

Objectifying China, Imagining America, grounded in an impressive array of careful and wide-ranging archival research, offers both a rich trove of colorful local details and a useful mapping of some neglected contours of early American material culture. More important, though, than the mountain of facts Frank has amassed from probate inventories, letters, and newspapers is the novel and revelatory framework she develops for interpreting them. While it is bound to face resistance in some quarters, the author's historical model brings strikingly into view both America's early participation in world trade networks and the significance of its bounty of Chinese goods in forging the colonists' sense of their place in an already rapidly globalizing world.

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Escape from Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang. Translated and introduced by BEATA GRANT and WILT L. IDEMA. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2011. x, 278 pp. \$70.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (paper).

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Students of Chinese religion have long recognized the importance of *baojuan* (precious scrolls) as a source for studying moral and religious values found at all levels of society in late imperial China. Written in prose and seven-character rhymed verse, and sometimes including lyrics based on popular tunes, the *baojuan* genre probably first appeared in the Yuan (1260–1368), and became increasingly popular during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912). As the expression “proclaiming the scroll” (*xuanjuan*) indicates, this type of literature was usually recited in front of an audience, and a typical audience consisted largely of women. This is also confirmed by the fieldwork conducted by Rostislav Berezkin in present-day China. Yet despite their historical value, few precious scrolls have been translated into English. A notable exception is Wilt Idema's *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008). It is therefore most welcome news that Idema and Grant have followed up their earlier collaboration on gender and literature in *The Red Brush: Writing Women in Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), with this translation of two more precious scrolls, *The Precious Scroll of the Three Lives of Mulian and Woman Huang Recites the Diamond Sutra*. The translation is very accessible, with notes and a glossary, and is suitable as a text for courses on Chinese religion and popular literature.

Although both stories have a long history of textual evolution, particularly in the case of Mulian, the earliest exemplars in printed precious scrolls, on which the translation is based, date to 1876 in the case of Mulian, and 1848 in the

case of Woman Huang. The translators' introduction explains the origins and development of the Mulian (pp. 5–11) and Woman Huang (pp. 11–17) legends, and this very useful background information enables the reader to recognize and appreciate the new elements introduced into these precious scrolls. To summarize briefly: both Mulian and Woman Huang are provided with three lives. While Mulian is reborn first as the evil general Huang Zhao and then as a butcher, Woman Huang is first reborn as a man who becomes a high official and then retires to cultivate the Way, which constitutes his third life. Both precious scrolls take great interest in describing in detail the horrific sufferings undergone by sinners in the various hells. While the two texts share the same understanding of the eighteen hells and the courts of the ten kings, there are also some surprising divergences. For instance, the Mulian scroll offers a unique explanation of the Wheel of Six Paths. Instead of the standard Buddhist version, it calls these six the paths of gold, silver, jade, bronze, stone, and water. Depending on which path one is assigned to, the manner of one's birth and one's physical appearance will differ (pp. 94–104). The scroll about Woman Huang, on the other hand, speaks of three high-ways leading to the world of the living, the world of heaven and the Underworld (p. 174).

While the translators are correct to highlight the sinful nature of women (pp. 17–19), vegetarianism (pp. 21–23), blood pollution (pp. 23–26), and the ritual power of women (pp. 31–34) as shared concerns and dominant themes of both texts, it is not entirely fitting to title the book as an “escape from blood pond hell,” for the blood pond hell appears only in the Mulian scroll but not in the Woman Huang scroll. Furthermore, the Mulian scroll attenuates the link between femaleness and blood pollution by listing two separate blood pond hells, one for women only (pp. 45–46) and the other for both men and women (pp. 78–83). It thus deviates from the *Blood Pond Sutra* (*Xuepen jing*), an indigenous Buddhist scripture dated to the late twelfth century, which gave rise to a Daoist counterpart in the first part of the thirteenth century. That sutra taught that women suffer in the blood pond because they “leak menses or in childbirth release blood which seeps down and pollutes the earth gods. And, what is more, they take their filthy garments to the river to wash, thereby polluting the river water. Later, an unsuspecting good man or woman draws some water from the river, boils it for tea, and then offers it to the holy ones, causing them to be impure” (p. 25). The reason why Woman Huang decided to sleep separately from her butcher husband so that she would not bear more children was precisely because she was afraid to cause such pollution. Yet there is no mention of a blood pond hell in the scroll about her. Moreover, while Mulian's mother, Liu Qingti, was saved by the ritual actions of her filial son, Woman Huang achieved salvation through her own efforts, by reciting the *Diamond Sutra*. In view of these issues, instead of portraying the two scrolls as upholding shared views about women, pollution, and salvation, I wonder whether it might be more useful to highlight their differences. The scroll of Woman Huang is clearly a text advocating the Way of Former Heaven (*Xiantian dao*), which celebrates lay celibacy, promotes the practice of inner alchemy, is particularly devoted to the worship of Guanyin, and

grants women more autonomy. It is thus unsurprising that Woman Huang, unlike Liu Qingti, does not need a son like Mulian to save her.

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Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine: Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late Imperial China. By MARTA E. HANSON. London: Routledge, 2011. xx, 265 pp. \$140.00 (cloth).
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Over the past decade and a half, there has been a sea change in the history of medicine, but until recently it has barely touched studies of East Asia. Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden's *Framing Disease* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992) and Robert Aronowitz's *Making Sense of Illness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) introduced the framework that has since become indispensable for historians of disease: to properly understand a disease, scholars must pay attention to its cultural history as well as its biological life cycle. Since then, disease biography has become a subgenre of medical history: since 2007, Johns Hopkins University Press, Oxford University Press, and Greenwood Press have all launched "Biographies of Disease" series. Scholars have devoted comparatively little attention, however, to how cultural meanings of Chinese disorders changed over time. Marta Hanson's *Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine* helps to remedy that neglect by applying the insights of recent scholarship to the study of Warm diseases (*wenbing*)—an important category in late imperial and modern Chinese medicine that historically "encompassed a range of illnesses from the common cold and respiratory illnesses to high fevers and epidemic diseases" (p. 10).

The book traces the changing ways in which literati physicians wrote about *wenbing* and its geographical associations, from the compilation of the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (*Huangdi neijing*) two thousand years ago to the SARS outbreak of 2003. It is a challenging project, to say the least, especially if one considers the whole cultural manifold of which these physicians formed a part, as Hanson does. She shows that physicians drew on geographical concepts mentioned in both medical and nonmedical classics to orient themselves. Thus, early on, they wrote of a world tilted northwest-southeast as the *Songs of the South* (*Chu ci*) suggested, and they believed that different environments, constitutions, and illnesses characterized the five directions that were discussed in the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon*. But since these men were practicing physicians, they relied equally on epidemiological observations. When a disease was endemic to one region and unknown in another, or when remedies recommended in the *Inner Canon* did not seem to work for an outbreak in one particular area, physicians noticed, and insalubrious frontiers and region-specific diseases appeared in