

## Individual Paper Proposal

Name: Jessica MOYER

Title: Assistant Professor, Smith College

Contact Information: [jmoyer@smith.edu](mailto:jmoyer@smith.edu)  
(preferred contact method) (203)824-1706  
(cell phone) 20 Maria Drive South Hadley,  
MA 01075

Paper Title: **Culture and Categories: Kinds of Virtue in the Early Qing**

Abstract: Sexual chastity (貞 *zhen* or 節 *jie*) was the keystone of virtue for women in late imperial China. But the terms *zhen* and *jie* had rich meanings extending far beyond the sexual realm. This paper analyzes the numerous biographies of exemplary women included under the headings “Maintaining Chastity” (守貞 *shouzhen*) and “Chaste Martyrdom” (殉節 *xunjie*) in the 1656 *Yu ding nei ze yanyi* 禦定內則衍義 or *Imperially Commissioned Expanded Meaning of the ‘Inner Standards,’* commissioned by the Shunzhi emperor and compiled by Fu Yijian 傅以漸 (1609- 1665). In this work, which aims to provide a guide to feminine virtue for the women of both the palace and the empire as a whole, exemplars of chastity far outnumber those of any other virtue. This reflects the cultural and political centrality of the concept of chastity in the seventeenth century. But women categorized in the *Nei ze yanyi* as “chaste” engaged in a wide range of behaviors other than sexual fidelity, from military defense of a city to successfully identifying a husband’s corpse by tasting its blood. I analyze Fu Yijian’s selection and organization of these biographies, and his commentary on them, as a window into the cultural functions of *zhen* and *jie* in the first decades of the Qing dynasty. These concepts not only took on a new urgency in the aftermath of dynastic fall, but also provided a culturally authoritative framework for thinking through unusual or exceptional actions by women.