



# **Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative (Harvard East Asian Monographs)**

*Rania Huntington*

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To discuss the supernatural in China is "to talk of foxes and speak of ghosts." Ming and Qing China were well populated with foxes, shape-changing creatures who transgressed the boundaries of species, gender, and the metaphysical realm. In human form, foxes were both immoral succubi and good wives/good mothers, both tricksters and Confucian paragons. They were the most alien yet the most common of the strange creatures a human might encounter.

Rania Huntington investigates a conception of one kind of alien and attempts to establish the boundaries of the human. As the most ambiguous alien in the late imperial Chinese imagination, the fox reveals which boundaries around the human and the ordinary were most frequently violated and, therefore, most jealously guarded.

Each section of this book traces a particular boundary violated by the fox and examines how maneuvers across that boundary change over time: the narrative boundaries of genre and texts; domesticity and the outside world; chaos and order; the human and the non-human; class; gender; sexual relations; and the progression from animal to monster to transcendent. As "middle creatures," foxes were morally ambivalent, endowed with superhuman but not quite divine powers; like humans, they occupied a middle space between the infernal and the celestial.

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