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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Dramaturgy of Death: Performing (And Spectating) Filial Piety in Early China*

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Abstract
This essay analyzes the early Chinese elite discourse on filial death rituals, arguing that early Chinese texts depict these rituals as performance events. Building on spectacle of *xiao* sacrifices in the Western Zhou Dynasty, Eastern Zhou authors conceived of filial death rituals as dramaturgical phenomena that underscored not only *what* needed to be performed, but also *how* it should be performed, and led to an important distinction between personal dispositions and inherited ritual protocol. This distinction, then, led to concerns about artifice in human behavior, both inside and outside the Ruist (Confucian) tradition. By end of the Warring States Period and in the early Western Han Dynasty, with the embracement of artifice in self-cultivation, the dramatic role of the filial son in death rituals became even more developed and complex, requiring the role of cultivated spectators to be engaged critics who recognized the nuances of cultivated performances.

Keywords: filial piety; dramaturgy; performance; ritual; Confucianism

The "Tan Gong shang" 檀弓上 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 (*Ritual Records*) contains the following episode:

> 孔子在衛，有送葬者，而夫子觀之，曰: "善哉為喪乎！足以為法矣，小子識之。" 子貢曰: "夫子何善爾也？" 曰: "其往也如慕，其反也如疑。" 子貢曰: "豈若速反而虞乎？" 子曰: "小子識之，我未之能行也。"
>
> When Kongzi (Confucius) 孔子 was in Wei 衛, there was someone participating in a funeral. The Master observed him, and said, "How adept he is at mourning—fit to be a model! My disciples, take note of him." Zigong 子貢 asked, "Master, why do you think he is adept?" The Master replied, "He went as if yearning (for his parent). He returned as if apprehensive." Zigong said, "Would it not be

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better if he returned quickly to perform the *yu* sacrifice?"[1] The Master responded, "Take note of him, my disciples. I've yet to be able to perform (as he has)."[2]

This brief conversation between Kongzi and his disciple, Zigong, illustrates some interesting elements of filial piety in early China. First, the unnamed person engages in a funerary ritual, and Kongzi and Zigong observe (*guan* 觀) him as uninvolved spectators. From the context of the subsequent discussion it can be assumed that this is a man leading a procession for a deceased parent. According to Kongzi's observation, the man is praiseworthy by virtue of the feelings that he expressed in the manner of his actions. For Zigong, however, the man's performance is lacking, because his actions should differ from what they see him do. Neither Kongzi nor Zigong actually talk to the man; they merely comment on what they see.

To describe the man's filial piety as a "performance" in this context is to acknowledge two distinct features: 1) the man engages in formalized, scripted behavior that is not his own design,[3] and 2) this behavior is a spectacle for public consumption and critical observation.[4] This passage, therefore, exemplifies a performer/spectator relationship. That is to say, in performing filial piety, the man does not act spontaneously, but rather enacts a kind of "ritual script" that is known and understood by all involved (i.e., performers and spectators). The quality of the man's filial piety, therefore, is a matter of the quality of the performance—and Kongzi and Zigong disagree on what the criterion for a successful performance is.

Though there have been several studies of filial piety or *xiao* 孝 in early China,[5] none have focused on the performative element that characterizes some of its most recognizable incarnations: rituals for the dead. To be sure, in early China (particularly from the

[1]The *yu* 虞 was a post-burial sacrifice to the spirit of the dead.

[2]*Liji jijie* 禮記集解, ed. Sun Xidan 孫希旦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1989), 8.194–95. Compare translation in James Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites. An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions* (New Hype Park: University Books, 1967), 137.

[3]My use of the term "performance" is based largely on the work of Richard Schechner, who defines performance as "restored behavior." As Schechner puts it, "Performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time. Performance is 'twice-behaved behavior.'" See his *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35–36. In this way, ritual is a kind performance, though not all performances can be described as rituals.

[4]Marvin Carlson writes, "Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self." See his *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

[5]See for example, Fang-chih Huang Jacobs, "The Origin and Development of the Concept of Filial Piety in Ancient China," *Chinese Culture* 14.3 (1973), 25–55; Li Yumin 李裕民, "Yinzhou jinwen zhong de 'xiao' he Kong Qiu 'xiaodao' de fandong benzhi 殷周金文中的'孝'和孔丘'孝道'的反功本質," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 (February 1974), 19–40; Kang Xuewei 康學偉, *Xian Qin xiaodao yanjiu* 先秦孝道研究 (Taibei: Wenjin, 1992); Keith N. Knapp, "The Ru Reinterpretation of *Xiao*," *Early China* 20 (1995), 195–222; Donald Holzman, "The Place of Filial Piety in Ancient China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118.2 (1998), 185–99; Masaru Ikezawa 池澤優,*"Kō" shisō no shūkyōteki kenkyū* "孝"思想の宗教学的研究 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2002); Chen, Zhi 陳致, "Yuan xiao" 原孝, *Renwen Zhongguo xuebao* 人文中國學報 9 (2002), 229–51; and Jianjun He, "Anxiety over the Filial Body: Discussions of Xiao in Early Confucian Texts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 140.2 (2020), 301–15. These studies tend to focus on the term, *xiao*, and its various meanings in different periods of early China. The present essay, by contrast, will examine descriptions of filial behavior that are not always labelled with that term, but are certainly relevant to it. Of all these studies, He's comes the closest to my approach, as his emphasis on the body also involves performance to some extent.

Warring States Period to the Western Han Dynasty), there were strong performative elements in serving living parents, but the performance of rituals for the dead formed a continuum between *xiao*'s Western Zhou beginnings and what developed by the early Western Han. Throughout this period, *xiao* rituals included the element of spectacle for living participants. As will be shown, however, the late pre-imperial and early imperial period witnessed a "dramaturgical turn" in the ways early Chinese intellectuals, particularly the Ruists ("Confucians"), discussed *xiao*. This dramaturgical[6] conception of filial piety centered not only on *what* needed to be performed, but also *how* it should be performed, and led to an important distinction between personal dispositions and inherited ritual protocol. This distinction, then, led to concerns about artifice in human behavior, both inside and outside the Ruist tradition. By end of the Warring States Period and in the early Western Han Dynasty, with the embrace of artifice in self-cultivation, the dramatic role of the filial son in rituals for the dead became even more developed and complex, requiring cultivated spectators to be engaged critics who recognized the nuances of cultivated performances.

Performing For A Dead Audience?—The Spectacle of *Xiao* in the Western Zhou

While the main dramaturgical transformation of *xiao* occurred in the Eastern Zhou, the roots can be found in the late Western Zhou.[7] The dominant religious practice of the

[6]"Dramaturgy" became a popular concept in the social sciences with the publication of Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1973). I am using the term in more straightforwardly theatrical sense. Admittedly, "dramaturgy" and a "dramaturg" are terms that are defined in various ways within the modern theater. For my purposes, I interpret dramaturgy as the theorizing about the elements of a proper performance of a given theatrical piece—or in this case, a ritual. I follow Michael M. Chemers conception of a "dramaturg" as "a total theater specialist, an artist whose passion for the theater is matched only by practical knowledge of the form, vitally integrated into the production process. In this model, dramaturgs are *practical aesthetic philosophers* whose collaboration in the process of theater making is as essential as that of the director." See his *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 11; italics in original. In addition, the contemporary dramaturg, Mark Bly, believes "dramaturgs are in a position to influence the kind of social, political, and moral questions that are presented on our stages." See David Moore, Jr., "Dramaturgy in America: Two Interviews and Six Statements," *What is Dramaturgy?*, ed. Bert Cardullo (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 116.

[7]Here I am referring to the Western Zhou "ritual reform" that occurred around the ninth century BCE. Beginning in this period, ritual bronze vessels were larger (and more numerous) with less intricate designs. Jessica Rawson suggests that that this transition from comparatively smaller vessels with more intricate design indicates that the ritual vessels from the early Western Zhou were intended for a more intimate audience who could see the vessels from a closer distance. The vessels from the ninth century, however, might have been intended for a larger audience who spectated from a farther distance. See her "Statesmen or Barbarians? The Western Zhou as Seen Through Their Bronzes," *Proceedings from the British Academy* 75 (1989), 89–91. See also Martin Kern, "Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice During the Western Zhou," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)*, ed. Marc Kalinowski and John Lagerwey (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 155–56, and Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), 56–64. Building on Rawson, Edward L. Shaughnessy has argued that one can trace a stylistic development in the *Odes* from hymns sung by "concelebrants" to poems sung by ritual specialists to an audience. See his "From Liturgy to Literature: The Ritual Contexts of the Poems in the *Book of Poetry*," in *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 165–95. In addition, large bells became a standard musical element in ritual performances. See Lothar von

political elite was a form of ancestor worship that emphasized ritual sacrifices to ancestors of the Zhou political elite, often referred to as the great lineage (*da zong* 大宗). In short, the rituals of the Western Zhou were about feeding the dead. *Xiao*, as has been documented repeatedly, was not only about parents, and therefore not properly translated as "filial." Rather, it was a ritual offering of food for recently deceased ancestors.[8] *Xiao* was largely transactional, such that the Zhou elite made offerings to the ancestors with the stated desire for them to send down blessings and longevity (*shou* 壽) in return.[9] The inscriptions that include *xiao*, however, do not tell the entire story, for these offerings were often part of a more elaborate, choreographed ritual performance.

The performative dimension of ancestral sacrifice and *xiao* is preserved in the *Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), including the Zhou hymns, which are part of the oldest stratum of the text.[10] These hymns, though typically classified as "poetry," were originally sung as part of ritual performances. Martin Kern has argued that the Zhou hymns, which probably date to the late Western Zhou, functioned as performance texts for ancestral rituals.[11] These hymns not only reiterate the "feeding" function of *xiao* offerings to the ancestors, but also add the fuller context of sacrifice as a religious, political, and even aesthetic experience. For example, though the "You Gu" 有瞽 hymn (*Mao* 280) does not reference *xiao*, it does illustrate a performer/spectator relationship in these rituals:

有瞽有瞽 The blind musicians, the blind musicians
在周之庭 In the courtyard of Zhou.
設業設虡 We've set up the cross-board and stand,
崇牙樹羽 High hooks and feathers,
應田縣鼓 Small and large drums,
鞉磬柷圉 Hand-drums and chime stones, the mallet box and the stopper,
既備乃奏 All prepared and they play.
簫管備舉 The panpipes and flutes are ready to begin.
喤喤厥聲 *Huang huang*—they ring
肅雝和鳴 In solemn harmony they sound.
先祖是聽 The ancestors are listening,

Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). As von Falkenhausen states, "Bells were to be seen just as much as they were to be heard" (123).

[8]Liu Yu 劉雨, "Xi Zhou jinwen zhong de jizu li," 西周金文中的祖禮, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 (April 1989), 519. Several scholars have noted the wide scope of *xiao* in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. In these sources, *xiao* can be dedicated to brothers (*xiong di* 兄弟), matrimonial relatives (*hun gou* 婚媾), and even friends (*peng you* 朋友). See Li, "Yinzhou," 22–23 and Knapp, "Ru Reinterpretation of *Xiao*," 201.

[9]Liu Yuan 劉源 states that in the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn Period bronze inscriptions, *xiao* refers to the wishes and attitude of the person making the sacrifice. See his *Shang Zhou jizu li yanjiu* 商周祭祖禮研究 (Beijing: Shangwu yin shuguan, 2004), 54. As will be demonstrated below, the significance of expressing one's attitude will only increase during the Warring States and Western Han periods.

[10]Dating individual poems in the *Odes* is notoriously difficult. For a discussion on dating larger sections of the *Odes*, see W.A.C.H. Dobson, "Linguistic Evidence and the Dating of the *Book of Songs*," *T'oung Pao* 51.4–4 (1964), 322–34.

[11]Martin Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of "Chu ci" (Thorny Caltrop)," *Early China* 25 (2000), 49–111. See also his "Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice During the Western Zhou," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. Marc Kalinowski and John Lagerwey (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 143–200.

我客戾止 The guests have arrived,
永觀厥成 Gazing long at the successful performance.[12]

This hymn illustrates the musical element of late Western Zhou ritual, implying an aesthetic dimension to the ritual performance, but the audience[13] is made explicit in the final lines in which living the ancestors "listen" (*ting* 聽) and the living guests "gaze" or "observe" (*guan*) the ritual. Kern notes that the late Western Zhou witnessed a merging of the religious with the political, as the ancestral temple was not only a ritual space for ancestral sacrifice, but also a place where he solidified ties with his regional lords. As Kern puts it: "the king presented his political and military feats both 'vertically' to his ancestor and 'horizontally' to his political community."[14]

Within this ancestral temple, however, the ruler making *xiao* offerings and the accompanying musicians were joined by another performer: the "impersonator of the dead" (*shi* 尸)—a living person who represented the ancestors, consuming their offerings and stating their blessings to one offering *xiao* and to the other attendants in the ritual space.[15] C.H. Wang claims that the impersonator of the dead was "the most important figure in the rite," and interprets this individual as performing a dramatic role within a larger act of mimesis in a religious setting.[16] This characterization is significant, given that *shi* and *xiao* frequently appear together, especially in odes that provide fuller descriptions of ritual sacrifice.[17] As the representative of the ancestors, the impersonator announces the satisfaction of the ancestors for the *xiao* offerings, often stating that they are "drunk" (*zui* 醉).

As several scholars have noted, "Thorny Caltrop" ("Chu ci" 楚茨, *Mao* 209) provides the most detailed description of a ritual sacrifice—complete with descriptions of actions from the performers and even scripts of what is said by various participants. Kern's analysis of this ode divides it into several parts, including a narrator, thus replicating a ritual performance.[18] Even without Kern's insightful segmentation of the various

[12]Compare the translation in Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 297. My own translation has been greatly influenced by Waley's.

[13]My use of the term, "audience," should be interpreted broadly to include not simply passive observers, but also (especially in the case of rituals) observers who are also participants, which Schechner calls an "integral audience." For more on the complexity of audiences within the broad spectrum of ritual and aesthetic performances, see Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, revised ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 218–22.

[14]Kern, "Evolution of Ancestral Sacrifice," 164. It is also possible that this function of the bronzes applied to earlier periods of the Western Zhou as well. See for example, Li Feng, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11–20.

[15]For a detailed history and analysis of the term, *shi*, in early China, see Michael Carr, "The Shi 'Corpse/Personator' Ceremony in Early China," in *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness: Julian Jaynes's Bicameral Mind Theory Revisited*, ed. Marcel Kuijsten (Henderson: Julian Jaynes Society, 2006), 343–416. It should be noted that there are no instances of *shi* in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions or in the Zhou hymns of the *Odes*. Therefore, given the difficulty of discovering firm dates for the *Odes*, the origin of the *shi* within *xiao* rituals is, admittedly, harder to pin down. Nevertheless, even if its origins are as late as the early Eastern Zhou, my analysis the *shi* within the *Odes* as compared to later texts still reveals important developments.

[16]C.H. Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory: Seven Essays in Early Chinese Poetry* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1988), 45–48. Wang builds upon the research of Liu Shipei, Wang Guowei, and Wen Yiduo, who connect early Chinese ritual to Chinese drama.

[17]It should be noted that odes that contain both *shi* and *xiao* are all outside the Zhou hymn section of the *Odes*.

[18]Kern, "Evolution of Ancestral Sacrifice," 175–76.

stanzas into specific roles, however, the text remains evidence of a larger ritual spectacle that revolves around *xiao* offerings to the dead. Towards the end of this ode, the text oscillates between describing the acts of the spirits and the impersonator vis-à-vis the *xiao* descendant:

禮儀既備 The ritual ceremony has been completed,
鍾鼓既戒 The bells and drums are ready.
孝孫徂位 The *xiao* descendant goes to his seat,
工祝致告 And the officiating invoker announces:
神具醉止 "The Spirits are drunk."
皇尸載起 The august impersonator then rises,
鼓鍾送尸 And drums and bells send him off;
神保聿歸 The spirit-protectors then return home.[19]

Wang notes the significance of the alternation between references to the impersonator and the spirits as an indication that the poet-narrator sees the impersonator as the ancestor, but then ultimately acknowledges the impersonator as a living performer of a role.[20] Regardless, in this performance of *xiao*, the impersonator is the main focus of spectatorship, such that the satisfaction of the ancestral spirits was of utmost importance. The poem concludes with a description of musicians performing, and asserts "No one is resentful, all are happy" (*mo yuan ju qing* 莫怨具慶). These positive feelings frame the entire ritual as a celebration in which the living has communed with their forebears, and then the living guests continue to commune with each other, once the formal elements of the ritual have concluded. Thus, the poem reiterates how the rituals were moments of both religious and aesthetic enjoyment. In other words, the ritual performances were celebratory spectacles for both the dead *and* the living, and the emphasis on spectacle not only continued after the Western Zhou, the act of *xiao*, itself, took a strong dramaturgical turn.

Ornamenting Emotions: The Dramaturgy of Filial Piety After the Western Zhou

This development of ritual spectacle in the Western Zhou served as a prelude to a more dramaturgical understanding of *xiao* (and ritual in general) in later periods up the Western Han Dynasty. The literary sources from the late pre-imperial period to the Western Han,[21] associate *xiao* more directly with parents (both living and dead) than what is found in Western Zhou sources (especially bronze inscriptions), and therefore may be translated more properly (and less controversially) as "filial piety." In relation to Western Zhou materials, these sources not only reiterate the importance of rituals for the dead, they also demonstrate a growing dramaturgical significance for the filial son as a performative role. Given the textual issues pertaining to dating and

[19]Compare translation in Waley, *Book of Songs*, 195.

[20]Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory*, 50.

[21]The texts of this period, much like the *Odes*, are notoriously difficult to date. Though I tend to discuss texts in a certain sequence, I do not imply that the texts were composed in this sequence or that the authors of these texts were responding specifically to the portions of the texts that I quote. In addition, these texts were all written by multiple authors, and often (aside from perhaps larger portions of the *Xunzi* 荀子) were not written by the individuals the texts claim to represent. Kongzi, in fact, will be a character in multiple texts quoted below, and I do not necessarily ascribe to any of them a privileged representation of the historical Kongzi.

authorship, of course, it is impossible to trace a neat chronology of this dramaturgical development. Nevertheless, one can still notice how these texts express either overlapping or combative attitudes towards filial dramaturgy.

The *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), for example, even with the controversy over its dating, still serves as an ideal introduction to the basic elements or Ruist filial dramaturgy.[22] To begin with, this text depicts Kongzi insisting on a particular way of performing sacrifices:

> 祭如在，祭神如神在。子曰：「吾不與祭，如不祭。」
>
> "Sacrifice as if present" (means) sacrifice as if the spirits are present. Kongzi said, "If I do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as if I am not (really) sacrificing."[23]

This "as if" (ru 如) behavior was far more than correct choreography. As Michael Puett has argued, it became fundamental to the Ruist subjunctive attitude in ritual performance, and emphasized the performer's attitude toward the deceased, rather than affirm, in any definitive way, whether spirits had power over the living.[24] Though this behavior did not necessarily indicate a disbelief in the existence of the spirits, there was considerable attention placed on the filial performer, and not primarily on any transaction with the dead.[25]

The filial son's attitude toward a dead parent was an extension of his attitude toward living parents. In this context, Kongzi noted explicitly that what made behavior truly filial was not simply the act, but also a sense of "respect" (*jing* 敬) (*Analects* 2.7). Moreover, these dispositions needed to be noticeable:

[22]Recently, the date of the composition of the *Analects* has come under increased scrutiny. Michael Hunter, for example, has argued that the *Analects* is best considered as Western Han text. See his *Confucius Beyond the* Analects (Leiden: Brill, 2017). Even if this text was compiled at such a late date, Hunter concedes that it contains material that probably dates to the pre-imperial period. In addition, there are still those who hesitate to consider the *Analects* as a representation of Western Han thought. See for example, Paul R. Goldin, "Confucius and His Disciples in the *Lunyu*: The Basis for the Traditional View," in *Confucius and the* Analects *Revisited: New Perspectives on Composition, Dating, and Authorship*, ed. Michael Hunter and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 92–115 and Robert Eno, "The *Lunyu* as an Accretion Text" in the same volume, 39–66. Though these essays represent the most critical reactions to Western Han date of the *Analects*, several (if not all) the essays in Hunter and Kern's volume are worth reading. For more on the accretion theory, see also E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 201–48.

[23]*Analects* 3.12; *Lunyu jishi*, 論語集釋, ed. Cheng Shude 程樹德 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 5.175. Compare translation in Edward L. Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 21–22.

[24]Michael Puett, "Ritual and Ritual Obligations: Perspectives on Normativity," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 49 (2015), 547. For a broader discussion of the subjunctive in ritual, see Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[25]Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology Sacrifice, and Self-Divination in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 98. For more on Kongzi's attitude toward death, see *Analects* 6.22 and 11.12. For a broader discussion of *shen* 神 ("spirits" or "spirituality") in early China, see Roel Sterckx, "Searching for Spirit: Shen and Sacrifice in Warring States and Han Philosophy and Ritual," *Etrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 29 (2007), 23–54.

子夏問孝。子曰：「色難。有事弟子服其勞，有酒食先生饌，曾是以為孝乎？」

Zixia [子夏] asked about filial piety. The Master said, "The countenance is what is difficult. When there is work to be done, the young take on the burden; when there is food and drink, it is placed before the elders—is this all that it takes to be filial?[26]

The countenance (*se* 色) was a visual indicator of the respect for one's parents that could not be rest solely on the formal behavior. By describing it as "difficult" (*nan* 難), Kongzi emphasized that rote or perfunctory ritual behavior did not constitute real filial piety. However, the importance placed on the countenance also set up a performer/spectator relationship implying that filial sons must show/reveal this attitude to others.

Spectatorship is subtle in the above passage, because it is framed from the standpoint of the performers and their explicit expression of feelings toward their parents. Kongzi brings critical spectatorship to the forefront of filial piety in *Analects* 1.11:

父在，觀其志；父沒，觀其行；三年無改於父之道，可謂孝矣。

When [a son's] father is alive, observe his intentions; when his father is dead, observe his actions. If for three years he does not change the ways of his father, he can be called filial.[27]

Here, Kongzi's implied interlocutors are spectators of the potential "filial son," who are instructed to observe (*guan*) not only actions (*xing* 行), but also "intentions" (*zhi* 志), which presumably come out through the son's countenance and demeanor. Though Kongzi distinguishes placing attention on intentions and actions based on whether the father is alive, the larger context of the *Analects* suggests that intentions and feelings are important in both cases. To be sure, Kongzi expresses this view in the *Analects* 3.26 when he says that for someone who "performs rituals without respect, and mourns without grief—how can I watch (*guan*) that?"[28] This performer/spectator relationship within the confines of ritual behavior became the foundation of filial dramaturgy in the Warring States.

On the performer side of this relationship, the emphasis on expressing personal feelings was never meant to supersede the significance of the filial son's ritual scripts. Instead, Kongzi envisioned an ideal balance between what he termed "native substance" (*zhi* 質) and "ornamentation" (*wen* 文):

質勝文則野，文勝質則史。文質彬彬，然後君子。

Native substance overwhelming ornamentation results in rusticity; ornamentation overwhelming native substance results in pedantry; only after native substance and ornamentation are perfectly blended will there be a gentleman.[29]

[26]*Analects* 2.8; *Lunyu jishi*, 3.88. Compare translation in Slingerland, *Analects*, 10.
[27]*Analects* 1.11; *Lunyu jishi*, 2.42. Compare translation in Slingerland, *Analects*, 5.
[28]*Lunyu jishi*, 6.224.
[29]*Analects* 6.18, *Lunyu jishi*, 12.400. Compare translation in Slingerland, *Analects*, 59.

Dramaturgically speaking, the "perfectly blended" (*binbin* 彬彬) state of filial piety was when people could merge their dispositions with the ritual scripts. Spectators, then, would ideally perceive their "native substance" through the "ornamentation" of these scripts. This ability to perform in a *binbin* manner, however, was something Kongzi associated with a high level of moral self-cultivation. Thus, it was an ability one should aspire towards, though few in society would likely attain it.

Attaining a *binbin* performance was even more difficult when the ornamenting ritual script was controversial. For example, the three-year mourning period (*san nian sang* 三年喪) was a relatively recent element in filial performances, and it was the ritual (or set of rituals) that most explicitly depended on emotional expression.[30] Kongzi's disciple, Ziyou 子游 is credited with asserting that "mourning should fully express grief, and then stop" (*sang zhi hu ai er zhi* 喪致乎哀而止).[31] But grief had to be expressed through this specific ritual script. Zaiwo 宰我 famously criticized the three-year mourning period for being too long and threatening the integrity of the wider program of ritual and music. To this, Kongzi replied:

> 「食夫稻，衣夫錦，於女安乎？」
> 曰：「安。」
> 「女安，則為之！夫君子之居喪，食旨不甘，聞樂不樂，居處不安，故不為也。今女安，則為之！」
>
> "Would you feel comfortable eating rice and wearing fine clothes?"
> "I would," Zaiwo responded.
> "If you feel comfortable, then do it. When a gentleman is in the mourning shed, he finds no sweetness in eating good food, no pleasure in listening to music, no comfort in staying in his home. Therefore, he does not do (these things). But if you're comfortable, then do it."[32]

Though Zaiwo claimed to be "comfortable" (*an* 安) with these activities, they run contrary to the accepted script of mourning, and Kongzi's apparent approval of Zaiwo modifying the ritual to suit his "comfort" was quickly followed by the implication that Zaiwo was no "gentleman" (*junzi* 君子), that he was not cultivated and could not achieve the *binbin* state of grief and the ornamentation of the three-year mourning period. Thus, though Kongzi's dramaturgy of mourning was founded on personal emotions, self-cultivation entailed engaging in behaviors that overcame the tension between one's personal feelings with the public obligations to embody the role of the filial son as naturally as possible—to become a cultivated spectacle for society to behold.

An Antitheatrical Backlash: Spectating the Filial Body in an "As is" World

The Ruist filial dramaturgy, consisting of an "as if" world for ornamenting emotions in rituals for the dead, became a key point of contention in Warring States thought. The Mohists, for example, had a reputation for frugality and practicality, and were generally

[30]Keith Knapp argues that the three-year mourning period was a Warring States innovation. See his "Ru Reinterpretation of *Xiao*," 209–16. As one anonymous reviewer noted, the three-year mourning period might be characterized as a set of rituals, rather than one ritual, since it encompassed a range of behaviors that might appear as individual rituals.

[31]*Analects* 19.14; *Lunyu jishi*, 38.1325.

[32]*Lunyu jishi*, 35.1231–1237. Compare translation in Slingerland, *Analects*, 209–10.

against all forms of aesthetic entertainment enjoyed by the political elite to the detriment of the masses. But many of the Mohist criticisms of the Ruists can also be traced to the Ruist dichotomy between emotion and ritual scripts. They criticized Ruist filial performances as shallow and misguided forms of ritual theatricality, and their criticisms of the Ruists can be described as a form of "antitheatricality" that rejects any performative behavior that relies on some form of artifice.[33] The result was a rejection of the Ruist "as if" project, and a defense of living in a world "as is."

Contrary to their reputation from Ruist critics, the Mohists were not against filial piety,[34] but their antitheatrical tendencies did lead them to criticize the three-year mourning period. Such a ritual, according to Mozi, led mourners to create absurd spectacles of themselves:

> 處喪之法將柰何哉？曰哭泣不秩聲翁，繚絰垂涕，處倚廬，寢苫枕塊，又相率強不食而為飢，薄衣而為寒，使面目陷陬，顏色黧黑耳目不聰明，手足不勁強，不可用也。又曰上士之操喪也，必扶而能起，杖而能行，以此共三年。
>
> What then are the rules for the mourner? It is said that one must cry and wail irregularly in a choked voice, wear sackcloth and hemp mourning garments with tears streaming down one's face, live in a thatched cottage and sleep on a straw mat with a pillow of earth. Then one is forced to strive not to eat and become hungry, wear thin clothes and become cold, make the face and eyes sunken in, and have a dark complexion. The eyes and ears are dull, hands and feet weak and unable to be used. Then it is said that high officials in mourning must have support in order to get up and use a cane in order to walk. All of this is to last for three years.[35]

The text goes on to argue that, much like rulers' obsessions with musical entertainment, such measures will result in economic disaster. But also like the criticism of elite entertainment, the passage above reveals a perception that mourners were acutely concerned with how they *appeared*. Aside from feeling hungry and cold, Mozi makes no mention of how the mourner really feels, especially about the deceased, implying that such emotions matter little—either to the mourners themselves or in Mozi's criteria for evaluating behavior.

In place of emotional expression toward the dead, the Mohists were more concerned with maintaining a relationship with the spirits. This attitude toward the living's relationship to the dead, then, resulted in a very critical and perplexed reaction to the bizarre spectacle that was the Ruist reaction to death:

[33]My use of "antitheatricality" is adapted from Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). Barish traces the beginning of this phenomenon in Western literature to Plato, who famously repudiated the arts in Book 10 of the *Republic* for producing mere representations of reality or the mere appearance of truth, rather than truth itself. Mohist antitheatricality, as shown below, was directed more towards behavior and the avoidance of actions that ran counter to how one believes the world really is—especially for the sake of creating a spectacle for others.

[34]For a discussion of filial piety in the *Mozi* in relation to the *Mengzi* 孟子, see Thomas Radice, "Manufacturing Mohism in the *Mencius*," *Asian Philosophy* 21.2 (2011), 139–52.

[35]*Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注, ed. Wu Yujiang 吳毓江 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 2006), 25 "Jie zang xia" 節葬下, 259. Compare translation in Ian Johnston, trans., *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 215.

其親死，列尸弗斂，登屋窺井，挑鼠穴，探滌器，而求其人矣。以為實在則贛愚甚矣；如其亡也必求焉，偽亦大矣！

When their parents die, (the Ruists) lay out the corpse without preparing it for burial, climb onto roof-tops, peer into wells, poke into rat holes, and look in wash basins, searching for them. To think that their parents will really be in these places is stupid indeed. To know they are dead and still search for them is the height of artifice![36]

This dichotomy between ignorance and artifice reveals a significant distinction between the Mohist and Ruist worldviews with regard to death and the spirits—and by extension, filial piety. While the Ruists expressed their grief by behaving "as if" they could call back the spirit of the deceased without an explicit commitment to a firm belief about this ritual's effect on the dead, the Mohists preferred behaving in the world "as is." Thus, from the Mohist perspective, the ritual was not so much "ornamentation" of emotions, so much as "artifice" (*wei* 偽), enacting an expression of beliefs that the performers did not actually have.

Despite rejecting the three-year mourning period, the Mohists were not against the practice of ritual sacrifices to the dead. In fact, they adamantly supported these practices, specifically because of their firm belief in the power of the spirits. They lamented that some people doubted the existence of "ghosts and spirits" (*gui shen* 鬼神), and found it absurd that some people doubted their existence and still engaged in sacrifice:

公孟子曰：「無鬼神。」又曰：「君子必學祭祀。」子墨子曰：「執無鬼而學祭禮，是猶無客而學客禮也，是猶無魚而為魚罟也。」

Gongmengzi said, "There are no ghosts and spirits." He then said, "The gentleman must learn the sacrificial rituals."[37] Master Mozi replied, "To hold that there are no ghosts and spirits and yet learning the sacrificial rituals is like there being no guests, and yet learning the rituals for guests; it's like there being no fish, and yet making a fish net.[38]

If sacrifices were worth performing, it was because the Mohists believed that they actually functioned as a means of communicating with the spirits. Otherwise, again, such behavior was mere artifice.

Fear also lay at the foundation of Mohist views of sacrifices, for failure to present the ancestors with properly prepared offerings could result in death.[39] Sacrifices were not spectacles for the living. Rather, actions of living people (both rituals and other

[36]*Mozi jiaozhu*, 39 "Fei Ru xia" 非儒下, 428–29. Compare translation in Johnston, *Mozi*, 351. The ritual described here bears some resemblance to the ritual of "calling back" (*fu* 復) the dead that is described in ritual texts from the Han dynasty, and scholars have discerned certain related beliefs about death and a kind of "soul." For a discussion of this ritual, see Yü Ying-shih, "'O Soul Come Back!': A Study in The Changing Conceptions of The Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987), 363–95.

[37]Reading *si* 祀 as *li* 禮.

[38]*Mozi jiaogu*, 48 "Gongmeng" 公孟, 690. Compare translation in Johnston, *Mozi*, 687.

[39]The *Mozi* tells of a certain person, conveniently named Guan Gu 觀辜 ("Observed Crime"), who failed to keep the sacrificial offerings to the ancestors clean and pure. As a result, a mysterious individual appeared, and beat him to death. See *Mozi jiaogu*, 31 "Ming gui xia" 明鬼下, 332–33.

moral actions) were a kind of spectacle for the spirits, who, according to the *Mozi*, saw everything:

> 雖有深谿博林，幽澗毋人之所，施行不可以不董，見有鬼神視之。
>
> Though (you) may be in a deep valley, a thick forest, or a dark place with no one around—do not fail to be careful in your conduct, for the ghosts and spirits are watching you.[40]

Because one's acts—not emotions—were important, any ornamentation was simply a false overlay that the spirits could see through, even better than living humans. Comparing the observational power of the spirits to even that of the sages, according to the text, was "like comparing those with keen ears and sharp eyes (*cong er ming mu* 聰耳明目) to those who are deaf and blind."[41] The ghosts and spirits, unlike living people, were "perspicacious" (*ming* 明).[42] Thus, though the Mohists eschewed any form of self-presentation of a person's "inner life," they still framed morality as a kind of spectacle of actions for an omniscient body of spectators, who evaluated and passed judgment on living "performers" living in a world "as is," with no need for any ornamentation.[43]

Antitheatrical Dramaturgy in Warring States Ruism

The concern for artifice in behavior also influenced Ruist conceptions of filial piety and morality in the mid- to late Warring States Period. Mengzi 孟子, in particular, developed his own antitheatrical tendencies, but not by embracing Mohist views. Rather, Mengzi placed an even greater emphasis on the internality of morality, while also acknowledging its visibility through the body:

> 君子所性，仁義禮智根於心。其生色也，睟然見於面，盎於背，施於四體，四體不言而喻。
>
> The gentleman regards the humaneness, rightness, ritual, and wisdom rooted in his heart as his nature. It emerges in his appearance—clearly seen in the face, filling out his back, and throughout his four limbs. The four limbs do not speak, and yet they express (these traits).[44]

Mengzi points to the "heart" or "mind" (*xin* 心) as the origin of these virtues, which was part of how Mengzi conceived of internality of one's morality, and particularly in goodness (*shan* 善) of one's human nature (*xing* 性).[45] He then asserts these virtues come out in one's appearance and entire body. That these virtues are "clearly seen in the

[40] *Mozi jiaogu*, 31 "Ming gui xia," 333. Compare translation in Johnston, *Mozi*, 287–89.

[41] *Mozi jiaogu*, 46 "Geng Zhu" 耕柱, 641.

[42] *Mozi jiaogu*, 31 "Ming gui xia," 336.

[43] The Mohists also interpreted Heaven (*tian* 天) as an ultimate arbiter of morality in the "Will of Heaven" ("Tian zhi" 天志) chapters, though the "vision" vocabulary is not as prominent.

[44] *Mengzi* 7A21; *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, ed. Jiao Xun焦循 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1987), 26.906. Compare translation in Bryan Van Norden, trans., *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008), 176.

[45] The most famous passages arguing for the goodness of human nature are found in *Mengzi* 6A.

face" (*sui ran jian yu mian* 睟然見於面) indicates that Mengzi thought of one's morality as not only embodied, but also distinctly visible.

The body and visibility, then, became fundamental elements of his dramaturgy of filial piety, best illustrated through his imagined origin for funerals:

> 蓋上世嘗有不葬其親者。其親死，則舉而委之於壑。他日過之，狐狸食之，蠅蚋姑嘬之。其顙有泚，睨而不視。夫泚也，非為人泚，中心達於面目。蓋歸反蘧梩而掩之。
>
> Now in past ages, some did not bury their parents. When their parents died, they took them and abandoned them in a gulley. Then one day they passed by them, and foxes were eating them, and flies were sucking on them. Sweat broke out on their foreheads, and they turned away so as not to look. This sweating was not for the sake of others. What was inside their hearts extended through to their countenances. So they returned home and came back with baskets and shovels to cover them.[46]

Like Kongzi in the *Analects*, Mengzi drew a connection between this internal feeling and an external manifestation: the countenance (*mian mu* 面目). Yet far from being "difficult," this expression was involuntary. He was also conscious of spectatorship for these emotions, as they were visible in one's appearance. However, Mengzi insisted that the people's expression of their distress was "not for the sake of others" (*fei wei ren* 非爲人). In this way, Mengzi affirmed an antitheatrical stance on grief, while also affirming the public nature of the funerary performance.

This antitheatrical dramaturgy of filial piety—accepting spectatorship, but denying its significance for the performer's motives—was indicative of Mengzian Ruism's focus on the internality of morality. Nevertheless, Mengzi did not use personal emotions to reject or diminish the value of inherited ritual scripts. For example, when a disapproving disciple, Chong Yu 充虞, criticized him for using a casket that was too "fine" or "beautiful" (*mei* 美), Mengzi responded:

> 古者棺槨無度，中古棺七寸，槨稱之。自天子達於庶人。非直為觀美也，然後盡於人心。
>
> In (early) antiquity, there were no rules for the inner and outer coffins. In middle antiquity the inner coffin was made seven *cun* thick, and it was the same for the outer coffin. (These standards) extended from the Son of Heaven to the common people. This was not simply for the sake of observing beauty, but because it was, after all, the full expression of people's hearts.[47]

Thus, Mengzi provided two justifications: the standard inherited from the authoritative past, and also the authority of his personal emotions. In correlating the received standard (i.e., the ritual script) with genuine emotions, he then rejected the notion that his performance was intended as a mere spectacle for "observing beauty" (*guan mei* 觀美).

[46] *Mengzi zhengyi*, 11.404–5. Compare translation in Van Norden, *Mengzi*, 75.
[47] *Mengzi* 2B7; *Mengzi zhengyi*, 9.281. Compare translation in Van Norden, *Mengzi*, 55.

Beauty, then, was an important aspect for Mengzi's filial dramaturgy, even as he correlated it closely with the natural expression of emotions. Ritual, though rooted in the heart, still retained the element of ornamentation:

> 仁之實，事親是也；義之實，從兄是也。智之實，知斯二者弗去是也；禮之實，節文斯二者是也；樂之實，樂斯二者，樂則生矣；生則惡可已也，惡可已，則不知足之蹈之、手之舞之。
>
> The core of humaneness is serving one's parents. The core of rightness is following one's elder brother. The core of wisdom is understanding these two (previous points) and not departing from them. The core of ritual is the regulation and ornamentation (*wen*) of these two. The core of music is to delight in these two. If one delights (in them) they will grow. If they grow, then how can they be stopped? If they can't be stopped, then without knowing it, the feet dance and the hands sway.[48]

The ornamentation of these "cores" (*shi* 實), which are all based in familial morality, lead to an involuntary expression through movement of the body. Moreover, Mengzi links this ornamentation to music (even playing on the dual meaning of *yue* 樂 ["music"] and *le* 樂 ["delight"]) and ultimately dance. This acceptance of the ornamentation in filial rituals, especially as linked to the aesthetic elements of music and dance, further distinguished Mengzi's antitheatrical dramaturgy from the more radical antitheatricality of the Mohists.

The Nature of Artifice in Late Warring States Ruism

Though Mengzi tended to diminish ritual artifice by connecting it tightly to internally based morality, Xunzi 荀子 embraced it. As he famously wrote: "Human nature (*xing*) is bad; what is good is artifice (*wei*)."[49] That is, though "artifice" was often used to denote something inferior or "fake," (as seen in the *Mozi*), it could actually be a powerful and positive force within human civilization. Human nature, he asserted, was universal to all human beings, but the sages (*sheng ren* 聖人) distinguished themselves from the masses (*zhong* 眾) through artifice in the form of ritual.[50] Therefore, unlike in the *Mengzi*, self-cultivation was not a matter of developing one's nature towards a more perfect form of goodness. Instead, one's nature should be transformed through ritual artifice.[51]

The act of moral transformation, then, stemmed from a regulatory function of ritual on the emotions:

> 兩情者，人生固有端焉。若夫斷之繼之，博之淺之，益之損之，類之盡之，盛之美之，使本末終始，莫不順比，足以為萬世則，則是禮也。非順孰脩為之君子，莫之能知也。
>
> These two emotions (sorrow and joy) emerge from people from the beginning. If they can shorten or extend them, broaden or narrow them, add to or subtract from them,

[48] *Mengzi* 4A27; *Mengzi zhengyi*, 15.532–33. Compare translation in Van Norden, *Mengzi*, 101.

[49] *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, ed. Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1981), 23 "Xing e" 性惡, 434.

[50] *Xunzi jijie*, 23 "Xing e," 438.

[51] For a more elaborate analysis of the "developmental" and "transformational" forms of self-cultivation in the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, respectively, see Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000).

> express them properly and fully, abundantly, and beautifully, make it so that from roots to branches and beginning to end, none do not conform, and (all) are worthy of becoming a pattern for ten thousand generations—then they have achieved (true) ritual. But aside from a devoted and cultivated gentleman, none can understand this.[52]

Aside from the regulation of emotions, the successful level of performance was a "pattern" (*ze* 則) for others to follow, implying that these cultivated performances were intended to be admired and emulated. Part of the admiration from others was due to the performance's "beauty" (*mei*). Indeed, Xunzi insisted that "without artifice, human nature would be unable to beautify itself" (*wu wei ze xing bu neng zi mei* 無偽則性不能自美).[53] In short, Xunzi's ritual dramaturgy embraced artifice by explicitly linking aesthetics and morality.

In this way, he embellished upon Kongzi's proposed relationship between the emotions (*qing* 情) of the performer with ornamentation (*wen*):

> 文理繁，情用省，是禮之隆也。文理省，情用繁，是禮之殺也。文理情用相為內外表墨，並行而雜，是禮之中流也。
>
> When the ornamental patterns are abundant, but the emotion and practical use (*yong* 用) is minimal—this is an excess of ritual. When the ornamental patterns are minimal, but the emotions and practical use are abundant—this is a dearth of ritual. When the ornamental patterns and emotions and practical use are made to be mutually inside and outside, light and dark, and move together and blend—this is the middle flow of ritual.[54]

Like Kongzi's "perfect blending" (*binbin*), Xunzi's "middle flow" (*zhong liu* 中流) idealized a balance between the individual's personal feelings and the social ritual scripts. Taken in conjunction with his negative view of human nature and the regulatory and transformational function of ritual, Xunzi could be even more emphatic about emotions conforming to the scripts, and was therefore less concerned with these scripts conforming to one's natural feelings in Mengzi's view.

Nevertheless, though Xunzi took a much more positive view of ritual artifice, he cautioned against shameless spectacle, using the ritual of mourning as an example:

> 故量食而食之，量要而帶之，相高以毀瘠，是姦人之道，非禮義之文也，非孝子之情也，將以有為者也。
>
> To measure the quantity of food to eat, to measure the waist before tying one's sash, to strive for an emaciated appearance—this is the way of wicked people. It is not the (proper) ornamentation of ritual principles, and not the (proper) feelings of a filial son. Such actions are only for the sake of effect.[55]

[52] *Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun" 禮論, 365–66. Compare translation in John Knoblock, trans. *Xunzi: A Study and Translation of the Complete Works*, vol. 3 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 66.
[53] *Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 366.
[54] *Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," p. 357. Compare translation in Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 3, 62.
[55] *Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 364. Compare translation in Knoblock, vol. 3, 65–66.

Thus, like the Mohists, Xunzi was highly critical of mourning for the sake of appearance, but only because mourning was intended to be a matter of using this particular ritual script to regulate one's own feelings about the deceased, and (as Mengzi insisted), "not for the sake of others." One's mourning was, in effect, for the sake of oneself, one's relation to the deceased, and one's relation to death.

Xunzi developed a robust, performer-centered dramaturgy of death. As part of his program of artifice, he insisted that various elements of funerary practices were forms of "imitation" or "symbolism" (*xiang* 象). Corpses were to be dressed like living people, and buried with certain objects that they would use, but Xunzi was very explicit that there should be indications that these objects were merely adornments. For example, people should be buried with empty jars, musical instruments that are not tuned, and carriages with no horses.[56] The unusable nature of the adorning objects, he believed, "emphasized grief" (*zhong ai* 重哀) in the living participants at the funeral.[57] In this way, the known fiction of the objects intensified real emotions in the mourner/filial son. Again, the fiction was not merely for display, but rather to help the performers fully engage their natural emotions for the deceased in a way that demonstrated the full respect they deserved, and come to terms with their death—for the living descendant to be transformed dramaturgically into a filial son.

The fiction of various objects or "props" for a burial was only part of the performative artifice of filial piety. Xunzi's dramaturgical technique provided a detailed description of part of the mourning process as well:

卜筮視日、齋戒、脩涂、几筵、饋薦、告祝，如或饗之。物取而皆祭之，如或嘗之。毋利舉爵，主人有尊，如或觴之。賓出，主人拜送，反易服，即位而哭，如或去之。

One divines with milfoil stalks to find the proper day, purifies oneself and fasts, cleans and sweeps, arranges the tables and mats, offers the sacrificial food, and informs the invocator as if (*ru*) someone were going to feast with them. The offerings are taken up and each item is presented as if someone were going to taste it. No benefit of holding up the wine cup is given to anyone but the host who has that honor, as if someone were going to drink from it. When the guests leave, the host bids them farewell and sends them off, returns and changes clothes, then takes his place and wails as if someone left (with the guests).[58]

The final lines of Xunzi's essay mimic the reactions of spectators witnessing the ritual:

哀夫！敬夫！事死如事生，事亡如事存，狀乎無形影，然而成文。

What grief! What respect! One serves the dead as one serves the living, serves the perished as one serves those who survive. Providing appearances to that which has no form or shadow, like so, perfects ornamentation.[59]

[56]*Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 368–69.

[57]*Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 369. Robert Campany refers to these acts as "symbolic indirection," referring to how the specific actions within the ritual mean something other than what is immediately apparent. See his "Xunzi and Durkheim as Theorists of Ritual Practice," in *Discourse and Practice*, ed. Frank Reynolds and David Tracy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 204–5.

[58]*Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 377. Compare translation in Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 3, 73.

[59]*Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 378. Compare translation in Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 3, 73.

Xunzi's choreography of "as if" behavior for the performer, in conjunction with this comment illustrates Xunzi's elaborate dramaturgy in which the performer demonstrates to his living "guests" (*bin* 賓) his devotion to his deceased ancestor through his bodily movements.[60] The performer, in turn, is praised for a performance that brings to life what was commonly understood to be scripted behavior.

Space, Spectacle, and Spectatorship in the Late Warring States and Western Han

Xunzi developed a dramaturgy of filial piety and ritual in which ornamentation factored into several elements of "expressing" (*fa* 發) emotions—not only the performer's face, voice, and clothing, but also the space itself[61]—thus creating a complete dramaturgical environment for filial piety. Indeed, the filial space was particularly significant for the potency of "as if" behavior. Prescriptive ritual texts compiled in the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE), such as the *Liji*,[62] illustrate how the "ancestral temple" (*miao* 廟) was intended to be a transformative space where ordinary behavior halted temporarily, and an alternative "as if" world prevailed. In particular, the *Liji* shows that, by the late Warring States Period and Early Han Dynasty, the dramaturgical significance of the filial son had surpassed even that of the impersonator of the dead:

> 君迎牲而不迎尸，別嫌也。尸在廟門外，則疑於臣，在廟中則全於君；君在廟門外則疑於君，入廟門則全於臣、全於子。是故，不出者，明君臣之義也。
>
> The ruler goes to see the sacrificial victim, but not the impersonator of the dead, in order to avoid confusion. Outside the temple gate, the impersonator of the dead is suspected to be a subject. Inside the temple gate, he is regarded completely as the ruler. Outside the temple gate the ruler is suspected to be the ruler. Inside the temple gate, he is regarded completely as a subject or a son. Consequently, not going out (to meet the impersonator of the dead) clarifies the distinction between ruler and subject.[63]

The necessity of this strange performance preparation is explained later in the text, where it notes that the impersonator should actually be the deceased's grandson and the son of the main person interacting with the impersonator.[64] Thus, in this scenario, not only is the ruler behaving "as if" he is interacting with his father, he is showing deference to someone to who, outside this ritual/performance space, is his clear subordinate. To express his grief publicly toward the impersonator is a major act of artifice on the part of the ruler, so not meeting the impersonator before the ritual helps him avoid "breaking character."

[60]These actions of the performer were part of what Ori Tavor has aptly described as Xunzi's "corporal technology" of ritual. See his "Xunzi's Theory of Ritual Revisited: Reading Ritual as Corporal Technology," *Dao* 12 (2013), 313–30.

[61]*Xunzi jijie*, 19 "Li lun," 364–65.

[62]Much like most other texts discussed in this essay, especially the *Analects*, the *Liji* is highly complex, containing material composed at different periods of time, and some as early as the Warring States. For a good, concise overview on the issues pertaining the composition of the *Liji*, see Michael David Kaulana Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 219–23.

[63]*Liji jijie* 禮記集解, ed. Sun Xidan 孫希旦, "Ji tong" 祭統, 47.1244. Compare translation in Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, 245–46.

[64]*Liji jijie*, "Ji tong," 47.1244.

That the filial son was someone who needed such performance preparation is a sign of how dramaturgically developed that role became. The "Ji Yi" 祭義 chapter, for example, describes how the filial son, while in a state of fasting (*zhai* 齋), deliberately contemplates (*si* 思) his deceased parents, especially their physical characteristics and even their likes and desires, to the point when he actually sees (*jian* 見) them.[65] The text continues to insist that the (ideal) filial son does not forget (*bu wang* 不忘) the sense experiences (i.e., sights and sounds) of his deceased parents to the point that they seem to still exist (*cun* 存), and such memories are kept in his heart/mind (*xin*).[66] This deliberate corporal preparation allows him to give a sincere performance. As the text says, "Thus, the filial son faces the impersonator of the dead without shame" (*shi gu xiaozi lin shi er bu zuo* 是故孝子臨尸而不怍)[67]—all the while understanding that this impersonator is not his father. But the filial son's deliberate and methodical self-manipulation for remembering and contemplating these individual details that are specific to his father infuses a personal truth into the artifice of the ritual script. The result for the performer is a more therapeutic experience for dealing with the loss of a parent.[68]

Though the filial son's performance of rituals for the dead served as a kind of personal catharsis, the authors of the *Liji* made it clear that the entire role of the filial son—and not merely his relationship to his dead parents—was a public spectacle:

> 是故，孝子之事親也，有三道焉：生則養，沒則喪，喪畢則祭。養則觀其順也，喪則觀其哀也，祭則觀其敬而時也。盡此三道者，孝子之行也。
>
> Thus, the filial son's service to his parents consists of three ways (*dao* 道): while they are alive, they are nourished; when they pass away, they are mourned; and when mourning is complete, they are offered sacrifices.[69] In their nourishing, we *observe* (*guan*) his obedience. In his mourning, we *observe* his grief. In his sacrifices, we *observe* his respect and timeliness. Completing these three ways is the practice of the filial son.[70]

As implied in other passages, the filial son was supposed to be introspective and not ostentatious, but the end result was still a performance that was a visible expression of his feelings to a viewing audience in the wider community. The personal qualities of obedience, grief, and respect were visible only through the artifice of ritual performance. Or more precisely, ritual artifice provided an acceptable form of expression to the wider public.

[65] *Liji jijie*, "Ji yi," 46.1208. For an extensive analysis and discussion on whether this ritual fasting was intended to induce hallucinations or facilitate "as if" behavior, see Michael Carr, "Ritual Fasts and Spirit Visions in the *Liji*," *Otaru Shōka Daigaku jinbun kenkyū* 小樽商科大学人文研究 91 (1996), 99–126. For a brief discussion of the wider context of fasting in several early Chinese texts, see Ori Tavor, "Embodying the Dead: Ritual as Preventative Therapy in Chinese Ancestor Worship and Funerary Practices," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 34.1 (2020), 37–38.

[66] *Liji jijie*, "Ji yi," 46.1209.

[67] *Liji jijie*, "Ji yi," 46.1210.

[68] Tavor, "Embodying the Dead," 39–40.

[69] A similar statement can be found in *Analects* 2.5. Here, Kongzi stresses that one must serve, bury, and sacrifice to parents according to ritual.

[70] *Liji jijie*, "Ji Tong" 祭統, 47.1237; emphasis added. Compare translation in Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 2, 237–38.

In rituals for dead parents, in particular, with the filial son's performance preparation and the elaborate "as if" behavior in mourning and sacrifices, he became a kind of "tragic" role that was both unique and familiar to his spectators.[71] Though the spirit of the ancestor was represented through an impersonator, the filial son was also "ghosting" his role.[72] That is to say, each filial son expressed his own personal emotions, but through the same ritual scripts spectators had seen others perform before him. The impersonator may have represented his esteemed deceased parent, but the attention of the other living participants and spectators were squarely on the filial son. The filial son, then, in his fully developed and cultivated role, and in contrast to the impersonator of the dead, became the most important figure in the rite.

The tragic performance of the filial son, however, was not for its own sake. The largest significance of public filial performance was for the political elite. *Mengzi* 3A2, for example, notes the power of "correct" filial mourning rituals over an initially skeptical audience to the crown prince of Teng 滕 as he attempted to mourn for his father. As part of his encouragement to the crown prince to follow the standard mourning script, Mengzi quotes Kongzi on the political power of morality:

> 「上有好者，下必有甚焉者矣。君子之德，風也；小人之德，草也。草尚之風必偃。」是在世子。
>
> "What the superior loves, the subordinates must love even more. The virtue of the gentleman is like the wind, and virtue of the small person is like the grass. When the wind blows over the grass, it must bend." This lies with the crown prince.[73]

The prince of Teng ultimately takes Mengzi's advice, and the final lines of this passage illustrate the perceived power of a filial ruler performing for his subjects:

> 及至葬，四方來觀之，顏色之戚，哭泣之哀，弔者大悅。
>
> Up to the time of burial, people came from the four directions and observed [*guan*] him, the sorrow in his countenance, and the grief of his wailing and weeping. Those who gave condolences were greatly pleased.[74]

The prince affects his spectators in such a way that they cannot help but react positively to his very personal, yet scripted, performance. The passage is a prime example of the belief in moral exemplarism in early Ruism: the idea that if a person (particularly a

[71]I am using the term, "tragic" in a broad sense, adapted from Susan L. Feagin, who defines it as a narrative with an unhappy ending. She uses this conception of tragedy to accommodate for the variety of examples in Western literature that are labeled "tragic." See her "The Pleasures of Tragedy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20.1 (1983), 95–104. For a discussion of tragedy (or lack thereof) in pre-modern Chinese drama, see Ch'ien Chung-shu. "Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama," *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 11.1 (1935), 37–46. In this essay, Ch'ien limits the notion of "tragedy" to Western "classical tragedy," which is far narrower in scope than Feagin's definition.

[72]I borrow the term, "ghosting," from Marvin Carlson, who uses it to denote (among other things) how a role in a play is portrayed by different actors, who then are inevitably compared to actors who played the role in previous productions. Roles are thus "haunted" by their previous performances. See his *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001).

[73]*Mengzi zhengyi*, 10.330. The sentence about the gentleman can also be found in *Analects* 12.19.

[74]*Mengzi zhengyi*, 10.332. Compare translation in Van Norden, *Mengzi*, 65.

ruler) demonstrates a strong moral character—in this case, through ritual performance—others will notice and be influenced to become moral themselves.[75]

This aspect of filial rituals for the dead is expressed even more strongly in the Western Han text, the *Xiaojing* (*Classic of filial piety*), which concludes with Kongzi describing a ruler's filial performance for his dead parents:

> 孝子之喪親也，哭不偯，禮無容，言不文，服美不安，聞樂不樂，食旨不甘，此哀戚之情也。三日而食，教民無以死傷生。毀不滅性，此聖人之政也。喪不過三年，示民有終也。
>
> When the filial son mourns for his parents, he wails without (excessive) sobbing, performs rituals without (concern for) his appearance, and speaks without elegance.[76] He is not comfortable in fine clothes, finds no happiness in music, nor any sweetness in food. These are the emotions of grief and sorrow. After three days, he eats, which teaches the people that (concern for) the dead should not injure the living, and that self-depravation (from mourning) should not extinguish what is inborn. This is the government of the sages. That mourning does not exceed three years displays to the people that there is an end (to mourning).[77]

This formalized performance of grief has a didactic quality, such that it "teaches" (*jiao* 教) and "displays" (*shi* 示) for the people how they, in turn, should behave. The ruler as filial son becomes the model for all.

The *Liji*, however, paints a more complicated picture. For instance, in the "Fang Ji" 坊記 chapter, Kongzi reiterates the ideal exemplarist qualities of the ruler performing filial rituals for the dead, and his effect on his spectators, but acknowledges the imperfection of this performance model:

> 祭祀之有尸也，宗廟之主也，示民有事也。修宗廟，敬祀事，教民追孝也。以此坊民，民猶忘其親。
>
> Having an impersonator at the sacrifices and a main presider of the ancestral temple displays to the people that they [too] should engage in service. Repairing the ancestral temple and respectful sacrificial service teaches the people to pursue filial piety. These [actions] direct the people, but people will still forget their parents.[78]

Later, he says,

[75]For a discussion of moral exemplarism in early Ruism, see Amy Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person is* That (New York: Routledge, 2012). For a broader discussion of moral exemplarism as an ethical theory, see Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[76]"Elegance" is a translation of *wen*, but here it is not intended to negate the "ornamentation" of scripted ritual behavior.

[77]*Xiaojing zhushu* 孝經注疏, ed. Jin Liangnian 金良年 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji, 2009), 18 "Sang qin" 喪親, 85. Compare translation in Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Roger T. Ames, trans., *The Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai i Press, 2009), 115–16.

[78]*Liji jijie*, "Fang ji," 50.1289. Compare translation in Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 2, 291.

升自客階，受吊於賓位，教民追孝也。未沒喪不稱君，示民不爭也。。。。以此坊民，子猶有弑其父者。

Ascending the guest's stairs and receiving condolences in the proper place [of a guest] teaches the people to pursue filial piety. Not taking the title of ruler until the mourning rituals are completed displays to the people that they should not be contentious. … These [actions] direct the people, but there will still be sons who murder their fathers.[79]

Kongzi uses the same main verbs as he does in the *Xiaojing*, "teach" and "display," and yet he acknowledges the performance can fail, revealing that at least some early Ruists understood, as Michael Ing states, "[o]ther powers, and in particular other people, determine the success of our rituals."[80] In cases such as these, spectators were as engaged in the performances as the filial sons and the impersonators of the dead. That is, they were not meant to be mere passive observers; they were as much performers as spectators, and had an active, albeit fallible, role in the dramaturgy of filial piety.

The significance of the cultivated spectator was most important in unconventional situations. As a prescriptive text, the *Liji* offered numerous examples of special circumstances that called for adjustments to the ritual protocol, especially for filial rituals for the dead.[81] The general assumption was that if the filial son performed his role correctly and sincerely, according to the circumstances, others would notice, and respond positively. Nevertheless, the authors of the *Liji* were also aware that there may be circumstances that even they had not imagined. To illustrate how a cultivated performer would handle such a situation, the "Tan Gong shang" chapter offers the following example:

將軍文子之喪，既除喪，而後越人來吊，主人深衣練冠，待于廟，垂涕洟，子游觀之曰：「將軍文氏之子其庶几乎！亡於禮者之禮也，其動也中。」

During the mourning of General Wenzi, at its conclusion, a man from Yue 越 arrived to offer condolences. The chief mourner wore a long gown and silk cap (for the first anniversary), and waited in the ancestral temple, tears falling (from his eyes). Ziyou observed [*guan*] this, and said, "The son of General Wenzi is not far off! He successfully performed a ritual for which there is no ritual."[82]

The son's improvisation is not a raw expression of emotions. He devises formalized expressions to match the unique situation. In one sense, this anecdote illustrates the son's uncanny ability to perform the role of filial son when there was no set script for his unique situation, but Ziyou's role is far from insignificant. He functions as a first-hand observer, and his status as a disciple of Kongzi gives his judgment a special

[79]*Liji jijie*, "Fang ji," 50.1291. Compare translation in Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 2, 294.

[80]Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual*, 147. Ing refers to these kinds of examples in the *Liji* in constructing a what he calls a "tragic theory of ritual," which is different from, though not necessarily incompatible with, my use of "tragic" as an aesthetic relationship between performers and spectators. See *The Dysfunction of Ritual*, 208–18.

[81]See, for example, the "Zengzi Wen" and "Beng Ji" chapters.

[82]*Liji jijie*, "Tan Gong shang," 8.206. Compare translation in Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 1, 144.

authority. He is, in effect, the only reason a reader (classical or modern) could understand that this son's performative choices were admirable, given the unique situation. Thus, while this passage certainly illustrates the possibilities for virtuoso performers, it also indicates that early Ruists saw a necessity for cultivated spectators not only to ensure that filial rituals were performed correctly, but also to confirm when deviations and innovations were permissible and even laudatory.

The belief in self-cultivation's impact on spectatorship, specifically one's ability to recognize another self-cultivated individual, existed as early as the Warring State Period. For example, a passage from the Guodian version of the *Wu Xing* 五行 (*Five aspects of conduct*)[83] illustrates this special power:

> 智之思也長，長則得，得則不忘，不忘則明，明則見賢人，見賢人則玉色，玉色則形，形則智。
>
> Wise thoughts are extensive; extensive, they comprehend; when you comprehend, you will not forget; not forgetting, you will be perspicacious; when you are perspicacious, you will see worthy people; seeing worthy people, you will have a jade-like countenance; having a jade-like countenance, you will have [external] form; having [external] form, you will be wise.[84]

The "jade-like countenance" (*yu se* 玉色)[85] is something the text also associates with people who are "humane" (*ren* 仁), indicating that the "wisdom" (*zhi* 智) that comes from "seeing worthy people" (*jian xian ren* 見賢人) most likely also makes one a worthwhile performer. Recall that "perspicacity" (*ming*) was a level of visual perception the Mohists attributed to ghosts and spirits, but this text attributes it to cultivated living individuals. It is unlikely that the authors of the text thought cultivated people were omniscient spectators, but the ability to notice the moral value of another's behavior, was important, especially when ritual dramaturgy was a fundamental part of moral, religious, and political life.

To return to the opening anecdote, one can also notice that within the *Liji*, sometimes cultivated spectators can disagree on whether a performance is truly filial. Kongzi sees the man's performance as "adept" (*shan*), and points specifically to his "as if" behavior for revealing his emotions. Zigong, on the other hand, cannot understand why the Master makes such a fuss over him, insisting that it would be better for

[83]A version of this text (along with other texts) written on silk was originally discovered in 1973 in a tomb that dates to 168 BCE. It was discovered at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in the province of Hunan 湖南. In 1993, an earlier version of this text written on bamboo slips (again, with other texts) was discovered in a tomb that dates to around 300 BCE. It was discovered in Guodian in the province of Hubei 湖北.

[84]Li Ling 李零, ed., *Guodian Chujian jiaoduji* 郭店楚簡校讀記 (Beijing: Renmin daxue, 2007), 101; see also *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1998), slips 14–15. Compare translation in Scott Cook, trans., *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian: A Study and Complete Translation*, vol. 1 (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2012), 494.

[85]For a discussion of this notion of "jade-like countenance" and significance of jade for describing a person's appearance in early Chinese texts, especially the *Wu Xing* and *Mengzi*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden, Brill, 2004), 101–60. For an interesting analysis on the hierarchical distinction between the visual and the aural in this text, see Erica Brindley, "'Sagacity' and the Heaven–Human Relationship in the *Wu Xing* 五行," in *Dao Companion to the Guodian Bamboo Manuscripts*, ed. Shirley Chan (Cham: Springer, 2019), 187–96.

the man to shift more quickly to the next ritual. The *yu* 虞 sacrifice to which Zigong refers involved an impersonator,[86] and given the above discussion about the performance preparation for interacting with an impersonator, one need not assume that Zigong was completely disinterested in emotional expression.[87] Even if we follow the commentarial tradition that interprets Kongzi's view as more authoritative, Zigong's challenge signifies that there could be reasonable disagreements over the quality of performances, especially when there was no obvious or egregious mistake on the part of the performer. Kongzi's insistence that the man should serve as a model (*fa* 法) filial son to his disciples reinforces the exemplarist quality within ritual performance. He and Zigong, however, demonstrate that cultivated performers and cultivated spectators had become inseparable entities in the dramaturgy of filial piety.

Conclusion

While it would be far too simplistic to reduce early Chinese *xiao* to the performing arts or visual entertainment, spectacle was certainly a prominent feature from a very early point in its development. Offerings were made to the dead, but the rituals were also for the benefit of the living—not only for the person making the offering, but also for the enjoyment of other living spectator/participants. It was in the late pre-imperial period, however, that the intellectual elite, particularly the Ruists, transformed *xiao* dramaturgically into a child's expression of emotions in which the most overtly choreographed performances were rituals for dead parents. The dramaturgy of these rituals consisted of a son harmonizing his feelings of respect and grief for his deceased parent with the "ornamentation" of inherited ritual scripts through an "as if" attitude, which was then witnessed by a community of living spectators.

But this transformation also created a tension between what was genuine and what was artificial in parent–child relations, while never fully rejecting the significance of some kind of spectatorship. Antitheatrical tendencies emerged within the discourse on filial piety ranging from a more direct, transactional relationship with deceased parents to an even stronger emphasis on emotional expression, especially grief. Others embraced artifice as essential to filial performances for dead parents, emphasizing the aesthetic elements of filial dramaturgy, while also developing emotional preparation techniques for proper performances. In this way, and in contrast to the celebratory *xiao* offerings of the Western Zhou, the filial son of the late pre-imperial and early imperial periods developed into a tragic role, whose performance depended on creating an ideal balance between the inborn and the inherited, the personal and the public.

This complex dramaturgy was intended to have a universal, if not transformative, effect on spectators, yet its proponents also acknowledged that spectators' experiences were no more homogenous than performers' abilities. As performances of filial piety became more closely associated with moral self-cultivation, so too did spectatorship, especially for any unique situations that may require unorthodox performances. In rituals for the dead, therefore, model spectators became just as important as model performers.

Overall, this "dramaturgy of death" supports Robert Eno's assertion that "The Master Ru was essentially an artist, and his love of ritual art was not a pose. It was

[86]*Liji jijie*, "Tan Gong Xia" 檀弓下, 10.259.

[87]Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) says that Zigong did not understand that grief was the "root" (*ben* 本) of ritual, and that sacrifices were the "ornamentation" (*wen*) of ritual; *Liji jijie*, "Tang Gong Shang," 8.195.

in ritual living that he found his greatest satisfaction."[88] One might add that this satisfaction came as much from watching rituals as it did from performing them. In this regard, while this discussion has centered on parent–child relations after a parent's death, analysis of this dramaturgical phenomenon may be expanded well beyond this domain to a highly interconnected "dramaturgy of life." Indeed, given the significance of ritual in early China, a broader performance analysis of early Chinese thought might reveal how theatricality (and antitheatricality) influenced competing ideas about social interaction, self-cultivation, and political affairs. In its own unique way, then, all the world of early China may have been a ritualized "stage" with many players, many spectators, and many ideas of how both groups should "act."

[88]Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 60.

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