

HYSTERICAL TRANSLATION: AN INTEREPISTEMIC EXPLORATION BETWEEN DELEUZIAN AFFECT THEORY AND THE *QI* THEORY IN TCM

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ABSTRACT: Hysteria has always been a heatedly debated topic in both the medical and the non-medical arenas with around four thousand years' history. However, the different ways it has been translated into Chinese are all barely satisfactory from the perspective of interepistemic translation since they haven't fully explored the translationalities between the epistemic regimes of East and West. In this paper, the author proposes a counter-hegemonic Western regime that shares quite a few convergences with the Chinese regime based on *qi* theory. The author translates interepistemically between Gilles Deleuze on hysteria in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* ([1981] 2003) and the *qi* theory in traditional Chinese medicine and argues that the Deleuzian conception of affect channels a lot of convergences, theoretically and philosophically, with *qi* in TCM, as both are vibrant, dynamic, and evolving destabilizing and restabilizing forces that always break through fixed organisms and boundaries.

KEYWORDS: Hysteria; Gilles Deleuze; Traditional Chinese Medicine; *Qi* Theory; The Body Without Organs

1. Introduction

One of the commonest memes dominating discourse regarding China and the West is that the two civilizations are radically different epistemic systems. Orientalist stereotypes would insist that the West is scientific, and the 'Orient' is mystical. The West is individualistic, China collectivistic. The West is scientifically reductivist, China philosophically emergentist, ecological. And so on.

In this paper I begin by introducing a Western diagnosis of a psychological disorder—hysteria—that is about as far from Chinese thought about psychological dysfunctionality as one can imagine, and the resulting difficulty of translating 'hysteria' into Chinese interlingually—and then move into an interepistemic translation between Chinese *qi* theory and a remarkably convergent Western reframing of hysteria.

2. Previous attempts to translate hysteria into Chinese

In his *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations*, Mark Micale calls hysteria "arguably the oldest and most important category of neurosis in recorded medical history" (1995, p. 3). The 'disease' has elicited heated discussions and debate for thousands of years, from Hippocrates in ancient Greece to Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer in their nineteenth and twentieth-century histories of hysteria. Henri Ellenberger, a Canadian psychiatrist and medical historian, even once commented that "One could say that the history of modern dynamic psychiatry originated entirely with the study of hysteria" (1961, p. 283). That might be a slight exaggeration, but it clearly underscores the significance of this 'disease' in medical history.

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Outside the history of medicine, too, hysteria has, over the centuries, inspired numerous scholars spanning the fields of literary history and criticism, gender studies, art history, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, discourse analysis, sociology, etc., to generate new thoughts. As a result, the disseminated meanings attached to the term have been accumulated to an almost unbearable point where, as Michel Foucault says, “Things themselves become so burdened with attributes, signs, allusions that they finally lose their own form. Meaning is no longer read in an immediate perception, the figure no longer speaks for itself” (2001, pp. 18-19). Hysteria can no longer be viewed only as a naturally occurring pathological entity, for it is overdetermined with too many historical, cultural, sociological, and metaphorical implications.

The most prevalent translations of the term ‘hysteria’ in Chinese are perhaps *xie si di li* 歇斯底里 and *yi zheng* 癡症 — the latter so commonly used that most Chinese might not even realize that it’s a loanword. The former translation *xie si di li* is apparently a transliteration in accordance with the English pronunciation of hysteria /hɪˈstɛəriə/ (some also argue that *xie si di li* is actually a relay translation from the Japanese transliteration ヒステリー — /Hisu teri/ from English in the Meiji era). The latter, *yi zheng*, is a relatively more liberal translation, literally meaning “mind disease”; it is used much more often in medical contexts.

3. Translationality and Interepistemic Translation

This kind of translation of a name for a disease is ultimately not a purely interlingual problem, but an interepistemic one. The medical epistemes in China and the West have historically been strongly divergent, and translating between them is really much more interepistemic than interlingual.

In his 2017 monograph *Translationality: essays in the translational-medical humanities*, Douglas Robinson, for the first time, put forward the concept of ‘interepistemic translation’. As the name suggests, interepistemic translation refers to the translation from one epistemic system, or knowledge system, to another. According to Robinson, “It is similar to ... *translatio studii*, the translation of learning, also known as the transfer or transmission of knowledge – which is never a ‘cloning’ of knowledge, of course, but always involves what I’m calling *translationality*: adaptation, *transformation*” (2017, p. 200, emphasis added). In textual context, translationality, the core of interepistemic translation, refers to the relationalities between the source text and target text. But such relationalities are not only about written texts (objectivity), but also *felt experience* (subjectivity). In other words, Robinsonian translationality is never about the passive transmission and acceptance of rigid knowledge, but a (felt-becoming-mobilized-becoming-performed) (peri)performativity that we co-perform with our bodies in constant and ever-changing embodied interactions with others. He writes:

Translationality as transformationality: the constant emergingness of everything, through embodied, situated, performative interactions. ... We exert pressure on ourselves and others

to bring our shared feelings into some kind of “neurocultural” organization, which, we hope, will increase predictability and so homeostatic control over our environments and ourselves. And then we periperform that organization, not only on the world’s stage, in situated/distributed social interactions staged as full-body movement in space and time, but on the body’s stage as well, in social interactions staged as expressive/receptive/mimetic body language. We periperform social organization by organizing social performance, and in so doing periperform social organization. This is the continual reciprocal/ reticulatory through-put of periperformative social regulation. (2017, pp. x-xi)

Any group’s epistemic regime would be the ‘neurocultural organization’ members (peri)perform every day, the organization that was shaped by, has shaped, and is still shaping the group’s construction and experience of the entire world, and also its members’ bodies. To this extent, what interlingual interepistemic translation engages would be how the target reader’s sense of ‘the right word or phrase’ or ‘equivalence’ between the source and target texts is organized neurologically so as to fit into their unique epistemic regime, and how the translator can learn and feel something like that neurological model in order to make their translation fit in with the epistemic regime. To put it in a simple way, the two epistemic regimes of the target knower and source knower are quite different, which means they know/experience/construct the world in different ways, but an interepistemic translator can track those differences and find the potential convergences in-between while translating.

From an interepistemic point of view, neither *xie si di li* nor *yi zheng* can be counted as a good translation—which is to say that translating them interlingually and not interepistemically doesn’t work. The transliteration *xie si di li* is nothing but a passively blind accepting and phonetic mimicking of its English original, whereas the latter one, *yi zheng*, might also be a rather lazy translation: simply describing what kind of disease the English original is about. Both fail to construct the periperformative interactions between the Eastern and Western epistemic regimes.

What, then, can be counted as a more Robinsonian interepistemic translation? An apparent answer might be, first of all, to look for the philosophical and cultural differences and convergences between the two, especially the latter, so as to seek a middle ground and also an affective connection point in-between for readers from both epistemic regimes to explore and feel the translationality as transformationality. Some might argue that that is easier said than done: given the deep and complicated differences between the Western epistemic regime and the Chinese regime and the difficulty of translating interepistemically between the two, how exactly can we locate a philosophical and cultural convergence point? It would certainly be hard if we only focused on hegemonic Western philosophies, namely the traditional metaphysics that the West has inherited from Plato in ancient Athens. But if we look at the periphery of Western philosophy, or I would call ‘the abnormal Western philosophy’, there is a sequence of philosophers from Anaximēnēs to Deleuze who are carving out what I would call a Western counter-hegemonic epistemic regime that might serve as a breakthrough channel for East-West interepistemic translationality.

4. Theoretical encounters between East and West

The most remarkable distinction between the Western hegemonic and counter-hegemonic philosophies that I'm about to introduce here is the former's fascination with binary oppositions, i.e. reason and unreason, body¹ and mind, ideality and reality, always honouring one pole and banishing the other. In the case of hysteria, for example, this 'disease' as the culture-based pathological stigmatization of the female *body*—specifically of the female reproductive organs—was based philosophically on the Platonist binary poles of the filthy body and the noble soul. As Plato notes in his *Phaedo* (*Φαίδων*),

For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; and by filling us full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies, and idols. ...and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body. (translation by Benjamin Jowett, [1980] 2002, p. 12).

To Plato the body is insignificant, filthy, and disgraceful. As the container for affections, desires, and passions, it represents the negative qualities of unreliability, instability, and pretentiousness that must be repressed and expelled from *The Republic*. His denigration of the body and promotion of binary opposition has influenced the West for thousands of years where the body was and maybe still is repressed for its excess sensitivity and emotionality that run counter to the 'normal' logocentrist philosophical tradition.

What would an 'abnormal' Western philosophy be like, then?

4.1 *The Western counter-hegemonic epistemic regime and the Chinese regime*

Anaximēnēs (Ἀναξίμηνης, 585-525 BCE) is believed to be the third philosopher from the pre-Platonic school of Miletus, who, I argue, might be the very beginning of this 'abnormal' Western philosophy. Anaximēnēs believed in material monism where materials of all things are derived from one class of matter, or 'the source'. According to Theophrastus:

[For Anaximēnēs] the underlying nature is single and boundless ... calling it *air*. It differs in essence in accordance with its rarity or density. When it is thinned it becomes fire, while when it [air] is condensed it becomes wind, then cloud, when still more condensed it becomes water, then earth, then stones. Everything else comes from these. And he too makes motion everlasting, as a result of which change occurs. (quoted in Graham, pp. 2-3, emphasis added)

Anaximēnēs believed that everything was derived from air and that there was no creating or perishing in this becoming process, but only *altering*. Such air-based monist thinking resonates strongly with ancient Chinese 气 *qi* philosophy, which has exerted a huge influence over Chinese thinking for millennia, ranging from cosmology and philosophy to culture and medical theory: there too *qi* (often translated as air, vapor, breath, vital

¹ For different approaches to the body as a concept see: Hibbs, S., Serban, A. and Vincent-Arnaud, N. (2018) and Federici, E. and Parlati, M. (2018).

energy, etc.) is regarded as the origin of all things. In chapter 42 of the *Daodejing*, Laozi ([老子, 571-471 BCE]) says:

The way [道 *dao*] begets one;

one begets two;

two begets three;

three begets the myriad creatures.

The myriad creatures carry on their backs the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and are the blending of the generative forces of the two. (D. C. Lau's translation)

The core of 道 *dao* (the way) is 无 *wu* 'nothingness/emptiness', where 有 *you* 'having' is born. It has no name, no shape, no sound, no action, no goal, no intention. Yet it integrates *yin* and *yang* in chaos, the two opposing principles in nature, which mother all things. Laozi's later follower Zhuangzi (庄周, 369-286 BCE) extends Laozian Daoism by implying that *dao* actually is *qi* — both representing the infinity of time and space — for the state of nothingness of *dao* is *qi*, which is exactly, as mentioned before, the core of it. According to chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi*:

Life is the companion of death; death is the beginning of life. ... Man's life is a coming-together of breath [*qi*]. If it [*qi*] comes together, there is life; if it scatters, there is death. ... The ten thousand things are really one. ... So it is said, You have only to comprehend the one breath [*qi*] that is the world. (Burton Watson's translation)

In other words, the "one" in chapter 42 of *Daodejing* is actually just a certain state of *qi*, which, once achieved, is able to "beget" all things. In other words, when Laozi says "the way [*dao*] begets one", it's not so simple as *dao* creating or becoming *qi* or *dao* equaling *qi* completely; instead, it's that *dao* somehow reaches nothingness/emptiness, one certain state of *qi* (also the core of *dao* itself), and then all the transforming and becoming processes begins. This sounds very similar to Anaximēnēs' air theory: Anaximēnēs' air is capable of being altered into the six main materials (i.e. fire, wind, cloud, water, earth, stone) before transforming into everything else, whereas at first Daoist *qi* evolves into *yin* and *yang* in chaos, which are then capable of transforming themselves into all things. *Qi*, or air, is the destabilizing and evolving forces that carry the potentiality to be transformed into all kinds of materials. This process is full of indeterminacies and complexities and therefore cannot be stabilized and fixed: *qi* and air is both everywhere and nowhere.

It seems miraculous that Anaximēnēs came up with such a pre-Platonic theory that shares so much in common with his near-contemporary Laozi and the later Zhuangzi. Since then, unfortunately, the Western philosophical tradition had been dominated by Platonist dualism, which suspended the traces of this 'abnormal Western philosophy' for a long term until Benedictus de Spinoza developed something like it in the 17th century by putting forward his philosophy of affect² theory.

² For additional discussions of somatic translation see: Robinson, D. (1991, [1997] 2003, 2023).

Arguing against Descartes' dissection of reason and emotion, or the mind-body binary that is paradigmatic in the Western philosophical tradition, Spinoza conceptualized the term 'affect' in his *Ethics*. In order to subvert the Cartesian mind-body dualism he submitted that affect should never be deemed as a flaw in the human being, for all emotions, just like all creatures, are originated from the power of 'Nature'.

In Spinoza's terms, affect cannot be simply counted as an expression of human emotions; it also points to inter-bodily interactions, passively or actively, and such interactions will strengthen or reduce the power of the body and also, naturally, generate changes of emotions. Liu Qianyue in her 2018 article *The Genealogy of Affect Theory* explains that:

In his *Ethics*, Spinoza believes that affection, or the inter-bodily interactions, will enhance or reduce the forces within the body and thus exert influences on the changes of affects. He never meant to measure the various states of things nor provide criteria for anything, good or bad, strong or weak, high or low. What he was interested in is the movement and transformativeness from one state to another ... and hereby define what the body means. (p. 204; my translation)

In other words, Spinoza regards affects, positive or negative, as the changes in an individual's power that happen during the body's interactions with other bodies, where the interactive body-mind relationship is closely associated with feelings and emotions. The body, therefore, can be defined by its transformation and movement from one state to another and the intensity and power involved therein. And affect is the becoming of such intensity; it is dynamic, fluid, and transformational.

In this way, Spinoza, insofar as I have been able to determine, was the first to shatter the logocentric mind-body binary opposition by means of his 'affect monism' — drawing the attention of the world into the power and dynamicity of the body as a whole. His affect theory is further developed by later philosophers like Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. Among them, Deleuze might be the most influential one. While in the process of his rethinking and extending of Spinoza's affect theory, Deleuze was also strongly influenced by anti-Platonist Nietzsche.

Friedrich Nietzsche, born two hundred years later than Spinoza, chose to draw attention to the body and the *power* therein as his retaliation against Platonic logocentrism. In *Zarathustra*, he refers to the body, or the self, as the hub of an aggregate of vital forces that are displayed as instincts and emotions. Nietzsche also despises the logos-based Western metaphysics and people's belief in imaginary realities. Such metaphysical traditions are nihilistic to him, since they totally deny the 'true self' of human being: the body. In terms of this theory of body as the ceaseless striving of the forces, Deleuze comments in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that:

What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body — whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a

relationship. This is why the body is always the fruit of chance, in the Nietzschean sense, and appears as the most “astonishing” thing, much more astonishing, in fact, than consciousness and spirit. (Deleuze, [1983] 2002, p. 40)

In Spinoza’s or Deleuze’s terms we might speculate that what Nietzsche means by the power in the body is the intensities and forces enabled and energized by affect. The body, full of passions and intensities, is always in flux, and this changeability always involves the process of struggling and becoming, which is exactly realized by the vital forces within: those “dominant and dominated” forces stir the body and create inner energies, thus generating the emotional intensities and passions in turn. Apart from this, for Nietzsche, there’s nothing left.

The perspective brought by Nietzsche from the 19th century to a large extent helps to shape Deleuze’s philosophical rethinking on the body and the forces from inside and outside, and thereby his extension and development of Spinoza’s pioneering affect theory in this ‘affective turn’ in Western humanities. As a result, Gilles Deleuze, altogether with Guattari, later developed their philosophy of ‘becoming-revolutionary’ that focuses on the positivity of affect.

He starts by pointing out various French translation mistakes from Spinoza’s *Ethics* in Latin, among which the biggest one might be that the French translator didn’t distinguish *affectio* from *affectus* and translated both as affection. Deleuze further argues that it might be better if *affectus* was translated as affect while *affectio* was affection and thus draws a distinction between affection and affect. Affect is a passion, referring to the continuous variation of one’s forces of existing and acting, the increase or decrease of power, which have to be recognized and determined by one’s ideas. The affection of the body, on the other hand, is a status, relying dependently on its interactions with at least one other body. The affect ‘envelops’ and ‘implicates’ the affection and is never dependent on the latter. To Deleuze, the affect is the becoming, transforming, and constant moving of the body and its autonomy rather than the become, transformed, and moved body. The affection ‘executes’ and ‘realizes’ the power of body as perfectly as it can but it can never do it without the kinetic increasing and decreasing of the body.

The body is capable of being affected and is “defined by a certain power of being affected” (*ibid.*). Such power, to Deleuze, is “an intensity”—a quantity of power, or “threshold of intensity”—and is able to be ‘fulfilled’. To explore how to reach such fulfilledness, he puts emphasis on the positivity of affect, calling it “the labor of life” that is full of potentialities and possibilities because those active or positive affects, like joy, can form a common notion, which is “a perception of a common relation, a relation common to me and to another body”:

The common notions are not abstract, they are collective, they always refer to a multiplicity... The common notions or the relations which characterize me still concern the extensive parts of my body. (1978, Lecture Transcripts)

It is through such common notions, Deleuze argues, that “I will not cease to pass via these variations of the power of acting as a function of the ideas I have” and “to follow the line of continuous variation of the *affectus* as a function of affection-ideas that I have”; In such a way, he says, “my power of being affected is completely actualized, completely fulfilled” (*ibid.*).

Among this series of abnormal Western philosophers, Gilles Deleuze, as a successor to Nietzsche, is perhaps the philosopher most influenced by Chinese thought. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, for example, Deleuze and Guattari directly integrate *dao* into their own philosophical conceptions of immanence and deterritorialization by arguing that “an intensive body without organs [BwO], *Tao* [*dao*], a field of immanence” constitutes “a plane of consistency proper to desire”, which is part of “the totality of all BwO’s, a pure multiplicity of immanence” and “all in movement of generalized deterritorialization” ([1980] 1987, p. 157). To Deleuze, “A plateau is a piece of immanence. ... Every BwO is itself a plateau in communication with other plateaus on the plane of consistency. The BwO is a component of passage” ([1980] 1987, p. 158).

In other words, the body without organs (which will be discussed in detail in the next section) is defined by its intensive interactions with various plateaus on the plane of consistency where the BwO, like a nomad, can flow freely in all directions without the restriction of organisms. Deleuze regards *dao* in early Chinese philosophical tradition as one example of this kind of plane because that tradition is different from hegemonic Western metaphysics. It can be said that, in doing this, Deleuze must have noticed the power of becoming and evolving contained in *dao*. In other words, formed on the basis of *qi*, the Daoist body is dynamic, interactive, transformative, and deterritorialized, just like the Deleuzian BwO.

Therefore, in a manner of speaking, the counter-hegemonic philosophers as discussed above, from Spinoza to Deleuze, all share convergences with and/or have been influenced by the Chinese epistemic regime, especially Daoism and the *qi* theory, which might make interepistemic translationality possible between the East and the West.

4.2 On Hysteria: Deleuze and TCM

Let us now go back to the translationality of the term ‘hysteria’. As I mentioned above, locating the interepistemic translationality of hysteria would mean to explore the connecting point(s) between the neurocultural organizations of the source knower and the target knower in order to build a bridge between them. In this case, then, the question would be: Is there any theory in the Western epistemic regime that can theorize ‘hysteria’, pathologically, metaphorically, and philosophically, in a way that fits into the Chinese mind so as to pave the way for potential interepistemic translation? In terms of the ‘tree-structured’ hegemonic Western philosophy the answer might be *no*; but what if we take the ‘abnormal Western philosophy’ above into consideration, which shares so many convergences with early Chinese philosophy?

This leads us to the next section: Deleuzian affect theory and his conceptualization of the body without organs and the *Qi* theory in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Specifically, we'll look into Gilles Deleuze's reframing the Western hegemonic pathological understanding of hysteria as something else and the convergences it shares with the philosophical system and pathological mechanisms of TCM before trying to draw corresponding implications for interepistemic translation practice and studies.

4.2.1 Deleuzian affect theory, hysteria, and the body without organs

Like Foucault, Deleuze also pays attention to the so-called bodily madness which is commonly believed to be derived from psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and hysteria—though what interests Deleuze most is actually the philosophical implications lurking behind such “madness” rather than mere clinical manifestations. Deleuzian schizophrenia and hysteria are not mental diseases in the strict sense of pathology; instead, they're more like Nietzsche's Superman or Foucault's deranged madmen in the *Narrenschiff* or 'ship of fools', representing a fully liberating and decentralized spiritual state that enables to body to escape from the sphere of Oedipal totality (see Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* ([1972] 2004).

How exactly does that work? To answer this, we'll need to look into an essential Deleuzian development in his *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* ([1981] 2003) of the body without organs.

The phrase 'body without organs' was first deployed by the French playwright and poet Antonin Artaud in 1947. Deleuze further theorizes that it's not that the body has no organs, but rather that there is no organism, no organization or structure of organs ([1981] 2003, p. 45):

It [BwO] is an intense and intensive body. It is traversed by a wave that traces levels or thresholds in the body according to the variations of its amplitude. ... a wave moves through it and traces levels upon it; a sensation is produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body.... When sensation is linked to the body in this way, it ceases to be representative and becomes real. ... the wave flows through the body; at a certain level, an organ will be determined depending on the force it encounters... . In short, the body without organs is not defined by the absence of organs, nor is it defined solely by the existence of an indeterminate organ; it is finally defined by the *temporary and provisional presence* of determinate organs. (pp. 44-48, emphasis in original)

Apparently, what is opposed to the body without organs is the body with an organism. The Deleuzian body without organs is always in the process of becoming and can only be temporarily defined by the interaction, or the 'encounter', between the wave flowing through the body and the force acting on the body from the outside. The organs are provisional because they have no clear boundaries, fixed functions, or predictable duration of existence—the duration of their existence depends on the intensity of the waves and forces. That is, the organs are present only when such interactions happen and

would dissipate when the waves and/or forces are displaced or removed or the magnitude of which changes.

If we bring Deleuze's affect theory to bear on the theorization of the body without organs, affect would be the continuous changes in the power contained in the process of becoming and dissipating of the organs in the body. As we've discussed before, what *affect* unfolds is that the influences and forces exerted from interactions with other bodies (the outside) are becoming and transforming into the body; *affection* by contrast would be the 'become', transformed, and moved body—a status. In this sense, arguably we can say that those ever-changing temporary and provisional organs constitute the affection of the body at any particular moment, whereas affect represents the continuous changes of the body's power of existence itself. Affect as power circulates through the body, determines 'the temporary and provisional presence' of organs and in this way defines the body in turn.

What then does hysteria, or the hystericity of the body, mean to Deleuze? To Deleuze, such a complete series of the body without organs, specifically from 'without organs' to 'the indeterminate polyvalent organ' to 'temporary and transitory organs', precisely constitutes "the hysterical reality of the body"—and Francis Bacon's painting can represent such hystericity without deferral or delay (p. 48):

If we look at the "picture" of hysteria that was formed in the nineteenth century, in psychiatry and elsewhere, we find a number of features that have continuously animated Bacon's bodies. First of all, there are the famous spastics and paralytics, the hyperesthetics or anesthetics, associated or alternating, sometimes fixed and sometimes migrant, depending on the passage of the nervous wave and the zones it invests or withdraws from. ... Next, there is the transitory character of the organ's determination, ... Next, there is the direct action of these forces on the nervous system, as if the hysteric were a sleepwalker. (pp. 48-49, emphasis in original)

This is probably why Deleuze uses Bacon's painting as the example—Bacon drew out the 'sensations', the purest and most direct response of the body when internal nerve waves and external forces encounter each other in it. In other words, he drew out both the flesh of the hysterical figure and the intensities of or the invisible forces beneath such hystericity. The invisible forces are channeled through the flesh and in this way make the flesh and bones twisted, tumbled, folded, and undulated. The body loses its centrality and territoriality and therefore becomes turbulent and chaotic. This is why Deleuze said the hystericity of Bacon's figures is always present without mediation: he drew out the body of becoming.

Therefore, we might be able to say that what makes the organs dysfunction, deform, and displace *are* those invisible forces; the body without organs is the body flooded with forces and intensities, or with affect in general, which breaks through the confinement of the organism and hierarchy and infuses the body with vitality and endless potentialities. To this extent, it seems like Deleuzian hystericity is ubiquitous among all bodies without organs. In other words, hysteria is the exact outward manifestation of a body without organism. This might be the fact of hysteria to Deleuze.

4.2.2 *Qi theory in TCM*

No Chinese is a stranger to *qi* theory, even in the current modern world. When we feel sick, feeble, and tired, friends or family members around us might say: “your *qi* is deficient”. When we are agitated and temperamental, they might say: “your *qi* is too exuberant.” It seems like *qi*-related discourse is so commonly used that it has become an indispensable part of Chinese life—so common that the majority of Chinese people have never even thought about what exactly its nature is or where it originates. In other words, the connotation and extension of the concept of *qi* is so rich that there is no precise definition nor interpretation of *qi* in history, but only descriptions and arguments in various classics.

According to Zhao Jichao’s *Qi Theory and the Academic Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (2020),

In traditional Chinese culture, ... non-philosophically speaking, *qi* as a commonsensical concept refers to any existence in the gaseous state, such as steam and cloud, and also any phenomena in a broad sense, including spiritual phenomena. Generally and philosophically, *qi* is often related with ontology. (p. 142, Chinese original, my translation)

Zhang Dainian, a Chinese historian of philosophy, commented in 2017 that *qi* in Chinese philosophy refers to the most minute, refined and fluid matter and is believed to be the foundation of all things. In this sense, *qi* might be the most fundamental theoretical conception in ancient China. It has exerted influences on various schools of early Chinese thought such as Confucianism, Chinese Buddhism, Daoism, Chinese Medicine, etc., and also literature, culture, and art. Speaking of the doctrinal source of *qi* theory in traditional Chinese medicine specifically, the *Huangdi Neijing* (lit. the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*) might be the epitome and will be the main theoretical underpinning of TCM in the following sections. It pays considerable attention to the movement of *qi*, or so-called *qihua*, the becoming and transforming of *qi*.

Chen (2012) concludes that from the medical point of view the *Huangdi Neijing* divides *qi* into four categories: the *qi* of nature, the *qi* of the human body, the *qi* of food and medicine, and other kinds of *qi*. Since, as we mentioned before, *qi* as the basis of all things is empowered with the destabilizing and restabilizing forces and therefore carries the potentiality to be transformed into all kinds of materials and ‘myriad creatures’ and to channel the movements of all things, it is very important to note that such categorization is never an insuperable structural confinement of *qi*; instead, the *qi* that belongs to one group at present might evolve and transform into another category in any moment. *Qi* is both everywhere and nowhere; it constitutes and connects everything.

To take the human body as the example, as we discussed in 4.1, *qi* can be philosophically divided into two genres: (the *qi* of) *yin* and (the *qi* of) *yang*, two reciprocal forces in constant motion and transformation that carry antagonistic yet complementary attributes. ‘The myriad things’ are generated from the interactions between *yin* and *yang* and among them, humans are formed by the ‘refined’ kinds of *qi*. However, the *qi* that constitutes the body, or the shape, is derived from the Earth (which means it carries earthy

characteristics like heaviness, turbidity, and coarseness) whereas the *qi* that forms the spirit, or the mind, is derived from the Heaven (which carries the characteristics like lightness, emptiness, and ethereality). The body and spirit are not a Platonic binary where the latter is superior to the former. Instead, it is the transformation of *qi* that provides vital energy for all human activities and thus motivates the changes of the mind and spiritual phenomenology. And all energies are equal: feelings, emotions, and perceptions are separated from yet not more elevated or degraded than thoughts, concepts, and logic. The body and the spirit are differentiated yet co-dependent; the former provides the physical base for the latter to cultivate itself and generate various kinds of thinking activities whereas the latter nourishes the former to ensure its normal functioning.

In this way, it seems reasonable and natural that humans are in connection and constant resonance and interactions with the world: They are all formed by one substance, which is invisible yet all-pervasive and always in motion and transformation (*qihua*)! And in the process of humans' participating in *qihua*, the body acts both as a utensil filled with fluid and transformative forces, or *qi*, and a mediator with non-enclosed and unfixed boundaries that allows the exchange and circulating of *qi* between the internal body and the outside world.

What is worth noticing, however, is that although the *qi* of the human body is in constant interactions with itself and the outside world, its transformations must be homeostatic and balanced dynamically as a whole; otherwise, the general state of harmony in *qi* would be broken and the body would suffer from diseases. As Chen Xi concludes the etiological factors and mechanisms of *qi* on diseases mentioned in the *Huangdi Neijing*,

The various factors of etiology mentioned in the *Neijing* are really all about the deficiency of the righteous *qi* [*zheng qi* 正气] in the body and the invasion of the evil *qi* [*xie qi* 邪气] from the outside. In different periods of time, the transforming and moving statuses of *qi* are different, which beget different "tendencies" [*shi* 势] and thus generate different "agents" [*yin* 因]. If a person is sick because of the agent, then this agent becomes the pathogenic factor. ... The evil *qi* refers to any pathogenic factors [in TCM]. ... However, just the evil *qi* is not enough to make people sick: as we say, "when the righteous *qi* is sufficient in the body, it can protect the body from the evil *qi*." Therefore, only when the pathogenic factor, or the evil *qi*, encounters with the body's righteous *qi* and creates a synergy [a cohesive force] therewith can the mechanism of disease starts to work. (2012, pp. 72-75; my translation)

According to the theory of TCM, the occurrence of disease results from the interplay between the righteous *qi* and evil *qi* (which include but are not limited to the *qi* of food and weather), which is full of indeterminacies and complexities. In terms of pathological interpretation, unlike what the ancient Egyptians or Greeks did to hysteria, traditional Chinese didn't put much emphasis on the anatomical structure of bodily organs; instead, they refer to a more dynamic, vibrant, and mobile way to learn the world and their own body. Disease would occur only when the movement and transformation of *qi* as a whole is incongruous and inharmonious, that is, in short, when the *qi* becomes 'abnormal'. For traditional Chinese, falling ill is nothing to be ashamed of, neither is it a sin. There is no

theoretical support for pathological stigmatization in TCM: nothing is intrinsically or permanently good or bad and everything is changing and becoming all the time.

5. Interepistemic Explorations

I'm definitely not the first person to explore the connections between Deleuzian philosophy (specifically his conceptualization of affect) and *qi* theory in early Chinese thought. Brian Schroeder, for example, in his 2022 article explores the potential relationalities between Daoist 'immortality' and Deleuzo-Guattarian 'becoming-imperceptible' starting with a very detailed tracking of etymology and theorizations of *qi* in various early Chinese classics, including the *Huangdi Neijing*. His main focus there is on Daoist sorcery, a kind of "Daoist internal alchemical ways of cultivating and harmonizing life energy" and also becoming immortal, which might sound utterly magical and even absurd to the rational mind and also might not be able to offer direct guidance for interepistemic translation studies (2022, pp. 8-9). However, I have gained inspiration from it for possible interepistemic connections between Deleuzian affect theory and *qi* theory in TCM.

5.1 An interepistemic exploration: connections between the two epistemic regimes

As we've seen, Gilles Deleuze speaks highly of Bacon's paintings, which according to him are capable of being completely present without mediation. The complete presence that Deleuze talks about is achieved by hysteria and the positivity of affect. On the other hand, Brian Schroeder argues that such presence can also be achieved by "the cultivation of *qi* flow in the torso" (2022, p. 17). As he elucidates,

There are three primary ways to energize and direct the body's energy fields. ... The third exercise (circulating or vibrating *qi*), ... focuses more on *affect*, that is, on feeling the connection between cosmic and bodily *qi* fields. This is the unification of *yinyang*. This happens when a person self-cultivates by invoking the power of *shen* [spirit or mind] in the body. When this occurs, there is also illumination or enlightenment; in other words, seeing things not only as they actually are but also as *how they can be*. ... The cultivation of *qi* enables one to be completely present in the moment, in the here and-now. (2022, pp. 17-25, emphasis in the original)

The affect that Schroeder mentions here is definitely different from Deleuzian affect; the former is more about mere human emotions or feelings. If we follow Deleuzian concepts, a reconstruction of Schroeder's statement will be: If we want to be completely present in the here and now, that is, to be fully actualized just like Bacon's hysterical figures, one way would be to feel and experience the interactions, or the connecting and exchanging, of *qi* in the body and *qi* outside in the entire cosmos; this is the way to realize the unification of *yin* and *yang* so as to experience the world and the self as a whole filled with and motivated by *qi*, or affect as forces. Ideally, this can act as an approach to surpass our biological separateness and (trans)feel the affect of other bodies in interactions with us. However, this is not just what happens on the bodily level, but also requires the participation of the mind (*shen*). This doesn't mean that there has to be logical reasoning

or thinking involved; instead, the mind participating simply means that we're aware of our own experience in this process, we perceive and sense it, and also have the autonomy to energize, channel, and (re)direct *qi* or affect in interaction. And "when this occurs", we're able to see things "not only as they actually are"—that is, affection as the state of the body—but "how they can be", which emphasizes the emergingness, evolvingness, and becomingness of affect, or *qi*.

In this way, whoever is cultivating the *qi* flow in the body becomes the hysterical figure in Bacon's painting. Their body has no clear boundaries, fixed structure, nor organisms that territorialize the organs and specify the functions thereof. In the hysterics there is only the free flowing, emerging, and transforming of *qi* and affect.

5.2 Hysterical translation studies

With the theoretical insights drawn from the reconstruction of Deleuzian affect theory and *qi* theory in TCM, it might not be hard to provide hysteria as a (mis)disease with a more post-structuralist (re)understanding that is acceptable to people from both the Eastern and (counter-hegemonic) Western epistemic regimes.

As we discussed above, there are no Platonic binary oppositions in the *qi*-based traditional Chinese thought. Therefore, what TCM is interested in is associating the rhythmic forces of nature with those of humans—arguably, positive affect for Deleuze and *zheng qi* (the righteous *qi* in the body) for the *Huangdi Neijing*—to obtain knowledge about life process, physical and mental activities, and pathological representations. Both TCM and Deleuzian affect theory pay attention to the transformativeness and dynamicities of forces, *qi* or affect. In this context, there's no way that they attribute any disease to organic lesions or disorders like what the ancient Greek did to hysteria, nor do they bother to impose stigmatizing pathologization as social construction on certain groups of people so as to demarcate them as the mad or insane.

What are the implications of hysteria in Deleuzian and TCM's terms for translation studies, then? What exactly are hysterical translation studies, as I call it, and what kinds of inspirations can it give us?

Wang Min'an argues in his 2022 monograph *Affect, Material and Contemporaneity* that:

The relationalities between British art and French philosophy are, in Walter Benjamin's terms, perhaps the relation of translation. If the body can be seen as a kind of "pure language", both French philosophy and British art ever since the 1940s or 1950s are translations (with differences) of such a pure language of the body. ... The art on the body and the philosophy on the body are mended together. ... What Deleuze does in *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* is this kind of mending work, where Bacon and Artaud translate and complement each other for a better model. (p. 90, Chinese original, translation mine)

According to Wang's reading of Deleuze, in other words, Artaud and Bacon, the two hysterics, are both intersemiotic translations of the hysterical body (without organs). And

even Deleuze himself and his school of philosophy is part of such a hysterical intersemiotic translation project. This idea is fascinating and inspiring: translation as hysteric is hysterical.

Now what I'm proposing here is to reframe this idea of translation as hysteric into 'translator as hysteric' in order to bring more flexibility to the subject. And the reason is affect, or *qi*—unlike dead texts, every one of us as a human being carries the potentialities of being hysterical in a real sense because of the existence of our body. As we've discussed in previous sections, the emergingness and transformativity of affect or *qi* makes it possible for us to break through the inter-bodily boundaries so as to explore the translationalities among different regimes and translate interepistemically. Therefore, ideally, such a translator-as-hysteric heteronym³ can act as an agency to channel the flow of such contagious affect from the source author to the target reader. But what exactly should we do to realize it?

Inspirations might be drawn from the approach used by traditional Chinese medical practitioners. In introducing the practice of diagnosis and treatment in TCM, Chen explains that:

In the diagnostic process, the TCM practitioners must actively integrate themselves into the patients' feelings to form "a unification". They adopt the four main diagnostic methods of *wang* 望 (observe), *wen* 闻 (listen and smell), *wen* 问 (ask questions), *qie* 切 (touch/take pulses) to examine the patients from different angles and layers. Although it's hard for practitioners to diagnose, for example, the changes of the shape of organs, what they can do is to make themselves the *extension of the patients*, or to unify with them by different means of perception and sensation like senses of vision, audio, and touch. In this way, they can sense the moving of *qi* in the patients' body. (2012, pp. 79-80; my translation; emphasis in original)

TCM practitioners can *co-experience* the movement and transformation of *qi* in the patient's body through sensing or feeling the outward manifestation of it, such as the patient's facial expression, body language and *mai xiang* 脉象 (image of the pulse), and thus making themselves an imagery-extension of the patient. Since, as we discussed before, *qi* (or affect) is the indeterminate forces channelled among human bodies and also between the body and the world, it makes total sense that the practitioner can, ideally, surpass the seemingly insuperable biological separateness to (trans)feel the *qi*/affect flooded in another body. In the case of translation studies, therefore, the translator-as-hysteric heteronym, or the translator-as-TCM practitioner heteronym, can act as the agency or intermediary to channel affect or *qi* and the intensities embodied in those forces through linguistic expressions that can "act immediately upon the nervous system" of the reader by, for example, awakening their "senses of vision, audio, and touch".

³ Robinson's coinage in his 2023 article "Heteronymous Narratoriality: The Translator (as Narrator) as Somebody Else", referring to other names, signifying the persona or pseudonym with idiosyncrasy of a translator before, during, and after the translating work.

In other words, in such a socio-affective ecology of audience response, there are at least two stages: 1) the translator-as-hysteric or the translator-as-TCM practitioner heteronym reads the source text as image, sound or touch objects as the audience by feeling and experiencing the *qi* or affect contained therein and 2) this hysterical heteronym channels autonomy of affect from the source text to the target reader by hysteric symptomology as avant-garde translation, specifically, for example, by jerks, stutters, or spasms as “an echo of irreducible excess” or “of gratuitous amplification” (Massumi, [2002] 2021, p. 29, quoted in Robinson, 2024, p. 25) or by prescribing herb medication or providing acupuncture therapy to (re)direct the flow of *qi* in the body of target reader. In this way, the hysterical experimental translator transforms visual or acoustic intensities into affect-becoming-(kinesthesia-)becoming-verbalization-becoming-affect-becoming-cognition and thus shatters the traditional translational organism of confined linguistic structure, semantic or pragmatic.

6. Conclusion

This might be a rather radical way of translating hysteria as a term and a social representation of certain epistemic regime. But ever since the publication of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* by the American Psychiatric Association in 2013, hysteria as a clinical disease has already been wiped out in the current world. But this doesn't mean hysteria is 'dead'. What's left, instead, is the delayed and deferred traces of it dating back from the nineteenth century BCE to decades ago. Those reticulatory traces are like Deleuze's rhizomes, continuing to expand and extend from rootlessness, and radiate their own rich and ever-emerging symbolic meanings to other disciplines: translation studies, literature, cultural studies, philosophy.

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