we select. Alongside this claim about hermeneutics, Keevak makes the claim that the Europeans were oriented by "religious conversion, cultural superiority, and monetary profit" (p. 28). This claim, though, remains always ambiguous: were the Europeans particularly bad, deliberately setting out to impose their own values and to make a profit? Or were they simply doing what any interpreter must do: making sense of things by relating them to their own concerns and views? The tone of the book implies the first, since it certainly suggests that the Europeans are to *blame* for their mistakes; yet the historical analysis usually only establishes the second. In fact, Keevak's polemics depend on a constant slippage between the two, on one side taking the most egregious examples of Euro-centrism and associating them with all European interpreters, while on the other side suggesting that Europeans were foolish for actions that are a necessary part of any process of interpretation. For example, perhaps Keevak's most emphatic point is that Europeans (and Christians) were more interested in the monument than were the Chinese themselves, but why should this be surprising or noteworthy? In the end, one cannot tell if the Europeans are being held up by Keevak as an illustration of how *not* to go about engaging another culture, or if they are meant to show that cross-cultural interpretation is always imperialist and should simply be avoided. Keevak's nuanced history of how the stele was interpreted in Europe suggests that the truth lies at some complex middle ground between these two positions, even while his rhetoric tends to obscure this complexity.

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The Talented Women of the Zhang Family. By Susan Mann. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. Pp. xvi + 322. $55.00 cloth, $21.95 paper.

Historians are in the habit of asking the question, "How do we know what we know?" Much less often do we ask the question, "How do we tell what we know?" Or, to put it another way: how do our modes of communication structure and inform our modes of knowing? What might happen if historians practised "thinking like a storyteller" in their everyday practice of writing history? Susan Mann has written a rich and imaginative book which shows her working and thinking like a storyteller and a scene setter; the book invites commentary on these questions, and should provide inspiration for future work on many levels.

The Talented Women of the Zhang Family looks at three generations of talented women in the Zhang family of Changshu. The narrative progresses with each chapter title taking the name of a central figure in each generation: first, Tang Yaoqing; second, her

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daughter Zhang Qieying; and third, Wang Caiqin, the granddaughter of Yaoqing and the niece of Qieying. The book spans a long nineteenth century—Yaoqing was born in 1763 and Caiqin lived until 1893. The sources for this book are rich: writings of many of the women themselves have been preserved, as have been writings by and about other family members. The book is not only an enchanting look into the domestic life of a nineteenth-century family, it also suggests ways of looking at the political and the social from the point of view of the domestic in ways which have the potential to be transformative, and suggests the richness of the late imperial conception of the latter.

Mann is quite forthright about the innovative, even risk-taking aspects of her method. She writes in the prologue, "Here I have followed a central tenet of Chinese historical writing, which strives to bring to life people from the past with their feelings, words, and deeds intact" (p. xvi). This is an admirable tenet, but how does one render an intact narrative when one's sources are a patchwork, shot through with silences of various sorts—not only the silences generated in the production of texts (self-censorship of various types, which Mann explores in interesting and productive ways) but silences produced by the destruction of texts during the terrible cataclysms of the Taiping rebellion (as well as later catastrophes)? The answer to this question lies, of course, in the educated imagination of the historian, which sets scenes, creates dialogue, and explicates motivation. Mann speaks (and analyses) through the silences—she does not obliterate or gloss over them, but rather regards silences as fissures which can open up new lines of vision. Seeing along those new lines of vision sometimes requires strong imaginative techniques. Most historians in thinking (and talking) about their work ask questions like, "What was she really thinking? What did it feel like when such-and-such happened? What *really* happened?" Mann has made questions like these central to this book. She reads beyond the text to get us inside the minds and imaginations of her subject. Mann is exceedingly well read; her readings beyond the text are provocative and informative. She invokes the genre of *waishi* 外史 (normally translated as unorthodox history) as the one in which she is working. This book differs from *waishi* in one critical respect: *waishi* authors are normally quite cavalier about their sources. Mann is anything but cavalier. She meticulously tells us which scenes are the products of her own invention and occasionally tells us why she has chosen to imagine scenes the way she has. This is of critical importance—an assiduous reader of footnotes will know which passages are created by Mann's imagination and which come directly out of her sources. Reading history is often a three-way conversation among reader, author, and sources, but in the case of *Talented Women* the grounds of the conversation become wonderfully explicit.

The ways in which Mann sees silence as an opportunity is shown in her treatment of footbinding. The Zhang women do not write about their feet; Mann refers to the general silence of late imperial women on the question of footbinding as "one of the most cavernous silences in the historical record on elite Chinese women" (p. 166). She takes us through the layers of that silence, writing that "Zhang Qieying may well have written a poem on footbinding, but I doubt that she would have saved it in a writing case where her

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brother might look to collect poems for publication. Were she to save such a poem, on the other hand, she would be secure in the knowledge that her brother would never print it" (ibid). Mann, however, must write about footbinding, and she does so using information garnered from other sources. She talks about the ways in which Tang Yaoqing was careful and gentle in the binding of her daughters' feet, calling in a seasoned practitioner and providing the girls with special favours as they went through the painful early stages of the process (pp. 24–25). It may be harder to imagine binding a child's foot than it is to imagine having bound feet; the difficulties of extending a modern imagination to the act of binding a child's foot are shown when Mann writes in a footnote, "It is not unreasonable, I think, that highly educated women like Tang Yaoqing were reluctant to take extreme measures in binding a daughter's feet" (p. 233, n. 47). It is not clear to me what sort of guidance the education of a woman in late imperial China would have provided her in terms of binding her daughter's feet, but Mann's comment shows just how complicated imaginative empathy can be.

Mann's method yields deep rewards in its discussion of Miss Fa. She was engaged to marry Zhang Juesun, who had died in 1803 at the age of fourteen *sui* 歲. As Mann points out in a note, we have only five documents which talk about Miss Fa; however, Mann's technique of "setting the scene" gives Miss Fa a much stronger presence in the family narrative than she would otherwise have had. Ten years after Juesun's death, the family of Miss Fa decided to send her to live with the Zhangs. The difficult ambiguities of this situation are conveyed to us not in an analytical historian's voice, but through the mind of Zhang Yaoqing as she receives a letter from Miss Fa's father, informing her of his daughter's decision to enter the Zhang household as a faithful maiden. She recounts what the Fa stand to gain from the daughter's decision (honour, and a ritually difficult situation removed), and then what the Zhang stand to lose. Miss Fa's presence is a constant reminder of the death of Juesun; another marriage has been contracted (between Yuesun and Bao Mengyi, the daughter of a dear family friend) with the understanding that Mengyi would be the eldest daughter-in-law. Yaoqing, however, knows she has no choice but to invite Miss Fa into the household. We thus see from the beginning that Miss Fa is only grudgingly admitted into the family and can imagine that things will not go well. As long as her mother-in-law Yaoqing is alive, Miss Fa behaves herself fairly well. But at Yaoqing's death, Miss Fa turns on Bao Mengyi. Both she and Mengyi know that as the elder sister-in-law Miss Fa has structural authority; Mengyi must show her respect and acquiesce to her wishes. The most revealing source on Miss Fa's misbehaviour is a eulogy of Bao Mengyi. Mann suggests that the eulogist regarded Mengyi's tolerance of the difficult Miss Fa (who by this time was referred to as mentally ill *xinji* 心疾) as evidence of Mengyi's virtue.

It is not my intention here to defend Miss Fa, but her position must have been very difficult. We do not know if the decision to have her enter the Zhang family was hers, or even the degree to which she acquiesced. We do not know if she entered with a dowry or not; presumably she did, but the sources seem silent on this. She was the fourth daughter

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in a family of doctors; indeed, part of the social difficulties she encountered in the Zhang family may have stemmed from the fact that her fiancé Juesun died while under the care of one of her relatives. We do not know if her separation from the other women in the household was present from the day she first entered the household, or if it was something that developed as a result of her quirks and resentment. The Zhang women were not only talented; they could be condescending (see below). If Miss Fa did not live up to their standards, they may well have decided she was not worthy of their attention. It is telling that no one bothered to record her given name, at least not on any documents that survive. Her choice to remain a "faithful maiden" (that is to say, to refuse to marry after the death of her fiancé) could, in theory at least, have been carried out within her natal family—as Lu Weijing has shown us, while most faithful maidens joined the families of their fiancés, it was not uncommon for them to remain with their families of birth. We know that Miss Fa was the youngest of four daughters; perhaps family resources were stretched thin by providing dowries to girls with living husbands, or perhaps Miss Fa was difficult at home and her natal family saw in the faithful maidenhood a way to be rid of a troublesome daughter.

Another woman who provoked complex reactions among the Zhang women is Li Luan, the concubine of Zhang Yuesun. Here, there seems to have been a generational difference in attitudes towards her. Li Luan, the daughter of a yamen servant, was called into the Zhang household as a concubine after the early death of Yuesun's beloved wife Mengyi. She was young, born in the same year as Yuesun's daughter, and was welcomed into the circle of poetry-writing cousins of that generation, a circle self-consciously modelled after the poetry club in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber.* Wang Caipin took pleasure in teaching Li Luan to write poetry; she was quick, lively, and good-tempered. But their elders were condescending. In an encomium to a book of poetry written by the cousins, their aunt Zhang Wanying wrote, "[Li Luan] is meek and demure although lacking in spirit. She is well aware of her shortcomings and strives to be rid of them in order to realize her utmost potential. Although her learning is limited, she always succeeds in what she sets out to do" (p. 188). One might be tempted to conclude that a concubine is a less problematic family member than a faithful maiden, and that might indeed be the case—a concubine's role is easily understood, whereas a faithful maiden remains an anomaly, an honoured and virtuous one to be sure, but still an anomaly. Virtue's crisp edges always present something of a moral problem, especially when the bearer of virtue is a bit unpleasant. There might, however, be another explanation: Miss Fa was a difficult and unpleasant person, and Li Luan was not.

The book convincingly shows the ways in which all the women of the Zhang family retained close ties with their natal family after marriage; two of the four women in the middle generation (Lunying and Wanying) married uxorilocally, a form of marriage which seems to have incurred no stigma in Changzhou in the nineteenth century (though it certainly did in other times and places in China's past). The book also suggests ways in which maternal relatives were crucial to a young man's chances. The acceptance of

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uxorilocal marriage and the importance of maternal relatives are not new findings, but the literature on the Chinese family is still so heavily weighted towards the patriline that we need all the vibrant examples of countercurrents that we can find.

In the epilogue, Mann looks at the social context of the Zhang women and delineates the ways in which the changing political background of nineteenth-century China determined their social roles and life chances. She argues that the gender system functioned in ways which privileged certain women within that system: women of the upper classes who found the protection, and even the patronage, of a man. Miss Fa is a casualty of the gender system (and perhaps of her internal demons), and Li Luan occupied an ambiguous position; but the Zhang women thrived. Mann concludes (perhaps somewhat provocatively) that "Late imperial thought and culture valorized and celebrated women's domestic labor as well as women's talent on a scale that the modern nation-state has never matched" (p. 200).

One of the final pleasures of the book is the painting by the contemporary painter Hong Zhang, entitled "Linking Verses across Adjoining Rooms," which is inspired by a no longer extant painting by Tang Bihen of the same title. The original painting was commissioned by Zhang Yuesun to record and commemorate the life-in-common he shared with his wife, sisters, and their spouses. The painting was probably commissioned sometime between 1828 (the date of Yuesun's marriage to Bao Mengyi) and 1844 (the date of her death). Surviving letters and colophons provide us with some clues as to what the original painting looked like. Hong Zhang's painting was doubtless inspired by these colophons and probably by Mann's work as well: a greedy reader wants to know more about the generation of this painting, which is reproduced in the book. Hong Zhang's painting consists of three panels, each featuring a couple in a study, surrounded by the accoutrements of the scholar's studio. In each of the cases, the couples are writing together: in two of the chambers, both the husband and the wife are writing; in the third, Zhang Wanying is writing while her husband Wang Xi is holding a book. Wang Xi (d. 1847) is a seventh-generation direct descendant of the painter Wang Shimin (1592–1680), and the portrait of Wang Xi in this painting is vaguely reminiscent of the Gu Jianlong (1606–*c*. 1685) portrait of Wang Shimin in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (available on their website at www.artsmia.org, search under Wang Shih-min). Indeed, the portrait of people in a house, using the home as a way of locating the portrait subjects and as a kind of second skin, is reminiscent of the Gu Jianlong portrait, though in many respects the two paintings are quite different. The pose of Wang Xi in the Hong Zhang portrait is distinctive—he is lounging rather than sitting upright in a chair, as are the other five subjects in the painting; he is dressed in a robe which is open at the throat while everyone else is properly attired. In the Gu Jianlong portrait, Wang Shimin is portrayed as utterly disregarding formalities (as befits a late Ming/early Qing artist). One suspects that Zhang Hong might be making a connection here between Wang Xi and his illustrious ancestor; we know from Mann's text that the grandeur of the Wang family was something which was imprinted on the consciousness of the Zhang family.

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The book is beautifully written, and Mann has gone to some length to make it reader friendly. The book includes a "Zhang family chronology" which connects the lives of members of the Zhang family with events in Changshu and China more generally. A family tree at the beginning of the book helps the reader keep track of who is who in this very complex family.

Mann's method may well engender controversy, but it lays bare the kind of imaginative work that is so central to history writing and which we normally mask. It will be a terrific book to use in the classroom, not simply because of its analytical subtlety but also for the methodological challenge it poses to the conventional practice of history. There may be places where the reader may want to imagine things differently. That, however, is the reader's prerogative, and Susan Mann in this marvelous book has given us all that we need to set our own scenes.

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Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes. Translated and with an introduction by Wilt L. Idema. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 227. $50.00.

This book provides a first English translation of two precious scrolls celebrating Princess Miaoshan 妙善 (Wonderful Goodness), the female incarnation of Guanyin, and her two acolytes, Shancai 善才 (Good-in-Talent) and Longnü 龍女 (Dragon Girl). Of the two precious scrolls, *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* (Xiangshan baojuan 香山寶卷) is much better known to scholars as well as among devotees of Guanyin than the much shorter *Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* (Shancai Longnü baojuan 善才龍女寶卷). However, since the two acolytes of Guanyin appear in *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain* and since *The Precious Scroll of Good-in-Talent and Dragon Girl* introduces some themes which have much intrinsic interest, it is good to read the two together.

The story of Princess Miaoshan is full of drama and pathos. Of the various stories transforming the Indian bodhisattva Avalokite vara into the Chinese female Guanyin, this is without doubt the most successful. By the late imperial period the story had become widely known among the common people through drama, storytelling as well as public chanting of *The Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain,* particularly among women audience. It is no wonder that many people came to know Guanyin through the story of Princess Miaoshan. When I did research on my book on Guanyin, I interviewed many women pilgrims in different parts of China. While there might be some minor differences

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