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## The Moment of Dying: Representations in Liu Xiang's Anthologies *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*

Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams  
And our desires.

Wallace Stephens

Death is a constant of life, and this constancy was what Yang Zhu 楊朱 (5th c. BCE) referred to when he reportedly said, “That in which the myriad things differ is life; that in which they are alike is death” 萬物所異者生也, 所同者死也.<sup>1</sup> But in fact not all deaths are equal. David Schaberg has argued that history proper – history as a specific kind of writing about the past as the past, distinguished from chronicles and other records – in China dates to around 100 BCE and the work of historiographer Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE).<sup>2</sup> In his famous letter, “Bao Ren An shu” 報任安書, Sima Qian expressed a distinctly historical outlook on dying, writing, “Each person certainly has one death, but some are weightier than Mt. Tai and some are lighter than a goose feather” 人固有一死, 或重於太山, 或輕於鴻毛.<sup>3</sup> Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) – Western Han (202 BCE–CE 8) librarian, bibliographer, editor – shared this insight, but my examination of his work shows that he reached a conclusion different from Sima Qian’s.

I AM grateful to Miranda Brown, Howard L. Goodman, and the anonymous readers for their helpful comments on this article. In writing, I was inspired and influenced by Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, transl. Helen Weaver (1981; rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1981). I am indebted to Stephen Durrant for giving me a copy of Ariès’ book, and for much instructive conversation about Chinese thanatology.

<sup>1</sup> The quotation attributed to Yang Zhu is preserved in *Liezi* 列子, *Sbby*, 7.3a (“Yang Zhu” 楊朱).

<sup>2</sup> David Schaberg, “Platitude and Persona: *Junzi* Comments in *Zuozhuan* and Beyond,” in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, Achim Mittag, and Jörn Rüsen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 177.

<sup>3</sup> Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), ed., *Wen xuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 41.1860; cf. the slightly different version in Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 62.2732.

The present article considers representations of death in two of Liu Xiang's anthologies, *Xin xu* 新序 and *Shuo yuan* 說苑.<sup>4</sup> These works implicitly enjoin the reader to treat death as a final chance to influence the world of the future – to achieve fame and ensure that one's name persists – thus reflecting historical consciousness at the individual level. Liu Xiang's approach contrasts both with early Chinese conceptions that posited supernatural potency from beyond the grave, and with Sima Qian's approach to history.

I begin my discussion with a brief consideration of why it is legitimate and worthwhile to argue on the basis of depictions from *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*, and to treat them as representing Liu Xiang's ideas. I then show that Liu Xiang depicts dying as a moment possessing a special potential to reflect a person's intrinsic nature, and to affect the world and win or rehabilitate a reputation that will carry into the future. The second part of the paper will look at how these things played out in stories about the conflict between loyalty to the ruler and duty to one's lineage, in which Liu Xiang puts the greater weight on familial responsibility.

#### REPRESENTATIONS, NOT RECORDS

This article treats representations of dying, not historical events and sources. Thus disruptions in narrative flow or connection of affairs, things like an ellipsis of time and/or event between the last words of the one who dies and actual death, result in an effect entirely different from that produced by a strictly historical analysis. A historical investigation of the events I look at would need to consider questions such as how someone's last words are supposed to have come to be known. Here, I will consider only how they function as portrayals.

My choice also connects to the broader question of representation in contrast to record. One of the sometimes troubling aspects of

<sup>4</sup> For the dating of Liu Xiang's birth, death, and other life events, I follow Qian Mu's 錢穆 (1895–1990) "Liu Xiang Xin fuzi nianpu" 劉向歆父子年譜, in *Lianghan jingxue jinguwen pingyi* 兩漢經學今古文平議 (Kowloon: Xinya yanjiusuo, 1958), 1–54. I use the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition of *Xin xu* as my primary text, while referring to the copious annotations and text critical notes in Shi Guangying 石光瑛, *Xin xu jiaoshi* 新序校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001). For *Shuo yuan*, I take the *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 edition as my text, and have referred to Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, *Shuo yuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987); and Zhao Shanyi 趙善詒, *Shuo yuan shuzheng* 說苑疏證 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1985). I have also consulted modern Chinese translations of these two works, particularly Lu Yuanjun 盧元駿, *Shuo yuan jin zhu jin yi* 說苑今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1977); and Li Huanian 李華年, *Xin xu quanyi* 新序全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1994). I will not make further specific reference to these works except in those cases where the analysis draws directly from those authors' views.

early Chinese sources, for example *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, is the inordinate accuracy of recorded prophecies. Predictions of various sorts come true far more often than would be expected, and this affects how these records are understood.<sup>5</sup> A historical consideration of events related in Liu Xiang's anthologies would require skepticism about how a given man could have known of his impending death. Such foreknowledge is not entirely impossible. Long sickness or a deteriorating physical condition, to say nothing of suicide or a willing encounter with mortal danger, could all give some hint of what was to come. But the certainty encountered in early texts raises questions about those accounts as history. Furthermore, there are good reasons to doubt the accuracy of depictions of private discussions and the like, which happened out of the public eye.

I will focus on representations of events qua representations rather than delving into their historicity, and concentrate on what these stories say about Liu Xiang's conceptions of death; I do not consider the factuality of the tales. I will interpret words and actions as resulting from decisions made by the text's editor/creator, rather than potentially (or certainly) dubious historical recording.

#### LIU XIANG, *XIN XU*, AND *SHUO YUAN*

Few intellectuals anywhere can match Liu Xiang for enduring influence. Though often criticized, he is credited with (and/or blamed for) establishing the forms for many of the most famous works of early Chinese literature, starting with *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策.<sup>6</sup> As cataloguer and librarian, he has been called the founder of the Chinese bibliographical tradition. His son Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23) built on Xiang's "Bie lu" 別錄 to make "Qi lue" 七略, which Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) in turn drew upon when compiling the *Han shu* 漢書 "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志, the earliest extant bibliography in China.<sup>7</sup> Liu Xiang thus played a pivotal role as an early mediator of classical culture, and this alone makes his anthologies worthy of attention.

<sup>5</sup> David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 321.

<sup>6</sup> See Tsuen-hsuen Tsien, "Chan kuo ts'e," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 1–11.

<sup>7</sup> See discussions in Cao Mufan 曹慕樊, *Muluxue gangyao* 目錄學綱要 (Chongqing: Xi'an shifan daxue chubanshe, 1988), 19–28, and Wang Zhongmin 王重民, "Lun 'Qi lue' zai woguo muluxue shi shang de chengjiu he yingxiang" 論“七略”在我國目錄學史上的成就和影響, in *Muluxue lunwen xuan* 目錄學論文選, ed. Li Wanjian 李萬健 and Lai Maosheng 賴茂生 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985), 257–78.

*Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* can be dated with some certainty, unlike many earlier texts – including those the two works draw from. Liu Xiang did not create most of the content of *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*: they are collections of material he gathered from other, disparate and unorganized, sources, particularly those held in the imperial collection. In some cases, Liu Xiang adds his own words to indicate his interpretation or judgment, and *Shuo yuan* contains brief discursive texts that appear to originate with him.<sup>8</sup> But *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* are essentially anthologies.

The basic idea of an anthology is simple enough. Anne Ferry, scholar of the anthology in English, defines:

What is recognizable as an anthology is an assemblage of pieces (usually short): written by more than one or two authors; gathered and chosen to be together in a book by someone who did not write what it contains, or not all; arranged and presented by the compiler according to any number of principles except single authorship, which the nature of the contents rules out.

Ferry also makes the broader point that an anthology is a work that reflects its compiler's ideas; its compilation is a creative endeavor, even when some or all of the building blocks are of others' making.<sup>9</sup> In the context of early Chinese texts specifically, Wang Bo 王博 has noted that selecting and ordering textual units manifests the editor's understanding of and ideas about the text.<sup>10</sup> Because of the nature of anthologies, we can be certain that, to a degree at least, these stories represent ideas that Liu Xiang either agreed with or accepted as instructive, regardless of factuality. Study of these examples permits study of how one well-known, Western Han intellectual understood – or at least represented – dying.

<sup>8</sup> This and the following discussion of the origins and dating of *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* draw from Du Jiaqi 杜家祁, "Liu Xiang bianxie 'Xin xu,' 'Shuo yuan' yanjiu" 劉向編寫 "新序," "說苑"研究 (Ph.D. diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999). Most critics seem to have accepted that Liu Xiang assembled these books and concentrate on the fact that he should not receive credit for actually creating (the vast majority of) the material therein; see the discussion in Zhang Xincheng 張心澂, *Weishu tongkao* 偽書通考 (1939; Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1970), 637–39. For a study that considers external parallels to the *Xin xu* narratives, see Kerstin Storm, "Variationen eines altchinesischen Frauenlebens: Anekdotisches Erzählen im *Xin xu*," in *Modi des Erzählens in nicht-abendländischen Texten*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2009), 127–96.

<sup>9</sup> See Anne Ferry, *Tradition and the Individual Poem: An Inquiry into Anthologies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), quotation p. 31; Du, "Liu Xiang bianxie," makes a similar argument with reference to *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* specifically.

<sup>10</sup> Wang Bo, "Guodian zhujian 'Ziyi' yanjiu" 郭店竹簡 "緇衣" 研究, in *Jianbo sixiang: wenxian lunji* 簡帛思想: 文獻論集 (Taipei: Taiwan guji chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 11–12 and passim.

As *Han shu* has it, Liu Xiang was disturbed by what he perceived as the deterioration of customs, mores, and ritual practice. He believed that the best way to change the realm was to influence the emperor, and he created three anthologies for this purpose. Probably the best known of these is *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, although the degree to which the transmitted text bearing this title corresponds to the *Lienü zhuan* that Liu Xiang assembled is uncertain.<sup>11</sup> *Lienü zhuan* collects stories of women to serve as examples, good and bad; despite its feminine focus, the text was intended first for the emperor.<sup>12</sup> Discussion here treats two other anthologies Liu Xiang assembled, *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*.<sup>13</sup> But like *Lienü zhuan* these circulated widely, and Liu Xiang designed them for a wider audience, not the sovereign alone.

Many of the most important works in Chinese literature have been anthologies. This started at the very beginning, with *Shijing* 詩經, which gathers a variety of poetical materials into a single work, even if the traditional account of an anthology of songs collected from the politics of pre-imperial China and edited by Confucius cannot be wholly accurate.<sup>14</sup> The key factor for any anthology is selection and assembly, which is exactly what Liu Xiang did: he chose his materials and ordered them as he saw fit for presentation to the emperor.<sup>15</sup> Liu Xiang wrote in the preface to *Shuo yuan* that he had taken out all material that was,

<sup>11</sup> On the textual history of *Lienü zhuan*, see Bret Hinsch, “The Textual History of Liu Xiang’s *Lienüzhuan*,” *MS* 52 (2004): 95–112; see also Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 105–12.

<sup>12</sup> *Han shu*, 36.1957–58. Liu Xiang’s exact role in creating *Lienü zhuan* is a longstanding question; Bret Hinsch argues that Liu Xiang created much of its content; see Hinsch, “The Composition of *Lienüzhuan*: Was Liu Xiang Author or Editor?” *AM* (third series) 20.1 (2007): 1–23. For a literary study of the phenomenon of gender roles and how those in early China did not adhere to commonplace modern conceptions, see Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *Han shu*, 36.1958.

<sup>14</sup> Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BC), *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 47.1936–37; see discussion in François Martin, “Les anthologies dans la Chine antique et médiévale: de la genèse au déploiement,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 25 (2003): 13–19; and Joseph R. Allen, “Postface: A Literary History of the *Shi jing*,” in *The Book of Songs*, translated by Arthur Waley, edited and with additional translations by Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 336–83; on anthologies in China more generally, see David R. Knechtges, “Culling the Weeds and Selecting Prime Blossoms: The Anthology in Early Medieval China,” in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge: The Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 200–41.

<sup>15</sup> *Han shu*, 36.1958 says, “When it came to selecting from records and past events, he wrote the *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*, fifty sections in all, and submitted them [to the throne]” 及采傳記行事, 著新序、說苑凡五十篇, 奏之。

“shallow and not in accord with the principles of duty” 淺薄不中義理, and put it in a separate work, which is not extant.<sup>16</sup> The processes of creation and compilation by which Liu Xiang did his work present interesting and complex questions for research, as Bret Hinsch has demonstrated in his studies of *Lienü zhuan*.<sup>17</sup> Following Ferry’s approach, I will treat the anthologies as works of Liu Xiang.

There is a clear affinity between *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*. This is apparent from an examination of the form, contents, and interests of the two works, and they are often taken together as representing Liu Xiang’s thought.<sup>18</sup> In his preface to *Shuo yuan*, Liu Xiang says he had, “Gotten rid of what was repeated in *Xin xu*” 除去與新序複重者, indicating *Xin xu* existed before *Shuo yuan*.<sup>19</sup> Although some readers have pointed to certain stories apparently duplicated in *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*, Du Jiaqi 杜家祁 has shown that most of these are actually different versions of a given tale – the kind of thing a bibliographer and librarian might well value and preserve. According to Du, there is only one actual repetition.<sup>20</sup>

A Song edition of *Xin xu* records that the text was submitted to the throne in 24 BCE, and Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296) repeats this dating.<sup>21</sup> Ma Zong 馬總 (ob. 823), referring to a lost preface to *Xin xu*, says that Liu Xiang submitted *Xin xu* to the throne in 25 BCE.<sup>22</sup> It is difficult to evaluate these datings conclusively. The modern commentator Shi Guangying 石光瑛 speculates that 25 BCE was the first time *Xin xu* was shown to the emperor, and 24 BCE was the date it of its formal submission to the throne.<sup>23</sup> Whatever its cause, the discrepancy is small, and a general time period of 25–24 BCE for the completion of *Xin xu* seems sure. The preface to *Shuo yuan* dates its submission to 17 BCE, some seven years after *Xin xu*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The preface (also discussed below) is in Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), “Quan Han wen” 全漢文, in *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 37.8b [334].

<sup>17</sup> Hinsch, “Composition of *Lienüzhuan*”; and Hinsch, “Textual History of Liu Xiang’s *Lienüzhuan*”; for an example study, see Du, “Liu Xiang bianxie.”

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Liang Han sixiangshi* 兩漢思想史 (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng shuju, 1979), 3:99.

<sup>19</sup> Yan, “Quan Han wen,” 37.8b [334].

<sup>20</sup> Du, “Liu Xiang bianxie,” 309.

<sup>21</sup> See Shi, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 1.1, which says that this dating is repeated at the head of each *juan* but left out of later editions; see also Wang Yinglin, *Han Yiwu zhi kaozheng* 漢藝文志考證, *Skqs*, 5.15a-b [55].

<sup>22</sup> Ma Zong, *Yi lin* 意林, *Sbby*, 3.5a.

<sup>23</sup> Shi, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 1.1.

<sup>24</sup> In Yan, “Quan Han wen,” 37.8b [334].

THE DYING AND THE DEAD IN *XIN XU* AND *SHUO YUAN*

*Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* contain numerous accounts of death and dying. Despite the elision of violence typical of early Chinese literature, there is little hesitation in these anthologies about portraying the fact of dying.<sup>25</sup>

The portrayals I look at here treat death as the defining moment of a life. The main actors involved are all men, mostly men who are otherwise little known and probably would have remained so but for the stories connected with their deaths. This is a major contrast with much historical writing in China (and elsewhere). Great men and women are usually remembered for what they did: a statesman like the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇, a general like Li Guang 李廣 (d. 119 BCE), or a polymath like Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE) is defined by what he achieved in life. The deaths of such people were often anticlimactic.<sup>26</sup> But for many of those whose stories Liu Xiang brought together, death was often the first chance for fame; for all those I discuss here, it was the last.

A concern with renown after death was common in early China. As Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82) wrote, “The ancients sought posthumous fame; the people of today seek fame in this generation” 古人求沒世之名, 今人求當世之名.<sup>27</sup> Confucius 孔子 (551–479 BCE) himself is supposed to have said, “A gentleman worries that when he leaves the world, his name shall not be proclaimed there” 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉.<sup>28</sup> *Laozi* 老子 asserts, “To die without being forgotten is [true] long life” 死而不忘者壽.<sup>29</sup> And Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. ca. 110 BCE) made winning such renown a part of filiality: “To have fame in later generations and so make your parents well-known is the greatest [form] of filial piety” 揚名於後世, 以顯父母, 此孝之大也.<sup>30</sup> This contrasts with the focus on physical longevity seen in many Han sources.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Liu Xiang’s ill-fated attempt

<sup>25</sup> On the “ellipsis of battle” in early Chinese poetry, see C.H. Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory: Seven Essays in Early Chinese Poetry* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> See *Shi ji*, 6.264; *Han shu*, 48.2264, 54.2449.

<sup>27</sup> See Huang Rucheng 黃汝成, *Ri zhi lu jishi* 日知錄集釋 (Taipei: Guotai wenhua shiye gongsi, 1980), 7.159.

<sup>28</sup> *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏, 15.7a [140]; this and other primary references to the Thirteen Classics are to Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), ed., *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Taipei: Yinwen yinshuguan, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> This is the Mawangdui 馬王堆 text of *Laozi* 33; see Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi jiao zhu* 帛書老子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 403–5; see also discussion of this text variant in Kenneth Edward Brashier, “Evoking the Ancestor: The Stele Hymn of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 C.E.)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1997), 20 and n. 50.

<sup>30</sup> *Han shu*, 62.2716

<sup>31</sup> See Ying-Shih Yü, “Life and Immortality in the Mind of Han China,” *HJAS* 25 (1964–65): 80–122.

at purveying recipes for creating gold and extending life, which almost cost him his life, contributed to his disinterest in such matters.<sup>32</sup>

But the major reason for the focus in *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* on concrete actions and fame in the mundane world was Liu Xiang's opinion concerning an important question in Han times: did the dead have consciousness. Liu Xiang's answer is negative (though he is not without his doubts), and he held no real supernatural hopes. Hence his approach contrasts with that of those Warring States thinkers who sought self-divination and the ability to affect the world by supernatural means after death.<sup>33</sup> Nor did he present the possibility of spirits that either traveled to a "tame place" elsewhere or lingered on earth to afflict the living.<sup>34</sup> Liu Xiang did not profess belief (or at least not wholeheartedly) in any sort of conscious afterlife. It follows that he would not give much weight to ideas about those who were able to achieve the power to affect the world after death because their descendants kept their memories alive and their spirits nourished.

Although ritual practice from high antiquity included sacrifice to the spirits of deceased ancestors, a marked agnosticism about the existence and/or nature of spirits was also evident from an early time.<sup>35</sup> The quintessential, if laconic, formulation of this mindset is the *Lunyu* 論語 description of Confucius, who, "Sacrificed [to ancestors] as if they were there, and sacrificed to spirits as if the spirits were there" 祭如在, 祭神如神在.<sup>36</sup>

Liu Xiang anthologizes an apocryphal exchange between Confucius and his disciple Zigong 子貢, which addresses the question of posthumous consciousness.<sup>37</sup> Zigong asked the master if the dead were conscious and Confucius replied,

<sup>32</sup> *Han shu*, 36.1928.

<sup>33</sup> See Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> This conception of the afterlife is described in Guolong Lai, "Death and the Otherworldly Journey in Early China as Seen through Tomb Texts, Travel Paraphernalia, and Road Rituals," *AM* (third series) 18.1 (2005): 12 and passim.

<sup>35</sup> See Lee Dian Rainey, "Life After Death: Some Early Confucian Views" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*, 3.7a [28]; translation after Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yi zhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 27. I follow Yang Bojun and the traditional commentaries to understand this as describing Confucius. E. Bruce and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 82, date this to ca. 342 BCE and render it as an exhortation.

<sup>37</sup> Zigong (also written 子贛) was the courtesy name of Duanmu Ci 端木賜 (this surname also written 端木; b. 520 BCE), one of Confucius' most prominent disciples. He has a biography in the *Shi ji* "Zhongni dizi liezhuan" 仲尼弟子列傳, 67.2195–201.

I should like to say that the dead have consciousness, but I fear that filial sons and obedient grandsons would disrupt their lives in sending off the dead. And I should like to say that they do not have consciousness, but I fear that unfilial sons and grandsons would abandon them unburied. You want to know if dead people are conscious or not? Wait 'til you're dead and you'll know for yourself – and it still won't be too late. 吾欲言死者有知也, 恐孝子順孫妨生以送死也。欲言無知, 恐不孝子孫棄不葬也。賜欲知死人有知將無知也? 死徐自知之, 猶未晚也。<sup>38</sup>

This answer is paradoxical, perhaps deliberately so. On the one hand, the figure of Confucius professes an unwillingness to say whether or not the dead are conscious. The expressed reasons have nothing to do with the dead and their state, and instead concentrate on the effects of the knowledge upon the living. But in closing the Sage says that Zigong would know it himself after death, which implies consciousness. Taken alone, this seeming contradiction might seem a witty but empty response to an unanswerable question.<sup>39</sup>

But a similar ambivalence toward the possibility that the dead have consciousness is reflected elsewhere in Liu Xiang's work, which suggests that Liu Xiang's opinion may have had a degree of uncertainty to it.<sup>40</sup> At the same, Liu insisted that whatever degree of supernatural belief one did have, it should not affect actions in the mortal sphere. In one of the brief texts written in his own voice and incorporated into *Shuo yuan*, he says that, "Those who trust ghosts and spirits botch their plans, and those who trust in [lucky or unlucky] days lose opportunities" 信鬼神者失謀, 信日者失時。<sup>41</sup>

None of the accounts of death in *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* touch upon any of the major Han conceptions of the afterlife.<sup>42</sup> Instead of asser-

<sup>38</sup> From "Bian wu" 辨物, *Shuo yuan*, 18.14b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 18.558. There is a parallel in the "Zhi si" 致思 chapter of *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語, *Sbby*, 2.5a.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han," in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 150–53, on Confucius as someone who did believe in supernatural beings, afterlife, etc. Confucius is often portrayed as demonstrating what seems to be wit; see discussion in Christoph Harbsmeier, "Confucius Ridens: Humor in the *Analects*," *HJAS* 50.1 (1990): 131–61.

<sup>40</sup> For example, in a memorial submitted in 16 BCE, Liu Xiang wrote,

If we suppose the dead have consciousness, then the opening (i.e., robbing) of people's tombs is surely more harmful [than making tombs not worth robbing]. And if [the dead] are without consciousness, then what's the use of a grand [burial]? 以死者為有知, 發人之墓, 其害多矣。若其無知, 又安用大。

See *Han shu*, 36.1956. Cf. also the story of the king of Wu in "Zheng jian" 正諫, *Shuo yuan*, 9.11b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 9.258, which expresses the same uncertainty.

<sup>41</sup> *Shuo yuan*, 20.1a; *Shuo yuan jiaozheng*, 20.511 ("Fan zhi" 反質).

<sup>42</sup> As identified by Michael Loewe, *Chinese Ideas of Life and Death: Faith, Myth and Reason*

tions about the hereafter, Liu Xiang presents examples of death that instruct the reader about how to die so as to win influence and fame on earth after dying. Later, in Eastern Han times, inscribed steles were a way for literati to ensure that the deceased's reputation – particularly a good reputation – would persist into the future.<sup>43</sup> In the absence of both a belief in supernatural life and memorial steles, Liu Xiang offers the moment of death as a way for the decedent to achieve the interrelated goals of achieving reputation and continuing to affect the world. This was a conception of mundane yet very potent influence after death, without regard to the consciousness or power of the dead or the existence of spirits.

Kenneth Brashier has identified Liu Xiang's son Liu Xin as influential in the Han-time development of the notion that ancestors are remembered not just for being ancestors, but for their merit (*gong* 功) and virtue (*de* 德) – that is, for their actions.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps Liu Xiang was the forerunner of this. At the very least, Liu Xiang's anthologies reflect a distinctly historical viewpoint, in that they focus not on dying in itself, but on future perceptions of it as past: Liu Xiang shows us dying as an event used to create memory.

## DEAD, BURIED, AND REMEMBERED

### *Yang Wangsun*

When there is expressed certainty about the question of posthumous consciousness in Liu Xiang's collections, it is that the dead do not have it. This is the case in the story of Yang Wangsun 楊王孫, anthologized in *Shuo yuan*.<sup>45</sup> Not only does Yang Wangsun argue against the spirits of the dead possessing awareness, he does so on the eve of his own passing. And Yang Wangsun makes his reputation with that speech – on the outer edge of life.

Almost nothing is known about Yang Wangsun. He has a biography in *Han shu*, but it is primarily a vehicle for the arguments about the afterlife and burial found in *Shuo yuan*.<sup>46</sup> Yang was an adherent of

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in the Han period (202 BC–AD 220) (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 27–28.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Laurent Asselin, *A Significant Season: Cai Yong (ca. 133–192) and His Contemporaries* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2010), 281–84; Miranda Brown, *The Politics of Mourning in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Brashier, “Evoking the Ancestor,” 40–43.

<sup>45</sup> “Fan zhi” 反質, *Shuo yuan*, 20.8b–9b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 20.613–14. According to *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記, *Skqs*, 3.2a, Wangsun was the courtesy name (*zi* 字) of Yang Gui 楊貴.

<sup>46</sup> *Han shu*, 67.2907–9.

Huang-Lao 黃老 thought who lived in the time of Emperor Wu 武帝 (Liu Che 劉徹, reg. 156–87 BCE), and was wealthy enough to take good care of himself.<sup>47</sup> When Yang Wangsun was sick and close to death, he ordered that his corpse was to be interred naked. This demand flew in the face of custom, and Yang's sons were torn. They considered ignoring the command, but hesitated to do so. Yet they could not bear to carry it out, so they sought the aid of their father's friend, the marquis of Qi 祁 (Shanxi), Zeng Tuo 曾它.<sup>48</sup>

The marquis tried to persuade Yang Wangsun to change his mind and accept burial according to common practice. In particular, Zeng invoked an agnostic position toward the consciousness of the dead, focusing on the possibility of consciousness after death. He offered that if the dead did have consciousness, then one who was buried naked would be exposed like an executed criminal, simply located below ground. He also mentioned the risk of meeting the ancestors in one's birthday suit.

Yang Wangsun rejected Zeng Tuo's admonishment with three primary arguments against contemporary funeral practice, refuting it on the basis of economy, the processes of death, and ancient precedent. Yang first avowed that his goal was to correct the funeral customs of the day, which he believed had grown away from the frugal ideals of the ancients. He asserts that the dead gain nothing from elaborate burials, then he goes a step beyond this. For Yang, rich funerary trappings were not just a waste, they actually impeded the processes of natural death, by which the soul departed the body and things returned to a state of nature. Yang goes on to argue that a rich burial obstructs the transformations that come after death. According to Yang, a rich burial would interrupt the return to true nature, effected through a separation of the form and spirit, and after which the body was left empty, to transform, in a process that included natural decomposition.<sup>49</sup> As Yang describes it, a dying person gives up the ghost, which goes to heaven and leaves

<sup>47</sup> Huang-Lao thought is discussed in Reinhard Emmerich, "Bemerkungen zu Huang und Lao in der frühen Han-Zeit: Erkenntnisse aus *Shiji* und *Hanshu*," *MS* 43 (1995): 53–140.

<sup>48</sup> The texts mention only the "marquis of Qi." Commenting on the biography, *Han shu*, 2907, Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) says that the marquis is Zeng Tuo, grandson and eventual successor of Zeng He 曾賀 (ob. 169 BCE), one of Han Gaozu's 漢高祖 (reg. 206–195 BCE) generals. According to the *Han shu* "Gao Hui Gaohou Wen gongchen biao" 高惠高后文功臣表, 16.564, Zeng He was enfeoffed as marquis in Qi, and his grandson Zeng Tuo acceded to the marquise in 151 BCE. In 133 BCE, Zeng Tuo lost the title as a result of a violation of ritual protocol.

<sup>49</sup> See also the discussion of burial and decomposition in Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 55–56.

the body behind to rot. There was no question of the ghost's consciousness, since it was no longer present. The body was just an empty shell, without spirit or knowledge, left to return to the earth. Thus there need be no concern for the corpse, its decoration or preservation.

Miranda Brown has shown that this indifference toward corpse preservation was normal in Han times. She suggests, "Perhaps for Han men, as for their distant forbears, the destruction of the body marked the final passage to eternity."<sup>50</sup> This fits precisely with what Yang Wangsun says. The idea of being buried without any covering whatsoever is another issue, and here Yang Wangsun seems to have been out of the ordinary.

At any rate, Yang next turned to a point that was utterly practical, albeit couched in moral phraseology: given that the dead are unconscious, the cost of an extravagant burial for an unknowing corpse was unconscionable. Yang claims that the ideal system he proposes was that used by the sages of old; he condemned contemporary practice: "I say that now people waste wealth on rich burials, but the dead do not know and it is useless for the living. What a mistake! It can be called doubly confused" 謂今費財而厚葬，死者不知，生者不得用，謬哉。可謂重惑矣。<sup>51</sup>

Yang Wangsun's argument combines economy with imitation of ancient models. This immediately calls to mind Mozi's 墨子 (Mo Di 墨翟; 480–390 BCE) moralistic teachings about frugal funerals, though such ideas were shared by members of various philosophical traditions in Han times.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the text *Mozi* describes the thrifty funerals of legendary sage kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹 in terms similar to those here.<sup>53</sup> Yang Wangsun says that these ancient practices were moral and reflected practical concerns: corpses should be buried so as to not contaminate water sources, and deep enough to prevent the smell of rot from escaping.<sup>54</sup> Anything else would only gild the lily.

The marquis caved in to these arguments, and Yang's wish for a naked burial was fulfilled. But if we take Yang Wangsun's assertions at face value, he failed in his professed purpose: he did not reform the

<sup>50</sup> Miranda Brown, "Did the Early Chinese Preserve Corpses? A Reconsideration of Elite Conceptions of Death," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4 (2002): 201–23; quotation page 218.

<sup>51</sup> *Shuo yuan*, 20.9b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 20.614.

<sup>52</sup> Mu-chou Poo, "Ideas Concerning Death and Burial in Pre-Han and Han China," *AM*, third series 3 (1990): 60–62.

<sup>53</sup> In the "Jie zang xia" chapter; see Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908), *Mozi jiangou* 墨子間詁 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 6.181–85.

<sup>54</sup> These, too, have parallel in the *Mozi*, which describes them as the burial practices of the sage kings; see "Jie yong zhong" 節用中, *Mozi jiangou*, 6.167–68.

world, and extravagant burials continued.<sup>55</sup> Yet by his acts at the time of death, Yang Wangsun secured his reputation. He became the subject of controversy, praised and criticized – *remembered* – long after he otherwise would have been forgotten.<sup>56</sup> In this way, we can see that Yang's deed was no failure. It may not have changed his generation, but it worked to win him fame. It allowed an otherwise unexceptional man to win renown after death, achieving the goal of a gentleman and the ultimate long life.

#### INFLUENCE AFTER DEATH

##### *King Gong of Chu*

Deathbed commands like Yang's feature in a number of narratives in *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*. Sometimes a ruler would issue commands to be carried out by his posterity, and so altering history and securing a good reputation for himself. The death of King Gong of Chu 楚共王 (personal name Shen 審, sometimes called Zhen 箴; reg. 590–560 BCE), recorded in *Xin xu*, illustrates this.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> This is shown in Han burial practices, including those in the time after Yang Wangsun, as described in Wang Zhongshu, *Han Civilization*, trans. K. C. Chang et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 175–231; and Michael Loewe, “State Funerals of the Han Empire,” *BMFEA* 71 (1999): 5–72.

<sup>56</sup> In the encomium at the end of Wang's *Han shu* biography, 67.2928, Ban Gu says, “Observing Yang Wangsun's purpose, [I think] he was worthier than the First Emperor by far” 觀揚王孫之志，賢於秦始皇遠矣。A favorable comparison to the oft-reviled First Emperor (Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, reg. 221–210 BCE) may seem a bit of a double-edged compliment, but the praise is real and there is no trace of sarcasm. In *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, Yang's example is evoked by Zhao Zi 趙咨 (2nd c.) in his last letter, where he says, “[Yang] Wangsun was buried naked ... [He] understood the pattern-lines of original nature and gave importance to a speedy transformation [after death]” 王孫裸葬 ... 達於性理，貴於速變; Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 39.1315. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648), *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 33.1003, records the final directive of Shi Bao 石苞 (ob. 272), in which Shi offers an apologia for Yang Wangsun's ritually incorrect burial request because of his noble intention to reform wayward customs. Ma Yongqing 馬永卿 (*jin-shi* 1109), *Lanzhenzi* 懶真子, *Skqs*, 1.6a [405], similarly says, “[Yang] Wangsun was buried naked. Although this is not the way of the sages, his intention was to correct lavish burials” 王孫裸葬，雖非聖人之道，然其意在於矯厚葬也。See also the mention of Yang in Wei Shou 魏收 (506–572), *Wei shu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 60.1349, where Cheng Jun 程駿 (414–485) invokes Yang Wangsun's example (though he will not follow it, except perhaps in general spirit). On the other hand, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) criticizes Yang Wangsun, and Ban Gu for his treatment of Yang, writing in *Shi tong* 史通,

Yang Wangsun was buried naked, contrary to the rites. He was a sanctimonious scrub, and looking at his whole life, there is no other matter [than his burial worth mentioning]. Yet [Ban Gu] ranks him with Zhu Yun 朱雲 (ca. 1st c. BCE) and puts him at the front of their biographical chapter. Is that not insulting? 楊王孫裸葬悖禮，狂狷之徒，考其一生更無他事而與朱雲同列，冠之傳首，不其穢歟。

See Pu Qilong 浦起龍 (1679–ca. 1762), *Shi tong tong shi* 史通通釋, *Sbby*, 7.2a.

<sup>57</sup> *Xin xu*, *Skqs*, 1.4a (“Za shi” 雜事); Shi GuangyingZ. *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 1.52–59. Versions of

The story begins with King Gong close to death, and beginning to criticize his past behavior by speaking of his relationship with two representative courtiers. First he praises his attendant Guan Su 筮蘇, who apparently had often reminded the recalcitrant king about the Way and duty. As is usually the case with such beneficial companions, the king often felt uneasy when with Guan Su and happier when out of his company. Yet, the king says, he had learned from Guan, who had thus earned ennoblement. In contrast, the marquis of Shen 申 had encouraged the king in his excesses, pleasing him but teaching him nothing. As a result, the king commanded that the marquis be banished. After the king's death, Guan Su was appointed to high office, and the marquis of Shen received banishment.

Impending death brought King Gong a clear-sighted understanding of his life, of what he had done right and wrong, as personified in Guan Su and the marquis of Shen. Although it was too late to change himself, King Gong saw his errors and corrected them – not in his own time, but for posterity, by elevating Guan Su and denigrating the marquis. These commands came too tardy to improve his record as a king, but they affected the future and extended his influence beyond death: he continues to exert power even after the end of his life. Liu Xiang appends to the story of King Gong two quotations from *Lunyu*, along with his own summarizing comments on them:

Zengzi 曾子<sup>58</sup> said, “When a bird is going to die, its song is sad. When a person is going to die, their words are good.”<sup>59</sup> This speaks of returning to original nature, and it describes King Gong. Confucius said, “If you hear of the Way in the morning, you can die that night [without regret].”<sup>60</sup> To enlighten posterity and awaken coming generations is better than dying without

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this story, with substantially different texts, are found in other sources, including *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and *Shuo yuan*. See Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 11.611, where the ruler is King Wen of Jing (i.e., of Chu) 荆文王 and the minister of good influence is called Xian Xi 芻讎. *Shuo yuan* has the ruler as King Wen of Chu 楚文王 (thus, like *Lüshi chunqiu*) and calls the good influence Guan Rao 筮饒; see *Sbby*, 1.11a-b; *Shuo yuan jiaozheng*, 1.25–26. The alternate versions give more detail about the later fate of the marquis of Shen than does *Xin xu*.

<sup>58</sup> Personal name Shen 參, *zi* Ziyu 子輿; 505–435 BCE. Zengzi's career as a student of Confucius is briefly summarized in *Shi ji*, “Zhongni dizi liezhuan,” 67.2205. Wang Zhuo 汪暉 (1162–1237), ed., *Zengzi quanshu* 曾子全書, *Skqs*, collects passages of texts concerning Zengzi.

<sup>59</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*, 8.2b [70].

<sup>60</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*, 4.3a [37]. Note that my translation reflects how this line is to be understood in the *Xin xu* context, where it is a general statement. Some readers understand it differently in the *Lunyu* context, taking it to be Confucius' description of his own situation (though in the end this reading blends into the more general one). See discussion below.

waking up. 曾子曰，鳥之將死，其鳴也哀。人之將死，其言也善。言反其本性，共王之謂也。孔子曰，朝聞道，夕死可矣。於以開後嗣，覺來世，猶愈沒身不寤者也。<sup>61</sup>

Zengzi is one of the most famous of Confucius' disciples and is conventionally associated with filial piety. His particular connection to duties and rituals concerning deceased parents extends into a general association with death and dying in various aspects.<sup>62</sup> Here, Liu Xiang juxtaposes a saying attributed to Zengzi and one of Confucius' best known lines, and adds his own comments to explain the significance of King Gong's story.

Zengzi's words are found in the "Tai bo" 泰伯 chapter of *Lunyu*, where they preface a brief discourse on general principles for living.<sup>63</sup> Zengzi's only apparent purpose in *Lunyu* is to draw his interlocutor's attention to what comes next in that text. Commenting on "Tai bo," Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) interprets this as Zengzi's modesty, implying that what he says is important only because of the situation.<sup>64</sup> It is possible that the lines about birds and men as they approach death come from some other source or existed independently as a kind of saying before becoming firmly identified with Zengzi no later than the first century BCE.<sup>65</sup>

In its original context in *Lunyu*, Zengzi's observation about birds' final vocalizations is somewhat obscure, and the significance of the parallel between a bird's sad death song and a human's "good words" is neither obvious nor explained by later *Lunyu* commentators, who pay it little mind. They focus instead on what Zengzi says next in "Tai

<sup>61</sup> *Xin xu*, *Shqs*, 1.4b [190]; Shi Yingguang, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 1.58–59.

<sup>62</sup> Zengzi is the putative author of *Xiao jing* 孝經. He is mentioned in *Lunyu* – not only in this passage but elsewhere – in connection with his own death and that of others. Furthermore, the "Tan Gong" 檀弓 and "Zengzi wen" chapters of *Li ji* 禮記 record a number of cases of Zengzi asking and being asked about death and related ritual matters.

<sup>63</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*, 8.2b [70]. Note that Liu Xiang quotes very similar lines elsewhere, in *Shuo yuan*, 19.11a–b, where they function – as in *Lunyu* – as preamble to a final discourse.

<sup>64</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註 (Taipei: Zhonghua congshu weiyuanhui, 1958), 4.340.

<sup>65</sup> *Shi ji*, 126.3208, quotes these lines to describe the deathbed turnaround of court wit Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BCE), attributing them only to an unspecified "tradition" 傳. Whatever their earliest provenance, by late Western Han times the lines were associated with Zengzi. In addition to the instance here in *Xin xu*, see also the fragment of a version of Zengzi's discourse in strips recovered from the no. 40 Han tomb at Bajiaolang 八角廊, Ding xian 定縣, Hebei, dated to around 55 BCE. It says, "Zengzi was sick and Gongmeng Yi went to visit him. Zengzi said, 'When a bird is going to die, it invariably has a mournful sound. When a gentleman is going to die...' 曾子有疾，公猛義往問之，曾子言曰，鳥之將死也，必有悲聲，君子將死卒也；Li Junming 李均明 and He Shuangquan 何雙全, *Sanjian jiandu heji* 散見簡牘合輯 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990), 47 [nos. 554–555]; on the dating of the tomb where this text was recovered, see Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所, "Hebei Ding xian 40 hao Han mu fajue jianbao" 河北定縣40號漢墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 8 (1981): 12.

bo,” which is left out by Liu Xiang.<sup>66</sup> Although the sense of these lines in *Lunyu* seems to be different, Liu Xiang summarizes them as descriptive of a return to original nature at the moment of dying. This, then, was the reason that these were “good” words. This nature as Liu Xiang conceives of it is not necessarily good in a moral sense. Rather, for Liu Xiang the words’ goodness lies in their expression of original nature and – I argue – ability to affect the future.

The second quotation Liu Xiang inserts comes from Confucius himself; it claims that one can accept death at night when one has heard of the Way in the morning.<sup>67</sup> Liu Xiang uses these lines in a way that makes it clear that he takes Confucius to be speaking in a broad sense, though the text is not always so understood.<sup>68</sup> Read in this way, the text asserts generally that a person can die the same day he hears about the Way because such knowledge can enable one, “To enlighten posterity and awaken coming generations.” Even a ruler who led a dubious life, like King Gong, could gain clarity and act to repair his future reputation and benefit posterity. The means by which this redemption occurs is the “good words” that convey influence and fame into later generations.

### *Hong Yan Redeems the State of Wei*

The “Yi yong” 義勇 (Dutiful and brave) chapter of *Xin xu* contains the story of a man whose death did more than simply earn him renown, although it did that too.<sup>69</sup> By his actions, Hong Yan 弘演 effected the

<sup>66</sup> Cf. the balance of attention given to the sections of this *Lunyu* passage in Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791–1855), *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 9.292–94. In his brief comment on these clauses, Zhu Xi takes them as more or less separate. Zhu explains that the bird’s reaction is a sign of its fear, while a person’s reaction signifies a return to original nature; Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, 4.339–40.

<sup>67</sup> Brooks and Brooks, *Original Analects*, 11, 15 number these lines among the “literally authentic sayings of Confucius.”

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the opinion of He Yan 何晏 (ob. 249), who takes it as a description of Confucius’ own situation, explaining, “This describes him approaching death without having heard that the world possessed the Way” 言將至死，不聞世之有道。Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010) elaborates on this idea, “Suppose that in the early morning he heard that the world had the Way, then at night he could die without regret” 設若早朝聞世有道，暮夕而死可無恨矣。See *Lunyu zhushu*, 4.12a [37]. Bao Shixiang and Lao An, *The Analects of Confucius* (Ji’nan: Shandong youyi chubanshe, 1992), 47 follow this line of interpretation to translate: “Confucius said: ‘Provided that I could be allowed to know the truth in the morning, I would be willing to die in the evening.’” However, the interpretation reflected in my translation is also common among modern readers; see, e.g., Yang, *Lunyu yi zhu*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> *Xin xu*, *Skqs*, 8.6a–b, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 8.1054–59. There are versions of this story in the “Zhong lian” 忠廉 chapter of *Lüshi chungqiu*, Chen Qiyou, *Lüshi chungqiu xin jiaoshi*, 11.595; *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, *Skqs*, 7.7b–8a [831–32]; *Lun heng jiaoshi*, 8.362; etc. The story of Duke Yi and his demise can be found in *Zuo zhuan*, 2nd year of Duke Min 閔, *Zuo zhuan zhengyi* 左傳正義, 11.8b–9b [190–91]; the “Chunqiu” 春秋 chapter of Jia Yi’s (200–168 BCE)

preservation of his state after he was already dead. According to the story, Hong Yan was a vassal of Duke Yi of Wei 衛懿公, a ruler famous for neglecting his subjects in favor of his favorite things: cranes and women. When the Di 狄 people invaded Wei, Duke Yi's troops refused to defend him and he was killed. The Di ate the duke and left only his liver behind.

Hong Yan had been sent far away on official business and returned to find his lord's liver. Apparently a stickler for formalities, Hong Yan gave Duke Yi's liver a report on the trip. He then began grieving for his lord – even though the duke had been a paragon of poor rulership. Hong Yan's next acts were even more remarkable: “He said, ‘I request to become a sign.’ Then he stabbed himself in the gut, put Duke Yi's liver inside [his body], and died” 曰，臣請爲表。因自刺其腹，內懿公之肝而死。

The famous Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (reg. 685–43 BCE) was the most powerful lord at the time of these putative events. When word of Hong Yan's display of fidelity to Duke Yi reached him, he said, “Wei was destroyed because it lacked the Way. But now it has a vassal like this. It must be preserved” 衛之亡也以無道，今有臣若此，不可不存。He proceeded to intervene on behalf of Wei, rescuing the state and its ruling house. The otherwise unknown and unimportant Hong Yan effected the restoration of a state lost through its ruler's incompetence, and in doing so Hong achieved fame.<sup>70</sup>

The narrative of Hong Yan's death recalls that of Yongmen Zidi 雍門子狄, included in *Shuo yuan*.<sup>71</sup> He committed suicide in response to an impending attack on the state of Qi 齊. This act, presumably because it evinced the resolution and devotion of Qi's defenders, caused the invading troops to withdraw. Both of these men, by their deaths, changed the course of history and won *kleos*.

## FAME AFTER DEATH

### *Yuan Jingmu*

Stories of dying in *Shuo yuan* and *Xin xu* do not always show such a concrete result. The death of Yuan Jingmu 袁旌目 is one example:<sup>72</sup>

*Xin shu* 新書, in Qi Yuzhang 祁玉章, *Jiazi Xin shu jiaoshi* 賈子新書校釋 (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua zazhi she, 1974), 6.774–75; and “Wei Kangshu shi jia” 衛康叔世家, *Shi ji*, 39.1594.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g., Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 22.643.

<sup>71</sup> *Shuo yuan*, 4.8b–9a.

<sup>72</sup> There are parallels in *Lüshi chungiu* (“Jie li” 介立), see *Lüshi chungiu xin jiaoshi*, 12.635; *Liezi* 列子 (“Shuo fu” 說符), see Yang, *Liezi jishi*, 8.168; etc.; which write Yuan's surname with graphic variant 爰.

In the east, there was a gentleman called Yuan Jingmu, en route somewhere, who was starving on the road. A robber from Gufu 孤父<sup>73</sup> called Qiu 丘 saw him and lowered a flask of gruel to give to him.<sup>74</sup> Yuan Jingmu ate three bites and then could see. He looked up and asked, “Who are you?” [Qiu] said, “I am Qiu, man of Gufu.” Yuan Jingmu said, “Hey! you’re a robber! Why are you feeding me? It is my duty to not eat this.” With both hands he leaned on the ground and tried to throw up [the food]. It didn’t come out. Coughing, he fell forward on the ground and died. 東方有士曰袁旌目，將有所適，而飢於道，孤父之盜曰丘，見之，下壺餐以與之。袁旌目三餽而能視，仰而問焉。曰，子誰也？曰，我孤父之人丘也。袁旌目曰，嘻，汝乃盜也。何爲而食我？以吾義不食也。兩手據地而歐之，不出，喀喀然，遂伏地而死。<sup>75</sup>

Yuan Jingmu’s first words upon being resuscitated are an enquiry as to his benefactor’s identity. Before he can express his gratitude, Jingmu must ascertain who it is that feeds him. Once he learns that it is a robber, Yuan Jingmu refuses further food from this impure source and even tries to regurgitate what he has already eaten. All this despite the fact that not eating means his life. At his dying moment, Yuan Jingmu perceives an unworthy would-be benefactor and takes proper action. Another story anthologized by Liu Xiang and discussed below makes it clear that a knee-jerk reaction of starving yourself to death for every perceived slight won’t do: not every situation calls for this kind of scruple. Yuan makes a correct decision and sticks to it, and achieves fame thereby.

This does not seem like a case of “better late than never,” for there is no other record of Yuan Jingmu, no hint that this interest in rectitude is new; it was these final words and actions alone that created his reputation. And with this last act, Yuan Jingmu secured a place next to the most punctilious worthies. As Liu Xiang explains,

<sup>73</sup> This name is given in other sources as Hufu 狐父. Presumably this is a phonetic borrowing, or one or the other versions is corrupt, as Gufu is unknown outside of this passage. Hufu, famous for production of *ge* 戈 halberds, was located in modern Jiangsu.

<sup>74</sup> I follow Shi, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.971, to read *can/sun* 餐 here as *sun/can* 殮; cf. Gao Heng 高亨, *Guzi tongjia huidian* 古字通假會典 (Ji’nan: Qi-Lu chubanshe, 1989), 218. Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–554), *Jinlouzi* 金樓子, *Skqs*, 6.5b, gives a parallel text with 殮. I understand *sun* 殮 as something like gruel, following Kong Yingda’s 孔穎達 (574–648) subcommentary on the “Yu zao” 玉藻 chapter of *Li ji*, which explains, “*Sun* refers to pouring a liquid over cooked rice in a vessel” 殮謂用飲澆飯於器中也; see *Li ji zhushu*, 29.14b [549]. That sense fits the context perfectly as something one would feed a starving person and which would be kept in a bottle. Shi Guanying takes it just as “to feed.”

<sup>75</sup> Here I follow the emended text in Shi, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.970–74; cf. *Xin xu*, *Skqs*, 7.17a.

Zengzi would not enter the prefecture named Shengmu 勝母 (Defeat your mother); Mozi turned his chariot back from the city called Zhaoge 朝歌 (Morning song). By the same token Confucius would not sit on a crooked mat, would not eat crookedly cut food, and would not drink water from Dao 盜 (Robber) Spring.<sup>76</sup> This is to accumulate correctness. Jingmu would not eat and died. That was the ultimate in purity. 縣名爲勝母，曾子不入，邑號朝歌，墨子回車。故孔子席不正不坐，割不正不食，不飲盜泉之水。積正也。旌目不食而死。潔之至也。<sup>77</sup>

Liu Xiang refers to accounts of three philosophers that focus on interests connected with each: Zengzi, exponent of filial piety; Mozi, critic of musical practice; and Confucius, whose strict sense of propriety extended to the positioning of his sitting mats, and the like. By his death, Yuan Jingmu – an exceedingly minor man – earned a ranking beside Zengzi, Mozi, and even Confucius. His correct response to the situation made him famous after death. Liu Xiang portrays a good death as something that could enable one to act beyond the span of mortal life, attaining reputation that would otherwise have remained out of reach. In reality, Liu Xiang may well have played a part in the processes that ensured fame through his work as anthologist. But his representation of Yuan shows a minor figure's purity to be a result of the manner of his death.

### *King Yan of Xu*

Sometimes the dying moment did not create a new reputation, as in the case of Yuan Jingmu. Rather, it could improve an existing one, as in the story of the death of King Yan of Xu 徐偃王. This is a good example of this moment of mental clarity around the time of dying as Liu Xiang portrays it, as well as how that clarity has the power to effect fame after death.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> See similar lists in *Shi ji*, 83.2478, and *Han shu*, 51.2352. Each item refers to a tradition concerning the philosopher involved, reflecting the particular interest(s) of each. Zengzi's putative refusal to go into Shengmu prefecture, for example, connects to his reputation as a paragon of filiality, and his adherence to this code of behavior supposedly kept him from entering that ill-named burg. Mozi's supposed aversion to Zhaoge plays off his famous (and perhaps exaggerated) opposition to music. *Lunyu* contains many examples of Confucius' scrupulousness, including the objections to imperfectly cut foods and crooked mats alluded to here; see *Lunyu zhushu*, 10.8a [89] and 10.9a [90]. *Shizi* 尸子, *Sbby*, 2.2b says, "When Confucius arrived at Shengmu it was evening, but he would not stay overnight; when he passed by Dao Spring, he was thirsty but would not drink. This was because he detested the names" 孔子到於勝母暮矣而不宿，過於盜泉，渴矣而不飲，惡其名也。

<sup>77</sup> *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.973-74.

<sup>78</sup> "Zhi wu" 指武, *Shuo yuan*, 15.1a-b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 15.406; *Shuo yuan jiaozheng*, 15.366. There are parallels in *Huainanzi*, "Ren jian xun" 人間訓, Feng Yi 馮逸 and Qiao Hua 喬華, *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 18.620; and Yu Zhigu 余知古 (Tang), *Zhugong jiushi* 渚宮舊事, *Skqs*, 1.4a-b; and below.

The narrative begins with an exchange between King Wen of Chu 楚文王 (reg. 687–677 BCE) and the otherwise unknown Wangsun Li 王孫厲. Wangsun Li first points out to King Wen that King Yan had won the submission of a number of states through his humaneness and devotion to duty. Wangsun Li goes on to say that this success posed a threat to the existence of Chu, predicting that unless Chu attacked, Chu was going to end up serving Xu. King Wen protested, “If [King Yan] really has the Way, he cannot be attacked” 若信有道，不可伐也。The king’s thinking is of a sort with that represented in *Mengzi* 孟子 and other Ru 儒 texts (though of course *Mengzi* did not yet exist when this event is said to have occurred), according to which the key to successful rule is morality, with the corollary that a moral state is protected.<sup>79</sup>

Wangsun Li refutes this naiveté with metaphors from the natural world, arguing that it is simply normal for the stronger and larger to overcome the smaller and weaker.<sup>80</sup> Swayed by this hardheaded line of reasoning, King Wen attacked and defeated Xu, at which point the narrative shifts its focus to King Yan. As he prepared himself for death, King Yan had an epiphany about the shortcomings of a purely moral basis for government:

I relied on cultivation and virtue, but was unenlightened about the preparations for war. I liked following the ways of humaneness and duty, but I did not understand the minds of deceptive men. And because of that, I have come to this. 吾賴於文 德而不明武備，好行仁義之道而不知詐人之心，以至於此。<sup>81</sup>

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The time of King Yan’s rule is variously given. Some sources describe him as a contemporary of King Wen of Chu, which would put him in the 7th century BCE; see, e.g., the “Wu du” 五蠹 chapter of *Han Feizi* 韓非子, in Wang Xianshen 王先慎 (1859–1922), *Han Feizi jiji* 韓非子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 19.445. Other sources, like *Shi ji*, 5.175 and 43.1779, date the defeat of King Yan to the time of King Mu of Zhou 周穆王. Qiao Zhou 譙周 (201–270), *Gushi kao* 古史考, says that King Yan was a contemporary of King Wen and far removed from King Mu; quoted by the “Zhengyi” 正義 commentary, *Shi ji*, 5.177.

Fantastic stories are recorded about King Yan of Xu. He is often said to have been born from an egg, e.g., in Zhang Hua’s 張華 (232–300) *Bo wu zhi* 博物志; see Fan Ning 范寧, *Bo wu zhi jiaozheng* 博物志校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 7.84. In *Lun heng*, Wang Chong does not mention oviparous origins, but uses King Yan as an example to argue how good acts are not enough to guarantee a ruler’s success – an allusion to the events described here; see Huang, *Lun heng jiaoshi*, 2.40–1, 10.438.

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion for this conception of government in *Mengzi*, see A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989), 113–17.

<sup>80</sup> *Shuo yuan*, 15.1a-b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 15.406: “For the large to attack the small, for the strong to attack the weak, is like a large fish swallowing a small fish, like a tiger eating a piglet. How does that not accord with principle?” 大之伐小，強之伐弱，猶大魚之吞小魚也，若虎之食豚也，惡有其不得理？(Actor Mike Myers paraphrases this essential truth in “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me” as follows: “I’m bigger than you, I’m higher in the food chain! Get in my belly!”)

<sup>81</sup> *Shuo yuan*, 15.1b; *Shuo yuan shuzheng*, 15.406.

King Yan's realization did not change anything concrete: his state was taken over by Chu, and he himself is known for other reasons. But he saw his errors – that he had been overly idealistic, however praiseworthy his intent. The tale of this deathbed awakening became the most widely reported aspect of this king's legend and won him notoriety for probity. Naturally this had something to do with the fact that this tale conveys notions in keeping with those thinkers more interested in *Realpolitik* than moral ideal. But the very quality brought by the moment of his death and its insight also turned the tale of his death into one worth recording and retelling, and so contributed to his fame.

#### BAD DEATH: ERASING ONE'S NAME, OR SPOILING IT

##### *Qian Ao and the Starving Anonymous*

In contrast to the foregoing narratives of good death, Liu Xiang also includes some negative cases. For example, the following story of a willing death contrasts with that of Yuan Jingmu. While Yuan Jingmu correctly assessed his situation and chose death rather than polluting himself by accepting food from an impure source, the unnamed man here – for convenience I will call him the Starving Anonymous – is criticized for refusing to eat, choosing to starve rather than forgive a perceived insult.

*Xin xu* records that famine once came to the state of Qi 齊, and a man named Qian Ao 黔敖 prepared food and waited by the side of the road to feed those in need.<sup>82</sup> The Starving Anonymous came along, stumbling and covering his face from shame at his plight. Qian Ao took food in his left hand and water in his right and offered them to the man, saying, “Hey, come eat!” 嗟，來食。 This was not a courteous address, however well intended, and did not accord with the Starving Anonymous' expectations of politeness. He rejected Qian Ao's charity, saying huffily, “It is only because I will not eat ‘Hey, come’ food that I have arrived at this” 予唯不食嗟來之食，以至於此也。 The man stalked off and Qian Ao followed after to apologize. But the Starving Anonymous paid no mind; he refused to eat and starved to death rather than take food from Qian Ao.

<sup>82</sup> Nothing else is recorded about Qian Ao except this story, which is frequently referred to. The story is found in the “Jieshi” chapter of *Xin xu*, *Skqs*, 7.16b; *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.967–70. It has a parallel in the “Tan Gong” 檀弓 chapter of *Li ji*; *Li ji zhushu*, 10.22a–b [196] and is mentioned in the “Qian li” 愆禮 chapter of Ying Shao's 應邵 (fl. 189–94) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, *Sbby*, 3.4b. Qian Ao's surname is sometimes written Qin 禽, and his name Ao 熬. He is not to be confused with the disciple of Mozi called Guan Qian'ao 管黔敖 (whose name may be better written with graph 敖); cf. Sun, *Mozi jiangou*, 11.432.

Liu Xiang appends Zengzi's judgment that the Starving Anonymous had been over-scrupulous, saying, "That was petty.<sup>83</sup> He could have left because of the 'Hey,' but he could have eaten after the apology" 微與。其嗟也可去，其謝也可食。The Starving Anonymous misjudged the situation and failed to respond appropriately to the one who would preserve his life.

Unlike Yuan Jingmu, who in his clarity recognized his situation and reacted correctly even though it meant dying, the Starving Anonymous' death seals his fate, winning him judgment only as picayune and unforgiving. His last words were not morally good; they were peevish and overproud. But they were good in that they accurately revealed the character of the Starving Anonymous, showing and setting his reputation as someone not even worthy of having his name remembered. His bad death effaced his identity from the historical record, just as Yuan Jingmu's good death had secured him fame.

### *Bao Jiao*

Liu Xiang also anthologizes the story of Bao Jiao 鮑焦, another man who starved himself to death in the name of right and earned a negative evaluation thereby. Bao Jiao is said to have been a recluse in the Zhou period.<sup>84</sup> According to *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, he plowed for himself and wore only cloth that his wife wove, and so appears to have professed the tenets of agrarian self-reliance associated with followers of Shennong 神農.<sup>85</sup> The narrative in *Xin xu* begins with a meeting between Bao Jiao, gathering vegetables and wearing worn-out clothes, and Zigong, the disciple of Confucius. Zigong is surprised by Bao Jiao's evident poverty and asks how he has fallen into such straits. Bao Jiao responds by saying that the ways of virtue had fallen out of fashion, so

<sup>83</sup> In translating *wei yu* 微與 as "That is petty," I am following the interpretation of Chen Hao 陳澧 (1261–1341), *Chen shi Li ji jishuo* 陳氏禮記集說, *Skqs*, 2.69a [741], who explains:

*Wei yu* is like saying that this was a minor cause and an overly fine observance. This means that even though saying "Hey, come!" was not respectful, it was not a large error. Thus he could have left because of the "Hey"; but when [Qian Ao] apologized, he could have eaten. 微與猶言細故未節，謂嗟來之言，雖不敬然，亦非大過。故其嗟雖可去而謝焉則可食矣。

This differs in precise reading, if not in general sense, from Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) commentary, the canonical interpretation, on "Tan Gong," where Zheng says *wei* means *wu* 無, "without, none"; Kong Yingda further explains, "The starving man need not have been like that" 餓者無得如是。

<sup>84</sup> *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.974–78; *Xin xu*, 7.17a–18a; there is a parallel in *Hanshi waizhuan*, 1.7a–b. Bao Jiao is frequently mentioned in various early texts; see e.g. the "Dao Zhi" 盜跖 chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844–ca. 1896), *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 9B.998.

<sup>85</sup> See the "Qian li" 愆禮 chapter of *Fengsu tongyi*, 3.3a, which gives a slightly different version of Bao Jiao's death:

stubbornly pursuing engagement with the world would negatively affect himself. In this way, Bao Jiao tries to prove himself clear-sighted by rejecting the search for employment he is too virtuous for, instead becoming a hermit. Zigong confounds this high-sounding line of reasoning with a call for consistency:

I have heard that one who rejects the world should not live off its benefits, and one who insults the lord should not walk his lands. Now, master, you insult your lord yet walk his lands, and reject the world but pick its vegetables. Who does that? 吾聞之，非其世者不生其利，汙其君者，不履其土。今吾子汙其君而履其土，非其世而(將) [掄]<sup>86</sup>其蔬，此誰之有哉。<sup>87</sup>

Bao Jiao immediately acknowledges the accuracy of Zigong's observation, and takes action accordingly: "He threw away the vegetables and stood there till he withered and died on the banks of the Luo River" 乃棄其蔬而立，槁死於洛水之上。<sup>88</sup>

Bao Jiao starved himself to death in an attempt to prove his resolved and consistent adherence to the ways of proper action. In *Xin xu*, the Gentleman offers a mixed evaluation of Bao Jiao, saying,

[Bao Jiao] was an incorrupt man, and unyielding! But if a mountain is sharp then it cannot be high, and a river that is narrow is not deep. Those whose actions are unique have scant virtue, and those with ambitions to imitate heaven and earth are unfortunate as people. Baozi (Bao Jiao) can be called unfortunate. Given the [scant] measure of his honor, it is fitting that he came to that end. 廉夫，剛哉。夫山銳則不高，水狹而不深，行特者其德不厚，志與天地疑者，其爲人不祥。鮑子可謂不祥矣，其節度深淺，適至而止矣。<sup>89</sup>

The Gentleman affirms Bao Jiao's constancy and imperviousness to material enticements. But he then criticizes Bao Jiao for going too far, being "sharp" and "narrow," and for being singular in his conduct. In

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Bao Jiao farmed fields to eat, bored a well to drink, and would not wear [cloth] not woven by his wife. He was starving in the mountains and ate jujubes. Someone asked him, "Did you plant these jujubes?" Then he vomited them up, and stood there till he withered and died. 鮑焦耕田而食，穿井而飲，非妻所織不衣，餓於山中，食棗，或問之，此棗子所種耶。遂嘔吐，立枯而死。

On the beliefs of the followers of Shennong, see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 66–74.

<sup>86</sup> This emendation follows Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907), *Zhuzi pingyi bulu* 諸子平議補錄 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1984), 16.133, taking 將 as an error for *luo* 掄, "to pick."

<sup>87</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.17b.

<sup>88</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.17b.

<sup>89</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.17b–18a; for a study of comments from the "Gentleman" 君子 in a broader context, see Schaberg, "Platitude and Persona."

the end, Bao Jiao earns a negative evaluation, and is judged to have been lacking in virtue and so an unfortunate.<sup>90</sup> Instead of a paragon of rectitude, he becomes an object of pity, and his name recorded only to be criticized.

#### FILIALITY TOWARD PARENTS VS. LOYALTY TO THE RULER

The preceding has examined some portrayals of death in *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* with attention to the importance death plays in those stories as the moment that reflects the dying person's nature and determines his posthumous reputation. Next, I want to look at how the interest in the moment and manner of death works in the context of the conflict between loyalty and filial piety. This was an important point of tension in Han times, which was at the time most commonly resolved in favor of loyalty to the ruler.<sup>91</sup> Liu Xiang shows us something different.

Liu Xiang anthologizes a number of anecdotes about men who died in order to resolve the intractable conflict between these two kinds of moral obligation. Many of these men are otherwise unimportant or unknown, and their bold acts at the end of life win them fame after death. Their stories thus demonstrate the interest in affecting the world after one is gone, which was discussed above. And as in the preceding cases, these men receive mixed evaluations. A dramatic death does not guarantee a good reputation, even when one's motives are good or proper: the act itself must also be correct.

#### THE CROWN PRINCE OF JIN AND THE SNAKE

*Xin xu* includes the death narrative of an unnamed crown prince, heir to Duke Xian of Jin 晉獻公 (reg. 676–651 BCE).<sup>92</sup> The crown prince had traveled to Lingtai 靈臺, where a snake was discovered wrapped around the left hub of his chariot. Whatever the usual associations with snakes, this was interpreted as a good omen. The crown prince's chariot driver said he should bow to the snake, as it signifies that the prince would soon ascend the throne.

Rather than delighting in the apparent promise of good fortune, the crown prince reacted to the omen's implication: if he was to come into his inheritance, the current ruler – his father – would have to die

<sup>90</sup> As Shi, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.978 says, “Jiao had ambitions for noble honor, but he had never heard of the greatest way; therefore the Gentleman pitied him.”

<sup>91</sup> Brown, *Politics of Mourning*.

<sup>92</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.6a–7a; *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.885–90.

first. The prince refused to bow to the snake and returned home. And when he next saw the driver, the prince explained that his duty as son and subject of the lord prevented him from reverencing such a portent, as wishing for his father's death would be neither filial nor loyal. The prince then drew his sword and prepared to commit suicide in order to prevent fulfillment of the prophecy. The driver tried to persuade him to respect the sign as indicating heavenly blessing, but the prince refused to see that course of action as anything but a violation of duty, and the prince committed suicide. The Gentleman's evaluation at the end of this passage expresses the problem with this course of action:

The crown prince of Jin's driver would have had him bow to the snake. It was a propitious sign, yet [the prince] detested it – to the point that he killed himself. This was because he would be suspected of desiring the state and [wanted to show that] he did not, in order to conciliate his lord. And this was made clear. But he went so far as to kill himself because of one foolish driver's words. He discarded the way of a son and cut off the ancestral sacrifices, so he cannot be called filial. He can be said to have distanced suspicion. He was a gentleman with [only] one aspect of honor. 君子曰：晉太子徒御使之拜(虵)[蛇]，祥猶惡之，至於自殺者，爲見疑於欲國也，己之不欲國以安君，亦以明矣。爲一愚御過言之故，至於身死，廢子道，絕祭祀，不可謂孝，可謂遠嫌，一節之士也。<sup>93</sup>

This conveys unambiguously the idea that an exclusive focus on one aspect of duty – loyalty – at the cost of another – filiality – upsets the balance between the two and negatively affects the evaluation of the crown prince's action. Instead of someone who observes the moral obligations of both son and vassal, as was his expressed hope, the prince is judged a lopsided gentleman. The premise for this judgment is the responsibility of a son to carry on the family line and its sacrifices: duty to family trumps that of service to the state. Like the Starving Anonymous, the crown prince's failure left his name unrecorded, depriving him not only of fame, but of any remembrance at all.

#### ZHUANG SHAN AND MASTER ZHUANG OF BIAN: TWO SIDES OF ONE QUESTION

The examples of Zhuang Shan 莊善 and Master Zhuang of Bian 卞莊子 are both in the same chapter of *Xin xu*, and taken together they underline the importance of properly evaluating a situation and acting

<sup>93</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.7a.

according to the correct principle – which turns out to mean primarily filial piety.

The events leading to the death of Zhuang Shan come in the rebellion against King Hui of Chu 楚惠王 (reg. 488–432 BCE) by one of his vassals, Duke Bai 白公.<sup>94</sup> Liu Xiang places several stories about this insurrection together in *Xin xu*, including that of the defeat of Duke Bai, and Zhuang Shan's comes at the end of this group. The result is that if the *Xin xu* chapter is read straight through, the story of Duke Bai is already done and its outcome (the death of Duke Bai and failure of his revolt) clear before the reader encounters the story of Zhuang Shan.<sup>95</sup>

No information is available about Zhuang Shan, except for that found in this story in its various tellings.<sup>96</sup> The narrative begins – after establishing the time – with Zhuang Shan taking leave of his mother to go and die for his lord. She reproaches him, “To forsake your parent to die for the lord – can that be called duty?” 棄其親而死其君，可謂義乎？ Though she did not use the word, this was clearly a plea to Zhuang Shan's filial piety. He responded by connecting filiality to duty:

I have heard that those who serve a lord accept his pay and offer themselves [in exchange]. Now, I care for my mother by means of the lord's pay. How could I not die [for him]?” 吾聞事君者，內其祿而外其身，今所以養母者，君之祿也。身安得無死乎。<sup>97</sup>

Zhuang tied his ability to provide for his mother to the service of his lord, making the first dependent on the second and implying that through observance of filiality he had acquired an obligation to his ruler that outweighed that to his mother. And off he went, ready to die.

But as he drew near the gate in his chariot, his brave façade cracked and Zhuang Shan broke down three times. His chariot driver saw his fear and asked why he did not go back home. Zhuang Shan replies, “Fear is a personal matter; dying for duty is a public matter. I have heard that a gentleman does not harm the public because of the personal” 懼者，吾私也；死義，吾公也。聞君子不以私害公。 When they reached the gate, Zhuang Shan committed suicide, and at the very end of the

<sup>94</sup> See *Shi ji*, 40.1718.

<sup>95</sup> In keeping with the approach of this paper, this sequence concerns the representation of events in *Xin xu*. As a reader pointed out, Zhuang Shan himself would not have had this information.

<sup>96</sup> *Xin xu*, 8.5a; *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 8.1044–48. Brown, *Politics of Mourning*, 35–36, discusses the version of this story found in *Hanshi waizhuan*, 1.9a–b, where the man is called Zhuang Zhishan 壯之善.

<sup>97</sup> *Xin xu*, 8.5a.

story, his acts are evaluated: “The Gentleman said, ‘He was fond of duty!’” 君子曰，好義乎哉。<sup>98</sup>

The implications of this judgment are mixed. On the one hand, duty was vital, and to be called “fond of duty” implies approval. But there is no mention of filiality in the specific senses of caring for one’s parents and carrying on the familial line, an absence underscored by Zhuang Shan’s disregard for his mother’s pleas. The reader’s knowledge that Duke Bai is doomed to failure, and that King Hui – the lord for whom Zhuang Shan commits suicide – will be restored to power make this even more mixed of an act. The story becomes not only that of a man who kills himself over the protestations of his mother, but who does so when duty would not seem to require it. Subsequent events – already known by the reader of the anthology – show him to have been mistaken, and his death to have been a waste.

Zhuang Shan, like the crown prince of Jin, was off-balance in adherence to his moral code, missing the more important component. This is clearly seen in the case of Master Zhuang of Bian, where the failure to be filial is pointed out explicitly. In *Xin xu*, Liu Xiang puts the story of Master Zhuang of Bian at the end of the chapter containing Zhuang Shan’s. Considering the two in tandem indicates that the reader should read both examples not as exclusively positive, but rather as stories of morally askew men.

Master Zhuang from the city of Bian in Lu 魯 was famous for bravery.<sup>99</sup> According to the story Liu Xiang anthologizes, at some earlier time, Master Zhuang had fled in battle three times in order to preserve his life and continue caring for his mother. Praiseworthy as Master Zhuang’s filial intent might have been, this act was perceived as cowardice, especially in contrast with his reputation for boldness. It earned him rebuke from his associates and insult from the lord of the state. Later

<sup>98</sup> *Xin xu*, 8.5a.

<sup>99</sup> *Xin xu*, 8.7a–b; *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 8.1070–76. Bian was a city located in modern Shandong. Little is known about Master Zhuang of Bian except his reputation for bravery. He is referred to as Zhuangzi of Bian 卞莊子, but in order to prevent confusion with the philosopher Zhuangzi 莊子 (Zhuang Zhou 莊周, 360–286 BCE), I call the Zhuangzi from Bian “Master Zhuang.” “Master of Zhuang” is not a given name, although commentators disagree whether this is a courtesy name or posthumous epithet. A number of texts refer to Master Zhuang of Bian as an paragon of courage; see, e.g., Confucius’ view as given in the “Xian wen” 憲問 chapter of *Lunyu*; *Lunyu zhushu*, 14.5b [125]. Master Zhuang of Bian is also mentioned in the “Da lue” 大略 chapter of *Xunzi* 荀子: “When the people of Qi wanted to attack Lu, they avoided Master Zhuang of Bian and dared not pass through Bian” 齊人欲伐魯，忌卞莊子，不敢過卞; Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 19.504. In the “Qin ce” 秦策 chapter of *Zhanguo ce*, 4.3a, a story is told about Master Zhuang hunting tigers, though he is there referred to as Zhuangzi 莊子 of Guan 管 (or perhaps reading *guan* as *guan* 館, thus “Zhuangzi of the lodge”); *Shi ji*, 70.2302, records a similar story, calling him Master Zhuang

Master Zhuang's mother died. After the required three-year mourning period had passed, he asked to join the army that was being raised to defend against an attack on Lu by the state of Qi. He explained to the commander the reason for his previous, apparently cowardly acts – a desire to care for his mother – and asked for the chance to make up for them. Then he went and joined the battle.

Master Zhuang took the head of an enemy officer and returned to present it to his general, saying, “This makes up for running away once” 此塞一北.<sup>100</sup> He did this three times, making amends for the three times he had run away. At this point the general told Master Zhuang to leave the battle, saying that his failures had been made good and he should further avoid risking his life, not for Zhuang's own sake, but for the sake of his lineage, in other words, for filial duty. The general approved of Master Zhuang so much he even suggested a marriage alliance between their families. But Master Zhuang insisted on returning to the fray, arguing that his disgrace did not permit him to continue living.

Master Zhuang returned to the battle and killed ten more of the enemy before dying himself. Though he did not take his own life, it is clear from Master Zhuang's last words that he intended to die and acted to bring this about. This willing death resulted in cutting off his family line, for which the Gentleman criticized him: “He had already made up for the blame for running away three times, [but he still] destroyed his lineage and cut off his line. His filiality was not complete” 君子曰，三北已塞責，滅世斷宗，於孝不終也。 This judgment recalls that of the crown prince of Jin, above. It was a part of filial piety to continue

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of Bian. *Han shu*, 80.3315, refers in passing to Master Zhuang of Bian's bravery. There, Dongfang Shuo mentions him as holder of the position of commandant of the guards (*weiwei* 衛尉) in a list of worthies who were properly employed; Yan Shigu explains simply, “Because he was brave” 以其有勇; *Han shu*, 65.2861–62. Note that here *Han shu* writes Bian with the graph 弁, a borrowing; cf. Gao Heng, *Guji tongjia huidian*, 221. Also, instead of Zhuangzi, *Han shu* has Yanzi 嚴子, a substitution to avoid the personal name of Emperor Ming 明 (reg. 58–75; personal name Liu Zhuang 劉莊, first named Yang 陽); see Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Shi hui ju li* 史諱舉例 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1997), 98. Master Zhuang of Bian is also listed in the “Gu jin ren biao” 古今人表, his name again given as Yanzi; *Han shu*, 20.923.

<sup>100</sup> *Xin xu*, 8.7a. What I interpret here as denoting officers is the phrase *jiashou* 甲首, literally, “armored heads.” Narrowly speaking, this refers only to troops wearing armor, a minority in Chunqiu and Zhanguo times. Thus, in his commentary on *Zuo zhuan*, 6th year of Duke Huan 桓公, Du Yu 杜預 (222–84) says, “*Jiashou* are the heads of those wearing armor” 甲首被甲者首; *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi*, 6.21a [112]. However, *jiashou* is often used in a way that suggests a specific reference to soldiers of rank. Thus, *Shang jun shu* 商君書 says, “Those who take one armored head are rewarded [with an increase] of one level of rank” 能得爵 [= 甲] 首一者賞爵一級, and Zhu Shiche 朱師轍 explains, “This ‘armored heads’ means the heads of armored soldiers, probably the officers in charge of the soldiers” 是甲首謂甲士之首。蓋統兵之官長。 See Zhu Shiche, *Shang jun shu jie gu dingben* 商君書解詁定本 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 73–74.

the sacrifices to clan ancestors and to carry on the line of descent. This is connected with a more general responsibility on the part of a child to maintain his body whole as part of filial piety and duty towards parents and lineage, including the responsibility to avoid unnatural death.<sup>101</sup>

### *Shi She*

In *Xin xu*, Liu Xiang anthologizes the story of Shi She 石奢, which also involves the conflict between filiality and loyalty.<sup>102</sup> Shi She was in the service of King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (reg. 515–489 BCE), and King Zhao made him a magistrate (*li* 理) because of his reputation for rectitude. When someone was killed at court, Shi She pursued and caught the murderer, who turned out to be his own father. Shi She let his father go, then returned to court. He reported what he had done and demanded execution for his crime, even laying his head upon the executioner block.

King Zhao did not want to kill him and offered the excuse that failing to apprehend a criminal did not warrant execution. Shi She repeated his assessment of the conflict he faced between two types of moral obligation, and added that although the king's willingness to pardon him showed kindness, remaining alive would offend against incorruptibility. Shi She refused to take his head off the block, and in the end he got the death he demanded. Since this resulted from the active rejection of a mercy that was entirely within the rights of King Zhao to offer, this can be considered a kind of suicide. Liu Xiang evaluated Shi She's deed in the following, which he appended to the end of the narrative:

The Gentleman heard about this and said, "He was a faithful man, and law-abiding."<sup>103</sup> Confucius said: "A son covers for his father, a father covers for his son, and integrity lies therein."<sup>104</sup> The *Shi*

<sup>101</sup> These ideas are common in early Chinese literature. Clear expression of them – again in the mouth of Zengzi – can be found in the "Xiao xing" 孝行 section of *Lüshi chungqiu*, inter alia; see Chen, *Lüshi chungqiu xin jiaoshi*, 14.737

<sup>102</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.13b-14a; *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 949–53; there are parallels in *Lüshi chungqiu xin jiaoshi*, 19.1256; Yu, *Zhugong jiushi*, 2.9a–b; *Hanshi waizhuan*, *Skqs*, 2.8b–9a; the last is mentioned in Brown, *Politics of Mourning*, 150 n. 62. In the *Lüshi chungqiu* parallel, this name is written Shi Zhu 石渚; Chen, *Lüshi chungqiu xin jiaoshi*, 19.1256. This variation reflects graphic interchangeability between *she* 奢 and *zhu* 渚, which were homophones or near homophones, although their modern pronunciations are quite different; see Gao, *Guzi tongjia huidian*, 896 and cf. Wang, *Gu wenzi tongjia shi li*, 124–25. I follow the majority of texts to call this man Shi She. Despite the shared surname, there is no recorded relationship between Shi She and Shi Tuoren.

<sup>103</sup> Although this has the form of a quotation, ostensibly from the Gentleman (*junzi* 君子) like the one that appears in *Zuo zhuan*, to voice similar moral judgments, I have not located this phrase in any other source, and so believe it to be Liu Xiang's.

<sup>104</sup> This is a quotation from *Lunyu*, though the transmitted version of that text reverses the

says, “That man / Is the corrector of the state.”<sup>105</sup> That describes Master Shi (i.e., Shi She). 君子聞之曰，貞夫，法哉。孔子曰，子爲父隱，父爲子隱，直在其中矣。詩曰，彼己之子，邦之司直。石子之謂也。<sup>106</sup>

Inclusion of these quotations certainly indicates approval of Shi She. But consideration of the whole narrative shows ambivalence, too, especially because Shi She chose to commit suicide against the command of his sovereign.<sup>107</sup> Shi Guangying insists that Liu Xiang did not hold Shi She up as a model, and that the story shows him as having “fallen into impiety” and being possessed of only limited honor.<sup>108</sup> This is especially evident when Liu Xiang’s version of this story is contrasted with that found in *Lüshi chungiu* 呂氏春秋, where Shi She is more directly praised.<sup>109</sup>

#### FILIALITY, HISTORY, AND MODES OF DYING

Michael Nylan has argued that Sima Qian’s historiography was driven by an essentially religious impulse under which his history acted as an offering to ensure that his lineage would persist into the future.<sup>110</sup> As I mentioned in the introduction, Liu Xiang agreed with Sima Qian that deaths differ, that some are important and others not. But Liu Xiang explicitly rejected entrusting one’s fate to supernatural entities, and through his anthologies, he provides examples of strictly mundane means to effect immortality. In his anthologies, the right death became a means to higher ends. The right death could win fame like Yuan Jingmu’s, or perhaps even preserve the state, like Hong Yan did. But there was also a risk that a wrong decision at the most important moment would destroy a reputation: devotion to duty like that of the crown prince of Jin or Zhuang Shan, or bravery combined with love

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order of son and father: “A father covers for his son, a son covers for his father; integrity lies therein”; see *Lunyu zhushu*, 13.7a; translation follows Yang, *Lunyu yi zhu*, 139.

<sup>105</sup> This is from the *Shijing* poem “Gao qiu” 羔裘 (Mao #80); *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, 4-3.1b [168]. The Mao version of this poem writes the compound *biji* with graphs 彼其. The text here has 彼己, a graphic variant reflected elsewhere as well, e.g., in a quotation of this poem in *Zuo zhuan*, 17th year of Duke Xiang; *Chungiu Zuo zhuan zhushu*, 38.15a [649]. It is possible that this variation reflects a difference between lines of *Shijing* transmission; cf. Wang Xianqian, *Shi Sanjia yi jishu* 詩三家義集疏 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1988), 346-47.

<sup>106</sup> *Xin xu*, 7.13b-14a.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. also the thematically similar case of Li Li 李離, a magistrate who committed suicide over the objections of his ruler; *Xin xu*, 7.14a-15a.

<sup>108</sup> *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7.953.

<sup>109</sup> Chen, *Lüshi chungiu xin jiaoshi*, 19.1256: “Shi Zhu [=Shi She] as a man can be called both loyal and filial” 石渚之爲人臣也，可謂忠且孝矣。

<sup>110</sup> Michael Nylan, “Sima Qian: A True Historian?,” *Early China* 23-24 (1998-99): 203-46.

for one's mother like that of Master Zhuang, could not prevent a man from spoiling his fame through an improper death.

Liu Xiang incorporates many tales that highlight the tension between filiality and loyalty with a focus on men forced to make a mortal choice between them. Liu gave the greatest weight to familial responsibility. Everything else came second – including service owed to the ruler. As mentioned, in Han times the tension between duty to the family and to the state was most often resolved in favor of public service.<sup>111</sup> Liu Xiang's view was contrary to this, and he seemed to have accorded with the values of Ru 儒 scholars of pre-imperial times.<sup>112</sup>

Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 noted that Liu Xiang's works generally demonstrate an abiding interest in preserving clan lineages, particularly that of the Liu 劉 clan, the Han imperial house, of which Xiang himself was a member.<sup>113</sup> Liu Xiang was concerned about the untoward power wielded by members of the consort clans, especially the Wang family in the time of Emperor Cheng 成 (Liu Ao 劉鷲, reg. 32–7 BCE).<sup>114</sup> Nor were Liu's fears misplaced: when the Western Han dynasty was ended to be replaced by the Xin 新 dynasty (9–23), the usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (reg. 9–23) was a member of that clan.

In the cases of the crown prince of Jin and Master Zhuang of Bian, it is explicitly stated that consideration of the fate of the family should temper the courses of action, counterbalancing personal honor. It is not that Liu Xiang believed suicide or other willing death was intrinsically bad, as the examples of Hong Yan and others show. But it all too often resulted in a failure to uphold one's familial duties. Since suicide for whatever reason, including honor, could weaken a lineage, and especially the imperial lineage, Liu Xiang viewed it as a risk. *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan* portray the devotion to preserving moral uprightness in even the most extreme cases – positively in many of those. But at the same time, Liu Xiang recognized a greater danger in underestimating the importance of individual life of each lineage member, even in

<sup>111</sup> Brown, *Politics of Mourning*, 30–32 and passim; for studies of how the tension between duty to family and to the state played out in Han times, see Anne Cheng, “Rites et lois sous les Han: l’apologie de la vengeance dans le *Gongyang Zhuan*,” in *En suivant la Voie Royale: Mélanges en hommage à Léon Vandermeersch*, ed. Jacques Gernet and Marc Kalinowski (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1997), 85–98; and cf. Nicolas Zufferey, “Debates on Filial Vengeance during the Han Dynasty,” in *Dem Text ein Freund: Erkundungen des chinesischen Altertums – Robert H. Gassmann gewidmet*, ed. Roland Altenburger, Martin Lehnert, and Andrea Riemenschneider (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 77–90.

<sup>112</sup> Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 84, 240 n. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Xu, *Liang Han sixiangshi*, 3:99.

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g., *Han shu*, 36.1966.

the face of humiliation. One who died unnecessarily, or when higher principle did not permit it, could doom his reputation for all time. The ancient ideal of filial piety, duty to one's family and lineage, required one to avoid death and remain alive as long as possible, and use the accumulated wisdom of a life, together with the moment of clarity at the time of death, to ensure the most efficacious end.