Dream a Little (*dobi*) Dream:

The Manchu translation of dream tales in *Liaozhai zhiyi*

by

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Abstract

This paper examines the 1848 Manchu translation of Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異) by the Manchu translator Buljigen Jakdan. Though, like most depictions of Manchu translations of Chinese fiction, this text has typically been approached as a literal translation of little use to scholars, this paper draws from translation studies and views it instead as a commentary. Focusing on dream tales, in particular the story “A Fox Dream,” this paper examines Jakdan’s translation of the story within the context of assessments made by contemporaneous commentators. While late imperial commentators sought to police the boundaries between dream and reality that are continually crossed throughout this story – as per the anti-supernatural rhetoric prevalent at the time – Jakdan’s translation instead deliberately blurs the boundary between the two. By closely comparing Jakdan’s translation to the Chinese original, this paper throws Jakdan’s alterations into sharp relief. These include ambiguous word choices, vague phrasing, and several crucial omissions. By continually blurring the boundaries between what is a dream and what is not, the story is complicated even further, thus creating a version of the tale that is uniquely Jakdan’s.
Preface
This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Sarah Jessi Primmer.
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The Little Dobi climbs the alin

Once upon a time there was a Little Dobi. The Little Dobi lived in a large forest with Ama and Eme, who both loved the Little Dobi very much. One day the Little Dobi was hunting alone when it came across an unfamiliar part of the forest. Peering between the trees, it saw a large pond in an empty clearing. Cautiously the Little Dobi walked over to the pond, when it saw in the muke the reflection of another creature. Surprised, the Little Dobi turned to look and saw that it was a great kesike, glowing faintly lamun in the sunshine. The Little Dobi trembled with fear, and then realized that the pond wasn’t a pond after all, but merely the beginning of a vast, endless ocean. The Little Dobi wanted to ask the kesike what was on the other side of the ocean, but then, with a giyok seme! The kesike vanished.

The Little Dobi returned home to Ama and Eme, but the Little Dobi couldn’t sleep or eat. After many days, the Little Dobi declared: “I will go see what is on the other side of the ocean.” Sadly, Eme and Ama said goodbye to the Little Dobi. “Banihalame wajirakū, Ama Eme,”1 said the Little Dobi. It walked back to the ocean, listening to the sound of Eme crying: hei hai hei hai.

When the Little Dobi reached the ocean it saw that a number of creatures were gathered there: the red Coko, the snuffling Sengge, the shelled Gui, and even the elegant Weifutu. They all stood by the water. “I have heard tales of the ocean!” claimed Coko, “The great things that we will see on the other side!” Suddenly they saw a little cūwan moving swiftly across the water, with an old Yabulan at its helm. The Coko called out, and they all clambered aboard.

They journeyed in the cūwan for many days, each one blending into the next. The Little Dobi sat close to the Weifutu, who was kind and dignified. Whenever the Little Dobi was afraid, the Weifutu would call out – jing yang jing yang jing yang – and the Little Dobi felt its heart

1 My endless thanks to my parents, Aletha Rossiter and Edward Logsdail.
grow light. One day, they saw great cliffs on the horizon. They saw one giant alin, with white peaks of nimanggi at the top. The Coko clucked loudly: “We must get to the top!” As they were climbing out of the cūwan, the Little Dobi heard the Yabulan say: “You will do well, Little Dobi.” “Banihalame wajirakū, sefu”\(^2\) said the Little Dobi, and then joined the others on the shore.

They all stared up at the great alin for a minute, then: “This way, this way!” hūlambi the Coko, setting off up the alin at once. The Sengge and the Gui however stayed by the water, while the Weifutu merely spread its great wings, preparing to glide swiftly to the top. The Little Dobi looked around, and then saw a narrow path that the others had not noticed. “Banihalame wajirakū, gucuse”\(^3\) said the Little Dobi, beginning to climb up the alin alone.

The Little Dobi travelled for many days, and the going was tough. The Little Dobi’s paws were not used to the rough ground, and there was nothing to eat. A few times the Little Dobi wanted to turn around – but then it remembered what the Yabulan had said and this gave it courage. One day it saw a Singgeri on the path, who smiled at the Little Dobi. The Little Dobi saw that the Singgeri was plucking great big berries off of a bush with its nimble paws, and rooting up fat nuts from the soil. The Singgeri pushed some towards the Little Dobi, and the Little Dobi ate heartily, cracking nuts with its teeth: fior seme fior seme fior seme. “Banihalame wajirakū, sefu”\(^4\) said the Little Dobi cheerfully, its teeth stained lamun from the berry juice.

As the Little Dobi walked on it grew cold, and in the yamji it was colder still. Each yamji the Little Dobi would dig a round hole in the soft dirt of the alin, and curl up in it to go to sleep. Many times the Little Dobi was cold and afraid, but then it would look up and see the soft light

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\(^2\) My endless thanks to all of my teachers, in particular Dr. Lars Laamann, Dr. Timothy Cheek, Dr. Timothy Brook, and Dr. Bruce Rusk.

\(^3\) My endless thanks to my fellow graduate students at the University of British Columbia: Eriks Bredovskis, Dylan Burrows, Kilroy Abney, Alexey Golubev, and Stephen Hay. Special thanks to Morgan Rocks, Eric Becklin, Jorge Carrillo, and Sarah Basham.

\(^4\) My endless thanks to all the teachers who have guided me. Special thanks to Dr. Michel Ducharme, Dr. Paul Krause, and Dr. Catherine C. Swatek.
of the glowing *biya*. This never failed to make its heart feel glad. “*Banihalame wajirakū, haji biya*”\(^5\) said the Little *Dobi*.

Then one day, the Little *Dobi* reached the peak of the *alin*, where all it could see was *abka* and miles of white *nimanggi*. The Little *Dobi* sat, resting gratefully. Then, with a jolt, the Little *Dobi* realized that the great *kesike* was there too. It sat, still silent, still shining faintly *lamun*. But the Little *Dobi* was no longer afraid. The Little *Dobi* continued to sit, with its calloused paws and its *lamun*-stained teeth. The *kesike* smiled. Slowly, it turned its great eyes to look up. The Little *Dobi* followed its gaze – and saw another great *alin* where before there had been none. The Little *Dobi* wanted to ask the *kesike* what was at the top of this *alin*, but then, with a *giyok* seme! The *kesike* vanished.

After a moment, the Little *Dobi* stood up. It looked down, checking that the forest across the ocean was still there. It looked up, checking that the *biya* was still there, shining. Then the Little *Dobi* faced the new *alin* and squared its shoulders. “*Banihalame wajirakū, sefu*”\(^6\) whispered the Little *Dobi*, and its paws crunched as they padded through the *nimanggi*: *kifur kifur kifur kifur kifur kifur*.

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\(^5\) My endless thanks to Luísa Bramão-Ramos.

\(^6\) My endless thanks to my supervisor Dr. Carla Nappi.
1. Introduction

This paper is an examination of the 1848 Manchu translation by the translator Buljigen Jakdan (Zha-ke-dan 扎克丹) of Pu Songling’s Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋志異). Within this collection this paper focuses on dream tales, in particular the story “A Fox Dream,” a tale that straddles the boundary between what is real and what is a dream. Though this boundary-straddling was viewed as problematic and in need of clarifying by contemporary commentators on the tale, Jakdan’s translation works to blur the boundary between the two, complicating the story further. Given this, this paper views Jakdan’s translation as a form of commentary on the dream tales that it translates.8

The approach of treating Jakdan’s translation as a commentary is inspired largely by Jakdan’s own preface to the collection.9 In this, Jakdan offers the reader a glimpse into his conceptualization of translation, and it is striking how subjective a process he perceives it to be:

Since then [the creation of the Manchu script], important scholars have continuously emerged and made to translate the imperial editions of the Four Books, the Five Classics, and other such books of guiding principles and profound mirrors… As for stupid me, due to my dull-wittedness, I have not read all the classics and histories. Nor have I grasped the skill of writing poetry and verse… [but] I was especially fond of reading Liaozhai zhiyi. Why, you may ask. This work takes Sima Qian’s thought as a model and esteems the morals in the Spring

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7 Broadly speaking, Manchu was the language of the Jurchens, a group of people who in the sixteenth century lived in what is today northeastern China. These people later became known as the Manchus. As a language, Manchu belongs to the Tungusic family, though it bears a great deal of similarity to languages belonging to Central and East Asian language families that used to be referred to as Altaic. In 1599 a writing system was created out of a modified Mongolian script, now known as Old Manchu script (tonki fuka akâ hergen or ‘script without dots and circles’). Most of the texts discussed in this paper however were written with a script that was refined in the 1620s (tonki fuka indaha hergen ‘script with dots and circles’). For a brief introduction to the Manchu language, see Jerry Norman, “The Manchus and Their Language (Presidential Address),” Journal of the American Oriental Society 123:3 (2003), 483-491; see also Igor de Rachewiltz and Volker Rybatzki, Introduction to Altaic Philology: Turkic, Mongolian, Manchu (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 255-347.

8 By only crediting Jakdan throughout this paper I am aware that I may be effacing the influence of these members of editorial staff and advisors who almost certainly had a hand in the creation of this text. As virtually nothing is known at present about these advisors however, this is regrettable but unavoidable.

and Autumn Annals; it enlightens each new generation as it emerges; it surprises people; it corrects errors; it propagates goodness. [...] I said to myself: ‘If I were to translate this book’s wonderful lessons and hidden truths into Manchu, the best parts [of the works] created by previous scholars might be elucidated more fully.’ For a long time I thought this, and yet I dared not pick up a writing brush.\(^{10}\)

Not only is the general tenor of this preface reflective of some of the standard tropes in late imperial prefatory materials, it is also consistent with other prefaces to Manchu translations.\(^{11}\) Though a contemporary reader might expect such prefaces to have included mentions of concerns about fidelity or accuracy these are curiously absent, perhaps suggesting that remaining faithful to the original may not the most pressing consideration for the translator. At the very least, it does not seem to have been as important as revealing the “wonderful lessons and hidden truths” of the original.\(^{12}\) Given this, Jakdan’s translation should be understood as one that was not intended to be a duplicate of the original, but instead a translation with an intrinsic sense of commentary, one working to lay the “best parts” of the original bare.

In order to access this commentary, the bulk of this study comprises a close comparison of the Manchu translation\(^{13}\) and the Chinese original of dream tales from the collection.\(^{14}\) Far

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\(^{12}\) As Lawrence Venuti points out, the near obsession with the maintenance of fidelity and close correspondence to the original that is pervasive in evaluations of translation today is largely a product of how translation is understood in the contemporary Anglo-American sphere. For a discussion of this, see The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation (London: Routledge, 1995), 1-42.

\(^{13}\) All Manchu translations in this paper are my own. In translating, I have relied on the standard English-language resource on the Manchu language: Jerry Norman, A Comprehensive Manchu-English Dictionary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013). Given this, I have followed Norman’s system of Romanization throughout. Although translations of individual Manchu words have been provided, I have not consistently given translations or explanations of Manchu grammatical particles or verb endings. For this, consult Gertraude Roth-Li, Manchu: A Textbook for Reading Documents (Manoa: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).
from suggesting that the differences that exist between the original and the translation are errors or mistranslations in the derogatory sense, this paper embraces these differences as prime cases to examine how the original text is being manipulated and what effect this has on the translated text.\(^{15}\) Overall, this paper shows some of the ways in which translation, even when it is at its most precise and careful – as Jakdan’s on the whole is – offers space for creative interpretation and embedded commentary.

This understanding of translation as a creative process is informed methodologically by contemporary works of translation studies, in particular scholarship following the ‘cultural turn.’ This ‘turn’ of the late 1980s and 90s displaced the importance of the original language text in studies of translation processes, replacing it with investigations of the translator and the translation itself.\(^{16}\) Resonances of this can be seen in Michael Hill’s *Lin Shu, Inc*, an examination of the translation work of Lin Shu and his collaborators in late Qing and early Republican China that goes beyond source and target language analysis and views translation as a labor in its own

\(^{12}\) Though there are many translations of *Strange Tales*, there is still no English language translation that is both reputable and complete. The most widely cited is by Herbert Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969). I have however relied on several different English language translations. For “A Fox Dream,” the primary story under consideration, I have used Judith Zeitlin’s translation taken from her foundational book on *Strange Tales, Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). However Zeitlin has not translated all other Liao-Chai stories referred to in this paper, therefore for English language translations of other tales I have relied on translations by John Minford, Sidney Sondergard, and Victor and Dennis Mair. Wherever possible, multiple translations have been given in the footnotes. For a brief overview of these and other translations, see John Minford’s notes to his own English translation, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (London: Penguin, 2006), 492-494. For a detailed study that ultimately argues that Giles’ translation owes much more to the translator than to Pu Songling, see Tong Man, “Whose Strange Stories?: A Study of Herbert Giles’ (1845-1935), Translation of P’u Sung-ling’s 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) *Liao-chai Chih-i 諧齋誌異*” (PhD diss., The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2001); for an overview of Giles’ translation, see John Minford and Tong Man, “Whose Strange Stories? P’u Sung-ling (1640-1715), Herbert Giles (1845-1935), and the *Liao-chai chih-i,*” *East Asian History* 17:18 (1999).

\(^{15}\) In any translation process a degree of manipulation is inevitable. As Lawrence Venuti puts it, interference is inevitable because every act of translation is “a rewriting of an original text,” and all “[r]ewriting is manipulation,” *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), vii.

right. Hill’s focus on how translations function as interventions in new contexts was in turn informed by Lydia Liu’s *Translingual Practice*, which also takes the manipulation of any given text by translators as both unspoken and inescapable, as well as exploring how this manipulation created meaning in early-modern China. These approaches are complemented here by scholarship on the translation of Shakespeare, which also suggests that translations of canonical works are best approached as a creative act. As Ton Hoenselaars argues in “Between Heaven and Hell,” though devotees of any canonical work may be tempted to lambast any translator who does not capture the original word-for-word, such an approach is limited in its productivity.

Though Hill, Liu, and Hoenselaars differ in terms of their respective source material, they are unanimous in their assessment that recognizing the translator’s role as an inherently creative mediator is crucial in order to understand a translated text; this is a notion that has been wholeheartedly embraced here.

Drawing from this, this paper aims to bring the field of translation studies into dialogue with Manjuristics. This is not a typical approach in the field, or at least not in the few works that engage with Manchu translations of Chinese fiction. Admittedly the bulk of these are now considered antiquated, as they were written in the early stages of Manjuristics in the 19th and

early 20th century. Within this context Manchu translations were considered excellent yet literal renditions of their originals, useful only in as much as they could give a “factual interpretation of linguistically difficult Chinese” and be drawn upon to verify the meaning of the Chinese original. Though such views are no longer representative of the Manchu studies community—which has sought to take Manchu elements of Qing rule seriously and make use of Manchu sources following the “New Qing History” movement of the 1990s—they have remained unchallenged. Not only are there “surprisingly few direct studies of particular Manchu translations,” notions about the assumed literalness of Manchu translations periodically resurface.

20 Martin Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey’: Manchu Translations of Chinese Novels and Short Stories: An Attempt at an Inventory,” Asia Major Third Series 1:2 (1988): 78. Similarly, Paul George von Möllendorff stated in 1892 that all Manchu translations “are excellent, but they are all literal,” A Manchu Grammar (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1892), x. These sentiments were later echoed in Berthold Laufer’s 1908 Skizze der Manjurischen Literatur, where he stated that Manchu translations of Chinese literature were “intended to serve.” Quoted in Stephen Durrant, “The Controversy Among Western Sinologists Regarding the Utility of Sino-Manchu Translations,” in Proceedings of International Ch’ing Archive Symposium July 2-7, 1978; July 6, 1978 (Taipei 1982): 217. These statements and others were made in the context of Manchu being used as a language aid. The French Jesuit missionary Father Amiot (Amyot) for example declared in the preface to his Dictionnaire Tartare Manchou Français (1789) that “the knowledge of Manchu would open a free entrance into the Chinese literature of all centuries: there is no good Chinese book which has not been translated into Manchu.” Quoted in Eric Hauer, “Why the Sinologue Should Study Manchu,” Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 61 (1930): 163. This was complimented by the characterization of Manchu as an easy language, a language that could be learned in the time of a “tiffin,” as Eric Hauer characterized it in “Why the Sinologue,” 158. Connected to the idea that Manchu translations are literal is the notion that Manchu translations were done with the sole intention of acquiring Chinese culture and knowledge. For an early articulation of this see Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey,’” 78; for a later, see Ping-Ti Ho, Reorienting the Manchus: A Study of Sinicization, 1583-1795 (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2011), 231.

21 For an overview of “New Qing History,” see Evelyn Rawski, “Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History,” The Journal of Asian Studies 55:4 (1996). Seminal works in the field include Pamela K. Crossley, Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Evelyn Rawski, The Last Emperors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Mark Elliott, The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). Though these works were fundamental in terms of reframing how non-Han aspects of the Qing are considered, Manjuristics has since developed outside of the scope of New Qing History, with scholars from other fields beginning to harness Manchu sources for a wide range of purposes. For some examples of recent works from the history of science and technology that use Manchu sources, see Catherine Jami, The Emperor’s New Mathematics: Western Learning and Imperial Authority During the Kangxi Reign (1662: 1722) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); He Bian, “Too Sick to Serve: The Politics of Illness in the Qing Civil Bureaucracy,” Late Imperial China 33:2 (2012); and Carla Nappi, “Maggots, Jawbones, and a Multilingual Archive of Decay,” Endeavour 38 (1) (2014); all works of science and technology that draw on Manchu language material. See also Jonathan Schlesinger, “The Qing Invention of Nature: Environment and Identity in Northeast China and Mongolia, 1750-1850” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012) for an example from the field of environmental history; and Suet Ying Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu)” (PhD diss., University of California, 2007) for an example from the field of Chinese literature.
Thus by bringing works of translation studies to bear on Manchu translations, this paper aims to bring a fresh perspective to such works, ultimately offering an alternative approach to Manchu translations that reads them as works of literature in their own right.

This is achieved in the following three sections. Part one gives the background to *Strange Tales*, both detailing the textual history of the collection and explaining how it fits within the history of zhiguai and their late imperial commentaries. This section also goes into more detail about dream tales themselves, contextualizing them and surveying how “A Fox Dream” was perceived by contemporary commentators. Part two also works to provide context, but from a different angle. This section introduces Jakdan’s translation, situating it within the body of Manchu translations of Chinese fiction, and detailing how parallel translation operates in Jakdan’s text. Taken together, part one and two provide the thorough grounding and background necessary to access Jakdan’s work.

Part three shifts to looking at the story “A Fox Dream” itself. While this tale is the primary story under investigation, other stories that involve dreams are also mentioned whenever they provide an illuminating counterpoint or comparison. This section proceeds as the story unfolds and is subdivided into three sections, the first two of which detail a single dream/non-dream encounter, and the third of which looks at the last meeting with a fox woman. The first

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22 Durrant, “The Controversy”, 219. There are however two notable contemporary examples of works that treat Manchu translations as more than just a language aid: Laura E. Hess, “The Manchu Exegesis of the Lùnyǔ,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113:3 (1993); and Durrant, “Sino-Manchu Translations.” Even within Durrant’s other work, however, the idea that Manchu translations are merely a tool to facilitate a better understanding of the Chinese original resurfaces. Durrant comments, for instance, that he would be interested in seeing “how the Manchus rendered a particularly problematic Chinese phrase, be that phrase in Analects, Liao ch'ai, or Jin Ping Mei,” “A Personal Note on Manchu Studies,” in *Proceedings of the First North American Conference on Manchu Studies: Volume 1, Studies in Manchu Literature and History*, ed. Stephen A. Wadley et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 10.

23 These tales are: “Sequel to Yellow Millet Dream,” “Jiaona,” “Princess Lotus,” “The Bookworm,” “Laughing Girl,” “The Painted Skin,” “Lotus Fragrance,” and “Becoming an Immortal.”
begins with the first meeting of the main male character, Bi Yi’an, with the fox woman – his future mother-in-law – and the second with the banquet at which Bi meets his wife’s sisters. The third looks at Bi’s last and final encounter with his fox wife, just before she takes her final leave of him. In all three of these encounters, the line between dream and non-dream is consistently overstepped, with Jakdan blurring the boundaries between the two using vague language, patterns of seeing and unseeing, and omitted phrases. The effect of this is to emphasize and create an overwhelming sense of strangeness that permeates the tale in a way that is heightened and unique to Jakdan’s translation.
2. Understanding Strange Tales

2.1 Textual History & Circulation

Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (completed 1670-1711) is arguably China’s most popular collection of ghost stories. It circulated widely when it was still in manuscript form, and it was only a year after its first printing of circa-400 stories in 1766 that it was re-printed, suggesting that it gained immediate readership. This rapid success gradually matured into enduring popularity and dozens of new editions were produced throughout the late imperial period, including fourteen editions in the nineteenth century alone, due in part to the vibrant print culture of the late imperial period. In addition to reprints of the collection, *Strange Tales* was also adapted countless times, into southern drama, folk theatre, and vernacular storytelling (*huaben* 話本) formats. The *Strange Tales* name even came to be deployed as a brand, used strategically by printers to sell shoddily printed anthologies and stories labeled *Strange Tales* ‘sequels.’ Both the critical and popular success of *Strange Tales* earned the text

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25 The 1766 edition was edited and ordered by Zhao Qigao (趙起杲), and is commonly referred to as the Zhao Qigao version of *Strange Tales*. For a detailed textual history, see Allan Barr, “The Textual Transmission.” See also Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 69-75 for a complete list of the Chinese reprints of *Strange Tales* as well as a detailed analysis of the different commentaries that accompanied the text and an overview of previous studies of them.

26 Not only was this a period of time in which literacy was – as a result of the increasingly-important civil examination system – relatively high, books remained both aesthetic objects and emblems of culture, a reputation that had emerged out of the late-Ming period (1368-1644). For a detailed study of the civil examination system, see Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); for a look at reciprocal relationship between printing and the examination system, see Kai-wing Chow, “Writing for Success: Printing, Examinations and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China,” *Late Imperial China* 17:1 (1996): 120-57. For a general overview of printing in late imperial China, see Tobie Myer-Fong, “The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66:3 (2007). For more on late imperial book culture, see Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 4-5. For the institutional role of book culture, see Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2001).


acclaim and it has been hailed as a literary classic to the present day, with the ghost stories of the collection receiving particular attention.\(^{29}\)

However, the impressive number of print runs that the collection had throughout the late imperial period, and the esteem afforded to *Strange Tales* today belies the fact that its literary status was, at many points during the Qing, under dispute.\(^{30}\) The literary reputation of *Strange Tales* emerged only out of and after a long period of negotiation and discussion that took place on the printed page. Each edition of *Strange Tales* was accompanied by a range of commentary materials, which could include prefatory essays, colophons, interlinear glosses, or interpretative commentaries. This was not of course a practice entirely unique to *Strange Tales*; it forms only a small part of the wider practice of commentary writing that proliferated in Ming-Qing China. During this period commentary writing and the printing of commentary editions of novels became very much the norm, so much so that editions of novels without commentary became virtually impossible to find. These commentaries were typically written with a high degree of seriousness – they were hardly passive notes, written idly and never read again – and would discuss the literary merits of the collection, then explain to the reader how best to read the text so as to fully experience the literary mastery of the work.\(^{31}\) In so doing commentary writing created an interpretive commentary practice that was extremely interactive, with later commentators building on and referring to the work of earlier writers.\(^{32}\) Such interactive commentary formed

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30 This is not of course to suggest that the history of *Strange Tales*’ reception from the imperial period to the present day has not been complex. *Strange Tales* was blacklisted and considered obscene on a number of occasions, most notably in the anti-ghost and anti-superstition rhetoric of both the May Fourth movement and the first decades of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Because of this, it was not read or reprinted in Mainland China for most of the 20th century. For a discussion of this, see chapter four of Hui, “The Ghost of Liaozhai,” 204-228.
31 For a more comprehensive introduction into commentary writing, see David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writings Between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
32 Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction*, 4-5.
what Judith Zeitlin has called an “ongoing dialogue not only between the author and his readers but also between generations of readers.”

A significant concern emerging from the commentaries written about Strange Tales has to do with how Pu’s collection can be classified in terms of genre. Strange Tales is, after all, a highly heterogeneous collection. Not only does it draw its stories from a wide range of sources including oral folk tales, literary antecedents, and Pu Songling’s own personal experiences, it also encompasses a broad array of writing styles and touches on a broad spectrum of topics, including natural disasters, examination candidates, ghosts, fox women, demons, and the walking dead. In commentaries written about it Strange Tales was typically characterized as a textual hybrid, one that straddled the divide between chuanqi (傳奇 ‘tales of the marvelous’) and zhiguai (詭怪 ‘records of the strange’), though neither one of these two characterizations was unproblematic or unassailable. Criticism of the collection on the grounds of it being too generically ambiguous was so vociferous that it was omitted from the Qing compendium of

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33 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 15.
34 For a discussion of the various sources that Pu Songling drew on, see Allan Barr, “Pu Songling and Liao zhai zhiyi: A Study of Textual Transmission, Biographical Background, and Literary Antecedents” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1983), 216-280. For a discussion of Pu Songling’s own background, see Chang and Chang, Redefining History, 11-51.
35 For a succinct overview of scholarship on chuanqi stories, see Chiang, Collecting the Self, 18-26. See also Rania Huntington, “The Supernatural,” in The Columbia History of Chinese Literature, ed. Victor Mair et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 110-131. For a discussion of Tang chuanqí, see Leo Tak-hung Chan, The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts: Ji Yun and Eighteenth-Century Literati Storytelling (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 45-50. Though Strange Tales has now become the classic of the genre, zhiguai had of course been written long before Pu Songling put brush to paper. Short sketches about the anomalous and the strange had first appeared during the Six Dynasties (220-589) period. There has been much debate over how zhiguai can be understood as a genre however, and two broad camps exist in English-language scholarship. While Kenneth J. DeWoskin sees the Six Dynasties zhiguai as fiction – arguing that zhiguai writers of this period saw their tales as intrinsically fabricated and fictional – Robert Ford Campany insists that literati authors of these early medieval anomaly accounts did believe in the factuality of their collections and viewed them as history. See Robert Ford Campany, Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996); and Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “The Six Dynasties Chih-Kuai and the Birth of Fiction,” in Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). For a comprehensive overview of these and other works on the topic, see Chiang, Collecting the Self, 12-16. For a detailed history of zhiguai from the Six Dynasties to the late Qing, see Xiaohuan Zhan, Classical Chinese Supernatural Fiction: A Morphological History (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 31-144. Zhan also has a detailed introduction to Strange Tales, 126-134.
written works (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書). The eighteenth century also saw some of the most vehement attacks on supernatural beliefs, meaning that *zhiguai* became viewed as a somewhat illegitimate and suspect form of writing and in turn commentators on *Strange Tales* had to negotiate the relationship between *zhiguai* and *Strange Tales* carefully.\(^\text{37}\)

This negotiation is evident in three major interpretations of *Strange Tales*, reflected in prefaces and commentaries to the collection. According to Judith Zeitlin, the first such interpretation appeared in the earliest prefaces of the collection, which were written by Pu Songling’s literary associates Gao Heng 高珩 (1612-1697) and Tang Menglai 唐夢薌 (1627-1698) in 1679 and 1682 respectively.\(^\text{38}\) These aimed at legitimating the practice of recording the strange and focused on both defending the *zhiguai* genre and touting the collection as a supreme example of it. However the second interpretation, which appeared in the prefaces of the first printing of the collection in 1766 by Zhao Qigao, sought to move the collection away from its

\(^{36}\) Prominent literary figure Ji Yun （紀昀）(1723-1805) most infamously took issue with *Strange Tales* on the basis of genre, and as he was an editor of *Siku quanshu*, has typically been judged as being primarily responsible for its omission. See Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 166-167 and Hui, “The Ghost of Liaozi,” 172-179. It is also worth noting that *Strange Tales* was also criticized on the grounds that some of the stories were about questionable subject matter. This can be seen most clearly in the Zhao Qigao edition of the text, which removed stories about disembowelment and bodily fluids – namely “Ghost Saliva” (鬼津) and “Pulling Intestines” (抽腸) – stories about bowel movements – including “Lieutenant Yang” (楊千緑) – scabs – “Jin Shicheng” 金世成 – bestiality, and sexual transgression – “Sex with a Dog” (犬奸) and “The Wife of the Local Earth God” (土地夫人). See Barr, “The Textual Transmission,” and Hui, “The Ghost of Liaozi,” 158-167 for a full discussion.

\(^{37}\) Anthony Yu notes that the rise of a strong disbelief in ghosts and the supernatural coincided with the proliferation of *zhiguai* tales, “Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit! Ghosts in Traditional Chinese Prose Fiction,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987). For a discussion of anti-supernatural rhetoric, see Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 79-93. Chan also has a discussion of the didactic rhetoric that most eighteenth-century *zhiguai* compilers used to circumvent the suspicion, 1-30. See also David Der-Wei Wang, “Second Haunting,” in *The Monster that is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-century China*, ed. David Wang (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Part of the reason that *zhiguai* was viewed as being so problematic has to do with the influence of sober-minded literati increasingly orientated towards the late-imperial intellectual focus on *kaozheng* scholarship (考證). *Kaozheng*, also referred to as the “search for evidence”, was a school and approach to study and research that began during the late Ming but became most prominent during the rule of the Qianlong (r. 1735-1796) and Jiaqing (r. 1796-182) emperors; it emphasized careful textual study and verifiable knowledge. For an overview of this, see Benjamin Elman, *The Ch’ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xxi-xxxii. See also Chow Kai-wing, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2-14.

association with zhiguai altogether. Perceiving zhiguai to be a somewhat problematic and unsavory genre, Zhao Qigao portrayed the collection instead as “an allegorical vehicle for serious self-expression” on the part of Pu Songling. Later nineteenth-century commentators continued this trend of disassociating the collection from zhiguai, instead “acknowledg[ing] the work as a model of stylistic brilliance and as a great work of fiction,” a genre that was growing in influence and prestige in the nineteenth century.

It is within this much larger context of Strange Tales consumption and debate that Jakdan’s translation is situated. Not only was it written around the same time that the collection was being avidly consumed and debated, it was also not the first time that zhiguai had crossed over into Manchu language publications. It may not have been called zhiguai as such, but ghost stories and tales of the bizarre were written in both Manchu-language publications and in publications penned by authors who considered themselves to be Manchu. In terms of Manchu-language works the most substantial is a collection of twenty-eight tales on ghosts, ghouls, and

39 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 16.
40 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 17. For a full discussion of this third spin, see Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 34-42.
41 For my purposes here I am not actively engaging in the question of what qualifies as Manchu literature. For an overview of the debate that concludes that the qualifying factor is ‘literature of the Manchu people’, see Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu),” 8-12. For a proponent of the view that Manchu literature is defined by being written in Manchu language, see Giovanni Stary, “The ‘Discovery’ of Manchu Literature and Its Problems,” in Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manchu-Tungus Studies, Bonn, August 28-September 1, 2000, ed. Carsten Naeher et al., 165-178 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002).
42 I do not claim that this list of Manchu ghost stories is comprehensive. There may be many more works that I am unfortunately unaware of. In evaluating this list it should also be noted that very little substantial work has been done on the contents of Manchu language texts. Though catalogues and lists of extant Manchu books have been compiled, few of these have been investigated in-depth. See Joseph Fletcher, “Manchu Sources,” in Essays on the Sources for Chinese History, ed. Donald Daniel Leslie et. al., 141-46 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973); and Pamela Crossley and Evelyn Rawski, “A Profile of the Manchu Language in Ch’ing History,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 53 1 (1993): 90-100. There are also a number of catalogues organized by specific library. For a comprehensive list of these and other catalogues, see Roth-Li, Manchu: A Textbook, 5-10. I have also not included in this list the Manchu-language text nisan saman i bithe. Though it does tell the story of a female shaman who enters the land of the dead and battles evil spirits it could conceivably be considered a tale of the strange, however it has been presented to me as a spiritual or religious text. For an example of a work that does treat the tale as a tale of the strange, see Robert Moss, The Secret History of Dreaming (Novato California: New World Library, 2009), 18-21. For a translation of the story, see Margaret Nowak and Stephen Durrant, The Tale of the
other unearthly spirits contained in the Dagur writer Donjina’s collection “Donjinai sabuha donjiha ejebun” or “Records of what Donjina saw and heard,” dated sometime in the late Qing.43 There are also earlier collections, notably an untitled Manchu version of Shiyou gushi (Stories Told by the Corpse 尸語故事) that was based on a set of Indian legends known as “Twenty Five Tales of a Bewitched Spirit” and transmitted from Sanskrit into Tibetan, then Mongolian, and finally Manchu, with significant alterations along the way.44 Collections of zhiguai were also written by Manchu writers, as evidenced by Manchu bannerman He Bang’e’s (和邦額) collection “Occasional Records of Conversations at Night” (Yetan suilu 夜譚隨錄) (1791), which contains a large number of stories devoted to fox spirits.45 There is also at least one


44 There are two versions of this Manchu collection. The first is a Sino-Manchu version of thirteen of the tales transcribed by a Russian scholar Vasily Vasilievich Radlov in the late 19th or early 20th century, re-published in Elena Lebedeva, Sidi kur: A Sibe-Manchu Version of the “Bewitched Corpse” Cycle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994). There is also a second version containing 21 stories in the Palace Museum of Beijing that dates to the early Kangxi period. For a modern reprint of this edition, see Yonghai Ji, Liyuan Bai and Bingwen Zhao, Shiyou gushi: Manzu fo chuan gushi ershiyan pian (Beijing: Central University for Nationalities Publishing House, 2002). For a discussion of this, see Hanung Kim, May 6, 2013, “Manchu Folklore: Tales Told by a Bewitched Being,” Manchu Studies Group Blog, http://www.manchustudiesgroup.org/2013/05/06/manchu-folke:tales-told-by-a-bewitched-being/. For a comparison of the different language editions of these stories, see the introduction in Ji, Shiyou gushi, 1-5. Among other alterations, the storyteller in the Manchu version is a medicine deity, not a corpse as in the original. See also Raffaella Riva, “The Tales of the Bewitched Corpse: A Literary Journey from India to China,” in India, Tibet, China: Genesis and Aspects of Traditional Narrative, ed. Alfredo Cadonna (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1999), 229-256.

45 For a translation of some of these stories, see Rania Huntington, Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative (Cambridge, Harvard University Asia Center: 2003), 35-59. See also Chan, The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts, 221-226.
zidishu (bannermen tales 子弟書) publication that deals with ghosts: Guiduan jiasi (鬼斷家私 A Ghost Settles the Lawsuit), printed in Shenyang in 1894.46

2.2 General Context of Strange Tales
Regardless of the language that they were written in, collections of the strange and fantastical often contained dream tales. These are staples of the zhiguai genre, regularly appearing alongside stories of miracle births, odd creatures, mythical lands, supernatural spirits and ghosts. This is particularly true of collections in the late imperial period when the importance of dreams reached unprecedented heights, resulting in a “peak of cultural creativity, inaugurating… a ‘golden age’ of Chinese dreaming.”47 This “golden age” was expressed in a broad range of printed materials, ranging from philosophical texts, to paintings and woodblock illustrations, and literary creations such as Strange Tales.48

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46 This is a popular storytelling genre created in the early eighteenth century that gained great popularity in Northeast China, particularly in Beijing. Though it is closely associated with the Manchus, non-Manchus did listen to and perform zidishu. For an introduction to zidishu, see Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu),” 21-67. For this zidishu in particular, see Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu),” 272.

47 Kelly Bulkeley, Dreaming in the World’s Religions: a Comparative History (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 68. Dreams were however clearly present in earlier Chinese philosophy, religion, and medicine. For a general overview of the importance of dreams throughout Chinese history, see Carolyn Brown, Psycho-Sinology: the Universe of Dreams in Chinese Culture (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1988). Dreams were also incorporated into different types of encyclopedic collections from the fourth to the seventeenth century. See Historian of the Strange, 135-136.

48 The most famous dream in late-Ming literature is that of Du Liniang in Tang Xianzu’s 1598 play Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting 牡丹亭), in which the young maiden encounters a lover in her dream and loses her virginity, but only in her dream. For other works of late imperial literature that mention dreams, see Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 264-265. For a discussion of dreams in late imperial Chinese poetry, see Rachel Bartow Schram, “A Life in Dreams: The Dream Motif in the Poetry of Luo Qilan and Ming-Qing Women Writers” (PhD diss., UC Santa Barbara, 2012), 1-30. For a discussion of dreaming in post-1919 Chinese literature, see Roy Bing Chan, “The Edge of Knowing: Dreams and Realism in Modern Chinese Literature” (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2009). For a discussion of dreams in philosophical writings, see Wai-yee Li, “Dreams of Interpretation in Early Chinese Historical and Philosophical Writings,” in Dream Cultures: Toward a Comparative History of Dreaming, ed. Guy Strousma et al., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17-42. Premonitory dreams were often illustrated in wood-block form, in which dreams were portrayed graphically as a “bubble” of consciousness that emanated from the mind while the body was asleep. For a reproduction of such images, see Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 137.
Beliefs about dreams were as varied as they were prevalent in late imperial China. It was thought that dreams were a medium of communication between the living and the dead; that during sleep the spirit could travel to other dimensions of time and space, and that dreams could be brought about by physical stimuli.\textsuperscript{49} However, writings about dreams tended to focus on one of two oneiric traditions: prophecy (zhao 兆), or illusion (huan 幻).\textsuperscript{50} In the first, the focus was on how best to interpret dreams, viewing them as a message from the spirit world that might, if interpreted correctly, predict the future and inform the present.\textsuperscript{51} In the other, the focus shifted from what dreams meant to what dreams were. Both of these oneiric traditions were rooted in the same medically-based theories of dream causation, theories that held that dreams were the result of thoughts and emotions experienced in waking life. In this tradition, thoughts and emotions, both of which stemmed from the heart, were understood to manifest themselves on the physical human body.\textsuperscript{52} However, not all dream-theory or dream-writings remained equally popular. By the Qing, the emphasis on ‘prophecy’ dreams had faded somewhat from the elite craze that it had


\textsuperscript{50} This categorization is typically attributed to Chen Shiyuan’s 1562 compilation, Remaining Points on Dream Interpretation (Mengzhan yizhi 夢占逸旨) in which Chen lays out the historical tradition of the prophecy and illusion traditions of dreams. It is not, however, unique only to late imperial Chinese literature. French scholar Roger Caillois’ assertion that “there are two types of problems concerning dreams… one problem concerns the actual meaning or significance of the dream; the other, the relationship between the dream and the waking world… the degree of reality that one may attribute to the dream” is virtually a paraphrase of the two approaches to dreams common to late imperial China mapped out here. See Roger Caillois, “Logical and Philosophical Problems of the Dream,” in The Dream and Human Societies, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum et al., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 23.

\textsuperscript{51} This was seen as being particularly useful for examination candidates – who were all too eager to get predictions about their examination success or the questions that would be in the exam – and led to a proliferation of dream-interpretation manuals. For more on dream-interpretation manuals, see Brigid E Vance’s in-depth study of He Dongru’s Forest of Dreams (Meng lin xuan jie 夢林玄解) (preface dated 1636), an encyclopedia history of dreams that covered everything from nightmare talismans to how to use glyphomancy to interpret dreams, “Textualizing dreams in a late Ming dream encyclopedia” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012). For discussion of dream journals, another rich source of dream interpretation, see R. Po-Chia Hsia, “Dreams and Conversions: A Comparative Analysis of Catholic and Buddhist Dreams in Ming and Qing China,” Journal of Religious History 34 (2010); and Struve, “Dreaming and Self-Search During the Ming Collapse.”

\textsuperscript{52} Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 21.
enjoyed during the Ming, and interest centered instead on illusion.\textsuperscript{53} Writers explored the boundaries between dreams and the waking state, emphasizing the difficulty of mediating between the two.\textsuperscript{54} In fictional tales, characters often adjudicated between dream and reality themselves, typically relying on some sort of material proof to categorically prove that their experiences were (or were not) a dream.

A number of stories in \textit{Strange Tales} deal explicitly with this, most notably the story “A Fox Dream” (\textit{Hu meng} 狐夢). The plot of this story centers on a liaison between young scholar Bi Yi’an (畢怡庵) and a fox-woman, which takes place in several dream-like states.\textsuperscript{55} In the tale Bi meets a group of fox sisters, marries one, goes to a banquet with them, and then after several more encounters is left by his fox-wife, although the possibility that Bi simply dreamt it all is left open to interpretation. Broadly speaking, there are many elements of “A Fox Dream” that are held in common and are therefore representative of dream tales in the \textit{Strange Tales} collection. Many tales deal with relationships between human men and fox women, and at least eight other

\textsuperscript{53} This is in part due to the influence of “more sober-minded elites” increasingly oriented towards the late-imperial intellectual focus on \textit{kaozheng} scholarship.

\textsuperscript{54} This is perhaps best encapsulated in one of the most famous Chinese writings to mention dreams, written by the Zhou dynasty (1121-249 BCE) philosopher Zhuangzi (庄子 369-286) and cited in almost every book that discusses dream writings in China: “Once Chuang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn’t know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn’t know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction!” Quoted in Zietlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 151.

\textsuperscript{55} Though it is not explicitly stated in the text, it is worth noting that a ‘fox’ here is not a furry, four-legged animal. Bi Yi’an meets, marries, and is separated from a fox spirit, often referred to in English language scholarship as fox women. These are shape shifters, who have both a four-legged fox form and a female (sometimes male) human form. When female, their human form is typically beautiful and alluring, and they are usually associated with seduction. For a discussion of fox shape shifters in \textit{Strange Tale} stories, see Allan Barr, “Disarming Intruders: Alien Women in \textit{Liaozhai zhiyi},” \textit{Harvard Journal of Asian Studies} 49:2 (1989). For a more general discussion of fox women, see Hunington, \textit{Alien Kind}. For a description of how the characteristics of fox spirits changed over time, see Daniel Hsieh, “Fox as Trickster in Early Medieval China,” in \textit{Interpretation and Literature in Early Modern China}, ed. Alan Kam-leung Chan et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 223-249.
tales involve dreams. However, Bi’s fox dreams (or non-dreams) are uniquely complex. Very few characters in other stories dream of encounters with fox-maidens, even fewer dream of marrying them, and none dream of being whisked off to such lengthy dream-banquets to drink dream-wine with fox-maidens, as Bi does. These complex dream scenes are only one facet of the narrative complexity that operates throughout the story, which “contain[s] so many layers of nested dreams that it becomes almost as impossible to untangle them as it is to tease apart the question of what is real and what is illusion.” At the end of the tale the reader is still puzzled as to whether what has been relayed to them was a description of a dream or a description of the character’s reality, a befuddlement not helped by the fact that Bi has only lingering dream-drunkenness and the assurances of fox-maidens to help him make sense of his nocturnal adventures. The story thus leaves the boundaries between dream and reality stubbornly blurred.

That this blurriness was considered problematic comes through quite clearly in dream tale commentaries. The writing of commentaries was an integral part of the process of understanding and unpacking these tales, as the inherent strangeness of the dreams required explanation. The need to interpret these stories in Strange Tales also coincides closely with the aforementioned desire to explain, and then explain away, the strangeness inherent in the collection as a whole. In “A Fox Dream,” although Bi Yi’an is fairly unfazed by his inability to come to any definite conclusion about whether his experiences are dreams or not, commentators took it upon themselves to come up with a more satisfactory verdict. For instance, nineteenth century writer He Shouqi (何守奇) puzzled over the matter:

56 As counted by Zeitlin in Historian of the Strange, 132. As the entire collection has circa 500 heterogeneous stories, this is not an insignificant number of tales on the topic.
57 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 176.
58 These of course may not be the most well-known stories in Strange Tales, for the collection is now almost synonymous with ghost stories. For more on these ghost stories, see Judith Zeitlin, The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 13-86; and Chiang, Collecting the Self, 62-126.
“A fox-spirit is already illusion, so a fox dream is even more illusion, but to consider it not a dream is the most illusory thing of all. There’s a saying ‘If there’s a dream in a dream, then it was never a dream.’ Was it a dream or not? I cannot decide…”\textsuperscript{59}

While He Shouqi had not yet made his mind up, he clearly saw a choice in the story: dream, or not a dream? Similarly, his contemporary, literatus Dan Minglun (但明倫), mulled over the same question:

It all came about from Bi’s having read “The Biography of Blue Phoenix” and longing for her; so when he encountered the girl [the fox woman] it was a dream. The banquet and congratulations were entrusted to another dream, but later Bi considered it wasn’t a dream. So he wasn’t dreaming, and yet it was a dream; he was dreaming, and yet it wasn’t a dream. How was it not a dream? How was it \textit{not not} a dream? When Bi related his dream, he realized that he had been dreaming, but that it wasn’t a dream. \textit{Liaozhai} recorded Bi’s dream, but said that it wasn’t a dream, so it was \textit{not not} not a dream.\textsuperscript{60}

Though Dan’s answer might not be entirely satisfactory – “\textit{not not not} a dream” is hardly conclusive – it is clear that this commentator sees in the story two options: either the story is a dream, or it isn’t. Either way, that the commentators attempt to demarcate parts of the story as dream or non-dream suggests a certain degree of discomfort with the way that the story blurs the boundary between the two.

This discomfort is not, however, present in Jakdan’s translation of the tale. As will be illustrated in the following sections, Jakdan’s rendition of “A Fox Dream” does little to clarify the tale for the reader, working instead to blur the boundaries between dream and reality and certain critical moments. This blurring should however still be considered one reflective of the late imperial literary scene, for it is inescapably situated within the various contexts laid out here. Not only is the crossing over of \textit{Strange Tales} into Manchu reflective of the relative popularity of dream tales, \textit{zhiguai}, and \textit{Strange Tales}.

\textsuperscript{59} Zeitlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 179.
\textsuperscript{60} Zeitlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 179.
Tales during the late imperial period, Jakdan’s translation is also further indication of the prevalence and importance of commentary writing, representing another moment in the long history of the collection. Viewed in this light, Jakdan’s translation of the story represents another moment in which the debate over what to do with the strangeness inherent in Strange Tales played out, with the Manchu text opting to elevate the bizarreness of the tale further, a noticeable departure from the interpretive strategies suggested by contemporaneous commentators.
3. The Structure of Jakdan’s translation of Strange Tales

Strange Tales was translated into Manchu by the translator, poet, and member of the Manchu Plain Red Banner Jakdan around 1848. Reprinted twice during the Qing, Jakdan’s Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutuci has been described as a Manchu literary masterpiece, written in a “flowing style and clear, artistic prose.” Though it is one of the best-known Manchu translations of Chinese fiction, it is certainly not the only one. One of the first Manchu-Chinese translations was of a vernacular novel, Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo yanyi 三國演義), and translations of fiction continued throughout the Qing alongside other court-sponsored translation projects. Jakdan’s translation may not have even been the first Manchu

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61 This work has a number of names: Zefan Liaozhai zhiiyi (擇繙聊齋志異); Hebi Liaozhai zhiiyi (合璧聊齋志異); Man-Han hebi Liaozhai zhiiyi (滿漢合璧聊齋誌異); Manju nikan liyoo jai jy bithe; and Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutuci. In this paper it is referred to under the name it is most commonly referred to in English language scholarship: Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutuci. Jakdan was a Metropolitan Graduate in translation (fanyi jinshi 翻譯進士). This was the highest level of degree status, often compared to the academic doctorate today, Charles Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 1985). 167. Jakdan is however best known for his poetry. His eight-volume collection of poetry was discovered in 2003 in the Harvard-Yenching Library, and the eighth volume, comprised of Manchu and mixed Manchu-Chinese verse, has received considerable attention from scholars. See James Bosson, and Hoong Teik Toh, “Jakdan and His Manchu Poetry,” in Proceedings of the First North American Conference on Manchu Studies: Studies in Manchu Literature and History, ed. Stephen Wadley (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006). Jakdan’s poetry also plays an integral part in Brian Tawney’s MA thesis, where he reconstructs the phonological aspects of literary Manchu through Jakdan’s original language poetry. Brian Tawney, “Reading Jakdan’s Poetry: An Exploration of Literary Manchu Phonology” (MA diss., Harvard University, 2007). For more on the banner system, a hereditary military/administrative classification, see Elliott, The Manchu Way, 39-88.


64 This was particularly true during the reigns of the Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) and Qianlong (r. 1735-1796) emperors, who were both extremely vocal in encouraging the development of the Manchu language. For more on this, see Rawski, The Last Emperors. See also Pamela Crossley, “Manzhou yuanliu kao and the Formalization of the Manchu Heritage,” The Journal of Asian Studies 46:4 (1987). Printing of Manchu language texts proliferated after 1683, the year that usually marks the end of the Manchu ‘conquest period’ and is typically taken as the moment when Manchu began to decline as a living spoken language. Manchu publications, however, had a trajectory different than spoken Manchu: only after 1683 did the publication of Manchu-language texts flourish. Both the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns were high points for the publication of Manchu books, with a surge in publication occurring as late as the Guangxu era (r. 1875-1909). See Rawski, “Qing Publishing in Non-Han Languages,” in Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China, ed. Cynthia Joanne Brokaw et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 310-311 for a comprehensive list of Manchu publications and their respective dates. For a discussion of early translation projects, including the 1650 translation of Romance of the Three Kingdoms, see Durrant, “Sino-Manchu Translations at the Mukden Court”; and Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey.’”
translation of *Strange Tales*; he comments in the preface to his collection that he was inspired to produce his work after reading the translation of a Mr. Ming Youpu. However Jakdan’s is the most complete Manchu translation extant today. In *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, Jakdan translated 128 stories, all taken from the first eight *juan* of the Zhao Qigao edition of the collection,\(^65\) while the Youpu translation reportedly contained only five stories.\(^66\)

Jakdan’s translation is also in printed woodblock form, a rarity among Manchu language texts that might indicate a relative degree of popularity. Only four Manchu translations of Chinese literature existing today in this form, the others being the *Plum and the Golden Vase (Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅) (1708)*, two editions of *Romance of Three Kingdoms* (1650, and Yongzheng era 1723-1735), and the play *Record of the Western Chamber (Xixiang ji 西廂記)* (1710).\(^67\) However this is not, strictly speaking, the norm, for many more Manchu language translations exist in manuscript form. Out of the 64 Manchu translations of Chinese novels and short stories that Martin Gimm lists in his inventory, 55 texts are Manchu manuscripts.\(^68\) This is also reflective of the larger body of extant Manchu texts, mostly of which are also manuscripts.\(^69\)

While the exact circulation of Jakdan’s text is unknown, that it was printed and later reprinted

\(^65\) See Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey,‘” 98. See also Appendix A for a full list of the stories that Jakdan translated.
\(^66\) Jakdan writes in his preface: “Later, I obtained and read *Huashen [The Flower Spirit]* and four other pieces translated by the late Mr. Ming Youpu.” Translation by Mark Elliott and Elena Chiu, “The Manchu Preface to Jakdan’s Selected Stories Translated from *Liaozhai zhiyi.*” I have not done an exhaustive study of this reference, however I have yet to find the Mr. Ming Youpu text that Jakdan mentions. It does not appear in Gimm’s “‘Bibliographic Survey,‘” or Giovanni Stary, *What’s Where in Manchu Literature* (Wiesbaden: Aetas Manjurica II, 2006). I have also not been able to find the “*Huashen*” story that Jakdan refers to either. According to the index in Barr, there is no story called “*Huashen*” (化神). There are, however, stories that deal with flower spirits in *Strange Tales*, including some that Jakdan has translated: 花姑子 (*Hua Guzi “The Flower Fairy”), 香玉 (*Xiang Yu “The Flower Nymph”), 葛巾 (*Ge Jin*), 黄英 (*Huang Ying “Yellow Pride”).
\(^67\) For more detail on these texts, see Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey.’”
\(^68\) Gimm’s inventory actually contains 76 listings. I have omitted in my count here texts that Gimm notes are missing, or only rumored to have existed.
\(^69\) Evelyn Rawski’s study of over 2,100 Manchu-language works comments that 51.7 percent of the texts examined were in manuscript form. Rawski also mentions that the bulk of the texts she looked at were multilingual, with only 39.5 percent exclusively in Manchu, and 48.2 percent in Manchu and Chinese, “Qing Publishing in Non-Han Languages,” 306-307.
might suggest that it did have a considerable number of readers. At the very least, the printed form of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin* suggests that it was valued enough to undertake the laborious process to have it printed.\(^{70}\) It can also be inferred that the translation was read by at least a handful of individuals, for Jakdan names editors at the start of each of the twenty-four volumes and mention that he had teachers and friends read over the translation in his own preface. Each printing of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin* was also accompanied by a respective set of unique prefaces, ones not authored by Jakdan.\(^{71}\)

Jakdan’s translation is, like many of the other Manchu translations, a parallel Manchu-Chinese (*ManHan hebi* 滿漢合璧) one, placing both the Manchu translation and Chinese original side-by-side.\(^{72}\) It proceeds in corresponding blocks of texts, with sections of Manchu, complete with punctuation marks, presented alongside the Chinese original. This means that, functionally, the reader of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin* is exposed to both the original and the translation simultaneously. The very first line from the tale “A Fox Dream” (*dobi be tolgikangge*) discussed in the previous section, for example, appears in the Manchu translation:

\[
\text{mini gucu bi i an ele mila geren ci colgoropi.}\quad 73
\]

My friend Bi Yi’an was easygoing and more prominent than other people.

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\(^{71}\) Jakdan mentions his editors in his preface, noting: “when I had accumulated many completed sections, I asked several teachers and friends for their corrections,” Elliot and Elena, “The Manchu Preface.” The 1848 printing was accompanied by five prefaces, while the later printing had nine. Interestingly, with the exception of Jakdan’s preface, all other prefaces were written in Chinese.

\(^{72}\) While the first edition of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* appeared only in Manchu, the second edition was in Manchu-Chinese parallel. For details about the various editions of this text, see Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey,’” 103-105. The *Plum in the Golden Vase* is not a truly parallel text. Chapter titles and the names of characters consistently appear in parallel throughout the one hundred volumes of this work, but the rest of the text contains sporadic Chinese characters. For a description of this text, see Gimm, “‘Bibliographic Survey,’” 87-90.

\(^{73}\) Jakdan, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 17A.
This appears right alongside the original Chinese, which reads:

余友畢怡庵倜儻不群
My friend Bi Yi’an was an unrestrained romantic, above the crowd…

On the page the effect is as follows:

Figure 1

1. 余友畢怡庵倜儻不群
   My friend Bi Yi’an was an unrestrained romantic, above the crowd…

2. hoo hio some beyebe beye buyembi.
   He was very proud of his own physical prowess.
   ...and content in himself.

3. arbun yalingga salu labdu.
   His appearance was fleshy and he had many whiskers.
   He cut a rather fleshy figure and sported a heavy beard.

The left-hand side is a reproduction of the Manchu script and Chinese characters as they appear in the original printed copy of the text. The right-hand side is a transcription and translation. The Manchu appears first, followed by the Chinese.

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Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 211. The Manchu translation of the second passage of this figure is somewhat ambiguous, as it is not entirely clear what meaning beye has when it appears in the phrase beye-BE beye buyembi. The word beye according to Norman can have one of two meaning: self or body. This phrase can therefore be rendered as either ‘[him]self proud of himself’ or ‘[him]self proud of his body.’ I have opted for the later of the two, choosing to read this as an emphasis of Bi’s physical being, though the other interpretation is certainly possible. My decision for this is largely based on the recurring use of beye to mean body in other stories translated by Jakdan. See for example the story “Becoming an Immortal” in volume two of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin.
As the text contains these delineated corresponding blocks, it is very clear that Jakdan is not engaged in the art of paraphrasing. Proceeding phrase by phrase, it is very apparent, even at a quick glance, which translated sentence corresponds to which original line. And, perhaps more importantly, it is very clear which word(s) Jakdan has chosen to capture the meaning of any given Chinese original.

It is also worth noting that the Manchu translation does contain a considerable amount of transliteration, as many of the story titles and all of the named characters are transliterations.\(^{75}\) The main male protagonist in “A Fox Dream,” for example, is named Bi I An, a direct transliteration of the Chinese original (Bi Yi’an 畢怡庵).\(^{76}\) This is clearly not any sort of Manjurized form of the Chinese name; it is immediately evident to the reader that this is a foreign, Chinese name.\(^{77}\) The reader would, however, have been able to sound the words out based on the Manchu transliteration, even if they were unable to read the Chinese characters.

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\(^{75}\) Not all of the stories have transliterated names, and it is not yet clear why this is. Volume seven, for example, contains four stories with transliterated titles: yung jing (Yue Zhong 樂仲), hung ioi (Hongyu 紅玉), cen yün ci 陳雲犧 (Chen Yun xi ‘Chen Yun’s sacrifice), and hiyang ioi (Xiang Yu 香玉). Volume one, on the other hand, contains only translated story titles, including hoton i enduri simnerengge “Examining [for the post of] City God” (Kao chenghuang 考城隍), and hojo faha i gisurendurengge “The one with the talking pupils” (Tongren yu 瞳人語). By ‘named characters’ I am referring to characters that have been given complete and full names. There are some characters, in both the original and translation, who have not been given complete names. The main female character in “A Fox Dream” for example is consistently referred to as simply sargan jui, daughter.

\(^{76}\) For the sake of consistency, this character is referred to as Bi Yi’an throughout this paper.

4. “A Fox Dream”

4.1 The First Dream – The Fox Woman

After being introduced to the fleshy and whiskered Bi, the reader promptly follows him into his first dream. This dream sets the scene for the rest of the tale that is to come, for here Bi is following an established pattern in *Strange Tale* dream stories: a man pines after a supernatural creature; she appears, and then declares that his previous pining drew her to him. In this part of the story the man is also promised a supernatural bride, who is then offered to her would-be husband. However, the dream-ness of this section is constantly under dispute in Jakdan’s translation. Even as the story follows Bi and his otherworldly meeting with a fox woman, there is no clear verdict reached on the real-ness of his experiences.

According to the story, Bi travels to the country estate of his uncle, the district magistrate. While there he ensconces himself in the upper floors of the house, which has a long history of fox stories associated with it:

\[
\text{taktu i dolo daci dobi labdu seme ulandume gisurehebi.}
\]

From the beginning tales of foxes in the building had been handed down and passed around.

傅言楼中故多狐

It was said that the building had long been haunted by foxes.

Foxes are something that Bi is particularly interested in:

\[
b i \text{ i an. cing fung ni ulabun be hūlaha deri. mujilen uthai gunggereme buyeme. emgeri ucarabuhakū jalin korsombihe. ede taktu de fiuhašame gūninjeme hing seme kidume. ede taktu de fiuhašame gūninjeme hing seme kidume.}
\]

When Bi Yi’an had read aloud from the “Biography of Blue Phoenix,” his heart had at once been overwhelmed with longing. He regretted that he had not had

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78 The Manchu translation states that Bi travels to the *encu falga* of his uncle, a set phrase which means country estate. Zeitlin translates this as ‘villa,’ *Historian of the Strange*, 211.

79 This double punctuation mark is not a typographical error. In Manchu there are two punctuation markers: a single dot (similar to a comma), and a double dot (similar to a full stop).

80 Jakdan, vo1 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 17A.

81 Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 211.
even one chance to meet the "Blue Phoenix." Here in the upstairs he carefully
reflected on this, sincerely longing for her.83

畢每讀青鳳傳，心輒向往，恨不一遇，因於樓上，攝想凝思
Now whenever Bi had read my "Biography of Blue Phoenix," his heart always
went out to her, and he regretted that he couldn’t meet her even once. So he sat
upstairs, lost in deep contemplation and longing for her.84

As it turns out, Bi’s powers of contemplation are strong. No sooner does he fall asleep facing the
door, as it is very warm, than he finds his rest almost immediately interrupted by the very thing
that he has been thinking about: a fox woman. This unfolds fairly innocuously in the original
Chinese:

睡中有人搖之，醒而卻視，則一婦人年逾不惑，而風雅猶存 […]
Someone shook him out of his sleep. He awoke and looked up, and there was a
woman past forty but who still retained her charms.85

This is of course fairly odd, but strictly speaking what seems to be happening is clear: someone
has shaken (yao 擺) Bi out of his rest, and he has woken up. The speed of the initiation of the
encounter is also relatively unremarkable, for characters in Strange Tales typically fall almost
instantly in and out of dreams/non-dreams as Bi is doing here.86

What is remarkable, however, is how the moment is rendered in Jakdan’s translation, for
things are significantly less clear in the Manchu:

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82 ‘Blue Phoenix’ is a character from another story by Pu Songling. This self-reference is as appropriate here in
Manchu translation as it is in the original, for Jakdan has also translated this tale. It appears in volume three of Liyoo
jai jy i bithei šutucin.
83 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 17A.
84 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 211.
85 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 212.
86 In “Sequel to Yellow Millet Dream” (Xu Huangliang 纡黃粱) for example, the main character slips both
seamlessly and immediately into his dream. In this tale a pompous examination candidate, Zeng, comes to visit a
fortune teller. After having his fortune told, Zeng and his friends, “…sat together. In a short while, they can hear it
raining cats and dogs outside the door. Zeng is tired, and he leans[down] on the bed. Suddenly two eunuchs of the
emperor’s [appeared] with an imperial edict in their hands” (tecehe urse kaicame injehe baj i ome uce i tule ele
hungkereme agaha be donjifi dzeng hiyoo liyan šadafi beser gen de giwaidaha manggi. holkonde juwe dorgi
tagiyan abkah jui i galai araha heset bithe be tukiyeme), Jakdan, vol 13 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 2B. Dennis
Mair & Victor Mair translate this as: “Just then they heard the rain begin to pour down harder outside. Already tired,
Zeng lay down on the couch. Suddenly two palace messengers appeared before him bearing an edict handwritten by
the emperor himself” (俄聞門外雨益傾注，曾倦伏榻間，忽見有二中使，贈天子手詔 […] ), Strange Tales
From Make-Do Studio (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2001), 261.
Here it seems that Bi has still woken up (getefi), but it isn’t clear exactly what is bringing him out of his slumber. In this single phrase (amu suwaliyame aimaka niyalma acinggiyaha gese) a sense of ambiguity is created by the use of two words: gese (like, here ‘to be like’), and aimaka (probably, seemingly). Grammatically speaking either word would have sufficed; the use of both suggests that the blurring effect may be more deliberate. The words chosen to describe the actions taking place here are also equally non-descript: suwaliyambi (to mix, to mix up) and acinggiyambi (to touch, to move slightly). The overall effect is that Jakdan’s translation is only vaguely suggestive of what is happening, and it is left to the reader to decide what is actually going on.

Double ‘seeminglys’ and repeated ‘likes’ also appear in other stories, always in close proximity to dream/non-dream boundaries. The story “Jiaona” (嬌娜) follows scholar Kong Xueli (孔雪笠) and his fox wife and is mostly dream-free, but does contain a reference to a dream at the very end. At this point in the story Kong Xueli is dead, having been struck down by

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87 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 17B.

88 This is itself significant, for it isn’t always the case that characters in Jakdan’s translation wake up and fall asleep as the original prompts them to. In Jakdan’s translation of the story “Princess Lotus” a man named Dou Xu is just about to fall asleep when he sees something rather strange by his bed: “[one] day he was just about to fall asleep, [when he saw] a person wearing coarse woolen clothing standing beside his bed…” (jing inenggi amgara de. emu funiyesun etuka eture niyalma besergen i juleri ilifi). Here it is clear that Dou Xu is not quite asleep when he sees the figure, for amambi (to sleep) is rendered in the future tense (amga-RA). Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 36A. However English translators of this story tend to translate this section as if the male character has already fallen asleep. Minford, for example, renders this as: “One afternoon, he had just dozed off… when he saw a man dressed in rough servant’s clothing standing beside his bed…” ([…] 方晝寢, 見一褐衣人立榻前 […]], Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, 76.
a great thunderstorm. He is, however, revived when his wife’s cousin Jiaona puts a red bolus in
his mouth with her tongue: 89

يلةنغ سا فيلغيان نمحيبري جا دا يسيبم دوسيمبو في. جلي انجغا اكامي إمرجي
ها سه بيجي. فيلغيان نمحيبري جا سكادن يICI بيلحا دوسيفي. كير كار سيم
جلجان تايك. كيجيإ أهوج مانجي. سي سيم ايتي. نييامان هانكين لكساي جليري
بيسرد بيسابفي. أيماكا تألف دغديه ادالي. 90

[She] used her tongue to send the red round object in[to his mouth]. Once [their] mouths were already joined and when [she] said ‘ha,’ 91 the red round object entered his throat with her breath. There was a gurgling sound after [it] appeared. After a long while, he recovered, and saw his family members all together in front of him. It seemed probably like he had awoken from a dream.

[…] 以舌度红丸入, 又接吻而呵之。红丸随气入喉, 格格作响。移时, 醒然而苏。见眷口满前, 恍如梦寤。

[She] pressed a red bolus into his mouth with her tongue, pressing her lips to his and pushing the bolus deep into his throat with her breath. There was a gurgling sound as it descended, and a minute later he regained consciousness and to his great joy saw his family gathered around him. It was as if he had awoken from a dream. 92

Here aimaka (probably, seemingly) appears again, along with gese (like, same), which is functionally similar to adali (like, same) that appeared in “A Fox Dream.” As before, through Jakdan’s translation the ambiguity of the entire scene is heightened, and the uncertainty of Kong Xueli’s experiences is stressed – was it really just a dream, or did he actually die?

Things are fairly clear for Bi once he finally wakes up, as he sees a woman standing before him. However Jakdan’s translation does hint that not all is what it seems, suggesting that something is slightly odd about this woman. She is described as being yakûngga mudan, a set

89 This is the second time that Kong Xueli has been saved by a red bolus. For an analysis of the tale, see Huntington, Alien Kind, 255-257.
90 Jakdan, vol 2 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 28A-B.
91 Ha is onomatopoeic, the sound made by breathing on frozen objects.
92 Minford, Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, 85. Sondergard translates this as, “…as if he’d just awakened from a dream,” Strange Tales from Liaozhai: Volume I (Fremont, California: Jain Publishing, 2008), 95; while in Giles the moment is rendered as, “Seeing all the family about him, he was disturbed as if waking from a dream,” Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2010), 48. The translation by Mair & Mair is, “When the red lozenge had been blown into his throat, he began to make a gurgling sound. In a while he came to himself. Seeing all his relatives before him made him realize that he had now awakened from a dream,” Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 36.
phrase that, when taken together, means ‘graceful bearing,’ and is roughly comparable to the Chinese 雅 (ya elegant). However, the word yakūngga on its own has rather different connotations, as it means ‘peculiar,’ ‘bizarre,’ and ‘out of the ordinary.’ The use of this phrase thus suggests not only that the woman is graceful, but also that her grace has a degree of strangeness about it, reflective of the underlying peculiarity of her being.93

Bi’s uncertainty only mounts when he begins to talk to this strange woman. Startled, he asks her who she is, and she reveals that she is a fox (bi oci dobi kai). She then explains to him why she has appeared:

_agu sinde merkime kidubure jakade. mini gūnin ambula hukšehe._94

“Because you were thinking and longing, I felt very appreciative.”

畢驚起，問其誰何。笑曰: “我狐也。蒙君注念，心竊感納。”

Startled, Bi asked who she might be. She smiled and said: “I’m a vixen. Having received the honor of your deepest thoughts, I was secretly moved to accept you.”95

In terms of the narrative of the story, the fox woman is telling the truth. Prior to her arrival, Bi is described as sitting in the upstairs of his uncle’s house:

_ bi i an. cing fung ni ulabun be hūlahā deri. mujilen uthai gunggereme buyeme. […] ede taktu de fuhašame gūninjeme hing seme kidume._

When Bi Yi’an had read aloud from the “Biography of the Blue Phoenix,” his heart had at once been overwhelmed with longing.96 […] Here in the upstairs he carefully reflected on this, sincerely longing for her.97

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93 This is not the only Manchu word that exists for ‘elegant.’ Boksokon, which means graceful or elegant, appears in other stories as a description of beautiful supernatural female characters, and lacks the connotations of strange and bizarre associated with yakūngga mudan.
94 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithej šutucin, 17B.
95 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 212.
96 The translation of 向往 (xiàngwàng, to be attracted to, to admire, to yearn for) as buyembi (longing) is an interesting one. Zeitlin’s translation here suggests that Bi feels a deep appreciation or sympathy for ‘Blue Phoenix,’ however this is not all that is connoted by buyembi. Buyembi appears in other stories as well, but not always as translation for 向往. In “Laughing Girl” (Yīning 嫄寧) for example it is used as a translation for 愛 (ài to love, to be fond of). When the infatuated scholar Wang finally meets a mysterious lady that he has been pining after, he immediately declares that he buyembi her: Wang said, “It is not at all the flowers that I long for. It is not. It is the one who holds the flowers that I long for.” The girl said, “How can [you talk of] dear relatives still longing for each other?” Wang said, “When I speak of my longings, I do not mean ‘dear family’. [I mean] the dearness of husband and wife.” The girl said, “How is that different?” He said, “Merely that at night they share a pillow and a mattress
This is of course a fairly well-established pattern in Strange Tales stories. The fox woman’s proclamation here is very similar, in terms of content and composition, to that of many other supernatural women in Pu’s stories. In “The Bookworm” (Shu chi 書痴),

一起，” (wang šeng hendume bi umai ilha be buyerenge. waka. ilha be jafašara niyalma be buyehengee kai sargan jui hendume. niyaman hűnčinhin i haji buyere be hono. aiserè. wang šeng hendume mini buyembi sehengge. niyaman hűnčinhin haji waka. eigen sargan i haji be kai. sargan jui hendume. encu babio. hendume. dobori cirku sishe de uhelere dabala), Jakdan, vol 4 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 31A. In the original, this reads: “It is not the blossom I love. It’s the person who held it in her hand.” “We’re not even that closely related. How can you talk about loving me?” “I don’t love you as a relation. I love you as a man loves a woman, as a husband loves a wife…” “What difference is there?” “Husband and wife share the same pillow and mat at night. They sleep together,” Minford, Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, 160. The translation by Mair & Mair reads: “I don’t love the flowers; I love the one who is holding the flowers in her fingers.” Between relatives love goes without saying. “What I mean by love is not the love between gourds on the same vine, but the love between husband and wife.” What makes that different? They share a pillow and mat at night, Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 107. (生曰：“我非愛花，愛拈花之人耳。”女曰：“賞花之情，愛何待言。” 生曰：“我所謂愛，非瓜葛之愛，乃夫妻之愛。”女曰：“有以異乎?” 生曰：“夜共枕席耳。”) This humorous scene complicates the connotations of buyembi somewhat. Not only is it not being used for 向往, it is not at all clear that buyembi is indicating platonic appreciation as in Zeitlin’s translation of “A Fox Dream.” On the contrary, as Wang is trying to make his naïve love interest aware that his feelings towards her extend beyond friendship – he would like to share a bed with her – buyembi appears to have immediately physical, even sexual connotations. This is not the only story in which buyembi is used in this way. In the story “The Painted Skin” (Hua pi 畫皮) for instance, the main male character Mr. Wang (王生) catches sight of a young lady, and has a very clear reaction to her physical appearance: “He quickly rushed over to look at her, and when he did he saw that she was a beautiful young lady, sixteen years of age, and his inner thoughts became consumed with extreme desire for her,” (hahilame amcanafi twauci. juwan ninggun se i hojo geje inu gúnin i dolo mujakû buyeme ofi), Jakdan, vol 3 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 16A. The translation by Mair & Mair reads: “Running up behind, he found her to be in the bloom of youthful beauty, and his heart loved and delighted in her,” (急走趁之，乃二八 妹麗。心相愛樂，[…]) Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 59. Buyembi also has other translations. In “Laughing Girl” the ‘love’ (愛) between husband and wife (夫妻之愛) has been rendered as haji, meaning ‘dearness’ or ‘affection’ (eigen sargan i haji), the same word used to describe the affection between family members (niyaman hűnčinhin haji). 爱 and buyembi are not always mutually interchangeable in other tales either. 爱 is also translated as gosimbi (to pity, to have mercy, to cherish) in “Lotus Fragrance (Lian xiang 蓮香),” and hairambi (to regret, to begrudge, to love tenderly) in “Cut Sleeve” (Huang Jiulang 黃九郎), Jakdan, vol 15 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 26B & 57A. Buyembi is also used in “A Fox Dream” as a translation for 喜 (xi, to be fond of), Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 17A. While this is somewhat of a tangential point to the discussion here, it should serve to underscore not only the range of language available to and deployed by Jakdan, but also that equivalency is not a sufficient answer to explain why Jakdan uses the words that he does.

97 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 17A.
98 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 211.
for example, the scholar Lang Yuzhu has an almost identical conversation with a gauze cut-out woman who has suddenly come to life in his studio:99

hocikon gege gaitai dara bukdame ilifi debtelin de tefi ijaršara de lang ioi jo alimbeharakū sesulafi. […] ai enduri seme dorolome fonjici. hocikon gege injeme hendume. fusiňin beye yan halangga. tukiyehe genu zu ioi. agu si aifini sahangge. inenggidari niorome tuwaci tetendere.100

One day, just at the time when he was looking fixedly at [the gauze cut-out], the beautiful lady suddenly bent at the waist and stood, [then] sat on a volume [of a book] and smiled cheerfully at Lang, who was greatly surprised. […] He greeted her with his hands in front of his face101 and asked “what deity are you?” The beautiful lady laughed and said, “My humble self is from the family ‘Yan.’ Everyone calls me Ruyu. Sir, you have known [me] for a long time. Since every day [you] look at me, [you] move me profoundly…

一日，方注目間，美人忽折腰起，坐卷上微笑。郎驚絕，伏拜案下。既起，已盈尺矣。益駭，又叩之。下幾亭亭，宛然絕代之姝。拜問：“何神？”美人笑曰：“妾顏氏，字如玉，君固相知已久。日垂青盼 […]

One day as his eyes were fixed on it the beautiful woman bent forward at the waist, got up and sat smiling on his books. [He was] startled to the utmost […] “Which goddess are you?” Lang asked with a bow. “My surname is Countenance, and I am called Like-Jade,” she said with a smile. “You’ve known about me for a long while, and every day you’ve been kind enough to look my way.102

As with Bi’s woman in “A Fox Dream,” this mysterious woman introduces herself, then mentions that she has noticed the human male’s devotion to her and claims that she has been moved by his sentiments.

Though Bi’s encounter with a supernatural fox woman is commonplace for Strange Tales and the process through which he meets her is fairly typical, in Jakdan’s translation the moment that Bi first sees her is anything but ordinary. Far from clarifying the moment for the reader, Jakdan has only complicated it further by rendering the

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99 Lang finds this image of a beautiful woman between the pages of a book that he is reading.
100 Jakdan, vol 10 of Liyoo jai jy i bihe šutucin, 14B-15A.
101 A number of different words for prostration are used in this section, namely hujumbi (to prostrate oneself, to bow deeply), dorolombi (to salute, to pay one’s respects), and henggilembi (to kowtow, to prostrate oneself).
102 Mair & Mair, Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 417.
moment of her appearance ambiguously, and by emphasizing her strangeness. Things will not, however, become any easier for Bi or any more transparent for the reader as the story progresses, as Bi now finds himself the victim of vixen tricks and games at a banquet held in his honor.

4.2 The Second Dream – The Fox Daughter and the Banquet

While the first dream/non-dream encounter with fox women took place in the comforts of Bi’s uncle’s home, his next nightly visit with a fox woman takes place at a banquet held at the residence of the fox women themselves. This shift in location sets the stage for the most extensive and narratively complex dream/non-dream encounter in “A Fox Dream” in which nothing is quite as it first appears. Though while Bi is being bamboozled with drinking games it seems clear that he is indeed in a dream, once he ‘wakes up’ from his ‘dream’ the dream-ness of his experience is called into question yet again. As the Manchu translation of the fox woman’s pronouncements on the dream-ness of his experiences are deliberately vague, the reader is left once again unsure if Bi was indeed dreaming, or if he really did journey to a banquet of fox women.

However, the banquet is not held by the woman who appeared before Bi in the previous section. Though she did enter with a good degree of fanfare, this vixen was not destined to be Bi’s lover or companion, even though Bi did indicate his interest towards her. A frank and straightforward man, shortly after she appeared in front of him, Bi made his intentions towards her known:103

\[ \text{bi i an donjifì urgunjefì. yobodome efìre gisun i yarkiyaci.} \] 104

103 Later on in the tale Bi is described as being both calm and straightforward (\textit{bi i an yabun elehun sijirhùn}), Jakdan, vol 22 of \textit{Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin}, 23B. 
104 Jakdan, vol 22 of \textit{Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin}, 17B.
Bi Yi’an heard this and rejoiced. When he jokingly said playful words to entice her...

畢聞而喜，投以嘲謔。

Bi was delighted to hear this and made some ribaldries toward her.\(^{105}\)

Bi’s advances here are certainly sexually motivated, indicated through the use of the word *yarkiyambi* (to entice, to lure, to dally with). The fox woman however bluntly refuses him, claiming that she is too old.\(^{106}\) However she does offer him a replacement:

\[\text{emu ajige sargan jui sifikū erin ofi. fungku ijifun alibume eršeci ombi.}\]

“I have one young daughter who is in her “hairpin season,”\(^{108}\) she can take kerchief and comb and attend to you.”

有小女及笄，可侍巾栉。

I have a young daughter of fifteen who can serve as your wife.\(^{109}\)

The implication of her statement is that her daughter is of marriageable age, and Bi readily agrees to this proposal. The women come back soon, and both Bi and the reader get a glimpse of his new wife:

\[\text{dobori de isinafi. hiyan dabufi tehei aliyame. hehe yala sargan jui gaifi isinjeme tuwaci. arbus giru nemgiyen nesuken gubci jalan de juru akū.}\]

Night came. He lit incense, sat, and waited. The woman really did bring her daughter, and when he looked at the girl, he saw that her appearance was gentle and mild – there was no one like her in the entire world.

至夜，焚香坐伺。婦果攜女至。態度嫻婉，曠世無匹。

When the next night fell, he burned incense and sat up waiting. As she had promised, the woman led in her daughter whose manner was refined and winning, without equal in the whole world.\(^{111}\)

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\(^{105}\) Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 212.

\(^{106}\) The fox woman laughs and says, “My humble self is already old. Even if people did not loathe me, I would be ashamed and embarrassed of myself first” (hehe injemeyendume. fushiin beye se baru oho. niyalma udu hatarakū okiini. beye neneme yerette girumbi), Jakdan, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 17B-18A. In Zeitlin’s translation, this is: “I’m afraid I’m a little too old for you. Even if you don’t despise me, I’d be ashamed myself,” *Historian of the Strange*, 212.

\(^{107}\) Jakdan, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 18A.

\(^{108}\) The implication of the girl being in her hairpin season (*sifikū erin*) is that she has turned fifteen and thus ready for marriage.

\(^{109}\) Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 212.

\(^{110}\) Jakdan, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 18A.

\(^{111}\) Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 212.
It is this new other-worldly girl who thus becomes Bi’s wife, for shortly after meeting they consummate their relationship. The fox girl then leaves, but she does return a few days later to let him know that she will return to get him later, to bring him to a banquet that her sisters are holding in order to celebrate their happiness.

Like the previous encounter with fox women, the fox girl comes to bring Bi to the banquet, just as he is on the verge of falling asleep:

*bi i an yala aliyaci. kejine gooidafi isinjirakū ofi. beye ulhiyen i cukume šadafi.*

Bi Yi’an truly waited, yet after he had endured waiting for a long time [she] had not arrived. His body gradually became tired and weary. Not until he had leaned on a surface and when he went to lie down did the daughter suddenly enter, saying…

In addition to emphasizing Bi’s weariness, Jakdan’s translation draws a strong link between Bi’s sleepy state and the appearance of the fox daughter, using language with an implied sense of conditionality that implies that this is another dream/non-dream scene. In the original Chinese this is achieved through the use of the word ‘cai only then), which is similar to the Manchu *teni* (’then and only then’ or ‘not until’). However, Jakdan’s translation reinforces this connection, as the word lying down (*dedumbi*) is presented in its conditional form (*dedu-CI*).

This creates an even stronger sense of causality between the fox woman and Bi’s sleeping state, implying that not until he lies down will she materialize: *only when* Bi leans down and *only when* he lies down will the fox daughter appear.

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112 Jakdan, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 18B-19A.
This double-conditionality appears in other dreams as well. The climax of “Becoming an Immortal” (Chengxian 成仙) is a major dream/non-dream scene in which the main character Zhou kills his wife, wakes up from his ‘dream’, then discovers that his wife has in fact been murdered in the very same way as he had ‘dreamed’ it.\(^\text{114}\) This sequence is set off, just as in “A Fox Dream,” with emphasized conditionality, as one day Zhou has his rest interrupted by his friend Cheng:

\[teni\ yasa\ nicuhe\ bici.\ ceng\ šeng\ hūlame\ aciha\ fulmiyen\ emgeri\ jabduha.\]

Just as he closed his eyes, then he heard Cheng call out to him, [saying] that his things had been moved,\(^\text{116}\) [and] they were already ready [to go].

甫交睫，聞成呼曰：“行裳已具矣。”

Just as he’d shut his eyes, Zhou heard Cheng call to him, “Go get dressed, we’re all ready.”\(^\text{117}\)

Here, as before, there is a double conditional in teni and bi-CI. In both “A Fox Dream” and “Becoming an Immortal,” this conditionality creates a link between the character’s sleep and the

\(^{114}\) The finer plot details of this tale are too long to recount in their entirety here. Briefly, Cheng decides to be a Daoist hermit and withdraws from the world around him. Zhou on the other hand is thrown into prison, and when he is released Cheng comes to visit him and tries to convince him to withdraw from the world as well. Zhou initially refuses, but after three surreal dream-like experiences finally accedes to Cheng’s request and retreats with him. This particular dream-scene is the third and final one. In it Zhou chops his wife’s head off, the description of which has been called violently misogynistic and befitting of Shuihu zhuans. In Jakdan’s translation, this scene reads: “Zhou brought a double-edged sword he had borrowed [from Cheng], her head he chopped off, [her] intestines he hung from the tree[s] in the courtyard,” (jeo šeng dabcičū be juwen gajifi. teře iju be sacifi duha be hūwa i moo de lakiyafi), Jakdan, vol 2 of Liyoo jai jy i bithej šutucin, 43A. Giles translates this as: “Thereupon Zhou borrowed Cheng’s sword and cut off her head, hanging up the trunk on a tree in the courtyard,” (遇借劍決其首，胃肠庭樹間。), *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, 57. For a description of this story, see Paolo Santangelo, *Sentimental Education in Chinese History: An Interdisciplinary Textual Research on Ming and Qing Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 129.

\(^{115}\) Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithej šutucin, 41A.

\(^{116}\) In Manchu translation this is an ambiguous phrase. Cheng informs Zhou that his bundles or packages (fulmiyen) have been moved slightly (acimbi), and they were already (emgeri) completed (jabdumbi). The implications of this are that they are now ready to depart and embark upon their trip. This is not, however, a literal translation of the Chinese here, which uses the compound 行裳, meaning the “clothes one takes along when going on a trip.” My thanks to Dr. Swatek for alerting me to this difference.

\(^{117}\) Sondergard, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai: Volume I*, 133. In Giles this moment is rendered as: “Chou had barely closed his eyelids before he heard Ch’eng call out, ‘Everything is ready for starting,’” *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, 57.
events that follow, indicating to the reader that these events may not be as real as they might first appear, and are indeed dreams.

The idea that the banquet that Bi Yi’an attends in “A Fox Dream” might be a dream returns in full force once he finally arrives, for when he drinks with the fox women, the reality of his experiences is continually under question. All four of the sisters play tricks on him, tricks that involve alcohol and some form of perception deception. After a drinking game involving the youngest sister and a cat, the elder sister takes her turn:118

\[\text{eyungge eyun. bi i an omire mangga be sabufi. uhai šošokū gaifī nure tebufi hacihiyambi. šošokū be tuwaci. arkan moro hiyase i nure baktambure dabala. tuttu seme omici. udu hiyasei labdu be serehe. sukiyame wajifī tuwaci šu ilhai abdaša inu.}^{119}\]

The elder sister saw that Bi Yi’an was skilled at drinking. Thus she took off her hair net and poured wine in it, and forced it on him. When he looked at the hairnet, it looked like it could just barely hold a quart box of wine. Then when he drank it, it was revealed that it contained several box-fulls of wine. He drained it completely and when he looked at it, he saw that it was really a lotus leaf.

大姊見畢善飲，乃摘髻子，貯酒以勸，視髻，僅容升許。然飲之，覺有數斗之多，比千視之則荷蓋也。

Seeing that Bi was a good drinker, the Eldest Lady took off her hairbun cover, which she filled with wine and offered to him. It looked as though the cover could hold only a pint, but when he drank it seemed as much as several gallons. When it was empty, he examined it and discovered it was really a lotus leaf.120

The second sister follows with a trick of her own:

\[\text{er niyang muhaliyan i gese amba emu fiyen tebure hoseri tucibufi. darabume hendume. nurei hūsun de eterakū be dahame taka gūnin be tuwabuki. bi i an tuwaci. emgeri ukiyeci. wacihiyaci ombi seme. alime gaifī tanggū angga nukiyeye bime. umai wacihiyara erin akū.}^{121}\]

118 The youngest fox sister arrived at the banquet with the cat in her arms. The drinking game that they play involves passing a chopstick from person to person while they wait for the cat to meow. The person left holding the chopstick when the cat meows has to drink. The game is not entirely fair however, as the youngest sister nudges the cat to make it meow every time the chopstick reaches Bi. Bi eventually catches on, though only after he has had a considerable amount to drink, and everyone around the table laughs uproariously. Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 21A.

119 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 21B.

120 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 214

121 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 22A-B.
The second sister took out a box, as big and round as a pellet, and filled it [with wine]. She invited him to drink, saying: “Because you cannot overcome the strength of the wine, for the time being [I want you to] indulge me.” When Bi Yi’an looked at it, it looked as if one slurp would finish it. He accepted it and took it away, [but] after 100 mouthfuls, he was only agitated. It was not at all finished.

二娘出一口脂合子大於彈丸, 酌曰: “既不勝酒, 聊以示意。” 畢視之, 一吸可盡, 接吸百口, 更無干時。

The Second Lady then produced a rouge box a little larger than a pellet into which she poured out the wine and toasted him: “Since you can drink no more, just have this one for sentiment’s sake.” It looked to Bi as though it could be drained in one sip, but he took a hundred sips, and it was still never empty.

Seated next to him, Bi’s wife takes the box and places it on the table, where its actual form is revealed:

_{hoseri be deretu de sindaci emu amba badiri inu.}^{124}

When she put the box on the long table, it was really a vast monk’s alms bowl.

置合案上，則一巨缽。

She placed the box on the table and it turned out to be a huge basin.

There is however one final trick in store for Bi, as he is handed yet another cup that he quickly drinks:

_{ilihai wacihiyaha. sefereci nilgiyan uhukken cincilaci coman waka. dule emu ceri fomoci inu. miyamime yangselahangge umesi faksi [...]}^{125}

He finished it immediately. When he grasped the satiny, soft [cup], and when he looked at it carefully, [he saw that] it was not a cup. Actually, it was a gauze sock. It had been decorated and embellished with a high degree of skill.

把之賦軟，審之非杯，乃置襪鉤，襪飾工絕。

Bi took the cup and instantly emptied it into his mouth. In his grasp it felt silky and soft. He looked again, and it was no glass but a silk slipper padded and decorated with marvelous skill.

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122 Literally _gūnin be tuwabuki_ can be translated as ‘I want you to follow/observe my intentions,’ in the sense of ‘follow my lead.’
123 Zeitlin, _Historian of the Strange_, 214.
124 Jakdan, vol 22 of _Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin_, 22B.
125 Zeitlin, _Historian of the Strange_, 214.
126 Jakdan, vol 22 of _Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin_, 22B.
127 Zeitlin, _Historian of the Strange_, 214.
In all of these Alice in Wonderland-esque tricks that the fox women play on Bi, not only is his fondness for wine exploited for the amusement of the sisters, more importantly his faulty tuwambi (sight) or his 看 (shi, to see, to look at) is constantly being deceived.\(^\text{128}\) He may look (tuwaci, 看) at the hairnet and think that it is a tiny vessel, but later it is revealed or perceived (serembi, 看) to contain much more. Similarly, he looks at the box (tuwaci, 看) and thinks that he can finish it in one gulp, even though he appears to be distressed (nukiyene, to be stirred up, to be agitated) by the fact that he cannot empty it; not until his wife takes hold of it can he tell that in fact it is a very large bowl. This pattern of first not seeing and then really seeing is present in the Chinese original. For example, when Bi is given the satiny, soft ‘bowl’, he is finally able to go beyond simply seeing (tuwaci, shi 看) and instead scrutinizes it (cinclambi and 审 [shen, to look at carefully, to scrutinize]). However, while the word 看 (shi, to see, to look at) is often repeated in both the un-seeing first glance and the truthful revelation in the Chinese original, by changing the word used to describe Bi’s form of ‘seeing’, Jakdan makes a clear feature out of the pattern, emphasizing the importance of looking closer, and in so doing, drawing attention to the fact that the banquet of the sisters may not be all that it appears to be.

Although while Bi is drinking and being tricked by the fox women his experiences do seem to be extremely dream-like, the divide between dream and reality is again called into question once he leaves the table and ‘wakes up.’ After consuming a substantial amount of wine, Bi finally staggers up from the banquet table to leave, but then abruptly:

\emph{sek seme getefi.}\(^\text{129}\)

Suddenly he awoke.

\(^{128}\) Zeitlin described these tricks as “Alice-in-Wonderland distortions in volume, distance, weight, and texture,” \emph{Historian of the Strange}, 177. Similarly, Barr compared it to \emph{Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There}, quipping, “which will doubtless remind the reader of Alice Through the Looking-Glass, and what she saw there,” “Pu Songling and Liaozi zhiyi,” 44.

\(^{129}\) Jakdan, vol 22 of \emph{Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin}, 22B-23A.
Suddenly, he awoke.\(^{130}\)

As before it is not the abruptness of this moment that is unusual, for “A Fox Dream” is not the only story in which characters move abruptly from dream to waking state. This transition is regularly abrupt and jarring in *Strange Tales* stories, typically marked by words such as ‘suddenly’ or ‘abruptly’, just as Bi is woken up here. In “Princess Lotus” (*Lianhua gongzhu* 莲花公主), for example, Dou finds himself brought out of his dream about a fantastical kingdom and beautiful princess rather quickly:

\[
\text{uthai boo de isinjiha. holkonde sek seme getefi tuwaci}.\(^{131}\)
\]

Thus he arrived home. Suddenly with a start he woke up, and when he looked he saw…

忽然醒寤,则返照已残。

And then suddenly he awoke, to find that the sun had almost set.\(^{132}\)

The very same happens at the conclusion of “Sequel to Yellow Millet Dream,” as the scholar Zeng is brought sharply out of his nightmarish dream, in which he has been reborn as an impoverished girl about to be wrongly killed for a crime:

\[
dz \text{ši hafan ciralame beidefi fuhali nimecuke erun i baita be toktobufi. fitarame wa sehe fafun i bithei songgoi wele tuhebufi huthufi wara bade gamaha. tungen i dolo muribuha bi jalu sibufi sui mangga seme fekuceme songgorongge. uyun butu juwan jakūn. gindana de enteke farhūn dashun akū seme. jing akame sureme bisire de emgi sarašara urse hūlame. ahūn si tołgin de gidabuhao sehe be donjifi. sek seme getehe}.\(^{133}\)
\]

The viscount judged the case strictly, and unexpectedly settled the matter with excruciating torture. Her sentence for her crime was declared to be death by cutting to pieces. She collapsed, and was tied up and brought to the place where her execution would be carried out. The inside of her chest twisted, she was filled with injustice, she jumped and cried. There was not even this sort of darkness in the nine underworlds and the eighteen prisons! Just when [she] was grieving,
there came the shouts of the people [he] was travelling with: “Elder brother, are you being crushed by your dream?” they asked. With a start he woke up…

刺史嚴鞫，竟以酷刑誣服，依律凌遲處死。拏赴刑所，胸中冤氣扼塞，距踊聲屈，覺九幽十八獄，無此黙黯也。正悲號間，聞遊者呼曰：“兄夢魇耶？”豁然而寤 […]
The magistrate subjected her to severe interrogation and finally used torture to establish her guilt. The sentence prescribed by law was death by dismemberment. She was bound and taken to the execution ground. Outrage at this injustice swelled within her chest till she could no longer contain it. She stamped frenziedly and screamed that she had been wronged. There could be no darkness worse than this, she thought, not even in the nine dungeons and eighteen levels of hell. In the midst of her wailing the voices of Zeng’s fellow sightseers were heard calling: “Are you having a nightmare, brother?” Zeng came back to himself with a start…”

In these three stories, instead of blurring the moment of awakening or rendering it obliquely, the translation conveys the abruptness of the character’s awakening (getembi to awaken) using words that emphasize both speed and shock: hokonde (suddenly, in an instant) and sek seme (suddenly, with a start).

While the suddenness of Bi’s awakening is not particularly striking, what happens after he resumes consciousness is. Immediately after waking up, Bi assesses his situation and evaluates his experience. In the original, it seems fairly clear what he thinks has happened:

竟是梦境，而鼻口醺醺，酒气犹浓，异之。

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134 Mair & Mair, Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 207.
135 Gaitai (suddenly) is also often used to set off a moment of awakening. In “ Becoming an Immortal” for example the main character Zhou wakes up from a dream involving his Daoist friend Cheng very abruptly: “Then they slept with their legs and feet together. Later, in a dream, Ceng’s body was naked, crouching on his [Zhou’s] chest. He [Zhou] could not breathe. When he asked, “What are you doing?” in astonishment, he did not see him respond at all in his dream and suddenly he woke up in alarm,” (amala beheleme angaha manggi. tolgin de Ceng šeng beye nimushuleme tuggen de huijfi. ergen gaime materekā. aïnambi seme ferguweme fomjici. umaj jaburakā seme bitubuhu gaitai gwiwachiyalahai getefi), Jakdan, vol 2 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 37B-38A. Later on in the story when Zhou is talking to his brother about the death of his wife, he also ‘wakes up’ abruptly: “When he saw his elder brother tears poured out of his eyes and he said, “Elder brother, after you left, robbers [in the] night killed ‘aunt’ [Zhou’s wife], they cut open her intestines and left, these are evil people who do bad things, regrettably up until now the officers have not yet been able to catch or take them away” just then, it was like Zhou had woken up from a dream,” (ahũn be sabuũ yasai muke sar seme tuheũfi hendume ahũn si genehe amala hũlha dobori aša be wafi duha be ūnwalafi genehe ehe kokirakā ohongge nasacuka tetele hafan jafabu secibe bahara unde sere jakade jëo šeng teni tolgin getehe gese), Jakdan, vol 2 of Liyoo jai jy i bithe šutucin, 44B-45A.
In the end, it had been a dream. And yet, he was still intoxicated, and the smell of wine was still strong. He thought this extraordinary.\footnote{Zeitlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 214.}

Here, the reader seems to be offered a firm conclusion: it was a dream (竟是梦景). In Jakdan’s translation however, the state of things seems less definite:

\begin{quote}
\textit{fuhali tolgin i arbun bicibe oforo angga wenjemeliyan. nurei wa kemuni sur sere jakade. ferguwehe.}\footnote{Jakdan, vol 22 of \textit{Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin}, 22B-23A.}

It was as if the shape of the dream was there, and his nose and mouth were tipsy. The smell of wine was still there. [He was] astonished.
\end{quote}

A sense of wonder and disbelief pervades this section, evoked not only by the use of the word \textit{ferguwehe} (to be astonished, to wonder at), but also \textit{fuhali}. Although the primary meaning of \textit{fuhali} is ‘as if…’, it can also mean ‘unexpectedly, surprisingly.’ Along with this sense of wonderment, Jakdan’s translation is inconclusive as to the real-ness of what he experienced, for the translation only mentions that the \textit{shape} of a dream (\textit{tolgin i arbun}) remains.

The inconclusiveness in this moment in should be understood as deliberate, for pronouncements on dreams in other tales have been rendered with far more finality. In “Princess Lotus,” for example, the distinction between dream and reality is made blatantly clear. In this tale Dou’s dreams have taken him to a great palace, where he meets and marries a beautiful princess:

\begin{quote}
\textit{baji ome tuwaci. ududu juwan gurung ni sargan juse gungju be eršeme tuwaci. fulgiyan junggin i uju be elbefi giogiyan bethe elhei oksome. fulgiyan nunggasun de wahiyame wesifi. deo šeng ni emgi sasa doroloho. dorolon šanggafi tatara gurung de fådeme bederefi. holboro boo i halukan gingge.}\footnote{Jakdan, vol 22 of \textit{Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin}, 40B.}

In a short while, when he looked he saw: about ten palace girls waiting on the princess. When he looked [at her] he saw: her head was covered with red brocade, her delicate feet took slow and easy steps, [as she walked], supported, up the red wool [carpet]. Together, with Deo Šeng, they performed the rites. When the rites were finished, they were pulled from the palace and accompanied out. The marriage home was warm and clean…
\end{quote}
Following the prompt establishment of their union, Dou remarks:

\[ \text{deo ŭeng hendume. gege yasai juleri bici. yala nyalma de sebjelëfi buedere be onggobumbi danu inenggi i ucarahangge. kemuni tolgin oyoro ayoo. gungju angga dasifì hendume. iletusaka fusihûn beye. agu i emgi bikai. ainu tolgin sembifi sehe.} \]

Deo Ŭeng said, “When the princess is in front of my eyes, truly, this person is so glad that [I] forget that [one] day I will meet death. Yet I fear that the dream is more than half finished.” The princess covered her mouth and said, “Clearly my humble self and sir are together! How can you say it is a dream?”

“Having you by my side, my dearest,” he said to the Princess, “brings me such joy that I could forget death itself. My only fear is that today’s meeting will turn out to be no more than a dream.” “But here we are together, you and I!” replied the Princess, holding her hand to her mouth to stifle a little laugh. “It is clear as anything. How could it be a dream?”

Here, Dou clearly demonstrates his awareness that what he is experiencing is indeed a dream, and that the dream (tolgin) is almost over (oyombi to be more than half finished). Later, when he has returned from the palace, his reflections also indicate his awareness that his experiences are dreams.

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139 Minford, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, 352. Mair & Mair have: “Soon several dozen palace maids emerged cluttered around the princess, who wore on her head a bridal veil of red brocade. She walked forward with steps delicate enough to skim over waves and was led onto a felt rug. There she performed, with the scholar, the mutual kowtow by which the wedding ceremony was completed. Then they were escorted to their residence. In the comfortable warmth of the nuptial chamber, he was treated to all the rich fragrance that human senses can absorb,” *Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio*, 287.

140 Jakdah, vol 22 of *Liyoo jai jy i bitheï šatucin*, 41A.

141 Mair & Mair, *Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio*, 352.

142 This is not something that is conveyed to such an extent in English language translations of this section. Minford translates this as: “Having you by my side, my dearest,” he said to the Princess, “brings me such joy that I could
yamji bihe ti boo de dengjan be mukiye bufi. da tolgin be dasame bitubuci ombi seme erere gojime. han dan i jugiin buru bara ofi. aiyame sejilere de wajihabi. 144

In the evening [he] extinguished the lamp in his study. He hoped that he could once again see the place of his dreams again in his dreams, but the road of Handan 145 was hazy. Regrettably, he sighed and gave up. 146

晚齋滅燭，冀舊夢可以復尋，而邯鄲路渺，悔嘆而已。
Later that night he blew out the candles in his studio, hoping to find his way back to the same dream, but the road was lost in a haze. All he could do was heave a sigh of regret. 147

Once again, Jakdan’s translation of Dou’s experiences makes it explicitly clear that Dou is dreaming, and indeed aware that he has been dreaming. Not only is Dou described as wanting to go back to his dream place (da place, tolgin dream), it is a place that he saw in a dream (bitubumbi). In the Manchu at least, it is made markedly clear that Dou’s experiences are dreams.

However, in “A Fox Dream” not only is the fuzziness of Bi’s dream-shape (tolgin i arbun) stressed once Bi ‘wakes up,’ it is also reinforced when fox girl comes to visit the next day:

forget death itself. My only fear is that today’s meeting will turn out to be no more than a dream.” “But here we are together, you and I!” replied the Princess, holding her hand to her mouth to stifle a little laugh. “It is clear as anything. How could it be a dream?” Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, 352. Likewise, Sondergard has opted for: “As I look at you,” said Dou, “truly I am the happiest of men, and even death holds no worries for me. But now that today has arrived, I’m afraid that it’ll prove to be nothing more than a dream.” The princess shyly covered her mouth with her hand, and said, “I’m obviously here with you, so how can it be just a dream?” Strange Tales from Liao zhai: Volume 3, 95. Mair & Mair have translated this as: “Having you before my eyes is such a joy that I can forget death,” he said to his bride. “But I fear that what happened today is only a dream.” “Here we are, you and I, clear as day. How could it be a dream?” asked the princess, covering her mouth to hold back a laugh,” Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 287.

143 This is not the only time that Dou mentions dreams when he is with the princess. The morning after their marriage, Dou begins to measure her feet. The princess asks: “Has sir lost his mind?” He said, “I have often been greatly deceived by dreams, so I am carefully noting down everything. Even if this is a dream, I can still think about it” (agu belcidembio. hendume. amba bi kemun tolin de habilabu bihe. tuttu narah śame ejembi. aika tolgin ohode inu cik seme güninjara be.). Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyou jai jy bi bithe šutucin, 41A.

144 Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyou jai jy i bithe šutucin, 40A.

145 This is a reference to the story “The Tale of Handan” (Handan ji 邯郸记). Based on a Tang story, the “Tale of Handan” follows the story of scholar Lu who, while on the road to Handan, meets a Daoist and has a nap on the Daoist’s pillow. He then believes he wakes up, and goes off to have a wildly successful and extravagant life – only to wake up and find that the millet, which the innkeeper was cooking before he fell asleep, was still not ready. For a summary of this story, see Chun Mei, The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early modern China (Leiden: Brill, 146 Buru bara means dim, unclear, hazy, or hidden.

147 Mair & Mair, Strange Tales From Make-Do Studio, 287. Minford’s translation is: “After his evening meal he put out his candle, hoping to revisit the Cassia Palace once more. But it was beyond recall, and he heaved a sigh of bitter disappointment, Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, 350.
The fox girls’ assurances in the Manchu here can hardly be judged as conclusive. Notably, she does not say that it was not a dream (tolgin waka kai); she says that it was not a real dream (yargiyan i tolgin waka kai). This is not, however, the tenor of the original, in which the fox girl’s statements may be judged as far more definite:


That evening the fox-maiden came to him and asked: “So you didn’t die of drunkenness last night?” “I had suspected it was a dream,” said Bi. The girl smiled. “My sisters appeared to you in dream because they feared you were a wild carouser. Actually, it was no dream.”

In the original text what follows the banquet scene is clear: Bi thinks that it was a dream, and then the fox girl tells him that it wasn’t. Although these two statements are contradictory, they are at least conclusive, and thus work towards clarifying the tale into a distinct dream/non-dream binary. In the Manchu, however, both of these statements have been changed somewhat – now Bi is unsure as to whether or not it was a dream, and the fox girl is only sure that it wasn’t a real dream. Though Jakdan could have, as he did in other stories, chosen to adhere to the tone of the original and pass clear judgements on the realness of the puzzling banquet scene, the Manchu translation refrains from doing so, and in fact will continue doing so up until the end of the story itself.

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148 Jakdan, Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 23B.
149 Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 214.
4.3 The Final Meeting

The uncertainty about the real-ness or dream-ness of Bi’s experiences continues right up until the end of the story, with the story remaining unresolved even as Bi’s fox wife is declaring to him that she will leave him for good. Although this final encounter between mortal male and fox woman is not strictly speaking a dream sequence – it does not even take place at night – this meeting is still pertinent to the discussion thus far. Not only is this the last time that Bi meets the fox woman, but even at this crucial juncture of the story Jakdan seems to be working to complicate the tale, leaving out a line of the original and rendering key phrases obliquely.

Despite Bi’s passion for fox women, by the end of the tale his relationship with his fox wife has cooled somewhat, and she comes far more infrequently. One day however she does visit him:

__emu aniya funche manggi. emu yamji jifi. munahűn i ishunde bakcilame tehe
gojime. ini baru tonio sindeci. sindaraku. ini baru deduci. deduraku. menekesaka
kejine guidafi […]__

After more than a year, she came one evening. She was displeased with him, though she did sit opposite him. When he asked her to play _go_ she would not play, and when he made to lie down with her, she would not lie down. She sat dejectedly for a long while…

積年餘，一夕來，兀坐相向。與之弈，不弈；與之寢，不寢。悵然良久 […]

Several years went by. One night she came, and they sat on a bench facing each other. He wanted to play chess with her, but she wouldn’t play; he wanted to lie with her, but she wouldn’t lie down. She sat dispiritedly for quite some time…

When she finally does begin to speak, she asks Bi to have a short biography written about her. Bi is surprised at this, for she had previously demanded that he hide their relationship, but she explains her change of heart by saying:

__sargan jui hendume. onggolo uttu hendumbihe. te fackaki seci tetendere. geli ai
daldere babi…__

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150 Jakdan, vol 22 of _Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin_, 24A.
151 Zeitlin, _Historian of the Strange_, 215.
152 Jakdan, vol 22 of _Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin_, 24B.
The girl said, “Before I did say this. Now, seeing as I want to part from you, why would I still hide this [relationship] from view?”

女曰：“向為是囑，今已將別，復何諱？”
“In the past I did instruct you to remain quiet. But now that we’re going to part, why should I still inhibit you?”\textsuperscript{153}

Bi replies to her sudden declaration with surprise, asking:

\textit{aibide genembi seme fonjici. hendume fisihūn beye duini non. si wang mu de hūin niyoo ši obu seme gemabuha. dahume bahafī jiderakū sehe… bi i an gisun buki seme baire de […]}

“Where are you going?” he asked. [She] said, “Xi Wang Mu has made my humble self and my fourth younger sister “hūin niyoo” scholars, told to manage [another place]. In the future, I won’t be able to [come] again.” Bi Yi’an asked her to give him some words [of advice]…\textsuperscript{154}

問“何往?” 曰:“妾與四妹妹為西王母徵作花鳥使, 不復得來矣。曩有姊行, 與君家叔兄, 臨別已產二女, 今尚未醮; 妾與君幸無所累。”

“Where are you going?” he asked. “My little sister and I have been sought by the Queen Mother of the West to fill the office of ‘flower and bird emissary.’ I won’t be able to come to you anymore. There was once someone in my older sister’s generation who had an affair with your cousin. Before she left, she had borne him two daughters; today they are still unbetrothed. You and I are fortunate to have no such entanglements.”\textsuperscript{155}

Interestingly, an entire section of the fox woman’s words, where she comments on her sister’s affair with Bi’s cousin, is conspicuously missing. This detail does not appear elsewhere in the passage, nor is it a part of any other sentence. Indeed, in the Manchu translation the fox woman’s statement about not being able to come again is marked with a double-dot punctuation sign, a clear and final stop. As these lines do appear in the edition of \textit{Strange Tales} that Jakdan was using, it is unclear whether Jakdan mistakenly overlooked them, or whether he omitted them deliberately.

The idea that the omission is a mere mistake does however seem somewhat untenable. As should be clear from the discussion thus far, not only has a great level of care been taken with the

\textsuperscript{153} Zeitlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 215.
\textsuperscript{154} Jakdan, vol 22 of \textit{Liyoo jai jy i bihei šatucin}, 24B-25A.
\textsuperscript{155} Zeitlin, \textit{Historian of the Strange}, 215.
Manchu translation generally, it also tends to correspond to the Chinese original and proceeds in many places phrase by phrase. As discussed in section three, *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin* was also a printed text – a relatively rare form for Manchu translations to appear in – and had a number of editors. Though the translation is not without its mistakes, it is clear that a great deal of time and effort was expended on its creation, belying any suggestion that phrases might be omitted haphazardly.\(^{156}\)

Since the absence of these lines does therefore appear to be deliberate, the reason for their omission needs to be examined. Could it be, for example, that the lines were omitted because the suggestion that a human male and a fox woman could have children together was an unsavory one? On the surface at least, this does not appear to have been a distasteful subject at all, for many stories in *Strange Tales* mention the interbreeding of foxes and humans and some of these have been translated into Manchu. “Jiaona” for example, involves intermarriage and the birth of a fox-human child, something that the child’s aunt teasingly comments upon:

\[
\textit{eyun si. meni duwali}^{157} \textit{be kūthūhabi sehe.}^{158}
\]

“Elder sister, you have mixed up our [two] species!”

“姊姊亂吾種矣。”

“You have mingled our two species, cousin!”\(^{159}\)

It also seems unlikely that the detail about the fox woman’s sister was omitted for fear that it would implicate Bi and the fox woman in a quasi-incestuous relationship. This topic is also alluded to in other Pu Songling stories, most notably “Lotus Fragrance” (*Lian xiang* 蓮香), a tale

\(^{156}\) The most glaring errors that I have found appear to be printing errors, as they have to do with the order that pages appear in. In volume 5 the story “Lotus Fragrance,” for example, pages 27A-B appear directly after 25B, while 26A-B appear after 30A. This story is also missing its very first page.

\(^{157}\) This is a rather loose translation. *Duwali* means category, type, or kind.

\(^{158}\) *Jakdan*, vol 2 of *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin*, 25B.

\(^{159}\) *Minford, Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, 84.
which Jakdan has also translated in its entirety.\footnote{This tale appears in vol 5 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin. In this story a young scholar engages in a polygamous relationship with a fox woman and a ghost. For a discussion of the tale, see Huntington, Alien Kind, 261-64.} If this detail has not been omitted from “A Fox Dream” due to its unsavoriness on either one of these accounts, it is worth entertaining the notion that the lines have been omitted in order to evoke a certain reading of the tale, one contrary to that created by the original. For instance, the original story at this particular moment has a clear sense of finality about it. Not only has the fox woman declared that she is leaving, but her departure is also definite and absolute. This resonates with the tone of her final line in this section of the story, just before she disappears:

```plaintext
至里許, 瀦涕分手, 曰: “役此有志, 未必無會期也。” 乃去。
After nearly a mile, she let go of his hand and wept. “If both of us have the intent, perhaps we’ll meet again.” And with that, she departed.\footnote{Zeitlin, Historian of the Strange, 215.}
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Although the fox woman is weeping “perhaps we’ll meet again,” this is hardly a strong indicator that she does actually want to see Bi again. In any case, as she has shares no children with him, there does not seem to be any real reason for the two to reunite again, a point that she herself stresses.

Jakdan’s translation, however, ends on a slightly different note:

```plaintext
emu ba isimeliyan. yasai muke sar seme tuhebufi gala fakcaffi hendume. ishunde gūnin bici. ainahai acara inenggi akū ni sefī uthai genehe.\footnote{Jakdan, vol 22 of Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutucin, 25A.} After about a mile, tears poured out from [her] eyes and she dropped his hand and parted from him, saying, “If we have feelings for one another, how can it be that one day we won’t meet again?” and thus she left.
```

Unlike the Chinese, the fox woman’s words in Manchu are much more hopeful with regards to the prospects of them reuniting. Not only is the fox woman not stressing that there is no reason for them to meet again, her words are also phrased in the form of a question, through the use of the word ainahai (how…?) and ni (a question mark). With this, then, the idea that the two will
meet again is presented as a rhetorical happenstance: of course they will meet again. Here, as before, Jakdan’s translation skillfully avoids any sense of closure, leaving the story conspicuously unresolved.

Though the unresolved quality about the story at its culmination may not make for the most satisfying of endings for its reader, it does accord with the general sense of unresolvedness that permeates the rest of the translation. Once Bi first entered the house known to be frequented by fox spirits, exactly what is happening to him has remained unclear. From the first arrival of a fox woman in a dream/non-dream in the first section, to confusing banquets and hesitant proclamations about ‘dreams’ not being real dreams in the second, the one consistency throughout the tale is its constant ambiguity. The omission of several key lines and another ambiguous statement highlighted in this third section is therefore in keeping with the rest of Jakdan’s translation.

However, the actual magnitude of these alterations that Jakdan has made to the text should not be overstated, for the narrative of the story does remain largely unchanged. Jakdan has not made any alterations to the general structure of the tale, and it does progress as in the original: Bi still meets fox women, drinks well beyond the point of inebriation, and is eventually abandoned by his wife. Once translated into Manchu, Bi does not do anything that his Chinese counterpart does not and the majority of changes that Jakdan has made to the tale are, technically speaking, rather small. Most occur at the level of a single sentence at a single moment in Bi’s experiences; an additional word here, a phrase omitted there. Given this, were Jakdan’s translation judged by the yardstick of literalness and fidelity so often wielded by Manjurists as introduced in the introduction of this paper, the text would probably rank fairly well.
Yet taken as a whole, the effect that Jakdan’s alterations have on the story and how it is read by the reader is both considerable and deliberate. If we look beyond each individual case and each single sentence, it becomes apparent that the overall tone of the story is being skillfully manipulated. Crucially, the very crux of the tale – is it or is it not a dream? – has been upended. That the lines between dream and reality are continually blurred in Jakdan’s translation of “A Fox Dream,” even in instances where the Chinese original contains a definitive verdict, gives the translation a sense of openness. Nothing is definite, nothing is set, and all possibilities remain – meaning that Jakdan’s translation is simultaneously not not a dream, and not not not a non-dream.

This alternation is not only striking in terms of how this one story can be read, but even more so when considered in the context of the literary scene of the late imperial period. As outlined in section two of this paper, the question ‘is it or is it not a dream?’ was not an inconsequential one. The general suspicion surrounding the supernatural, which peaked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, led to the strange becoming a rather low category of a disreputable nature. Seeing as ambiguous dream/non-dreams involving fox women certainly qualified as odd, commentators sought to clearly demarcate dream/non-dream spaces in stories like “A Fox Dream.” This is not, however, the strategy chosen by Jakdan, who seems largely unconcerned with the blurred boundaries between dream and non-dream. In this sense not only is Jakdan’s translation of “A Fox Dream” different from the original in the sense of fidelity and accuracy, but it also stands out from contemporaneous interpretations. In this way, Jakdan’s not not not a dream/non-dream may be judged as both exceptional, and uniquely his own.
Exactly why Jakdan has chosen to opt for this interpretation of “A Fox Dream” is unclear, but it does seem to be deliberate. As examples from other stories offered throughout the three sections of part four indicate, not all dream tales in *Liyo jai jy i bithei šutucin* contain such ambiguous language and no other tales have omitted phrases. Choosing to blur the lines between dream and reality is thus not a choice that Jakdan has chosen to make in all of his translated tales. The question of why this tale, therefore, looms large. Perhaps Jakdan wanted to put the fleshy Bi Yi’an through his paces, perhaps he himself did not wish to categorically decide one way or another whether or not Bi was asleep when he saw his beloved fox woman.

Returning to Jakdan’s own preface, however, might yield an answer that will at least be satisfying for the time being:

> If I were to translate this book’s wonderful lessons and hidden truths into Manchu, the best parts [of the works] created by previous scholars might be elucidated more fully. \(^{(164)}\)

It is of course problematic to blindly accept that what an author claims they are doing is in fact what they deliver in any work of literature, including this one. However, if our suspicion of Jakdan is temporarily suspended and this statement is considered in conjunction with how Jakdan presents “A Fox Dream” to the reader, the initially trivial-seeming nature of the question ‘is it or is it not a dream?’ diminishes further. It would seem that, at least to Jakdan, even if none

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\(^{(163)}\) There is no evidence to suggest that Jakdan adopted this approach in reaction to previous commentators, however the concern over the blurred boundaries in *Strange Tales* clearly manifested itself in the various commentaries written about it. For a discussion of this, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 17-34; and Chiang, *Collecting the Self*, 68-80. For a discussion of how this discomfort led more broadly to declarations of the didactic quality of *zhiguai* collections, see Chan, *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts*, 207-226. For a similar discussion in the late Qing regarding the discourse of the fox, in particular the uneasiness regarding the close relationship between foxes and humans, see Huntington, *Alien Kind*, 290-322. For a parallel discussion of the removal of ambiguities by the commentators of *Peony Pavilion*, see Catherine C. Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2002). Of particular relevance here is the discussion in chapter three, “Containment of Imagery in *Fengliu meng*,” which details how Feng Menglóng’s reading of *Peony Pavilion* restored a basic of rationality to the play’s actions and restricted actions and impulses judged as falling outside of the bounds of reason, 68-98.

\(^{(164)}\) Translation by Mark Elliott and Elena Chiu, “The Manchu Preface to Jakdan’s Selected Stories Translated from *Liaozhai zhiyi*.”
of the “previous scholars” accepted it as such, the underlying blurriness of the dream/non-dream in “A Fox Dream” is one of its “hidden truths,” and its uncertainty “its best part.” And as for the ambiguity between dream and non-dream, and the inability to demarcate them? That of course would be one of its many “wonderful lessons.”
5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to put Jakdan’s translation of Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi* into dialogue with contemporaneous discussions of Pu Songling’s stories. Though commentators of the tale “A Fox Dream” expressed concern over the lack of clear dream/reality boundaries and attempted to demarcate between the two, Jakdan’s translation blurs the two together. This is achieved in a variety of ways, such as translating moments where dreams/non-dreams begin ambiguously, rendering sections inconclusively, and omitting final phrases. Though some of these techniques do on occasion appear in other dream tales, this is not always the case, suggesting that their inclusion in this tale is deliberate. Taken as a whole, this has the effect of leaving the story more ambiguous and more open than in the original, and even less decided as to whether what the character Bi Yi’an experienced in his story was dream or reality.

In viewing Jakdan’s translation as a form of commentary on the original text, this paper seeks to read it as a unique work of literature. This aims to help move the discussion on Manchu translations of Chinese literature within the field of Manjuristics away from the approach that is currently most often utilized, namely to view the text as a duplicate of the original. Not only does approaching the work as a commentary help reveal elements of Jakdan’s text that may not be immediately apparent if it were treated as a copy, it also refrains from assessing the translation by the standard of its adherence to its original. Rather than view the departures Jakdan makes in “A Fox Dream” from the original text as failures on his part to capture the original, these alterations help to make the Manchu translation of the text uniquely different. Though the overall narrative is the same, the effect is not, thus allowing the translation to stand as a work of literature in its own right and on its own terms.

Drawing from the field of translation studies, it is hoped that viewing Jakdan’s translation as a work of commentary and of literature will offer a new way in which to view and thus
approach Manchu translations. Not only might this serve to reframe the questions that are asked about Manchu translations – shifting away from fidelity and accuracy to interpretation and commentary – but hopefully it will also allow for Manchu translations to be brought into different fields of study. In this paper, placing Jakdan within the context of late imperial commentary writing, the reception of *Strange Tales*, and understanding of dreams helps to illuminate the work he is carrying out in his translation; it also offers another angle from which to approach these three avenues of literary studies. Just as Jakdan’s translation has been looked at here, so too other Manchu translations need to be re-introduced to their wider contexts and re-examined in situ; doing so will expand avenues to how they can be approached and utilized.
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Appendix A

This index functions as a glossary of the stories in the Jakdan translation of *Liaozhai zhiyi* and also provides a system of cross-reference between the Jakdan translation and edition that Jakdan was using, the Zhao Qigao edition (1766). The entries in *Liyoo jai jy i bithei šutuci* are listed in the first column, followed by the Chinese title in the second column, and the position that they appear in the Zhao edition in the fourth. In both the first and fourth column the first number refers to the order in which the story appears, the second the volume number it appears in. The third column gives the number that the story is given in Barr’s study of the collection, *The Textual Transmission*, and serves as a reference point to facilitate locating the story in other scholarly works.

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