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Sommario/riassunto

"This book draws from newly available sources of women's writings from late imperial China to present an alternative approach to the lives of 'exemplary women'--a category of women who were written into official dynastic histories for their unrelenting adherence to female virtue as defined by core Confucian family values. Despite the rich writing traditions about these women, their lives often remain clouded by larger moral and cultural agendas or distorted by the male authors who presented them according to their own emotional or commemorative needs. This book introduces an array of women from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who were powerful and active subjects of their own lives, and closely examines the rhetorical strategies they exploited for self-representation. This study highlights these female authors' skillful negotiation with--and appropriation of--the constrictive values of female exemplarity for self-empowerment. It draws on interdisciplinary sources to show how these authors crossed the boundaries of domains that were traditionally assumed to be closed to them--boundaries not only of gender but also of knowledge, economic power, and political engagement, as well as ritual and cultural authority"--Provided by publisher