the urban audience, and also discusses the role in the textualization of the narrative played by the men of letters, members of *shuhui*.

Chapter 6, Literary Vernacular and Novelistic Discourse, is a discussion about what distinguishes vernacular fiction from its *wenyan* precursor. He points out that *Shuihu zhuan* presents a type of narrative art that is fundamentally different from that found in *wenyan* fiction.

In this book, Ge presents an excellent and insightful discussion on the long process of vernacularization in Chinese literature. He has made extensive use of the literature concerning *Shuihu zhuan* and other literary works in Chinese, English, and Japanese. Based on his conisderable efforts, his analysis has considerable persuasive power. Although it is slightly unfortunate that he did not have the opportunity to read some previous studies in Japanese, such as OGAWA Tamaki's (1952) "Study on writers of *Shuihu zhuan*," TAKASHIMA Toshio's (1987) "The world of *Shuihu zhua*," and MIYAZAKI Ichisada's (1993) "*Shuihu zhuan*—The truth in the fiction," this does not reduce the valuable contribution this book makes to the debate on the process of vernacularization in Chinese literature.

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HUNTINGTON, RANIA. *Alien Kinds: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 222. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004. 370 pages. Illustrations, bibliography, title and author index, subject index. Cloth US$45.00; ISBN 0-674-01094-9. (Distributed by Harvard University Press)

Rania Huntington's volume is an interesting and informative addition to English language literature on the phenomenon of foxes during a time period when fox tales circulated widely in Chinese culture. One of the strengths of this book is Huntington's meticulous use of a wide variety of sources, accompanied by extensive notes, as well as names and textual information in both Chinese and in transliteration for those who wish to access material in the original language. Huntington's challenge in this book is to make accessible to a primarily Western reader a subject that has no obvious correlate in Occidental culture, save for some European folk literature that vaguely resembles the way fox tales and thinking about foxes have evolved in China.

Alien Kind's divisions into chapters on "Species History, Genre History," "The High Qing: Fox Practice and Theory," "Haunting and Residence," "Fox Worship," "Foxes and Sex," "The Fox Romance," and "Becoming *Xian*, Arousing *Yao*: Foxes and Meaning," lead the reader through the intricacies of the particularly Chinese phenomenon of fox haunting. One of the difficulties for the Western reader is grasping exactly what foxes are supposed to be or

represent in Chinese society. I found myself wondering if they are ghosts, or apparitions, or hauntings, or spirits of persons who have died. The answer seems to be that they sometimes, or possibly even often have characteristics of hauntings in the familiar sense, though at times they do not. Part of Huntington's aim in *Alien Kind* is precisely an attempt at a broad explanation of the phenomenon, and to articulate her conception of what foxes are and what role they have played, and to some extent continue to play, in Chinese culture.

Succinctly put, Huntington's view of foxes is that they are the playing out of certain psychological needs of Chinese society, which seems to explain both why foxes have very specific and at times peculiar characteristics (these conform to the particularities of the Chinese psyche) and why the details of fox hauntings change over time (Chinese society and to some extent Chinese psychological make-up alters as decades and centuries pass). In Chapter 1, "Species History, Genre History," Hungtinton attempts to answer the question "Why did foxes become first magical animals and then a magical people?" (7), pointing out that the fact that many cultures view the fox as a tricky creature makes likely a connection between the natural and cultural fox. She stresses that while as early as the Han Dynasty foxes were sometimes depicted as either "an auspicious or an uncanny animal" (10), it was not until the Six Dynasties (220–589 CE), that the tradition of the transforming fox began, and transformation is, according to Huntington, the most enduring aspect of early fox tradition.

In some ways, I found Huntington's description of early Chinese fox lore to be the most interesting because it seemed the closest to mythic, archaic thought patterns, and therefore provides perhaps more direct and unmediated access to the psyche than later tales, but since this is not Huntington's stated focus in her book it is understandable that she does not dwell on the contents of early fox lore. Nevertheless, her references to, for instance, Tang tales in which "the link between foxes and the netherworld is closer than in later stories," and in which "foxes assume human form by wearing a human skull and praying to the moon" (11) are fascinating and no doubt worthy of further investigation. As a rule then, though later fox tales move away from the dark and ominous overtones of earlier tales, where "their opulent mansions are revealed as tombs, their clothing and gifts prove to be leaves, their wine turns back to urine," or where they "incite family members to slay one another" (11), there remain remnants of this stage of development, especially in the area of violation of human boundaries, in particular the sexual, that continue to arouse unease in humans.

In Chapter 2, "The High Qing: Fox Practice and Theory," Huntington arrives at the stated focus of her book, and through a series of translated fox tales and accompanying discussion, makes it clear that by this time in Chinese history fox lore had grown considerably in sophistication and scope. By the Qing the fox tale had become a distinct genre practiced by individual authors, who not only wrote fox stories, but also speculated on the nature of foxes. One strength of this chapter is the abundance of translated fox lore, some of which Huntington has no doubt rendered into English for the first time. While some of the writers Huntington covers (she begins with Ji Yun and He Bang) claim to be merely recording stories told at gatherings (both Ji Yun and He Bang claimed their stories were told in a single night), there are unmistakable literary elements that make these stories more than curiosities of oral lore.

And it is also during this period that fox tales, while continuing to depict foxes as inhabiting marginal physical spaces (like empty rooms or abandoned or infrequently visited human structures like houses, city walls, or ancient guard towers), also become more concerned with the vixen as a skilled seductress whose appearance signals unresolved sexual energy, the manifestation of which allows the playing out of male sexual fantasies involving women (vixens) who are not bound by the normal gender constraints of the society. The results of male union with a vixen are sometimes tragic, though by no means always so, and

as Huntington chronicles in considerable detail depiction of foxes over time is so varied that one is hard pressed to see foxes as exhibiting a fixed set of characteristics.

Yet, as Huntington notes, some things can indeed be said beyond the citing of specific examples, such as for instance that there is a tendency towards "increasing humanization of foxes throughout history" (78), and that during the Qing the hierarchy of the fox world mirrors that of the human world, with levels of fox society corresponding to officials, literati, and peasants. Curiously, as Huntington explains, foxes are engaged in a struggle to better their place "in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the heavens" (80), with one clear difference, however, from the human world; advancement is open to foxes of both sexes. In closing Chapter 2, Huntington muses on the persistent fascination of foxes in Chinese culture, concluding that "foxes are worth talking about because of their mixed divine and monstrous nature… [and] because they [are] entertaining" (86). For Huntington, foxes both entertain us and expose the principles of the universe, through their position as outsiders, who are both like and different from us in significant ways.

In following chapters, "Haunting and Residence," and "Fox Worship," Huntington explores the intersection of fox manifestation and the human social and religious world, making a case for foxes as both alien sojourners typically inhabiting abandoned or neglected human spaces, essentially "mischief-makers" (97) increasingly affecting urban, mobile society (105), and as ultimately at least partly assimilated into Qing popular religious practice as a way of "imagining and giving shape to a relationship with non-human forces…and of regulation of that relationship" (129). The result of this overlapping of folk and religious elements, Huntington argues, is in large part responsible for certain peculiar aspects of the Ming and Qing literary fox story, such as their increasing tendency to portray foxes as capable of not only hurting but also helping people, such as by bringing them wealth or curing illness (157).

In the second half of the book, in chapters entitled "Foxes and Sex" and "The Fox Romance," Huntington continues her investigation of Qing foxes (vixens) as emblems of excess desire and harmful sexuality, where they are often portrayed as sexual parasites and potentially dangerous to the health of their male lovers through draining of their life force, and yet who gradually make a curious transition to much more benign or even helpful (though still supernatural) domestic partners. Yet despite this shift, occasional irruptions of a most atavistic sort seem still to be present in the form of tales that explore "the extremes of desire and revulsion" (275), as in the story of a man named Zhou who relates the tale of his incurable obsession in a previous life with a vixen capable of taking the form of famous beauties from Chinese history to satisfy his sexual desire. In the end the reader is presented with a series of repulsive images (Zhou making love to the corpse of his deceased vixen lover, and her skeleton containing only the heart remaining, covered in flies), that convincingly demonstrate the danger of excess desire (277). As Huntington points out, this tale "effectively negates the idea of *qing wu qing*, 'overcoming passion through the extremes of passion.' Far from reaching enlightenment, the protagonist of this tale [Zhou] veers from one form of insanity to another" (278).

In Huntington's final chapter, "Becoming *Xian*, Arousing *Yao*: Foxes and Meaning," she works towards a theoretical explanation of why fox tales have depicted foxes in such diverse ways throughout the centuries, contending that in the late Ming and Qing conception of foxes resolves itself into moral tales reflecting values of the times, emphasizing foxes' transformation and ascent through either *xian* or *yao*, terms that have "opposite moral valences" (290) connoting self-cultivation through traditional Confucian study of the classics, and damaging psychological projection of desire or unresolved emotion ("monsters") respectively. These two ways are, Huntington argues, part of "an attempt at a master narrative…a single explanation for the wild variety of the fox tradition, for the malicious bogeyman to the benign

divinity, from the sexual vampire to the paragon of virtue," an explanation for fox advancement that is both "reassuring as well as explanatory," and "less disturbing than the uncontrolled crossing of the borders between species" (308). Foxes' trajectory, in short, parallels humans', and though they can never become fully human, their struggle to advance reflects both the best and the worst of their human counterparts. Thus foxes, originally representatives of mischief and chaos, come to represent both creatures morally transformed by texts and advocates of perseverance and prudence (299), related to ideals and fears of social mobility as well as ideas of moral self-determination (307), and beings who take advantage of humans' emotional disturbances by taking the forms of desires or fears in order to create havoc with persons in their daily lives (309).

Huntington ends her consideration of foxes in the book's conclusion by comparing the Chinese phenomenon of foxes with other models for "middle people" drawn from the European folk tradition, with the aim of "throw [ing] Chinese concepts of the alien and the human into sharper relief" and to further discuss the issues of genres used to depict supernatural beings (323). She suggests that for a variety of reasons Chinese foxes, though similar in some ways to European fairies, elves, nymphs, ghosts, poltergeists, and elemental spirits, inhabit a world that is considerably more coexistent and permeable with (that is, less separated from) the human world. While she concedes that early European and Chinese conceptions of supernatural creatures may have been similar in their expression of the inexplicable irruption of chaos into people's lives, she notes that narrative and culturally specific expression over the centuries caused significant differences to emerge (333). Ultimately, Huntington argues, the "Chinese case" shows foxes to be the stuff of ordinary experience, though at times elaborated in very complex ways. The paradox, perhaps, of foxes is that they are both familiar and alien, the "thunks in the next room" (336) and the marvelous, simultaneously scary and irresistible, manifestations of our deepest psychological complexes and the utterly quotidian, of patriarchal Chinese society's ambivalence towards women as marriage and reproductive partners, and mysterious bearers of the power of pleasure and pain.

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LE BLANC, CHARLES, et RÉMI MATHIEU, Dir., *Philosophes Taoïstes II: Huainan zi*. Bibliothèque de la Pléïade. Paris: Gallimard, 2003. lxxxiii + 1182 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index of names, analytical index. Hardcover €56,90. ISBN 2-07-011424-4.

This book presents the first complete translation into a Western language of the *Huainan zi* 淮南子 ("Book of the Master of Huainan"), a philosophical work in twenty-one chapters dating from the mid-second century BCE. The sponsor and (as we might say today) general editor of the *Huainan zi* was Liu An 劉安, King of Huainan (c. 180–122 BCE) and uncle of the greatest of the Former Han emperors, Wu Di 武帝. Compiled by scholars at the court of Huainan, the work seems to have been intended to contain everything that a successful monarch of its era needed to know, from astronomy to military principles. The implicit message that Liu An understood perfectly the principles of sage rulership undoubtedly played a role in his indictment for sedition in 122 BCE; he committed suicide rather than journey to the imperial capital to face the charges.

The *Huainan zi*, which Liu An had presented to the throne in 139 BCE, was preserved in the imperial library. It was classified in the *Han shu* 漢書 bibliography of the imperial collection