater importance or centrality of the topics addressed in both contents chapters are just as “miscellaneous.” To impose a specific philosophical identity on the “Establishing a Discourse” chapter, one must read selectively. Though it includes many more non-narrative passages than other chapters, they are joined by plenty of narrative anecdotes and parables very similar to the content of other chapters. The non-narrative sections include observations about literary
aesthetics, discussions of ethical principles, and even occasional descriptions of metaphysical patterns. The passages related to literary aesthetics found here have received the most scholarly attention, usually having the added benefit of being unique to Jinlouzi, though they too draw phrases from other works and make numerous allusions.

Even these discussions of literary style are at times borrowed from other sources, such as one passage that is lifted virtually word-for-word from the treatise on literary aesthetics, Wenxin diaolong.77 Jinlouzi’s inclusion of this brief comment, which concerns errors and misused words in otherwise reputable literary texts, is exemplary of the citational complexity of many anecdotes in the chapter. In its original incarnation in Wenxin diaolong the passage quotes at length from Guanzi, and mentions the text by name.78 Without signalling that this passage is taken from Wenxin diaolong, Jinlouzi absorbs that text’s judgment as its own, but retains its direct citation of Guanzi. This gives the appearance that the Jinlouzi’s compiler has directly consulted (or memorized) Guanzi, while in reality the text simply appropriates the breadth of scholarship used to create the Wenxin diaolong passage. Granted, this is only the case if a Jinlouzi reader does not instantly recognize the passage as an excerpt from Wenxin diaolong. Beyond this appropriation of citational structure, Jinlouzi also manipulates the thrust of Wenxin diaolong’s critique. in the Wenxin diaolong version the introductory, tone-setting passage from Guanzi is followed by a litany of examples of faults in pieces by a variety of authors, among them Cao Zhi, Zuo Si, and Pan Yue. The Jinlouzi excerpt reproduces only the first critique of Cao Zhi, and then ends, transforming the passage from a long survey covering a variety of literary errors to a brief

77 JLZ, 892.

78 Liu Xie 劉勰, Wenxin diaolong yi zheng 文心雕龍義證, ed. Zhan Ying 詩謙 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 1529.
anecdote that targets only Cao Zhi. In its whittled-down form, the passage becomes something that is formally more similar to the rest of the short prose anecdotes that fill Jinlouzi than to anything else in Wenxin diaolong.

The layers of citational complexity apparent throughout Jinlouzi blur the line between allusion and appropriation. To write off Jinlouzi as a work of mere appropriation is to overlook that all of these varying citational techniques are housed within a text that text that often engages directly with ideas about the arrangement and curation of text, from its two overtly bibliographic chapters to the alternative system of prose “genres” it constructs through its other chapters. Jinlouzi’s repurposing of preexisting material, as anxiety inducing as it may be, is an attempt to do new things with old writing, rather than simply peddle it off like used goods. Indeed, even when lifted directly from older sources, these borrowed passages take on new life and significance both through subtle alterations as well as their new positions within Jinlouzi.

Jinlouzi is not unique in its liberal adaptation and reorganization of material that can be found in preexisting sources. The most visible instance of this type of variation (that is, variants in the structure and length of entire passages, as opposed to variants of individual words or phrases) is the way that leishu truncate and simplify the contents of the texts that they “quote.” This has long been acknowledged as a feature of Taiping yulan, and it is also likely to have been the case for the older leishu that served as the basis for Taiping yulan. Such modifications may frustrate efforts to use leishu to reassemble lost texts, but their presence is understandable. Leishu

79 Furthermore, Cao Zhi appears frequently throughout Jinlouzi, though usually in a more positive light. For additional references to or quotations of Cao Zhi, see JLZ, 857, 883–84, 949–50, 1241, and 1283.

80 For more on early medieval leishu and their relationship to Taiping yulan, see Hu Daojing, Zhongguo gudai de leishu, 117–18, and Glen Dudbridge, Lost Books of Medieval China (London: British Library, 2000), 16.
collate vast amounts of knowledge and arrange it into an ontological hierarchy. The criteria that organize their content relate entirely to the nature of the phenomena their gathered passages describe, rather than to the bibliographic identities of the texts from which they are gathered. In this case, it is not surprising that fidelity to the source text is not a priority. In many ways, *Jinlouzi* resembles a *leishu*: It, too, gathers, edits, and concatenates excerpts from diverse materials, divorcing them from the contexts of their original sources, and integrating them into its own organizational structure. But the logic that dictates this structure is textual. Many of *Jinlouzi*’s chapter titles are reminiscent of topics that in other cases would define the contents of an entire book. A *leishu* digests texts of myriad genres in order to rewrite and rearrange their contents into a hierarchy that reflects the order of the material world, rather than the textual order from which they were extracted. *Jinlouzi* offers material taken from a similarly diverse assortment of textual types, but rather than integrate them into a hierarchical system reflective of relationships among the phenomena they discuss, it rearranges them according to an alternative conception of their relationships to one another as texts.

In other words, *Jinlouzi* removes textual pieces from the contexts that make them intelligible, whether as lessons, as consequential moments in the dynastic cycle, or even as a sequence of textual references to the same phenomenon or concept. This ensures that they are relatable only to one another, as pieces of text. In spite of its oddly defined parameters, the “bibliography” performed by *Jinlouzi* resembles the strict formal boundaries used to divide the contents of the *Wen xuan* more than it does the broader conceptual framework into which texts are integrated in the imperial bibliographic treatise. Bibliographies attempt to categorize entire books based on the assumptions that a text’s contents are unified in theme, and likely to remain constant throughout the transmission process. *Jinlouzi*, on the other hand, acknowledges that,
despite the assumed integrity of the book, text continues to circulate and spread in much smaller units. Passages from geographic treatises, private histories, genealogies, and a host of other documents are tracked down and plucked out to supplement the histories, to form collections of anomalies, or even to fill the pages of encyclopedic leishu. Jinlouzi devises its own system of organization that disregards the bibliographic categories into which entire books are confined, instead establishing connections between their constituent parts, thus allowing it to participate in this exchange of fragments across genres of compilation, while at the same time contributing to the bibliographic project of textual categorization.

4.3 Creating and recreating Jinlouzi

Though the Jinlouzi preface boasts that, unlike Huainanzi and Lüshi chunqiu, it represents the work of a single compiler, as 21st century readers of a medieval text we must take a broader view of the many hands involved in the compilation process. Like many texts of its era, the version of Jinlouzi that exists today is a reconstruction, or “recompilation,” put together from citations of the Jinlouzi found in a handful of much later sources. A summary of Jinlouzi’s textual history is included in its Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao synopsis, and Zhong Shilun and Xu Yimin have supplemented this account with additional details about the text’s transmission and reconstitution.81 In short, though it is listed in bibliographies until the Song dynasty and is cited extensively in Taiping yulan, after that references to the text are scarce. All current editions of Jinlouzi are based on an edition compiled in the Qing dynasty, which was put together from Jinlouzi citations of the text appearing in the Ming collection Yongle dadian prior to that encyclopedic work’s own tragic disappearance. Fortunately, surviving excerpts of the Yongle dadian reveal that its Jinlouzi citations also include references to the chapters in which they

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appear. These chapter titles are roughly consistent with indices of the text recorded in bibliographic sources. This means that, even if the text of each component is reproduced accurately from older intact versions of Jinlouzi to Yongle dadian to the Qing edition, the sequence of passages within each chapter is the invention Qing recompilers, and not a reflection of the precise ordering of the text as it may have existed in any pre-Yongle dadian edition.

Problematic textual histories are unfortunately quite common among early medieval texts. Though they raise many questions about the integrity and authenticity of these works, without access to older editions these questions are largely unanswerable. The multiplicity and variety suggested by the text’s messy transmission is sacrificed for an idealized text that is singular and consistent, but is merely a theoretical simulation of the way the text may have (or perhaps should have) appeared at the time its compiler stopped adding new material. And yet, though the text produced through recompilation is alien to the hypothetical original Jinlouzi, the recompilation process as well as the conditions of transmission that necessitated such a recompilation are themselves quite resonant with the Jinlouzi’s own patterns of citation and recontextualization. Just as Jinlouzi is both reliant on and transformative of the preexisting texts whose material it gathers and reorganizes, so too are later attempts to recover and reorganize the text both dependent on and opposed to the structures of the resources that have enabled the text’s recompilation.

Even without access to older, more complete versions of Jinlouzi, traces of the recompilation process left in the form of notes from the text’s Qing editors reveal consequences of recompilation even more significant than the disruption of the original sequence of anecdotes within each chapter. In several cases, notes from the text’s recompilers report on their role in redefining the contents of Jinlouzi chapters. In the received version of the text, both
“Establishing a Discourse” and “Miscellaneous Records” are divided into two parts (shang 上 and xia 下). Notes at the beginning of the first half of each chapter discuss this division:

The index lists “Establishing a Discourse” in two parts, the base text combines them into one chapter, while scattered fragments and repeated anecdotes also have titles that indicate whether they appear in the first or second part of the chapter. We have cautiously consulted these and divided them as follows.

目錄有《立言》上、下，原本合為一篇，其散見復出者，猶有上、下之名，謹參考分之如左。82

In the table of contents, this [the “Miscellaneous Records”] chapter is originally divided into two halves and the base text was broken apart. For those passages that record the chapter part in their titles have we preserved this division. Those that are only labeled with “Miscellaneous Notes chapter” have been appended at the end of the first and before the second half of the chapter. Furthermore, this chapter draws eclectically (za) from the Masters and Histories. We suspect that all entries [originally] had concluding portions, but since the original text has been broken apart and subject to loss, so that now some have them and some do not. In this edition, we have preserved the old forms in all cases, and cautiously recorded them here.

此篇目錄本分上下，原本割裂，有載上下篇名者，今仍分屬。其但標《雜記篇》者，則附於上篇之後，下篇之前。又此篇雜引子史，疑皆有斷語，原本割裂失去，故或有或無今悉仍其舊，謹識於此。83

The placement of individual contents in the two halves of these chapters was not clearly indicated at all stages of the transmission process, and it is also possible that some editions of the text did not divide these chapters into two portions at all. The impact of this decision on readers’ interpretation of its contents may not be tremendous, but it serves as an important reminder that Jinlouzi as we know it, like other reconstituted texts, is essentially a version of the text that had never actually existed in the hands of Xiao Yi, nor in any period prior to its recompilation.

Moreover, the premise that the remnants of the Jinlouzi are themselves fragmentary and missing

82 JLZ, 949.

83 JLZ, 1219.
Xiao Yi’s original constructive conclusions is pure assumption. Though it does not appear to have prompted recompilers to go so far as to supply their own additional comments to fill in for those that they presume have been omitted, the note colors the reader’s understanding of what the ideal Jinlouzi must have looked like, creating the basis for an argument against accusations that the text is basely derivative and deceptive.

Additional notes throughout these chapters reveal even more significant editorial interventions. As suggested in the previous appended comments, most pieces of Jinlouzi reached its recompilers with some indication of the chapter in which they belonged. This can be confirmed from the partial remnants of Yongle dadian that cite Jinlouzi, which include chapter titles. However, this is not the case for all entries that appear in the received Jinlouzi. The second note indicates that passages not clearly marked with either part one or two are to be found between those two halves, however it is not clear exactly which portions of the text this is meant to refer to. Another note towards the end of the first half of the “Miscellaneous Records” reports that “The following seven items were listed in the original text without chapter title; they have been recorded here” 一下七條，原本無篇名，附於此, contradicting the note at the beginning of the chapter by suggesting that even their status as components of any part of the “Miscellaneous Records” chapter was not previously known. Though a charitable reading suggests that the only missing information for these seven anecdotes was which half of the chapter they belong in, this is certainly not the case for the final two entries in the second half of the chapter. The second to last entry in that section is followed a note that reads, “This item was

84 For the portions of Jinlouzi included in extant Yongle dadian fragments, see Zhong, Jinlouzi yanjiu, 44–48.

85 JLZ, 1293.
originally without a chapter title. Scrutiny of its contents suggests that it belongs in this chapter, so we have cautiously included it.” 此條原本不載片名。詳文義，應屬此篇。謹附。86

Similarly, the final entry is followed by this comment:

This entry is not in the base text. Taiping yulan attributes it to Fuzi, while Guo Wei of the Ming dynasty’s compilation Baizi jindan attributes it to Jinlouzi. We have cautiously included it here.

此條原本無，《太平御覽》引作《符子》，明郭偉所輯《百子金丹》引作《金樓子》。謹附於此。87

In this final instance, the entry’s questionable affiliation with Jinlouzi should not draw too much suspicion. Fuzi predates Jinlouzi, and it is certainly not at all unusual for Jinlouzi items to also appear in other texts. But the fact that the Jinlouzi attribution in Taiping yulan, along with the original reference to the previous anecdote, were not accompanied with information pertaining to its location within the text means that in these cases the recompilers had to decide for themselves where to insert these comments.

The same is true for the final four entries in the second half of “Establishing a Discourse,” which are followed by a similar note that explains that these four passages were not present in their base text, but are included in Taiping yulan citations without chapter titles. The text then notes, “Consideration of their contents suggests that they appear to belong in this chapter, so we have cautiously appended them here” 考文義似應屬此篇，謹附於此。88 Other entries in this chapter are also suspect. The entry that precedes these four, along with ten additional entries earlier in the chapter, are annotated with notes explaining that citations

86 JLZ, 1342.
87 JLZ, 1343.
88 JLZ, 994.
attributing them to both “Establishing a Discourse” and “Quick Responses” ("Jie dui" 捷對) were extant, and that the decision to place them in one and not the other was again made based on consultation of their contents. In more recent recompliations, it is standard practice to include such stranded fragments (yiwen 佚文) in an appendix, indicating clearly that they are associated with the work in leishu and other sources, but not present in the base text from which the modern edition is derived. In this case, however, the recomplilers become active participants in determining the contents of the text itself. These later scholars, centuries after the compilation of Jinlouzi began, find themselves conducting a form of textual categorization quite similar those which brought the text into existence in the first place. By deciding how to divide insufficiently annotated fragments of text from a wealth of gathered materials and distributing them among Jinlouzi’s schema of chapter topics, the recomplilers become collaborators in the text’s ongoing compilation process. Thankfully, these alterations are documented and explained by the editors responsible for the recompilation of the text. But their presence is a reminder of the potential for textual transmission to result in significant alteration of a text’s contents, and skeptical readers would be justified in seeing these cracks in the text’s integrity as merely the outermost visible layer of editorial manipulation, suggesting countless other revisions and manipulations that were not as meticulously documented.

If the text as we know it today bears any resemblance to the Jinlouzi that Xiao Yi himself compiled, it is due to the documentation provided in the Yongle dadian. Two additional examples of the text’s treatment in later sources show that, without the detail offered by the

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89 JLZ, 942, 983.

90 Xu Yimin includes such an appendix, which contains five additional citations of Jinlouzi that did not make their way into the initial Qing recompilation, in JLZ, 1371–75.
Yongle dadian, Jinlouzi can appear to be a different kind of text entirely. In addition to Yongle dadian and a handful of anecdotes preserved in Taiping yulan, another source of Jinlouzi citations is the compilation Shuo fu 說郛 (Outskirts of exposition).\(^{91}\) However, these excerpts are all heavily edited. They preserve only a line or two of each anecdote cited, but also give each entry a brief title, an element not included in any other version of the text.\(^{92}\) Most are derived from the “Miscellaneous Records” and “Documenting the Strange” chapters. Zhong Shilun posits that these truncations show that Shuo fu treats Jinlouzi as a mere repository for allusions (diangu 典故), preserving only enough information to make the phrase used as the title for each entry intelligible.\(^{93}\) For instance, the first entry in the Jinlouzi section, entitled “Dreaming of intestines, upset stomach” (Meng chang fan wei 夢腸反胃) reads, “When Yang Xiong composed

\(^{91}\) The textual history of Shuo fu is perhaps even more complicated than that of Jinlouzi, and many unanswered questions remain. For an overview of the debate surrounding the various editions of Shuo fu and its relation to other texts, see Glen Dudbridge, “Towards a Genetics of the Shuo fu blocks: A Study of Bodleian Sinica 933 and 939” in Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 75–93. For a more recent study of Shuo fu’s messy history, which surveys past scholarship and compares versions of a Yuan text as it is represented in several extant Shuo fu manuscripts and early print editions, see Christopher P. Atwood, “The Textual History of Tao Zongyi’s Shuofu: Preliminary Results of Stemmatic Research on the Shengqu qinzheng lu,” Sino-Platonic Papers 271 (June, 2017): 1–70.

\(^{92}\) These portions of Jinlouzi are found only in the 120 juan version of Shuo fu, expanded in the Ming dynasty after the death of Tao Zongyi and included in the Siku quanshu. Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1329–1410), et al., Shuo fu 說郛, Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu 影印文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 876–882 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 23.36–40. The earlier, one hundred juan version of Shuo fu believed to have been compiled by Tao Zongyi himself was never printed, and the many discrepancies between the various extant manuscript editions and fragments makes the history of the text difficult to trace. The most accessible version of the text as it existed prior to Ming interpolations is an early 20th century reconstruction based on several manuscripts. Atwood, “Shuofu,” 4–5; Tao Zongyi, Shuo fu, ed. Zhang Zongxiang 張宗祥 (Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu yinshuguan, 1927).

\(^{93}\) Zhong, Jinlouzi yanjiu, 39.
a poetic exposition he talked about dreaming of his intestines, when Cao Zhi wrote his prose there was the discussion of his upset stomach." In the recompiled Jinlouzi, this passage is part of a much longer anecdote:

Yan Hui aspired to be like Shun, this is the reason why he perished early. Jia Yi was fond of study, therefore he was brought to a quick death. When Yang Xiong composed a fu he discussed dreaming of his intestines, when Cao Zhi wrote his prose there was the discussion of his upset stomach. “Life has a limit. Knowledge has no limit. To use a limited life to pursue limitless knowledge…” I would nurture my life, nurture my spirit, and “capture the unicorn” [i.e. bring his endeavor to a conclusion] with the construction of my “golden tower.”

Not only is the Shuo fu version much shorter, this truncation eliminates everything about the anecdote that connects it to the broader context of Jinlouzi, both in terms of form and content. Like other Jinlouzi anecdotes, it is more than just a transcription of a portion of an earlier text, weaving together multiple types of allusion, citation, and unique commentary. Each of the four examples provided has an earlier precedent, and these examples draw from both in classical texts and from more recent documents. As is common in the text, these passages are abbreviated and condensed into two “couplets” with regular line-length, resulting in four brief lines that provide examples that reach from the Springs and Autumns to the Warring States. These condensed

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94 Tao Zongyi, Shuo fu, 23.36.

95 JLZ, 857.

96 As glossed in Xu Yimin’s notes, Yan Hui’s early death is addressed, for instance, in his Shi ji biography, in SJ, 67.2188. His admiration for Shun is discussed in Wang Su 王肅 (195–256), ed., Kongzi jiayu 孔子家語, Xinbian zhuzi jicheng 新編諸子集成 ed (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1991), 5.45. Jia Yi’s early death is recorded in SJ, 84.2503. Yang Xiong and Cao Zhi’s maladies are addressed in an excerpt from Huan Tan’s 桓譚 (23 BCE–56 CE) Xin lun 新論 (New
allusions are followed by an unannounced citation of *Zhuangzi*, marked in the above passage with quotation marks, that links them together through a common theme. But the quotation of *Zhuangzi* trails off before reaching its conclusion, presuming readers will themselves be erudite enough to finish the thought, that the use of a limited life to pursue limitless knowledge, is “perilous, and if with this in mind we still pursue knowledge, then we are already in peril” 以有涯隨無涯，殆已，已而為知者，殆而已矣.⁹⁷ All of this becomes a preamble to the concluding comment, which returns yet again to the composition of *Jinlouzi* itself. Here, the text is presented as its compiler’s compromise, its modest contents evidence of a lifetime wherein scholarly ambition is balanced with proper attention to the nourishment of life and spirit. The excised portions of this anecdote anticipate the argument that *Jinlouzi* is sprawling and unfocused, and make a case that it be considered an example of cautious erudition rather than unbounded, dangerous eclecticism.

Without this additional text, though, *Jinlouzi* appears to be just that: An unfocused collection of random textual snippets, with no adherence to patterns or structure to give it coherence and limit its scope. In *Shuo fu* each *Jinlouzi* anecdote is removed from its original position within a specific, topic-based chapter of the text, and combined together as a representation of the text as a whole. The uniformity afforded by this truncation and rearrangement makes it possible to incorporate *Jinlouzi* within the broader structure of the text that now contains it, a single specimen of uniform characteristics to be placed alongside others of

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⁹⁷ The borrowed passage opens *Zhuangzi*’s “Yang sheng zhu” 養生主 chapter, in Chen Guling 陳鼓應, ed. *Zhuangzi jinzhujinyin* 莊子今注今譯 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 94.
its type. Just as Jinlouzi edits and rearranges its own contents to make them conform to its own structure, the texts that cite Jinlouzi reshape it in their own image. The result is a version of the textual record in miniature, which provides its own subtle argument about the potential for the contents of all of the texts it contains to be related to one another.

This is even more pronounced in Wuchao xiaoshuo 五朝小說 (Minor talk from five dynasties), an obscure Ming anthology that shares much in common with Shuo fu. Because of this redundancy, as well as both it and Shuo fu’s limited utility for the reconstruction of lost texts, Wuchao xiaoshuo has largely been forgotten, but its odd, perhaps even misguided treatment of Jinlouzi offers a unique window into the reception of the text in later periods.98 Wu chao xiaoshuo, as its title suggests, divides its contents temporally into five dynastic periods: Wei, Jin, Tang, Song, and Ming. This is the first of the text’s many idiosyncrasies. The section devoted to the Wei and Jin dynasties (Wei Jin xiaoshuo 魏晉小說) in fact contains excerpts from texts dating from the Han through Southern Liang dynasties, Jinlouzi included. Likewise, the

98 Because of its obscurity, the history of Wu chao xiaoshuo remains somewhat mysterious. Numerous Ming editions of the text are extant, and some of them claim Feng Menglong as their compiler, but this attribution is generally considered spurious. A later edition of the text takes a new title, Wuchao xiaoshuo daguan 五朝小說大觀, but its contents are largely unchanged. It is generally believed that Wuchao xiaoshuo was printed using some of the same blocks used for an earlier edition of Shuo fu, but Chen Yizhong notes evidence that suggests Wu chao xiaoshuo may have existed prior to the edition of Shuo fu with which it is most similar. For the history of this text and its relationship to Shuo fu, see Dudbridge, “Shuo fu blocks,” 79–82, and Cheng Yizhong 程毅中, “Wuchao xiaoshuo yu Shuo fu” 《五朝小說》與《說郛》, Wen shi 47 (1999): 259–66.

For this study, I consulted the edition of Wu chao xiaoshuo held by the National Central Library in Taipei, which is dated to the late Ming. This edition of the text bears the (likely spurious) Feng Menglong attribution. Chen Yizhong’s study of Wuchao xiaoshuo and Shuo fu focuses on the Tang and Song portions of the text. I have confirmed that the sections of Wuchao xiaoshuo and Shuo fu on Jinlouzi are identical, but the arrangement of the text that contains them are different; Jinlouzi excerpts appear alongside those from different titles in each collection, and only Wuchao xiaoshuo features the arrangement per textual type as discussed below. Further study of these two texts is necessary to date the text, as this additional evidence does not confirm or reject Chen Yizhong’s hypothesis.
section on the Song dynasty also includes the occasional Yuan text. This anachronism is not likely to be the result of simple ignorance, as the entries for each individual text clearly state each text’s dynasty of origin. The contents of the *Wei Jin xiaoshuo* are further divided into a set of ten subcategories. 99 *Jinlouzi* is found among the “Miscellaneous treatises” (“Zazhi jia” 雜志家), where it is joined by an odd assortment of other texts, including the *Xiuzhong ji* 袖中記 of Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) and Tao Hongjing’s 陶宏景 (451–536) *Daojian lu* 刀劍錄. The appearance of *Jinlouzi* in this text gives it a position in the developing narrative of the origins of *xiaoshuo* as a literary genre. 100 Works like *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*, *Jinlouzi*’s self-identified predecessors and “Miscellaneous” compatriots, are not included in this anthology. But while other texts identified as *xiaoshuo* of the “Wei Jin” period are given more specific subgenres, the complexity of *Jinlouzi* forces it to remain inscrutably “Miscellaneous,” with only the vague qualifier “zhi” 志 (treatise) to distinguish it from the *Wu chao xiaoshuo*’s own “Miscellaneous Accounts” subcategory, or from its typical identity as a “Miscellaneous” Masters text.

Many of the problems introduced by its citation in other anthologies and *leishu* are resolved through its relatively thorough representation in *Yongle dadian*, but it is clear that even more have been introduced in its subsequent recompilation. These cases may indeed raise

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100 For a discussion of the Ming transformation of *xiaoshuo*, see Laura Hua Wu, “From *Xiaoshuo* to Fiction: Hu Yinglin’s Genre Study of *Xiaoshuo*” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55.2 (December 1995): 339–71. There is some overlap among subcategories of *xiaoshuo* proposed by Hu Yinglin and those used in *Wu chao xiaoshuo*, an issue which perhaps warrants further consideration.
questions about the integrity and authenticity of the recompiled *Jinlouzi*. Rather than interpret
these consequences of the transmission process as evidence with which to discredit the text
totally and hence ignore it, it is more constructive to consider how the traditions of textual
preservation and reorganization that produced these consequences are themselves relatable to the
particular approach to textual compilation on display in *Jinlouzi*. *Jinlouzi* is built largely from
pieces of preexisting texts, a process that preserves such fragments for later readers, while at the
same time indelibly altering their significance by disassociating them from their preexisting
contexts and rearranging them according to the text’s own new organizational parameters. The
transmission process that *Jinlouzi* was then subjected to was also one of dissolution and
reconstitution, so much so that it is at times difficult to distinguish its consequences from
features of the text in its original form.

These textual fluctuations are as important to the identity of *Jinlouzi* as anything that can
be gleaned from reading the text in relation to the life of its attributed compiler, even as they
redirect attention away from Xiao Yi as an individual author, to the role played by those living
both before and after Xiao Yi in the formation of the text as we know it today. Were the text to
have been both comprised entirely of original material and transmitted as a discrete whole rather
than as a flurry of later citations in a host of other compiled texts, it would be less difficult to
disentangle the text from the web of other works in which it is suspended. But unfettered
transmission processes like this are quite rare among early medieval texts. It is not possible to
divorce *Jinlouzi* from the compilation and categorization endeavors that give the text its
structure, and the same is true for many other texts composed with the same approach to
compilation. Moreover, these approaches to compilation must be considered alongside the
material fragility of books in both Xiao Yi’s time and beyond. The constant appearance of new
composite works in the textual record is matched by the equally constant disappearance of others, whether destroyed to catastrophe, made obsolete by new editions and collections, or simply abandoned as a result of fading interest. It is ironic, then, how profoundly this legacy of textual loss and recovery resonates with the historical memory of Xiao Yi as paradoxical collector and destroyer of books.

4.4 Conclusion: Looking at a Golden Tower through a Maple Window

A final anecdote, with its own confounding history of transmission and recovery, crafts a multi-generational narrative of textual loss and reconstruction through a sequence of stories wrapped around an alleged Jinlouzi anecdote, included in the Southern Song biji text Feng chuang xiao du 楓窗小牘 (Minor notes from the maple window). The resulting narrative is filled with coincidences that playfully strain belief, but as they do so, they provide an excellent encapsulation of the questions a text like Jinlouzi forces us to ask about the nature of the textual record, and its relationship to the curious patterns on display in the process that has conveyed the text to the present. The anecdote appears in the received Jinlouzi as follows:

When Wang Zhongxuan [aka Wang Can 王粲, 177–217] was in Jingzhou, he drafted a book of several chapters. Jingzhou was defeated, and the book was completely burned up. Today only one of its chapters remains, and all knowledgeable gentlemen value it. If you only see a strand of a tiger’s fur, you will not know of its stripes.

王仲宣昔在荊州，著書數十篇。荊州壞，盡焚其書，今存者一篇，知名之士咸重之。見虎一毛，不知其斑。

101 Both the dating and authorship of this text are inconclusive, with each edition of the text bearing a different pseudonymous attribution. A note at the beginning of the Congshu jicheng edition specifies that the version found in the Ming collectanea Tang Song congshu 唐宋叢書 is the source of the attribution to the otherwise obscure Yuan Jiong. Yuan Jiong 袁褧, Feng chuang xiao du 楓窗小牘, Congshu jicheng chu bian 叢書集成初編 edition (Changsha: Changsha shangwu, 1939), 1.

102 JLZ, 1293–94.
According to a note appended to both major editions of the recompiled text, *Siku quanshu* and *Zhi bu zu zhai* edition, the materials from which *Jinlouzi* was recompiled only included the last eight characters of the anecdote—the remark about the tiger’s fur. The preceding anecdote about Wang Can’s collection is supplied only from a *Jinlouzi* citation in *Taiping yulan*, and its inclusion in *Feng chuang xiao du*. Setting aside the unanswerable question of whether this implies that the archival edition of *Jinlouzi* that is the subject of the *Feng chuang xiao du* anecdote was the exact same copy cited by the *Taiping yulan* editors, this is at the very least a case in which *Yongle dadian’s* *Jinlouzi* must be supplemented with material from additional texts.\(^{103}\) *Jinlouzi*’s comment about tigers and their stripes is itself a single strand of a tiger’s fur, incapable of representing the whole on its own.

The treatment of this piece in the *Feng chuang xiao du* compounds this irony by surrounding this brief passage with several layers of additional narratives:

I once happened to see the inner archive copy of *Jinlouzi*, which had an appended poem in the hand of Last Ruler Li [of the Later Tang]. It read:

“Emperor Yuan of the Liang wrote, ‘When Wang Zhongxuan was in Jingzhou, he drafted a book of several chapters. Jingzhou was defeated, and the book was completely burned up. Today only one of its chapters remains, and all knowledgeable gentlemen value it. If you only see a strand of a tiger’s fur, you will not know of its stripes.’

Later, the Western Wei smashed Jiangling, and the Emperor too burned all books, saying ‘The ways of _wen_ and _wu_ shall end tonight.’ Why indeed was it that the tale of Jingzhou’s fall and of the immolation of the books, one after another, each followed the same pattern? May this poem express my sorrow:

Wound up around ten thousand slim spokes with red silk,

Wang Can’s writing was still burned up in flames.

It is not as though the Ancestral Dragon left anything behind,\(^{104}\)

So how may relayed passages ever reach the present?”

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\(^{103}\) All four of the named individuals who participated in *Taiping yulan*’s compilation during the early Song dynasty had earlier served under the Southern Tang. See Johannes Kurz, “The Compilation and Publication of the *Taiping yulan* and *Cefu yuangui*,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 1 (2007): 51.

\(^{104}\) Here “ancestral dragon” (_zu long_ 祖龍) is an epithet for Qin Shihuang.
The scrolls of the text were all copied on Xue Tao paper, only “The present” (jin chao 今朝) was misprinted as “Jin Dynasty” (jin chao 金朝). Emperor Huizong was angered by this, and used a brush to strike it away. Later, just as foretold, the text indeed reached the Jin dynasty.

余嘗見內庫書《金樓子》有李後主手題曰：梁孝元謂王仲宣昔在荊州著書數十篇，荊州壞，盡焚其書。今有者一篇，知名之士鹹重之。見虎一毛，不知其斑。後西魏破江陵，帝亦盡焚其書，曰「文武之道，盡今夜矣。」何荊州壞、焚書二語，先後一轍也。詩以概之曰：牙籜萬軸裹紅綃，王粲書同付火燒。不是祖龍留面目，遺篇那得到今朝。書卷皆薛濤紙所抄，惟「今朝」字誤作「金朝。」徽廟惡之，以筆抹去，後書竟如讖入金也。105

Here Xiao Yi’s comment about the state of Wang Can’s manuscript becomes the basis for a lamentation on the damages incurred to the textual record in the turmoil of a regime’s collapse. The preface to the piece directly acknowledges the cruel irony that Xiao Yi, though sensitive to the devastating consequences of book burning, would himself be responsible for the immolation of countless other books. Li Yu’s poem addresses these patterns of loss with subtle complexity. The poem ponders not simply what is lost in such catastrophes, but the fact that, while they occur regularly enough to feel inevitable, fragments of text will somehow remain in their wake. From Qin Shihuang’s burning of the books, to the loss of Wang Can’s manuscript, to Xiao Yi’s own destruction of the imperial library, what is truly profound about this devastating history of loss is that we are left with just enough strands of tiger fur to provoke endless speculation about the patterns to which they must have once belonged.

Emperor Huizong’s reaction to this passage, while not as reflective as that of Li Yu, is equally emotional. It introduces a new element to this multi-generational discussion of textual transformation: Not only are texts destroyed or spared according to chance, they are also subject to constant reinvention through scribal error and even misinterpretation. The mistake that angers

105 Yuan Jiong, Feng chuang xiao du, 8–9.
Huizong is perfectly innocent, a transposition of one character for another with the same pronunciation. But this scribal error opens up a new interpretive path, which leads from the history of textual loss and preservation into its future. The anecdote does not specify whether Huizong’s anger stems from the portentous significance of the mistake, or simply because it is a blemish on an important and valuable edition of the text. Indeed, unlike the emotional testimony of Li Yu, which is presented as having been authored in his own hand as an appended comment, Huizong’s anger is supplied by the anecdote’s outermost narrator, the last reader of this edition of Jinlouzi and the compiler of Feng chuang xiao du. The text, as presented in the anecdote, provides only Huizong’s correction. Even if Huizong was aware of the significance of the mistake, his attempted correction fails to erase or even conceal this accidental prophecy, instead lending the anecdote an added layer of pathos, securing Huizong’s place in its lineage of doomed rulers.

Like all of the texts that cite Jinlouzi, and like Jinlouzi itself, this piece transforms the context of its received contents in order to give them new significance, and to ensure that they adhere to the patterns and standards of their new textual home. Feng chuang xiao du is known primarily for offering an insider’s perspective on the downfall of the Southern Song. Here, a much older rumination on dynastic collapse is made to participate in that conversation through the discovery of a heavily annotated text. This citation of Jinlouzi differs from its uses in various leishu and anthologies in that it actually serves to enhance the text’s connection to its purported author. It does so by locating a Jinlouzi passage that fortuitously brings to mind to the historical catastrophe with which Xiao Yi would come to be most closely associated, creating a bond between Jinlouzi and Xiao Yi’s historical legacy that could not possibly have manifested within the text itself. Though ostensibly historiographic, it is difficult to read through these nested
anecdotes without experiencing a disorienting sense of mistrust. The anecdote reminds us of the inevitability of textual loss and distortion over time, while simultaneously using that imperfect textual record to create a narrative of extreme coincidence and serendipity. How is it possible to both accept the anecdote’s theme of the randomness of textual loss, while at the same time accepting that these exact bits of texts, which fit together perfectly in service of creating this multi-generational narrative, were among those lucky enough to have survived the very process they describe? In other words, this anecdote offers a perfect simulation of what it is like to read *Jinlouzi*, a text suspended in an impossible balance between its compiler acting as author, and subsequent generations of compilers exerting their own authority over the text.

*Jinlouzi* is more than a catalogue of excerpts from other sources. These excerpts are modified meaningful ways, transformed into new pieces that are different from their predecessors. It is not necessary to insist that the hands responsible for these modifications as those of Xiao Yi—neither the historical Xiao Yi nor the caricature of him that survives in official historiography—for there is no evidence to prove that the *Jinlouzi* versions of these anecdotes were unique to *Jinlouzi*. Many could just as easily have been excerpted verbatim, from intermediary textual sources now lost to us. Moreover, the transmission process of *Jinlouzi* was long and messy. As with other early medieval texts, *Jinlouzi* remains subject to the transformative process of textual transmission. Even if the goal was only to make the *Jinlouzi* that exists in the present more like the *Jinlouzi* that should have always existed, the alteration of the text continued as it was reproduced, edited, and recompiled. Though we may accept the *Jinlouzi*’s assertion that it, unlike *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*, was initially put together without the help of hired hands or enlisted men, acknowledgement of the complexity of its transmission process requires us to concede that the text as we read it today is the product of
innumerable collaborators and interlopers. As unique and deliberate as the finished product appears, this form would not have been possible without the intervention of many other contributors: Those who produced the library of anecdotes from which Jinlouzi draws, those who enabled such anecdotes to circulate throughout known and unknown intermediary texts, and those responsible for the transmission and reconstitution of Jinlouzi in subsequent eras. The dissolution, rediscovery, and reinvention of the text is another part of the story Jinlouzi tells, in which borrowed bricks may be used to build elaborate and unique new towers, while at the same time retaining the traces of their earlier uses.