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Unwholesome Bodies: Reading the Sign of the Amputated Foot in Early China

ABSTRACT:

Early Chinese philosophical, historiographic, and divinatory texts point to a common anxiety regarding the maintenance of the wholeness of the body. Mutilating punishments served as indices that signified the crimes and criminal status of those affected. They effectively destroyed their *de* (character, power, or charisma). Yet, texts from a variety of genres and philosophical positions subverted the conventional signification of the amputation of the foot. Narrative accounts about Sun Bin, Yu Quan, and Bian He invert the signification of mutilation, presenting exemplary figures whose amputated feet become indices of talent, loyalty, or self-sacrifice. Three stories of amputees from the *Zhuangzi* go further still in undermining this conventional signification. While the rare wholeness of character of such exemplary figures in the “De chong fu” chapter is put into sharp relief against the unwhole state of their disfigured bodies, their mutilations – as signs – are themselves defaced and unreadable. It shows that mutilation means little or nothing to those who understand people: those who read unwhole bodies in the conventional manner prove to be poor judges of character.

KEYWORDS:

Zhuangzi; law; punishment; signs; mutilation; de

Frantz Kafka’s “In The Penal Colony” (1919) relates a conversation between two anonymous figures, a Traveller and an Officer, the latter of whom is presiding over the execution of a Condemned Man. The execution is performed by a machine that writes the very law the prisoner has violated into his flesh. The Officer explains to the Traveller: “Our sentence does not sound severe. The law which a condemned man has violated is inscribed on his body with the Harrow. This Condemned Man, for example,” and the Officer pointed to the man, “will have inscribed on his body, ‘Honour your superiors!’”¹ The Officer makes it clear that the inscription is meant to be read:

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¹ Franz Kafka, Ian Johnston, trans., *The Metamorphosis, A Hunger Artist, In the Penal Colony, and Other Stories* (Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2009), p. 74.

“Read it,” said the Officer. “I can’t,” said the Traveller. “But it’s clear,” said the Officer. “It’s very elaborate,” said the Traveller evasively, “but I can’t decipher it.” “Yes,” said the Officer, smiling and putting the folder back again, “it’s not calligraphy for school children. One has to read it a long time. You, too, would finally understand it clearly. Of course, it has to be a script that isn’t simple. You see, it’s not supposed to kill right away, but on average over a period of twelve hours. The turning point is set for the sixth hour. There must also be many, many embellishments surrounding the basic script. The essential script moves around the body only in a narrow belt. The rest of the body is reserved for decoration. Can you now appreciate the work of the Harrow and of the whole apparatus? Just look at it!”²

Kafka’s story lays bare the relationship between the sign of the punished body and that which it signifies – the legal status of the Condemned Man and the terrifying power of those who control the legal apparatus. But while Kafka made explicit the connection between subjugated bodies and the body politic, he did not invent it. When a legal authority employs mutilating punishments, it effectively displays its power and announces the criminal status of punished persons directly through their bodies. Mutilation is not only punitive in function, but epideictic. Decipherable even to those who cannot decode written language, mutilating punishments are signs that demand to be read and are readable by all.³

Along with forced labor and fines, mutilating punishments served as a major component of the early Chinese legal apparatus prior to 167 BC, when tattooing, amputation of the nose, and amputation of the foot were abolished.⁴ Excavated legal documents and skeletal remains show that tattooing and amputation were in fact employed through the

² Ibid., pp. 78–79.

³ The mark of mutilation was distinct from other types of physical abnormalities, such as those resulting from disease or birth defect, in that it bespoke the criminal history of the mutilated person and that it bore the unambiguous stamp of power. Olivia Milburn has effectively demonstrated that other types of physical abnormalities did not generally disqualify one for participation in ritual or politics, or even from inheriting the throne of a domain. Moreover, Milburn shows that an abnormal appearance at birth might be interpreted as a sign of inborn malevolence or an exalted destiny in texts such as *Zuo zhuan*. See her “Marked out for Greatness? Perceptions of Deformity and Physical Impairment in Ancient China,” *MS* 55 (2007), pp. 1–22. The bodies of mutilated persons were marked in highly specific ways, however, that by convention suggested a clear history. The “De chong fu” chapter of *Zhuangzi* (discussed below) is remarkable in that it denies the conventional meaning of the sign of the amputated foot and places mutilated persons and persons with other types of physical abnormalities in a common category.

⁴ A.F.P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Han Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1955), pp. 124–25.

Qin dynasty (221–207 BC).⁵ Albert Galvany, in his excellent work on amputees, has shown that “physical and moral integrity” were largely regarded as coextensive in early China; to be unable to walk was to be disqualified from performing certain rituals, and to be mutilated was, according to some accounts, to be less than fully human.⁶ In early China, the body was the outward manifestation of the inner character, and those whose bodies had been made incomplete by mutilating punishments became ritually and socially abject. Mutilation was not just a punishment but, in my own view, an index that pointed toward the crimes and criminal status of those condemned to it. Like other indexical signs, such as footprints or bullet holes, marks in the body indicate and call to mind the events responsible for their creation. Lack of integrity in the body implied lack of integrity in the person. To be unwhole of body 身 was to be unwholesome of character 德.⁷

At least, that is how things appeared. The vagaries of recognition – the process of differentiating those who were loyal or talented from those who were secretly self-serving or subtly inept – preoccupied thinkers, administrators, and readers of history in early China. The problem of recognition prompted the production of technical manuals and philosophical debates on the subject of physiognomy, narratives

⁵ A.F.P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), D 1, 100, 105. Excepting front matter, citations for this book are given according to the group and item numbers that Hulsewé assigns to the texts. Several Qin tombs discovered at the Longgang archaeological site in Hubei contained bodies of persons whose feet had been amputated. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 湖北省文物考古研究所, Xiaogan diqu bowu guan 孝感地區博物館, and Yunmeng xian bowu guan 雲夢縣博物館, eds., “Hubei Yunmeng Longgang Qin Han mudi dierci fajue jianbao” 湖北雲夢龍崗秦漢墓地第二次發掘簡報, *Jiang Han kaogu* 江漢考古 1 (1993), pp. 40–51. In M6, the remains of an amputee were found with several hundred slips of text related to the maintenance of gardens. The tomb occupant was also found with an intact placard placed about his waist. The editors of *Longgang Qin jian* suspect that the placard was created to announce that the tomb occupant had returned to commoner status so that he would not be identified as a criminal in the afterlife as a result of his amputated feet; Zhongguo wenwu yanjiu suo 中國文物研究所 and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo, eds., *Longgang Qin jian* 龍崗秦簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2001), p. 7.

⁶ Albert Galvany, “Debates on Mutilation: Bodily Preservation and Ideology in Early China,” *Asiatische Studien* 64.1 (2009), pp. 69–71.

⁷ The notion of *de* 德 is difficult to translate into English and decisions concerning its translation often must be made on a case by case basis. “Virtue” is the most conventional translation, but workable only when understood primarily in the sense of the Latin *virtus*. Arthur Waley, who preferred the translation “power,” explains in the introduction to his classic translation of the *Daode jing* 道德經 that “*Virtus* originally meant the inherent power in a person or thing; which is very different from what we mean by virtue” (*The Way and Its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* [New York: Grove, 1958], p. 20). Power, in my view, conjures up a modern sense of large-scale networks through which various social groups maintain or compete for prestige, wealth, and dominance, rather than the special species of power located in the individual. As the sense of *de* in this article is used with respect to individual persons and their bodies, I have employed the translation “character,” which I believe to be imperfect but workable in this context.

centered on minute ritual slip-ups that revealed the hidden characters of court officials, and poems of protest by men claiming that their own talents or loyalty had gone unnoticed or been misunderstood. It was by no means easy to separate the wheat from the chaff. Yet amputees were exceptions, persons marked by a sign of criminality in a world populated, for the most part, by inscrutable people.

The sign of mutilation carried a highly conventionalized and eminently legible meaning. Corporal punishment was a spectacle that served both to display the abject status of those who were punished and to project the power of those authorized to legitimately carry out acts of violence.⁸ Concern with maintaining the integrity of the body does not seem to have diminished after the abolition of most mutilating punishments in the early Western Han 漢 (206 BC–8 AD). While the stories of amputees in the “De chong fu” 德充符 (“Tallies of Complete Character”) chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, for instance, are not frequently cited in Han texts, their survival indicates their presence in at least some Han textual communities. They were part of an ongoing discourse that continued into the Western Han (and beyond), even though they were presumably composed prior to the Qin 秦 unification (221 BC). Thus, while *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*), the eponymously titled *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BC), and *Zhuangzi* are presumably earlier, and while *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Senior Archivist*, ca. 100 BC) is later, both Western Han and pre-Qin texts may be brought to bear on one another.

At the core of this discourse was the identity between the integrity of the body and the integrity of character. The fulcrum of this identity is *de* 德, character, or virtue. *De* is a physical substance in the body, as discussed in *Mengzi* 孟子, in the excavated “Wu xing pian” 五行篇 (“Five Kinds of Action”), and in *Huainanzi* 淮南子.⁹ Many parts of *Zhuangzi*, narrative accounts in both philosophical and historical texts, and speeches recorded in *Shiji* evince a shared anxiety regarding the maintenance of the wholeness of the body. The identity between the body and the character of a person intensifies this anxiety, but does

⁸ Building on Max Weber’s (1864–1920) formulation of the state as a “human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory,” Mark Edward Lewis identifies the first major role of legitimate violence in the context of early China “as compelling force, as the decisive element of the political”; *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY, 1990), p. 1, emphasis in original. In a very basic sense, the political order is defined and made visible through acts of violence. Mutilated bodies, unlike the corpses of those who have been executed, persist over time and are therefore particularly suited to manifesting political power.

⁹ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 156–60.

not go unchallenged. Texts from a variety of genres and philosophical positions subverted the conventional signification of mutilating punishments. Narratives surrounding mutilated persons of exceptional character invert the conventional meaning of the sign. In the stories concerning Yu Quan 鬻拳 in *Zuo zhuan* and about Mr. He 和氏 in *Han Feizi*, the amputated feet of the protagonists are indices of their self-sacrificing loyalty and, in the case of Mr. He, penetrating discernment. Sun Bin 孫臏 (4th c. BC) loses his feet to a jealous rival who intends to mark him as a criminal, but in his *Shiji* biography that sign serves as an index of his great talent. While these narratives turn the usual meaning of the sign on its head, they nonetheless preserve elements of its basic structure. The three stories of amputees in the “De chong fu” chapter of *Zhuangzi*, however, go much further in denying the identity between body and character, obliterating any structural connection between outward form and inner virtue. These narratives deface the sign of mutilation, rendering it an unreadable cipher, thereby presenting a powerful critique of those who insist on attaching conventional meaning to the amputated foot.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AS SPECTACLE

Corporal punishment in early China was a public process that displayed both the legal transgressions of convicted criminals as well as the power of authorities to destroy the integrity of criminal bodies. The term used for beheading, *qi shi* 棄市, literally means “to be abandoned in the marketplace.” *Zhe* 磔, a term traditionally read as meaning “to be torn apart by carriages,” most likely meant “to be executed and exposed.”¹⁰ *Yao zhan* 要斬 consisted in “cutting the body in half at the waist.”¹¹ Such punishments provided passersby with what must have been both a lesson in civil obedience and a vicarious, violent thrill. In addition to penalties intended to bring about the death of the accused, lesser mutilating punishments were also imposed. We can ascertain from the *Hanshu’s* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*) “Xing fa zhi” 刑法志 (“Treatise on Punishments and Laws”) that these were remembered

¹⁰ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, p. 14.

¹¹ Hulsewé believes that a case of *yao zhan* is documented in D 41 of the “Answers to Questions Concerning Ch’in Statutes” though the word *yao* is not actually used in the text (*Remnants of Ch’in Law*, D 41, n. 4). He translates, “those who praise the enemy in order to frighten the mind of the population will be dishonoured. What is ‘to dishonour’? To dishonour him when alive, and when the dishonouring is over, to cut him asunder – that is what is meant. 譽適(敵)以恐眾心者, 戮(戮).” “戮(戮)者可(何)如? 生戮(戮), 戮(戮)之已乃斬之之謂殿(也).” Chinese text follows *CHANT (CHinese ANcient Texts) Database* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1998) <<http://www.chant.org>>.

as having been in force since Zhou times (1046 BC–256 BC).¹² Citing ancient Zhou laws 昔周之法 concerning the collective punishment of domains 刑邦國, the treatise presents the imposition of the “Five Punishments” as a moderate method for punishing a domain, involving the execution of 500 individuals and the mutilation of 2,000 more: “The Five Punishments consist in tattooing the faces of 500, amputating the noses of 500, castrating 500, amputating one foot of 500, and executing 500 五刑: 墨罪五百, 劓罪五百, 宮罪五百, 剕罪五百, 殺罪五百.”¹³ The dead are displayed in the marketplace, while the mutilated are to occupy loci of official authority and liminal spaces throughout the domain:

Those who are executed are to be exposed in the marketplace. Those who are tattooed are to be sent to guard the gates. Those whose noses are amputated are sent to guard the passes. Those who are castrated are sent to guard the palace. Those whose feet are amputated are sent to guard the gardens. Those who are left intact are sent to guard the stores. 凡殺人者踣諸市, 墨者使守門, 劓者使守關, 宮者使守內, 剕者使守囿, 完者使守積。¹⁴

The bodies of those who have been mutilated or killed carry meaning and are placed in locations associated with political power or easily visible to the public at large. They demand to be read. They demonstrate to subjects of the criminal domain the consequences of its crime and the power of its punisher. Every passage through the gates of a city means an encounter with a tattooed countenance; every entrance into a pass means meeting a disfigured face. Like the writing on the body of the Condemned Man, the marks in their flesh are not immediately legible as language, but nonetheless hail passersby: “Honour Your Superiors!”

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AS AN INDEX OF EXCESS

Resistance to the state’s power as exhibited through the spectacle of corporal punishment came in the form of early writers’ arguments. Many of these held that excessive use of such punishments indicated callous and ineffective governance. The unjust application of mutilating punishments was a common theme.

¹² Cf. *Zhou li zhushu* 周禮注疏, j. 36, pp. 242, 245, in Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), ed., *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980).

¹³ Ban Gu 班固 (32 AD–92 AD), *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962; hereafter, *HS*) 23, p. 1091, translation after Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 330.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Recent scholarship has shown that there was in fact a high level of continuity between the Qin and Western Han legal and penal systems.¹⁵ Writers in the Western Han and later historical periods nonetheless maligned the Qin as an exemplar of cruel governance, treating its downfall as a cautionary tale for later rulers. In the early Western Han, Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169) argued that high-ranking ministers should not be subjected to corporal punishment of any type, lest they become unwilling to offer critical advice. Abolishing corporal punishment for high-ranking officials would be one step toward avoiding the fate of the previous dynasty.¹⁶ By the late Western Han, reformist political thinkers favoring the institution of governance centered on moral suasion identified the Qin as a period of particularly poor governance and excessive punishment. A passage in *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 (*Discourse on Salt and Iron*) representing reformist views cites the excessive use of mutilating punishments under Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 (r. 221–210), to the extent that “cut-off noses filled up baskets and chopped-off feet filled up carts 劓鼻盈筐，斷足盈車，” as a key reason for the fall of the dynasty. It urges Western Han rulers to adopt moral suasion 德教 rather than punishment as their primary means of bringing order to the empire.¹⁷

In times of truly excellent governance, corporal punishments were said to have been replaced with symbols. A fragment of the pre-Qin writing known as *Shenzi* 慎子 explains:

As for the penalties applied under the Zhou, they employed a cloth veil in lieu of facial tattooing, a tassel of grass in lieu of amputation of the nose, straw sandals in lieu of amputation of the foot, mug-

¹⁵ The Qin legal system was perhaps no harsher than that of the early Western Han. Comparing legal documents discovered at the early-Western Han site Zhangjiashan (*terminus ad quem* 186 BC) with those discovered at the Qin site Shuihudi 睡虎地, Michael Loewe argues that early Western Han law was very similar to Qin law. Though the Qin, like the Western Han and later dynasties, did employ severe punishments, excavated texts evince concern with avoiding the misapplication of those punishments. Charles Sanft has shown that legal proceedings in the Qin were a type of ritual aimed at seeing through attempts at deception and uncovering subjective factors surrounding crimes, such as the intent of the accused. Qin legal documents, such as “Fengzhen” 封診 discovered at Shuihudi, argue against the use of fear and torture in interrogation, buttressing the perceived fairness of legal proceedings. Also drawing on “Fengzhen,” Li Xueqin has demonstrated that Qin legal proceedings employed sophisticated forensic techniques to distinguish, for example, suicide victims from murder victims, and to discover whether or not miscarriages had been caused by physical abuse. See Michael Loewe, “The Laws of 186 BCE,” in Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, eds., *China’s Early Empires: A Re-appraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010), pp. 254–55; Charles Sanft, “Notes on Penal Ritual and Subjective Truth under the Qin,” *AM* 3d ser. 21.2 (1998), pp. 35–57; and Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Jianbo yiji yu xueshu shi* 簡帛佚籍與學術史 (Nanchang: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), pp. 113–15.

¹⁶ *HS* 48, p. 2255.

¹⁷ Huan Kuan 桓寬 (fl. 73 BC), comp., *Yantie lun* (SKQS edn., Intranet 2007), j. 12, chap. 58, p. 23a.

wort knee-covers in lieu of castration, and collarless cloth robes in lieu of execution. These were the [same] penalties applied under the sage-king Shun. Cutting off people's limbs and tattooing their faces is called "punishment." Making marks on their robes or caps, or having them wear different pendants or clothing, is called "shaming." In high antiquity, they employed shaming and the people did not violate the laws. In the present age, we employ punishment and the people do not obey.¹⁸ 有周之誅，以幪中當墨，以草纓當劓，以扉履當劓，以艾鞞當宮，布衣無領當大辟；此有虞之誅也。斬人肢體，鑿其肌膚，謂之刑；畫衣冠，異章服；謂之戮。上世用戮而民不犯也，當世用刑而民不從也。

While these symbols seem benign in contrast to the corporal punishments they replace, they nonetheless mark those who bear them with shame.¹⁹ The fragment suggests that the symbols were more effective in achieving control than mutilation itself. Other texts, including the chapter titled "Chi mi" 侈靡 ("On Extravagance in Spending") in *Guanzi* 管子 and the chapter "Wu xing" 五刑 ("Five Punishments") of *Bo hu tong* 白虎通 (*Debates at White Tiger Hall*), also claim that in high antiquity symbolic markers were employed in place of corporal punishments.²⁰

Historical precedents likewise foretold ill-consequences for rulers and officials who applied corporal punishments mercilessly or without cause. Liang Juxin 梁車新 was dismissed from his post as magistrate of Ye by the marquis of Zhao after having ordered the penal dismemberment of his own older sister, who had climbed the wall into his city after arriving to visit her younger brother in the evening when the gates were closed.²¹ Duke Yi of Qi 齊懿公 (r. 612–609) had a man's foot cut off after losing a hunting competition to him. He later took the man's son, Bing Chu 邴歅, as a servant. Bing Chu, along with the charioteer Yong Zhi 庸織, who had his own grievances against the duke, murdered

¹⁸ The fragment is included in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (comp. 984; SKQS edn.) 645, p. 8a.

¹⁹ A familiar parallel may be found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850). The novel's protagonist, Hester Prynne, is forced to wear a scarlet "A" that marks her as an adulteress.

²⁰ Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Wen Yiduo 聞一多, and Xu Weiyu 許維通, *Guanzi jijiao* 管子集校 (Beijing: Kexue, 1956), vol. 1, j. 12, *pian* 35, pp. 540–41; Chen Li 陳立 (1809–1869), annot., *Wu Zeyu* 吳則虞, punct. and additional notes, *Bo Hu tong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994), vol. 2, j. 9, pp. 438–39.

²¹ Accounts of this story occur in both *Han Feizi* and in a fragment of Liu Xiang's *Xinxu* 新序 (*New Arrangement*). Neither text specifies which marquis of Zhao or makes clear when Liang Juxin was supposed to have lived. See Wang Xianshen 王先慎 (1859–1922), annot., *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解 (Zhuzi jicheng edn., vol. 5), j. 12, chap. 33, p. 230, and Zhang Guoquan 張國鈞, *Xinxu jiaozhu* 新序校注 (Chengdu: Rugu, 1944), vol. 2, j. 11, p. 1b. The fragment is drawn from *Taiping yulan* 517, p. 6b.

him.²² In contrast, sympathy for the punished could save one's hide. In an often retold story, Ji Gao 季羔, a disciple of Kongzi 孔子 (traditional dates 551–479), encountered a gatekeeper, whose foot he had personally amputated, while fleeing from political enemies who had taken control of the Wey 衛 capital. The gatekeeper hid him until the coup was over. When Ji Gao asked the gatekeeper why he had not taken his revenge, the man explained that Ji Gao had been visibly distressed as he had applied the punishment and had had no real choice in the matter. Ji Gao's humanity and sympathy had saved him.²³

Corporal punishment emerges as an index of excess in the context of pragmatic discussions concerning the consequences of carrying out such punishments. On a grand scale, Jia Yi points to the danger that wise officials might fail to offer invaluable advice for fear of punishment; *Shenzi*, *Yantie lun*, and other texts point to rampant crime and rebellion as consequences of excessive punishment of the broader population. Punished bodies appear when regimes fail to maintain real order. On a smaller scale, the stories of Liang Juxin and duke Yi of Qi point to disastrous consequences for individuals who apply corporal punishment without warrant or mercy. Ji Gao, by contrast, appears as an exemplar who maintains his sense of humanity and justice even as he amputates a man's foot. Though corporal punishment may be allowable in certain circumstances, this group of texts suggests that it should be practiced with restraint and avoided whenever possible. Dire consequences obtain for both regimes and individuals that employ such punishments to excess.

IRONIC FIGURES OF INTEGRITY

Where indices of excess focus on the agents of corporal punishment, anecdotes centered on amputees themselves draw attention to the character of mutilated persons. The destruction of the wholeness of the body conventionally signified, and performatively produced, the destruction of one's character and one's reputation. In certain narratives, however, the sign of mutilation takes on an inverted significance, signaling honor rather than degradation. The characters at the centers of these narratives emerge as ironic figures of integrity. Yu Quan chops off his own foot after violently remonstrating with his lord. Mr. He is punished with the loss of one foot, then another, as he presents an un-

²² Liu Xiang, comp., *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1937), vol. 1, j. 6, p. 57.

²³ See Wang Su 王肅 (195–256), comp., *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1922), vol. 1, j. 2, pp. 3a–4a; *Han Feizi jijie*, j. 12, chap. 33, pp. 218–19; *Shuoyuan*, vol. 3, j. 14, p. 143.

polished jade to a series of rulers who fail to appreciate the rare and precious materials embodied both in the object he presents and in his own person. Sun Bin loses his feet not because of any criminal act, but on account of his talent as a military strategist. The basic signification of the sign of the amputated foot is the ethically, legally, and ritually base status of the amputee. However, in the stories of Yu Quan, Mr. He, and Sun Bin amputated feet demand to be read as indices of self-sacrifice, unwavering loyalty, or singular talent.

A high minister of Chu, Yu Quan is figured as a recalcitrant but wise minister who was not only willing to offer unwelcome counsel, but would go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that his advice was adopted, no matter what consequences he might personally suffer. The story of the amputation of his foot is framed by the narrative of the events that lead to his ultimate suicide:²⁴

In spring of the nineteenth year (of the reign of duke Zhuang of Lu 魯莊公, 675 BC), the viscount of Chu, defending against enemy forces, suffered a great defeat at Jin. When he returned, Yu Quan refused to allow him through the gate. Thereupon, the viscount led a campaign against Huang and defeated the armies of Huang at Jieling. When the viscount arrived at Jiao, he grew ill, and died on the *gengshen* day, in the sixth month, during the summer. Yu Quan buried him in Evening Chamber, committed suicide, and was himself buried at the gates to the mausoleum.²⁵ 十九年春, 楚子禦之, 大敗於津. 還, 鬻拳弗納, 遂伐黃. 敗黃師于蹇陵. 還, 及湫, 有疾. 夏六月庚申, 卒. 鬻拳葬諸夕室. 亦自殺也, 而葬於經皇.

Yu Quan, occupying the office of Grand Gatekeeper, refused to allow his defeated ruler to step foot in his city, so long as he remained unsuccessful in battle. However, when the ruler returned victorious but seriously ill, Yu Quan himself not only buried the ruler, but having broken with the normative rules of propriety conducting the relationship between ministers and rulers, ended his own life. The narration in

²⁴ All citations of the narrative surrounding Yu Quan refer to Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan jizhu* 春秋左傳集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 210–11. I benefited from consulting the translation of the same passage in Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2016) 1, pp. 185–87.

²⁵ My translation of *xishi* 夕室 as “Evening Chamber” follows *ibid.*, p. 186, n. 115, which explains that the term may refer to a place name of Chu burial grounds. My translation of *die huang* 經皇 follows Du Yu’s 杜預 (222–286 AD) commentary, which glosses the term as *zhongqian que* 冢前闕 (“before the gatehouses of the mausoleum”). See *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhushu* 春秋左傳注疏 (SKQS edn.), j. 8, p. 25b.

Zuo zhuan then flashes back to tell an even more powerful, but structurally similar story:

Early on, Yu Quan vigorously remonstrated with the viscount of Chu, but the viscount refused to heed him. Yu Quan came upon him with a blade, threatening the viscount and forcing him to heed his counsel. Yu Quan then said, “I have threatened my lord with a blade, and there is no crime greater than this!” Thereupon, he cut off his own foot. The people of Chu made him the Grand Gatekeeper, calling him Taibo, and made it so that the office could be passed to his descendants. 初，鬻拳強諫楚子。楚子弗從。臨之以兵，懼而從之。鬻拳曰：“吾懼君以兵，罪莫大焉。”遂自刖也。楚人以爲大閘，謂之大伯。使其後掌之。

Following Yu Quan’s amputation of his own foot, he is made a gatekeeper, which under normal circumstances would be a low status position, appropriate to be filled by a man who had suffered a mutilating punishment. But in Yu Quan’s case, the title is given the honorific prefix, “Grand,” and honorable and valuable enough that it is worth passing on to his descendants. Moreover, when the people of Chu call Yu Quan “Taibo,” literally “Great Uncle,” the anecdote evokes the figure of the legendary uncle of king Wen of Zhou 周文王 (trad. d. 1046 BC), Taibo 大伯, who mutilated his own body with tattoos, and fled to the distant barbarian land that later became the domain of Wu, so that the son of his younger brother could succeed to the throne of Zhou and found the dynasty.²⁶

The anecdote concludes with the anonymous Noble Man, a rhetorical feature of *Zuo zhuan*, praising Yu Quan. “Yu Quan may be said to have cherished his lord. He counseled his lord and brought upon himself a mutilating punishment. And even once he had suffered that punishment, he did not cease to bring his lord into alignment with the good. 鬻拳可謂愛君矣：諫以自納於刑，刑猶不忘納君於善。” Yu Quan’s mutilated body is read as a signifier of his deep affection for and loyalty to his lord, the polar opposite of the abject social and ritual status the sign of the amputated foot conventionally expresses.

The tragic story of Mr. He likewise portrays a loyal and virtuous man. Mr. He’s own penetrating discernment of the hidden virtues of the unpolished jade stands in sharp contrast to the lack of discernment of the Chu kings who fail, one after another, to recognize his worth.

²⁶ See Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86) *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959; hereafter *SJ*) 31, p. 1445. While Taibo later becomes a common kinship term, the phrase is generally tied to the specific figure of King Wen’s famed granduncle in Western Han and earlier texts.

Unlike Yu Quan, Mr. He's character is recognized only after two kings have died and both his feet have been unjustly amputated. Thus, while Mr. He's amputated limbs, like those of Yu Quan, ultimately come to signify his self-sacrificing virtue, they also signify the arbitrary, unwise execution of political power and the blindness of the Chu kings and the experts they employ at court.

The passage begins with an explanation of how Mr. He was labeled a liar after experts in jades failed to appreciate the interior of the object by examining its external features:²⁷

Mr. He, a man of Chu, obtained a fine raw jade in the mountains of Chu, and he offered it to king Li ²⁸ (r. 757-741 BC). King Li ordered an expert in jades to examine (*xiang*) it. The expert in jades said, "It is an ordinary stone." The king took Mr. He for a liar, and had his left foot cut off. When king Li died, king Wu (r. 740-690 BC) ascended to the throne. Mr. He again offered his raw jade to king Wu. King Wu ordered an expert in jades to examine (*xiang*) it. Again the expert said, "It is an ordinary stone." This king too took Mr. He for a liar and had his right foot cut off. 楚人和氏得玉璞楚山中, 奉而獻之厲王. 厲王使玉人相之. 玉人曰: "石也." 王以和爲誑, 而刖其左足. 及厲王薨, 武王即位. 和又奉其璞而獻之武王. 武王使玉人相之. 又曰: "石也." 王又以和爲誑, 而刖其右足.

For each of the occasions when Mr. He presents the jade to court, Han Fei uses the word *xiang* to describe the mode through which the court experts examine the jade. This is the same word that is used to describe the examination of the physiognomy of animals and human beings in order to determine their value or, in some cases, their destiny, a practice that had been explicitly rejected by Han Fei's teacher, Xun Qing 荀卿 (3rd c. BC), in his famous essay, "Against Physiognomy" ("Fei xiang" 非相).²⁹ Han Fei implies that neither uncut jades nor human beings can be reliably evaluated simply by examining their external, physical features. Some fifty years after Mr. He lost his second foot, king Wen (r. 689-677 BC) ascended to the throne. Mr. He crawled into the mountains of Chu, where he wept tears and blood for three days and three nights:

²⁷ The passages pertaining to Mr. He are drawn from *Han Feizi jijie*, j. 4, chap. 13, pp. 66-68. Han Feizi's discussion that follows the narrative points to the ubiquity of the problem of recognition in early China and the dangers this posed for both worthy officials and the sovereigns who sought them.

²⁸ King Li is apparently the Fen Mao 蚡冒 who, according to *SJ* 40, p. 1694, occupied the throne of Chu for seventeen years before his death. His heir was murdered by king Wu.

²⁹ See Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Zhuzi jicheng edn., vol. 2), j. 3, *pian* 5, pp. 46-56.

When the King heard this, he sent a man to ask about the reason for it. The man said to Mr. He, “Those in the world who have had their feet cut off are many indeed. Why do you cry with such sorrow?” Mr. He replied, “It is not that I find it to be sorrowful to have lost my feet, but that I find it sorrowful for a precious jade to be labeled an ordinary stone and for an incorruptible officer to be called a liar. This is what I find to be sorrowful.” The king then had the expert in jade cut and polish (*li*) the raw jade,³⁰ and obtained the precious object within it. Thereupon he called it “The Jewel of Mr. He.” 王聞之, 使人問其故, 曰: “天下之別者多矣, 子奚哭之悲也?” 和曰: “吾非悲別也, 悲夫寶玉而題之以石, 貞士而名之以誑, 此吾所以悲也。” 王乃使玉人理其璞而得寶焉, 遂命曰“和氏之璧。”

Mr. He earns recognition, and the signification of his amputated limbs shifts from denoting his status as a foolish liar who presented, on two occasions, a worthless object to the throne. Instead, his absent feet come to signify, in part, his own capacity to decipher the internal value of the uncut jade from its external appearance. The jade experts at court and the kings they serve, however, fail to understand the value of the jade until they cut into it, just as they fail to appreciate the value of Mr. He until long after they amputate his limbs. When Mr. He does attain recognition, the sign of his missing foot comes to signify his loyalty to the court, his capacity for recognition, and the injustice of the punishments he has suffered.³¹

³⁰ In rendering *li* 理 “cut and polish,” I follow Burton Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1963, 1964), p. 80.

³¹ Mr. He’s loyalty and self-sacrifice were not lost on Han readers, who generally referred to him as Bian He 卞和. In a memorial sent from prison, Zou Yang 鄒陽 (fl. 150 BC) cited Bian He, along with Li Si 李斯 (ca. 280–208 BC), Bi Gan 比干 (trad. d. 1046 BC), and Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484 BC) as exemplary figures whose loyalty earned them death or dismemberment. Zou Yang’s rhetoric succeeded, and he regained his position at the court of Liu Wu 劉武 (d. 144 BC), king of Liang (S783, p. 2471; Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han, and Xin Periods: 221 BC–24 AD* [Leiden: Brill, 2000], pp. 753–54). Du Ye 杜鄴, in a 2 BC memorial criticizing emperor Ai’s favoritism toward the Ding 丁 and Fu 傅 families, cited Bian He as an exemplar. Not facing the dangers Bian He had faced, Du Ye claimed that he himself must be just as forthright (HS 85, p. 3475). Wang Chong 王充 (27-ca. 97 AD) wrote that the purpose of his *Lunheng* 論衡 (*Sorting and Weighing*) was to differentiate truth from falsehood in an age when men could not distinguish Bian He’s jade from an ordinary stone. See Huang Hui 黃暉, *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), vol. 4, j. 29, p. 1183. Elsewhere in his text, Wang cites Bian He’s story to prove or disprove two strange occurrences in the past. In the first, he cites it as corroboration for a story in which a certain Master Gao weeps blood (*Lunheng jiaoshi*, vol. 2, j. 8, p. 369). In the second, Wang cites Bian He’s story as evidence against a narrative in which Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 BC) caused a summer frost to fall by shouting at the sky. If such thing were possible, Wang reasons, surely a frost would have fallen in Chu when Bian He wept tears of blood (*Lunheng jiaoshi*, vol. 2, j. 15, pp. 657–58).

Sun Bin's 孫臏 (4th c. BC) case diverges from those of Yu Quan and Mr. He in that his amputated feet mark talent rather than loyalty. Sun Bin is punished on false pretenses at the hands of his rival, Pang Juan 龐涓 (4th c. BC). Early in his life, Sun had studied alongside Pang, who envied his considerable talent:

Sun Bin once studied military strategy with Pang Juan. Pang served Wei, attaining the post of general under king Hui (r. 369–335), yet he believed himself to be less capable than Sun. Because of this, he secretly summoned Sun. Sun came, and Pang, fearing that Sun was more worthy than he was himself, grew vexed at him. Thus, under the color of law, Pang punished Sun by having both his feet cut off and his face tattooed, desiring that he would be hidden away and none would see him.³² 孫臏嘗與龐涓俱學兵法。龐涓既事魏，得爲惠王將軍，而自以爲能不及孫臏，乃陰使召孫臏。臏至，龐涓恐其賢於己，疾之，則以法刑斷其兩足而黥之，欲隱勿見。

Pang Juan implements a conscious strategy of marking Sun Bin so as to render him ineligible for government service, cynically employing mutilating punishments in their conventional sense. Pang Juan lures Sun Bin to Wei, arraigns him on trumped up charges, and carries out the punishment so as to eliminate him as a potential rival. Amputated feet and a tattooed face leave no room for confusion; Pang identifies Sun as a recalcitrant criminal. Yet within the logic of Sima Qian's narrative the marks carry a different significance. They function as indices of Sun's capability. Unlike the jade experts who could not see the precious jewel within the stone that Mr. He presented to the kings of Chu, Pang recognizes Sun's talent, though envy prevents him from appreciating it. Sun's amputated feet and tattooed face powerfully remind the reader of exactly that which Pang intends to obscure – Sun's copious power as a military strategist.

Though Pang Juan might have brought Sun Bin to the court of Wei as an advisor, he instead makes an enemy of him. Ultimately, despite Sun's mutilated body, an emissary from Qi does recognize his great talent. The emissary secretly brings Sun back to Qi, where he gains the favor of the general Tian Ji 田忌 by proposing a winning stratagem for betting on horses. King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (r. 356–320) appoints Sun as a strategist 師. Sun later cites his punished form in his refusal to accept a promotion to the rank of general. When Wei and Qi come into direct conflict, Sun draws Pang into a trap:

³² *SJ* 65, p. 2162. The translation of the story of Sun Bin is my own. For a discussion of Sun Bin in the context of military divination, see Albert Galvany, "Signs, Clues, and Traces: Anticipation in Ancient Chinese Political and Military Texts," *EC* (2015), pp. 31–42.

Sun Bin kept account of [Pang's] movements and knew that he would arrive at Maling at dusk. The road to Maling is narrow, and beside it are many obstacles in which troops might lie in wait. Thus, he felled a great tree, whitened it, and wrote upon it: "Pang Juan will die beneath this tree." Thereupon, he ordered those Qi soldiers skilled in shooting to load their crossbows and lie in wait on both sides of the road. He commanded them: "When you see the fire set at dusk, let your arrows fly in unison." Pang as expected arrived at night beneath the felled tree, saw the writing on the whitened area, and lit a fire to illuminate it. Before he could finish reading the writing, the Qi soldiers all let their arrows fly from their myriad crossbows. The Wei soldiers, in great confusion, lost track of one another. Pang realized that he was at his wits' end and that his troops had been defeated.³³ 孫子度其行，暮當至馬陵。馬陵道狹，而旁多阻隘，可伏兵，乃斫大樹白而書之曰“龐涓死于此樹之下。”於是令齊軍善射者萬弩，夾道而伏，期曰“暮見火舉而俱發。”龐涓果夜至斫木下，見白書，乃鑽火燭之。讀其書未畢，齊軍萬弩俱發，魏軍大亂相失。龐涓自知智窮兵敗。

While Pang Juan once attempted to destroy him by marking his body, Sun Bin ultimately proves to be a much more capable manipulator of signs. He carefully observes Pang's movements, but also evinces a deep understanding of Pang's character, correctly predicting his precise

³³ *SJ* 65, p. 2164. Han readings recall Sun Bin's story as one of both tragedy and triumph. Like many other figures, he suffers at the hands of a jealous rival. Wang Fu's 王符 (ca. 76–157) chapter "Xian nan" 賢難 ("Worthies in Adversity") compares Sun Bin to Han Fei, who was brought to Qin and killed by his own former classmate, Li Si 李斯 (ca. 280–208). For Wang Fu, Sun Bin is one of many talented men, whose ranks include Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 347–ca. 277), Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169), Chao Cuo 晁/鼂錯 (d. 154 BC), and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195–ca. 104), who lost their lives or their positions to malevolent competitors. See Peng Duo 彭鐸, annot., *Qianfu lun jian jiao zheng* 潛夫論箋校正 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), j. 1, chap. 5, p. 44. Sima Qian, however, places Sun Bin among an overlapping set of figures in his "Letter to Ren'an," but emphasizes their achievements rather than their suffering: "When the Earl of the West (i.e. king Wen of Zhou, d. 1046 BC) was imprisoned, he developed the *Zhou yi* (*Changes of Zhou*); when Zhongni was a beggar he composed the *Chunqiu* (*Annals*); when Qu Yuan was exiled, he intoned "Lisao" (Encountering Sorrow); Zuo Qiuming (5th c. BC) lost his sight and produced *Guo yu* (*Tales of States*); once Sunzi had his feet amputated, he put his *Bing fa* (*Military Stratagems*) in order. 蓋西伯拘而演"周易"; 仲尼厄而作"春秋"; 屈原放逐，乃賦"離騷"; 左丘失明，厥有"國語"; 孫子黜腳，"兵法"修列。" Sima Qian most likely refers to *Qi Sunzi* 齊孫子 (*Master Sun of Qi*), the title immediately following *Wu Sunzi Bingfa* 吳孫子兵法 (*The Military Stratagems of Master Sun of Wu*) in the *Hanshu* bibliographical treatise (*HS* 30, pp. 1756–57). Despite the condition of their bodies, Sun Bin and Zuo Qiuming are remembered for their textual achievements. In this sense, they are particularly important models for Sima Qian, who chose castration rather than death so that he could complete the *Shiji*. "As for those such as Zuo Qiuming, who had no eyes, and Sunzi, who had his feet cut off, in the end they could not be employed. They retired and composed their texts, so as to vent their frustration, hoping to leave some empty words and make themselves seen. 及如左丘明無目，孫子斷足，終不可用，退論書策以舒其憤，思垂空文以自見。" (*HS* 62, p. 2735).

response to the sign inscribed on the tree. Pang himself lights the fire, signaling the Qi soldiers to fire on his own troops. Sun's amputated feet and tattooed face ultimately bear a double significance. Pang employs these signs as marks of criminality meant to efface Sun's talents. Yet ultimately, they come to stand for the very qualities that Pang intended to obscure. The narrative recognizes that unscrupulous officials might employ penal dismemberment for the purpose of deceit. The sign functions as a radical and permanent form of slander. The narrative also suggests, however, that observers can see past the outward sign of disfigurement and recognize the virtues of those who bear such marks. Pang's final words address Sun with contempt, yet nonetheless recognize that he will be remembered for his talent, rather than shunned and ignored due to his status as an amputee: "Thereupon, [Pang Juan] cut his own throat, saying: 'And so you have made your name you good-for-nothing!' 乃自剄, 曰: "遂成豎子之名!"³⁴

CHARACTER DISFIGURED:

TALLIES OF COMPLETE CHARACTER

Where the stories of Yu Quan, Mr. He, and Sun Bin invert the signification of the amputated foot so that it is transformed into a signifier of loyalty, self-sacrifice, or talent, the process of inversion nonetheless maintains the original structure of the relationship between signifier and signified. Though the amputated foot does not carry its usual abject meaning in these anecdotes, it nonetheless continues to carry a meaning, to tell a story, and to demand to be read. The stories of amputees in "De chong fu" are radically different. That chapter of *Zhuangzi* effaces the meaning of the sign of the amputated foot. Presenting a series of bumbling characters who attach conventional significance to the sign of mutilation, it disfigures convention, rendering the sign unreadable. Moreover, the "De chong fu" chapter, unlike the stories of Yu Quan, Mr. He, and Sun Bin, does not use the sign of amputation to mark any narrative in which the loss of the foot played any significant role, and discloses, only in the vaguest of terms, how the amputees came to lose their feet. Moreover, the compiler(s) of the chapter present, along with the amputees, stories of various other "freaks" whose physical deformities are presumably natural, rather than indices of punishment. This creates the sense that both physical deformities and mutilating pun-

³⁴ *SJ* 65, p. 2164.

ishments are unreasonable criteria to evaluate the worth or character of individuals.

Approximately the first half of the “De chong fu” chapter consists of the stories of three individuals who had lost their feet. The third, the story of a certain Shushan No-toes,³⁵ is the briefest and most straightforward.³⁶ Hobbling on his heels, Shushan pays a visit to Kongzi (known in the West as Confucius), who is respectfully designated by his courtesy name, Zhongni. Upon seeing Shushan, Kongzi immediately reads the sign of Shushan’s amputated feet in the conventional manner. Kongzi says, “You sir, were not careful, and since you have already run into such a calamity in the past, even though you come to me today, what good can it do? 子不謹, 前既犯患若是矣。雖今來, 何及矣?” Kongzi responds to Shushan’s incomplete body as a signifier of his unwholesome character. To the extent the body is to be identified with one’s character, once the integrity of one’s body is destroyed, the integrity of one’s character cannot be recovered. Shushan’s response, however, challenges the conventional view of the relationship between character and the body. “I did not know my task and frivolously used my body. This is the reason why I lost my feet. Now I have come to you, and still that [part of myself] more honorable than the feet remains, and for this reason, I wish to make it whole. 吾唯不知務而輕用吾身, 吾是以亡足。今吾來也, 猶有尊足者存, 吾是以務全之也。” The commentator Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl. 631–655) aptly writes that “although his body has been diminished, his character still remains 形雖虧損, 其德猶存,”³⁷ identifying “that which is more honorable than the feet 尊足者” as an aspect of Shushan not identifiable with his body. Shushan denies the conventional signification of his amputated feet, expressing his disappointment with Kongzi, whom he had once held to be a man of all-encompassing wisdom. Kongzi politely invites Shushan into his dwelling and asks perhaps to be allowed to share his own teachings with the amputee, perhaps to be taught.³⁸ But having recognized the

³⁵ I borrow from Watson’s translation here, which reads *wuzhi* 無趾 as “no toes” rather than “no feet,” to make sense of the verbal use of the word “heel” (*zhong* 踵) in the following clause. See Burton Watson trans., *Chuang tzu* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1968), p. 71. Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312 AD) and Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl. 631–655 AD) both gloss the character *zhong* as *pin* 頻 (frequently).

³⁶ The full anecdote concerning Shushan No-toes, including all quotations below, appears in *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Zhuzi jicheng edn., vol. 3; hereafter, *Zhuangzi*), *pian* 5, pp. 91–93. For an alternative reading of this narrative that emphasizes its position within the broader philosophical argument in *Zhuangzi*, see Albert Galvani, “Deformed Bodies and Heavenly Minds in the *Zhuangzi*,” in R. King and D. Schilling, eds., *The Ethics of Ease: Zhuangzi and the Norms of Life* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, forthcoming).

³⁷ *Zhuangzi*, *pian* 5, pp. 92.

³⁸ Kongzi’s language is ambiguous; 請講以所聞 could mean “Please allow me to tell you

flaws in Kongzi's character, Shushan is no longer interested and leaves without a word.

The text goes on to tell how Kongzi spoke of the occasion to his disciples, and how Shushan spoke of it to Laozi 老子. Kongzi seems to have missed the point, and Shushan pronounces Kongzi a hopeless case, echoing Kongzi's initial view of Shushan, whom he had chastised for coming to seek instruction too late for it to do him any good. Kongzi says to his students: "Strive to emulate him, my disciples! For No-toes is an amputee, and yet he still takes learning as his task, so that he might make up for the ills of his earlier behavior. How much more so should men whose character remains whole? 弟子勉之! 夫無趾, 兀者也, 猶務學以復補前行之惡, 而況全德之人乎?" At a glance, the admiration Kongzi expresses for No-toes' diligence seems to show that he sees amputees in a different light than he did before his encounter with Shushan, and that he has learned that character cannot be evaluated by examining the body. However, Kongzi's language betrays him, showing that he maintains the same assumptions as before. Rather than using what is presumably his actual name, Shushan, Kongzi refers to him through the synecdoche of his missing body parts, calling him No-toes. He assumes that Shushan committed some ill deed to have lost his feet, though by Shushan's own account we know only that at some point he had been careless. The reader does not even know for certain that Shushan had been subjected to penal dismemberment, which generally involves the amputation of the entire foot, rather than just the toes.³⁹ Shushan's failure to be sufficiently prudent might have resulted in a serious accident or battlefield injury that cost him his toes, rather than a legal penalty. Most importantly, however, Kongzi's comparison of Shushan with "men whose character remains whole 全德之人" implies that Kongzi continues to read the incomplete state of Shushan's body as a sign of his lack of integrity as a person. At the end of the passage, in a conversation with Laozi, Shushan describes Kongzi as a sort of prisoner, a man whose conventional concern for reputation 名聞 has left him in shackles 桎梏. Kongzi, rather than Shushan, becomes indelibly marked as a criminal. And when Laozi asks if it might be possible to release Kongzi from his fetters by teaching him to take life and death as a unity, Shushan responds: "When heaven has punished him, how can I release him? 天刑

about what I have heard" or "Please tell me about what you have heard."

³⁹ Skeletal remains found at Longgang strongly suggest that penal dismemberment involved the amputation of the entire foot, rather than only part of it. See line drawings in Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo et al., "Hubei Yunmeng Longgang Qin-Han mudi di er ci fajue jianbao," pp. 41-42.

之,安可解?” With neat formal symmetry, the opening and the closing of the passage effectively transfer the signified meaning associated with penal dismemberment from the body of Shushan onto the character of Kongzi. Though Kongzi’s body remains whole, Shushan suggests, his character is irreversibly marred.

The dialogue between Shentu Jia and Zichan likewise juxtaposes an amputee with a paragon of classicist virtue.⁴⁰ Zichan is perhaps rivaled only by Kongzi himself as an exemplary figure in *Zuo zhuan*.⁴¹ In addition to being a trustworthy, yet pragmatic and skillful statesman, the Zichan found in that work is also an excellent reader of human beings and their bodies. He predicts the downfall of king Ling of Chu (r. 540–529) eight years before the event,⁴² following the king’s display of ostentation and arrogance in a meeting with dignitaries from surrounding domains. Zichan explains, “I no longer consider Chu to be a threat. The king is profligate and deaf to remonstrances. He will not last more than ten years. 吾不患楚矣。汰而悞諫,不過十年。”⁴³ Zichan shows himself to be capable, however, not only of predicting political demise, but of diagnosing the source of illness. In two instances, Zichan diagnoses the illness of the prince of Jin. In each case, Zichan reasons that the ruler’s illness is not brought on by malevolent spirits, but the result of his lapses in ritual propriety.⁴⁴ In the *Zuo zhuan*, Zichan proves a reliable, perspicacious reader of the human body.

The caricature of Zichan in “De chong fu” also reads the body of Shentu Jia as a symptom of his ethical failures.⁴⁵ But unlike the prince of Jin, who holds a higher level political position than Zichan himself, Shentu bears the marks of abject status. Though Shentu, like Zichan, studies under the master Uncle Dusk-Nobody (Bohun Wuren 伯昏无人), Zichan does not want to be seen with him. Having already asked Shentu once to leave the master’s abode either before or after he left it himself, Zichan repeats his request in frustration: “If I go out first, you stay put. And if you go out first, then I stay put. Now, I’m about

⁴⁰ This dialogue occurs in *Zhuangzi*, *pian* 5, pp. 89–91.

⁴¹ For a discussion of Zichan and Kongzi as “exemplary lives,” see Michael Nylan, “The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋), As Read through Its Three Traditions,” in *idem*, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 2001), pp. 289–301.

⁴² The death of king Ling occurs in the thirteenth year of duke Zhao of Lu (529 BC). For an account of the events surrounding his death, see *Zuo zhuan jizhu*, vol. 4, pp. 1344–53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1252 (538 BC).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1217–23 (541 BC) and 1289–90 (535 BC). Zichan diagnoses the ruler’s excessive indulgence in drink and sexual pleasure as the source of his first illness and the ruler’s failure to offer the proper sacrifices befitting a covenant chief as the source of his second.

⁴⁵ Zichan assumes that Shentu Jia has been punished for a crime.

to go out. Can you stay put or can't you? What's more, when you see someone who holds office, you don't go against him! Could it be that you hold office? 我先出, 則子止; 子先出, 則我止. 今我將出, 子可以止乎, 其未邪? 且子見執政而不違, 子齊執政乎?" Shentu responds by questioning the relevance of the status distinction that Zichan draws, arguing that it places more importance on one's political status than on one's status as a human being. "Within the master's gates, are there still those who hold office, as you say? You, you take pleasure in holding office and leave human beings behind. 先生之門, 固有執政焉如此哉? 子而說子之執政而後人者也!"

Shentu Jia compares their master to a clear mirror through which he has come to understand himself and avoid making dangerous errors, such as those that presumably cost him his foot. Citing an aphorism from an unknown source, Shentu says to Zichan, "I have heard it said that 'When a mirror is clear, dirt and grime do not settle on it. If dirt or grime settled on it, it would not be clear. If one dwells for a long time with a worthy man, one will commit no transgressions.' 聞之曰: '鑑明則塵垢不止, 止則不明也. 久與賢人處, 則無過.'" Zichan sneers at him, still caught up in the idea that Shentu's character is readable through his body. "You've ended up like this, and still you would compete with the Sage-king Yao in goodness. In my estimation, your character isn't even enough to allow you to reflect upon yourself! 子既若是矣, 猶與堯爭善, 計子之德不足以自反邪." Shentu's reply, however, both defends his own character and shows an unusual capacity for self-reflection. "Those who dress up their transgressions and say that they should not have lost [their feet] are many, while those who do not dress up their transgressions and say that they should not have kept their feet are few. As for knowing when there is nothing that can be done, and being able to accept such things as fate, only those with character are capable of this. 自狀其過以不當亡者眾, 不狀其過以不當存者寡. 知不可奈何而安之若命, 惟有德者能之."

Insofar as his master is a mirror, and insofar as Shentu Jia sees himself through that mirror, the fact that he is missing a foot is no longer salient, no longer a concern. Long ago, before he had learned to accept his status as fate, Shentu tells Zichan, he would grow angry at the multitude of men who laughed at him for his missing foot. "I would boil with anger and go into a rage, but when I came to our master's abode, my anger would cease and I would return home, not even aware that our master had cleansed me with his goodness. 我怫然而怒, 而適先生之所, 則廢然而反, 不知先生之洗我以善邪!" Finally, Shentu compares the master's indifference to his amputated foot with Zichan's fixation on

it. “I have befriended our master for nineteen years now, and he has never known that I am an amputee. Now, you and I roam beyond the physical form, and yet you seek me within it.⁴⁶ Is this not a transgression? 吾與夫子遊十九年矣，而未嘗知吾兀者也。今子與我遊於形骸之內，而子索我於形骸之外，不亦過乎!” Just as Shushan shifts the status of having been punished onto Kongzi, Shentu shifts the act of transgression onto Zichan. For Shentu, the master has been a “bright mirror” who has prevented him from transgressing. But Zichan, perhaps due to some “dust and grime” he carries with him, has learned nothing. The passage concludes: “With a jolt, Zichan changed his expression and said, ‘Don’t say anything about this!’ 子產蹴然改容更貌曰：‘子無乃稱!’” Though he recognizes that he has been bested in his argument with Shentu, Zichan remains as concerned with outward appearances – how people perceive him – as ever.

The opening passage of “De chong fu,” in which Kongzi explains to his bumbling but inquisitive disciple Chang Ji the magnetic charisma of the amputee Wang Tai, is perhaps the most powerful and complex of the three descriptions of amputees in “De chong fu.”⁴⁷ Chang Ji, like Zichan in the case of Shentu Jia, and Kongzi in the case of Shushan, is caught up in Wang Tai’s status as an amputee. Perplexed by the number of disciples Wang Tai has attracted, despite the fact that “when he stands he does not lecture, and when he sits he does not engage in discussion 立不教，坐不議,” Chang Ji asks, “Could it really be that there is a teaching that does not require speech, that brings the heart-mind to full maturity in a manner that is without physical form? What sort of person is he? 固有不言之教，無形而心成者邪？是何人也？” Kongzi here, unlike his dull doppelganger who has been punished by heaven, is the portrait of humility and perspicacity. He is able to read Wang Tai and explain his power to the reader of the text, if not to Chang Ji. In unequivocal terms, Kongzi calls Wang Tai a sage, saying that he himself should become the amputee’s disciple. Chang Ji then asks Kongzi about Wang Tai’s methods, specifically, his use of the heart-mind 其用心. Kongzi’s reply suggests that Wang Tai has effectively transcended the physical body, as he has transcended life and death, and become a master of

⁴⁶ Following Brook Ziporyn, *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2009), p. 35, and Watson, *Chuang tzu*, p. 71, I reverse *nei* and *wai* here. A.C. Graham translates the text as it stands, “You and I are roaming now on the inside of the flesh-and-bone, yet you haul me out to take a look from the outside of the flesh-and-bone”; *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2001), p. 78.

⁴⁷ The complete narrative surrounding Wang Tai appears in *Zhuangzi*, *pian* 5, pp. 85–89.

physical things, rather than a subject of the constraints that normally apply to them. “Life and death are great matters! Yet he doesn’t change along with them. Even if heaven and earth were to collapse, he would not be left behind along with them. Limpid, without flaws,⁴⁸ he does not move along with things, but commands their transformations and holds fast to their source. 死生亦大矣，而不得與之變，雖天地覆墜，亦將不與之遺。審乎無假，而不與物遷，命物之化，而守其宗也。” Wang Tai is able to avoid transforming along with things because he does not distinguish between his own body and other physical things. Kongzi goes on:

Looking at things from the perspective of their differences, there is the liver and the gall, the domains of Chu and Yue. From the perspective of their similarities, the ten thousand things are all one. And if that is the case, and one does not, moreover, know of that which pleases the ears and the eyes, but instead lets his heart-mind roam among the harmony of character, looking at things from the perspective of their oneness, then he does not see what among them is lost. He sees his lost foot exactly as if it were a clod of earth that had fallen away. 自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。夫若然者，且不知耳目之所宜，而游心於德之和，物視其所一，而不見其所喪，視喪其足，猶遺土也。

The first thing Chang Ji mentions about Wang Tai is that he is an amputee,⁴⁹ and when he refers to Wang Tai a second time, he calls him “that amputee 彼兀者,” whereas Kongzi refers to him as “the master 夫子.” Kongzi shows little concern for the fact that Wang Tai is missing a foot and mentions his amputee status only to show Wang Tai’s indifference to it. Chang Ji, like Zichan and the other Kongzi who cannot get past Shushan’s amputee status, never comes to see “that amputee” as a person who could be worthy of attracting followers. In his final question, Chang Ji expresses a certain suspicion that whatever Wang Tai is doing, he is only doing for himself. “He acts for his own benefit, using his knowledge to attain his heart-mind, and using his heart-mind to attain the constant heart-mind. Why should things [namely, disciples] gather⁵⁰ around him? 彼爲己，以其知得其心，以其心得其常心，物何爲最之哉?” Kongzi argues in his reply that, like the master of Zichan and

⁴⁸ Reading *jia* 假 as *xia* 瑕, following the suggestion of Guo Qingfan in *Zhuangzi, pian* 5, p. 86.

⁴⁹ When Chang Ji questions Kongzi, his first words are “Wang Tai is an amputee. 王貽，兀者也。”

⁵⁰ Reading *zui* 最 as *ju* 聚, following *Jing dian shi wen* 經典釋文 (*Glosses on the Classics*) as cited in *Zhuangzi, pian* 5, p. 88.

Shentu Jia, Wang Tai is a sort of mirror.⁵¹ “No one uses flowing water as a mirror. Rather, people use still water as a mirror. Only one who is still himself can still the many stillnesses. 人莫鑑於流水，而鑑於止水，唯止能止眾止。” Wang Tai is unperturbed by the exigencies of physical existence that most people are caught up in, life and death, the loss of a foot. We never hear Wang Tai’s own voice in the passage; he does not need to speak. His mere presence allows those who gather around him to partake of his peace and reflect upon themselves. But those such as Chang Ji, who obsess over the mundane signs of status with which Wang Tai has been marked, will fail to appreciate the transformative power of his character.

The reader never learns how Wang Tai, Shentu Jia, or Shushan came to be amputees – their lost appendages tell no tales. The reader assumes, but cannot know for certain, that each figure was punished for violating a law at some point in his past. Their bodies have been inscribed, presumably, with the authority of those who possess political power. Each inscription serves as a visible record of a past crime that announces itself to passersby. Yet, those who read these bodily signs in the conventional manner, Chang Ji, Zichan, and Kongzi, are presented as caricatures, stooges. By contrast, those who largely ignore, or do not even notice, the sign of penal dismemberment – the wise Kongzi who tries to explain Wang Tai to Chang Ji, Uncle Dusk-Nobody, and Laozi – are presented as penetrating readers of character who see past outward forms. As for the amputees themselves, Shushan No-toes is able to see past Kongzi’s reputation. Shentu Jia attains a kind of peace when he learns to see himself through the mirror of his master. Wang Tai, whose presence we experience only by way of hearsay, has transcended his own marked body to become a perfectly unblemished mirror. Silent and still, he induces his disciples to reflect deeply on themselves.

Insofar as punishment is an inscription, the stories of Wang Tai, Shentu Jia, and Shushan serve to efface that inscription. If these narratives do not strip mutilation of meaning entirely, at the very least, they render it ambiguous. The compilers of “De chong fu,” moreover, present the three amputees alongside other disfigured figures, whose odd physical forms cannot be the result of corporal punishment, but must be the result of disease or birth defects. Ai Taituo 衰駘它, whose name has been variously rendered Uglyface Tuo, Horsehead Hump-

⁵¹ Hamamura Yoshihisa 浜村良久 has gone so far as to compare Wang Tai to modern talk therapists in the tradition of Carl Rogers (1902–1987). See his “Soshi naihen ni okeru seijin ni tsuite” “莊子”内篇における“聖人”について, *Chūgoku koten kenkyū* 中国古典研究 52 (Dec., 2007), pp. 25–39.

back, and Nag the Hump, is the most prominent among them. Ai Taituo is so charismatic, so whole in his character, that men gather around him, women want to become his concubines, and the duke of Lu tries to abdicate to him. Kongzi explains Ai Taituo's charismatic character to the duke by comparing it to the much more limited, but still presumably potent, integrity of the concubines of the Son of Heaven, who neither pierce their ears nor cut their nails. "If being whole in form is enough to allow one to do that [to serve in the palace], how much more so is it true of one who is whole in character! 形全猶足以爲爾, 而況全德之人乎!"⁵² The passages concerning Wang Tai and Ai Taituo are somewhat analogous. In both cases, Kongzi explains their character to a third party. Both characters have the same unusual word, *tai* 駘, in their names, and both characters have physical abnormalities. By presenting the two narratives in the same chapter, the compilers of "De chong fu" create the sense that legally inflicted physical abnormalities are no more reliable signs of ethical virtue than naturally occurring physical abnormalities.

CONCLUSION

By the time that the first extant commentary to *Zhuangzi* was written, the amputation of the foot as a criminal penalty had passed out of living memory.⁵³ Convicts who bore the sign of amputation were no longer the quotidian sight they once had been, during the early Western Han, Qin, and Zhou periods, when the anecdotes contained in the chapter were presumably composed. It should not be entirely surprising, then, that the earliest complete commentary reads the incomplete bodies of the figures presented in the chapter at least in part through its title, "De chong fu," or "Tallies of Complete Character." The incomplete bodies of the figures presented within it were no longer indices of legal power and criminal status, but icons, whose missing feet had come to represent their capacity to rejoin a whole greater than any human body. While we do not know when the anecdotes came to be organized into a chapter entitled "De chong fu," the physically incomplete

⁵² *Zhuangzi*, *pian* 5, p. 96. For Ai Taituo, see Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters*, p. 79; Ziporyn, *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings*, p. 35; and Victor Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Bantam, 1994), p. 46.

⁵³ Hulsewé explains that Eastern Han edicts dating between 72 AD and 124 AD show that a punishment called "the right foot" continued to be employed during this period, but occurs without a verb meaning to cut. Hulsewé further notes a Han inscription mentioning a man who is punished by having his feet shackled and a preface to the Jin 晉 dynasty (266–420 AD) legal code stating that wooden shackles replaced leg irons during the Wei 魏 dynasty (220–266 AD). See *Remnants of Han Law*, p. 126.

state of figures such as Shushan, Shentu Jia, and Wang Tai in particular bears a material similarity to a tally: an object that becomes whole only when fit together with its other half. The other half for these amputees, however, is not their lost feet, but the totality of things, an ultimate whole that is never lost. As Guo Xiang writes: “Character completes them inside, so that things respond from outside. Outside and inside mysteriously come together, fitting faithfully like a tally of command, and their physical forms are left behind. 德充於內，物應於外，外內玄合，信若符命而遺其形骸也。”⁵⁴

The earliest readers of the anecdotes concerning amputees that were eventually collected in “De chong fu” lived in a culture that identified physical wholeness with ethical integrity. While, unlike Kafka, they did not, so far as we know, explicitly formulate punishment as a kind of inscription that demanded to be read, the sight of a person missing a foot undoubtedly drew their gaze and *meant* something to them. Mutilated persons were unmistakably *marked*. The mark of penal dismemberment carried a signification that was at once conventional and formal, performed through ritual and codified into law. It told those who saw it that the person bearing the mark was a criminal, morally and ritually abject, an incomplete and unwholesome person. Moreover, it reminded those who remained whole that their own physical integrity was tenuous, contingent as it was upon their submission to legal authority. While the anecdotes concerning Yu Quan, Mr. He, and Sun Bin served to reverse the conventional signification of penal dismemberment, they nonetheless preserve the structure of that signification. “De chong fu,” however, obscures the origins of the sign of mutilation, and presents those who read mutilation according to its conventional signification as myopic men who lack the capacity to recognize character. Early readers, and perhaps later readers as well, likely would have reacted to such marked persons just as Zichan and Kongzi reacted to Shentu Jia and Shushan No-toes, assuming their lack of character from the sign of their missing feet. Like Uncle Dusk-Nobody and Wang Tai, the text itself might have served as a sort of mirror, causing readers to reflectively forget their conventional views concerning the signification of the outward signs of the body and to remember that for which those signs were supposed to stand.

⁵⁴ *Zhuangzi, pian* 5, p. 85.

JESSE CHAPMAN

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HS Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書
SJ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記
Zhuangzi *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋