

Queering the Translation of Same-Sex Desire: English Translations of 1990s Queer Literature of Taiwan as Examples

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Introduction

In recent years, we have come to see translation studies as intimately intertwined with queer theory. The interpenetration of the two fields has stimulated significant shifts in how we understand both the nature and the uses of queering social identities and categories. It has also illuminated the complex and nuanced ways in which desire, sexuality, and gender are inscribed in languages and translation. If the word *queer* is significant both for its “celebration of difference” and in its “reappropriation of the language used by the heterosexist culture” (Slagle 94), then the meanings that queer acquires in its translation both to and from non-English linguistic and cultural codes are particularly useful for the study of how queer goes beyond universal notions, fixed identities, or default categories. Translation is “comparably indeterminate and similarly imbricated with issues of gender and sexuality, playfulness, and power” (Epstein and Gillett 1). In this article, I discuss the relationship between queer and translation, and the implications of this relationship for the *queering* of translation, through textual analysis of the translated, transferred, transmitted representations of male same-sex desire and practices, particularly fetishism and sadomasochism, in Taiwanese queer literature from the 1990s. That decade saw an unprecedented flowering of queer literature in Taiwan and, as such, provides a fascinating case study in the historical and social development of the global circulation of queer theory across languages and cultures. I centre my discussion around two short stories from Ta-wei Chi’s queer anthology 膜 (*The Membranes*, 1996) and Chu T’ien-Wen’s novel 荒人手記 (*Notes of A Desolate Man*, 1994), and draw on William J. Spurlin’s (2017) rethinking of gender and sexual politics in the spaces between languages and cultures, Brian James Baer’s (2020) application of queer theory to translation studies and Douglas Robinson’s (2020) formulation of “equivalencefuck”. I argue that their insights enable an approach to the queering of translation that incorporates queer theory into the theory and practice of translation by understanding translation as essentially a queer praxis that simultaneously *fucks with* linguistic and cultural binaries on the one hand and with sexual and gender binaries on the other. While *fucking binaries* plays a vital role in critiquing what is fetishized as source-target equivalence in translation, considering translation as a queer praxis demonstrates that the conjunction of queer and translation offers “new sites of heterogeneity and difference” (Spurlin 2017, 181). Thus, I argue that bringing queer theory to translation and translation studies disrupts some of the foundational assumptions about translation. In turn, this offers new opportunities to queer how we think about sexual and gender difference, cultural dissimilitude, and linguistic diversity in both translation practice and translation studies.

Queer Translation in the Chinese Context

Notions of queer/queering translation have been increasingly problematized in the last ten years. Following the publication of a special issue edited by B. J. Epstein of the journal *In Other Words* (2010), which situated itself at the intersection of translation and sexuality, and Christopher Larkosh's edited volume *Re-Engendering Translation* (2011), a wave of scholarship has emerged on the cluster of issues around the possibilities of queering translation. Among other significant contributions, William J. Spurlin's paper in a special issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* (2014) is especially pertinent for thinking about the queer politics of translating from "non-Western contexts." (205) In 2018, the first book-length volume on the concept of queering translation appeared: *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism* (2018), co-edited by Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl, that critically explores the intimate connectedness between translation and queer aspects of sex, gender, and identity. Notable contributions to that volume include José Santaemilia's survey of "a progressive queering of translation and sexuality studies" (20) and Elena Basile's ground-breaking analysis of the "fuckable" text and the "violent" aspects of translation (26). These and other recent studies have contributed to a persuasive dismantling of previously established binarism between translation and sexuality, source and target, the textual and the corporeal, and sex and gender. In the process, translation has come to be widely recognized as a fundamentally queer praxis, a breaking or fucking of binaries, and queer theory as an essential part of translation studies.

Scholars have explored the multifarious intersections not only between queer theory and translation studies in literature, language, sexuality, and culture but, more particularly, the slippages of signification of both the terms *queer* and *translation*, and the transgressive latency of such slippages, in what Pascale Casanova calls the "unequal exchange" (Pascale Casanova 7) across time, languages, and cultures. Both *queer* and *translation*, in Spurlin's words, "mediate between hegemonically defined spaces, and their critical conjunction offers the possibility of new sites of heterogeneity and difference as a vital heuristic" (2017, 181). Although there have been some studies of queer translation in the context of Sinophone language and culture, a survey of the field of queer translation studies reveals that a considerable gap remains between queer translation and Chinese-English translation, especially around the translation of non-normative sexualities, genders, bodies, and desires. Notable exceptions include Andrea Bachner's discussion of how the concept of queer has been translated, circulated, and received in Sinophone contexts(77) , Leo Tak-Hung Chan's (96) case study of parodic Japanese manga versions of the Chinese classic *The Journey to the West* (西遊記, xiyouji), Baer's passing but suggestive mention of the Chinese same-sex love tale "The Passion of the Cut Sleeve" (2020), Robinson's (2020) reading of the Chinese classic 道德經 (daode jing) based on the "rhizomatics" of gender (161), James St. André's analysis of the authenticity of British sinologist John Francis Davis's *The Sorrows of Han* (漢宮愁, han gong kou) in the context of cross-identity performance, and Hongwei Bao's article on how western queer theory was introduced and framed in mainland China at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

My aim in this article is not only to help close the gap between queer translation and Chinese-English translation, especially with regard to the translation of non-normative sexualities, genders, bodies, and desires from Chinese into English, but also to explore in what ways queering translation can contribute to challenging, resisting, and unsettling traditional concepts and models in translation, thus enlarging how we think about sexual difference, cultural dissimilitude, and linguistic diversity in relation to translation in Sinophone contexts. I begin by briefly tracing how English translation has typically dealt with representations of same-sex desire in Chinese texts and the role that such queer translations have played in the translingual, transcultural, and transtemporal circulation of queer sexualities, non-normative forms of sexual desire, and sexual epistemology, which are key to understanding how queer translation challenges traditional gender roles and heteronormative sexuality.

Translation as a Queer Praxis

When translating texts from non-Western contexts or from the past, Spurlin (2017, 172) asks, how do we deal with the specificity of the term *queer*? This question is my starting point for exploring the gender and sexual politics of translation in Chinese contexts. When the pejorative queer was re-appropriated during the AIDS crisis in the United States in the 1980s, critical inquiries into gender, sexuality, and their subjectivity began to appear in many fields, though most centrally in cultural studies and sociology. If the new uses of the term were important for enabling a “celebration of difference” (Slagle 93) and a liberational “reappropriation of the language . . . [of] heterosexist culture” (Slagle 94), then the meanings that *queer* has acquired through its translation into non-English cultural and linguistic codes become especially significant, making it clear that the meanings of queer exceed any universal notion, fixed identity, or default category. In this way, queerness, as concept or cultural referent, illuminates “a key issue in contemporary translation studies” namely that “translation is not merely about language alone” (Spurlin 2017, 172). Although conceptions of translation are always aligned with an understanding of language (Baer 30), translation is not a mere linguistic process or linear operation but a complex negotiation “intimately intertwined with new forms of textual and cultural production” (Spurlin 2017, 173). Thus, translation can be “a proactive force that . . . introduces new ideas, forms or expressions, and pathways for change” (Gentzler 8)—even, in Susan Bassnett’s words, “offering life-changing possibilities” (Bassnett 2017, ix).

More than just the “bringing over” that the English term’s etymology suggests, queer translation is, or should be, a site of correspondence where different cultural systems, social norms, and linguistic domains of gender, sexuality, and sexual freedom are communicated, translated, shared, distributed, and remembered. This relational, intersectional, transformational nucleus where “languages touch,” to use Emily Apter’s phrase (61), is at the core of queer and translation. In studying translation through the lens of queer, we are not just performing a linguistic exercise across languages, times, and cultures. Analyzing sexual and gender differences and fluidities in translation can, as Spurlin argues, provoke “new sites of knowledge production” and stimulate “significant shifts in social identities and categories” (2017, 173). Attending to the nuanced ways

in which gender and sexuality are expressed in different language communities, and the transgressions, slippages of signification, and incommensurabilities that are revealed by understanding translation as a “queer praxis” in this sense, calls into question, as Spurling notes, whether “the very terms used for gender and sexual identities [are] reducible to equivalents” (2017, 173). Taking this theorization of translation as a queer praxis as a framework, I am interested in unpacking the ways in which translation deals with representations of same-sex desire in non-Western, specifically Sinophone, literature and how queer translation thereby plays a role in the translingual, transcultural, and transtemporal circulation of queer sexualities, non-normative forms of sexual desire, and sexual epistemology.

In Taiwan, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a remarkable flourishing of literary representations of same-sex desire that subverted, troubled, and resisted traditional heteronormative ideas of gender and sexuality in Sinophone cultures. Liang-Ya Liou notes that “globalization and localization are inextricably bound together” (Featherstone 103), especially around issues of gender and sexuality (Liou 2003, 193), and this Taiwanese offshoot of the larger *tongzhi* “movement” (Wong 209) emerged during the period when the terms *AIDS* and *Queer*, which had become rallying points for new ways of looking at non-normative sexualities in the US under the rubric of “queer theory,” became current in Taiwan, translated as *ai zi* 愛滋 and *ku'er* 酷兒. I should acknowledge here that *tongzhi* (同志) is “the most popular contemporary Chinese word for lesbians, bisexuals, and gay people” (Chou 2000, 1). The term is itself a striking example of how non-normative sexualities and translation are always entangled in fascinating ways. *Tongzhi* is a relay/indirect translation by Chinese and Japanese scholars of *мосапуу*, *camarade*, and *comrade*, terms derived in turn from the egalitarian ideals of the French and Russian Revolutions. This reimagined term of address—expressing Chinese men’s quest for political solidarity—marked the outset of the totalizing politicization of the construction of masculinity at a national level (Hee 24). As Wei-Cheng Chu notes, the adoption of the term by Chinese queer communities was arguably “the most creative appropriation and invention of modern Chinese language in the 1990s” (9). The formerly hermitical, reclusive phrase used by the party-state has been painted lavender.

The appropriation has been widely accepted by Sinophone LGBT+ communities “for its positive cultural references, gender neutrality, desexualisation of the stigma of homosexuality, [and] politics beyond the homo-hetero duality” (Chou 2000, 2). Rather than recounting the extensive and painstaking research that numerous scholars have done on the meanings and deployments of this term, I need only note here that the appropriation of *tongzhi* by LGBT+ communities in Taiwan, mainland China, and Hong Kong symbolizes an inseparability in the imagination of belonging, homonationalism, queerness, (direct/indirect) translation, community, and originality. As such, its use subverts “the mainstream culture by queering and destabilizing rather than antagonizing and essentializing the supposedly straight world” (Chou 2000, 4). As Liou points out, *tongzhi* stresses “solidarity” but sheds “gayness” (2003, 193). Chi Ta-wei makes a similar argument regarding the difference between *tongzhi* and queer or homosexual” (2017, 61-63; 2017, 377-382). For Chi, since the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War, post-war Taiwan literature and culture as a whole have frequently appropriated Western (especially American) terminologies, ideas, and cultural products to express various kinds of “local emotions and feelings” and situate

them within larger or global contexts (Chi 2017, 355). By the end of the 1990s, however, having gone through multiple processes of localization, tongzhi had shaken off its sense of source “equivalence” to *gay*, *homosexual*, and *queer* (Chi 2017, 382). In keeping with its elusive history in the West, the idea of queerness in particular has already been multiply re-appropriated, refracted, and twisted in Sinophone contexts (Bachner 78). Despite ongoing debates on mis-readings, misuses, and/or misappropriations of queer, it has become almost “a floating signifier . . . [and] a cultural fad, which is in tune with the carnivalesque spirit” (Liou 2014, 271). Indeed, with the rise of tongzhi/queer movements in Taiwan in the 1990s, expressions and idioms around non-normative desires, genders, and sexualities proliferated in a hybrid dynamic that challenged traditional gender roles and heteronormative sexuality through initial “recourse to Western models and [then] renegotiating these with locally and culturally specific formations” (Bachner 77).

In researching how English translations of Taiwan tongzhi literature challenge and recirculate sexual knowledge around the subject of male same-sex desire, I have come to see fetishism, for example, as a provocative point of entry into a discussion of queer translation as the central concern of fetishism as well as an especially revealing challenge to the universalizing pretensions both of dominant models of “faithful” translation practice and of simplistic notions of sexuality, desire, fantasy, and pleasure. A great many of Ta-wei Chi’s short stories published in the 1990s thus use fetishism to subvert, trouble, and resist traditional gender roles and heteronormative sexuality while at the same time highlighting the difficulty of making intimacies that are so thoroughly imbricated in local histories and cultures legible in another language. For example, in Chi’s 1995 short story 香皂 (literally “soap” but translated as “The Scent of HIV” by Fran Martin), the protagonist is aroused by the rose-soap-scented, sweaty, musky smell of a male body that is infected by HIV/AIDS. A secret possessed by one body (positive HIV status) brings together two strangers at a swimming pool, and their strange encounter is precisely the spot where Chi explores “the complexities of identifications, sexual and otherwise, and their refusal to hold out the promise of an unproblematic or transparent ‘gay subject’ or ‘identity’” (Martin 1998b, 141). The practice of fetishism, both in the original and the translation, is pastiched through olfactophilia, a fetish where individuals derive sexual pleasure from smells and odours, literally through the rose-scented smell of one man’s body and figuratively through the overall atmosphere of the swimming pool, the changeroom, the swim strokes and styles, and the queer male gaze. Claiming tenable positions for queer subjectivity in the face of contemporary Taiwan’s entrenched homophobia and HIV/AIDS phobia, “The Scent of HIV” embraces fetishism as an evocative site of embodied queer praxis.

Chi’s fetishization of Taiwanese queerness applies equally to the challenge the story poses for translation. Martin’s rendering of the title as “The Scent of HIV,” instead of a more “accurate” literal translation is modeled on her own field research on queer representation in Taiwan in the mid and late 1990s and reveals her careful attention to the gender and sexual differences that traverse literary and psychoanalytical boundaries and the established forms of erotic fantasy and carnal desire. Her translation, not confined to the change of title, is an attempt to explore fundamental differences between tongzhi culture in Taiwan and gay culture in the Anglophone West in the 1990s. By revealing the story’s HIV/AIDS theme in the title, Martin’s translation

paradoxically conceals a deeper queerness in Chi's text and acknowledges its disruptive force, exposing it all the more clearly in the target language. This move is suggestive of what Marc Démont calls the mode of queering translation that is opposed to misrecognizing and minoritizing modes of translation (163).

I will give one further example of the source text's specific manifestation of fetishism.

蓮蓬頭射出來的水花在這名男子身上拍打按摩，香皂泡沫的分子這才輻射進入我的鼻腔，我的神經中樞……我背後的這個人是否灑脫大方？還是膽怯一如偷咬主人拖鞋的小狗，在沖澡時仍然小心翼翼保留泳褲，讓我族的目光得不到一絲便宜？(Chi 2011, 205)

As the stream of water shooting out of the shower head massaged that man's body, the smell from the foam rushed into my nostrils, into my central nervous system... had the person behind me stripped completely naked? Or, timid as a puppy stealing his master's slippers, had he carefully kept his shorts in place as he showered, refusing to allow my type of person anything for free? (Martin 1998b, 142)

This passage illustrates some of the complications for translation posed by sexualized terms or phrases that are both colloquial and highly sensitive in the context of queer culture in Taiwan. The Chinese phrase 射 (出來) (literally “[sperm] shooting out”) suggests a strong force of ejaculation, an impressive distance, and a large volume of semen. This is underlined by the parallel image of a “stream of water shooting out of the showerhead” and further animated by the image of a “head” (suggestive of oral sex in both English and Chinese) massaging the man's body in the steamy shower room full of naked male bodies. I would argue that Martin's translation invites the potential for a queer reading that can challenge the imposition of a Western sexual epistemology and embrace a queer text like “The Scent of HIV” as a site of embodied queer performance that disrupts heteronormativity, monogamy, and intercourse-based bedroom sex.

In addition, in this fetishistic paragraph, Martin recreates queerness in her translation of a text so saturated with same-sex desire and cruisy undertones by introducing a further queer dimension: a possible relationship between a “puppy” and a master. Martin uses a pair of terms, *puppy* and *master*, used in a sexual practice known as “puppy play,” in which practitioners role-play as puppies and their handlers or owners, often within a dominance/submission sexual context (Langdridge and Lawson 2201). In the original Chinese text, the phrases 膽怯 (timid), 偷咬 (secretly biting), and 小心翼翼 (carefully, discreetly) may be interpreted either as idealization of a fetishist's kinky BDSM fantasies and desires, or as a symbol of a general interrogation of a shower room as a public facility surveillance or private intimate space. If the characterization of the narrator's “I” signals problems of class structure in public and private selves for the sake of safeguarding public morality in the queer past, Martin's addition of the extra queer dimension—questions concerning textual agency and boundaries between a master/handler and a slave/servant/puppy—becomes what José Esteban Muñoz would call “a critique of a limited and

problematic straight time” (83). While explicitly acknowledging the cruisy atmosphere of homosexual encounters in the violent and tragic queer 1990s, with their pervasive fear of physical sexual contact, let alone their aura of perversity around those who desired a male body affected by HIV/AIDS and BDSM, Martin’s translation suggests the facets of queering translation: acknowledging its disruptive force and recreating it in the target text. The translator’s attention to differences and slippages across languages, cultures, and times is, in effect, a queer praxis. Moreover, I would argue that it is warranted on the basis of conveying a queer understanding of the nature of sexuality as “heterogeneous, multiple, and fundamentally indeterminate” (Dinshaw 1).

Another example is Ta-wei Chi’s 因為我壯 (Because I am Strong; translated as “I am Not Stupid” by Martin, 1998b) from the same queer anthology *The Membranes*, a short story about an encounter between a security guard named Tongqing and a concert attendee. While challenging the normative binarism of sexuality and divides of sex and attending to the differences, Chi represents fetishism in a celebratory manner through fictional representations. Olfactophilia is seductively and sensually depicted and has been accurately translated, as evident in Martin’s translation of “I am Not Stupid”. Critically engaging with Chi’s depictions of fetishism, the rose-soap-scented, sweaty, musky smell of the male body has repercussions for translation decisions. Chi writes,

他扶著似乎虛脫的半裸男孩走向點亮白日光燈的男廁，同慶又聞到男孩身上的香味，那味道與濃重汗臭相配更是強烈挑逗，同慶不禁臉紅起來。他看見男孩胸膛的些許毛髮汗濕一片，臉上殘留血跡。他想掏出褲袋裏的紙巾為男孩擦去鼻血，可是褲袋裏沒有紙巾，完了，一定是擠掉了。(Chi 2011, 201-203)

He carried the apparently unconscious half-naked boy toward the fluorescent lights of the male toilets. Tongqing smelled once again the scent of the boy’s body, the smell was accompanied now by the strong stink of sweat and the two combined were even more seductive—Tongqing couldn’t help blushing. He looked at the sparse hair on the boy’s chest, slicked with sweat, and on his face, saw trails of blood. He wanted to take a tissue from his pocket to wipe the blood from the boy’s nose, but his pocket held only the pocketknife and no tissues, oh dear, they must have fallen out in the crowd. (Martin 1998a, 150)

Martin’s translation preserves Chi’s queer thoughts to highlight the contradictory combination of the fragrant and stinky smells, which counters the binarism of the pleasant and unpleasant odour of the male body. Tongqing seems to oscillate between his intense desire for the scent and the sweat, however, he has fallen unconsciously for the sweating body of the intoxicated man, which is a great pleasure for him, a merry and gay jouissance that is not necessarily penetrative or ejaculatory. Chi’s narrative of same-sex desire and practices begins with the half-naked boy’s entrance into the “male toilets” accompanied by Tongqing, a space rife with anonymous public sex, or in other words, the idealization of an “unconscious, seductive” space that functions as an

erotic utopia, a utopia that is built with the presence of male bodies, sweating bodies, blood, tissues and the absence of urinal, tile, underwear, penis, anus, or coprophilic pleasure. I consider how the erotic tension between absence and presence highlights same-sex desire in tongzhi literature. It coincides with a sense of desire that does not characterize libido in the Freudian sense of the term or Lacanian *jouissance* and the pursuit of it, rather, *jouissance* in the text demonstrates the significance of what the unspeakable/untranslatable *jouissance* implies and how it is potentially lost in translation. Consider, for example, the English translation of 香皂, marked by a change of title from “Soap” to “The scent of HIV”, which highlights the stark difference between literature and culture in Taiwan and the Anglophone sphere. As Emily Rose (46) asks, “How does a translation masquerade as an original? Can a text seem ‘original’ if it is not fluent?” This allows me to trace what Lawrence Venuti describes as “a fluent text” that has “an absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities” that gives “the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer’s personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text” (1). However, Martin’s translation may not be necessarily categorized as a fluent text. Martin’s translation includes an introduction and endnotes to the texts, where she notes “Chi’s writing style is aptly characterised as ‘queer’ [ku’er]” and refuses to “hold out the promise of an unproblematic or transparent ‘gay subject’ or identity” (Martin 1998c, 141). Potential English readers coming to the translation without knowledge of the original author and his style would assume the translation as “original” or a “faithful” and “beautiful” (in this case, “fragrant”) representation of Chi’s original ideas and the metaphoric connotations of “the soap”. Without omitting or softening the intensity of desire and its fulfilment, the translator having expertise in tongzhi literature and the study of sexualities, I would argue, may have used the translation of works to give semi-public expression to same-sex desire, thus making these texts available to queer readings and contributing to the queering of the translation of the queer. Martin, in her introduction to her translation, points out that writings like Chi’s offer “a re-reading of ‘queer’ from a cultural and geographic point where what is assumed in the Anglo-American version of ‘queer’ may become exotic, and where possibilities unrealised by those more familiar figurations, may unfold” (Martin 1998c, 141).

Fucking Binaries

Translation implies that analyses of gender and sexual difference are “not reducible to feminist and queer studies” (Spurlin 2017, 175). Translation and gender and sexual difference intersect with each other. In fact, as Santaemilia argues, translation studies has been “incorporating sexuality as an analytical category” since the 1990s (12). For Santaemilia, translating the language of sex and sexuality and analyzing the translation of sex and sexuality are political acts that register the translator’s attitude toward existing conceptualizations of gender and sexual identities, human sexual behaviour(s), and moral norms. In this sense, translation of non-normative sexualities, in particular, can reveal the most “intimate textualizations of our identities and desires for queering translation” (Santaemilia 13). It demands a critical unpacking of the complex systems of binary models of translingual, transcultural, and transtemporal exchange and circulation. As many scholars remind us, in translation studies, the normative binary is a source-target equivalence (Robinson xxiii). Equivalence, as Baer argues, is a concept that “(re)enforces the binary relationships it is meant to evaluate” (42). The problems of equivalence also arise from the

asymmetrical properties of natural languages by nature, as evidenced in Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood's view of translation as a linguistic matching game. Baer, in his analysis of the erotics of Lotbinière-Harwood's bilingualism, reminds us that "the act of translation brings together two words that cannot be the same." Having "lived different lives in their respective languages" (Baer 194), foreign words necessarily puncture "the regime of fluency" (Baer 18) that translation viewed as source-equivalence aims for.

In the emergence of modern understandings of sex and sexuality, the subject of male same-sex desire, as a defining linguistic and cultural other to the heterosexual nation, has consistently been characterized as *foreign*. This is evident in the history of the tongzhi/queer literature of Taiwan, in which themes of travel, exile, and diaspora are persistently associated with those who are erotically and romantically attracted to people of the same sex. For example, Chu T'ien-wen's 1994 awarding-winning novel *Huangren Shouji* (荒人手記, translated into English as *Notes of a Desolate Man* by Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-chun Lin), a classic of postmodernist fiction and a canonical contemporary text on *tongxinglian* (Martin 2003, 104), traces the feverish wanderings of one desolate man from Taipei to Tokyo to the Vatican City and many other places around the globe while absorbing and reflecting on an extravaganza of foreign philosophy and culture from Michel Foucault to Thomas Williams. Chu, through Xiao Shao's melancholic and nostalgic contemplations on the loss of his friend Ah Yao and "on his relation as homosexual man to the institutions of family and nation" (Martin 2003, 104) encourages readers to imagine a time and place "not yet there," a place Muñoz might describe as one that is "not yet here but functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and past to critique presentness" (106). The homosexual wanderer confesses that "I have long been infected by an incurable sense of drifting and rootlessness [. . . upon] the call of the *yin* world, [where] the homosexuals have no homeland" (Chu 1994, 145). Xiao Shao's characterization of the *yin* world—*yin* being negative, dark, and feminine, as opposed to *yang*, which is positive, bright, and masculine (Wang 3)—is associated with a lack of "homeland," or in Martin's translation, "fatherland," which is translated by Goldblatt and Lin as "the nationless world."¹ The Chinese phrase for nation, *zu guo* (祖國), is feminine and is often allegorized with a feminine image, as is evident in the classic text *The Huannanzi* (淮南子) in its formulation of heaven as father and earth as mother. While a single equivalent term may not exist in English, one can easily add a gendered modifier to indicate a nation's gender and perhaps the world's femininity and masculinity, motherhood, and fatherhood. Martin's use of the masculine *fatherland* subverts and troubles the binary models of the translanguing encounter by complicating established understandings of source and target texts based on "the notion of a fixed point of origin and of translation as an endpoint in cross-cultural exchange," to use Baer's words (40). Goldblatt and Lin, whose translation seems to posit "a nationless world" of negotiating and crossing borders, approximate a notion of neutrality in terms of gender.

¹ Fran Martin translates "同性戀者無祖國" as "... the homosexuals have no fatherland [wu zuguo]" (See: *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public*, p. 104); Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-chun Lin translates it as "in the nationless world", see: *Notes of a Desolate Man*, p.108.

If the set of behaviours and codes of conduct we refer to as feminine or masculine are not to be slaves to biology (Muñoz 106), the way that translators (both Martin and Goldblatt and Lin) queer equivalence—or “conceptualize sameness that is never the same” (Baer 40)—functions not only as a place of possibility and transformation from a nationalist framing of homosexuals to a queer investigation of homonationalism but also challenges traditional binary models of sender and receiver. A queer transformation, I would argue, is necessarily an aspect of translation. The original is no longer husband, father, or author (Chamberlain 456). It now takes on a seductive subversion of the binary source and target languages that moves beyond the restrictive and reductive binaries that structure popular understandings of both translation and heterosexual relationships, at least in ideal terms, as requiring fidelity and beautifulness suggestive of a missionary position and submissiveness next to godliness (Chamberlain 461). The linkage between translation and sex appears most familiarly in the old-fashioned, famous tag *les belles infidèles*. As Lori Chamberlain points out, such an attitude “betrays real anxiety about the problem of paternity and translation” as it “mimics the patrilineal kinship system where paternity—not maternity—legitimizes an offspring” (456). If the illusion of fidelity in textual communication and sexual intercourse represents the inner and outer nature of what Theodor Adorno, in “Sexual Taboos and Law Today,” calls the “patriarchal commandment of abstinence, virginity, and chastity” (72), queer translation is extrinsic to what heteronormativity demands. Whereas heteronormativity speaks to “a bias related to sexual object choice” (Muñoz154), queer translation allows us to imagine a space for communication, circulation, and transformation outside the heteronormative imperative and to conceptualize possibilities unconstrained by binaries, dominated by fathers/husbands, disciplined by masters, or penetrated by the phallus.

Queer translation thus resists the various violent asymmetries and binaries that dominate traditional understanding of translation. Basile, in her imaginative article “A Scene of Intimate Entanglements, or, Reckoning with the ‘Fuck’ of Translation,” offers a seductive image of the “fuck” of translation as “a profoundly disorienting experience of bodily arousal drawn into a zone of indefinite proximity to the object of desire, always somewhere else, just beyond our reach” (29). Basile’s problematization and legitimization of the non-phallic “fuck” of translation is a call to move beyond binaries of fucking. She argues that, if translation “holds out dangerous pleasures of cultural transgression and leakage even in its most domesticating and conservative manifestations,” and if queerness “connotes ways of living that refuse the normative containment of socio-sexual regimes of power,” the terrain between them can be a “fuckable” one (27). For Basile, the queering of translation is based on a “pervasive heterosexist analogy” between sexuality and translation that pervades the idea of *les belles infidèles* (27). Differing from Gayatri Spivak’s consideration of translation as the most intimate act of reading, in the scene of translation unfolded pornographically by Basile, languages touch, pleasure, lubricate, and fuck each other, undoing and repurposing systems and norms. Associating this kind of doing and undoing with the performative enables us to see that translation opens unprecedented possibilities for queering or fucking binaries: source vs. target language/culture, husband vs. wife, master vs. slave, vagina vs. penis, yin vs. yang.

Drawing on Basile, Robinson associates vagina with vaginoplasty not only to critique sexism and gender binaries but also to elaborate on what has been fetishized as source-target equivalence in translation studies. Robinson proposes that “the Translation Studies version of genderfuck would be *equivalencefuck*” (xxiv) (emphasis in original). He reminds us that some people want to trouble and “*fuck* gender norms” (xxiii, emphasis in original), offering as an example his reading of Lotbinière-Harwood’s *Re-belle et infidèle: la traduction comme pratique de ré-écriture au féminin/ The Body Bilingual: Translation as a Rewriting in the Feminine* as “a kind of manifesto for radical feminist translations that fuck strategically with equivalence” (xxiv). In revealing that translators and translations can legitimately be rebellious and unfaithful, the seductive scene of translation, as constructed by Basile, offers a prospect of not only making love to but *fucking* languages, as well as a process of translating, using pleasurable lubrication, without the presence of a phallus. It is worth mentioning here that Robinson strategically uses the gender-neutral *ze* and *zir* throughout his monograph to fuck the rigid gender binaries that have shaped our understandings of sexuality past and present, confirm the foundational premises of his critique of homolingual and heterolingual addresses, and call for translanguing forms of address on the other.

As Christopher Larkosh argued, working across languages and cultures can both complement and question how we think about gender and sexuality within “established and continuing projects” such as gay/lesbian studies and thereby challenge “one’s own sense of gender or sexuality” (4). This suggests that dismantling sexual and gender binaries structured around fixed, stable identities can open new possibilities for cross-identification outside binary oppositions, including (as Larkosh observed) man/woman, male/female, hiv+/hiv–, straight/gay, and, I would add, those having to do with sexual roles such as master/slave, top/bottom, puppy/handler, dominant/submissive, fister/fistee that travel across languages, cultures, and communities. Taking this further, if binary gender can be a territory within which penis-centred masculine heterosexuality is idealized as territoriality and vagina-defined feminine heterosexuality conceived as sub-territoriality, as argued by Robinson (2020), fucking binaries pushes gender and sexual roles and identities beyond exclusive heterosexual/ homosexual categories and analogies between a masculinist privileging autonomy of the master (original) text and independence of the feminized servant (target) text. Only when translation is divorced from both sexual and linguistic boundaries will it be able to create a practice that is “amorphous, ambiguous, different and quite possibly queer” (Spurlin 2017, 176).

Coming back to Goldblatt and Lin’s English translation of *Notes of a Desolate Man*, we can see that the translation of sadomasochism in the text no longer “depends on” the so-called original text. In fact, it radically subverts the binary between original and translation by bringing out the unseen, closeted sadism in the Chinese text. When the protagonist, Ah Yao, reappears (after disappearing just before the screening of a Luis Buñuel film he is attending with the narrator), he is “engulfed in the stink of urine” and has “shoe prints on his face.” Shocked by Ah Yao’s ghastly appearance, the narrator busies himself with questions and confessions:

... 我心臆阿堯大約是去幹了那事。但他的可怕樣子擾亂了我好久。他挨扁了嗎？或是性虐待？被凌虐的他痛快嗎？細節，細節，我太想搞懂細節。千百種性幻

想，夢魘纏繞我，幾至我甘願降服于這股強大求知慾，以身試法在所不惜！
(Chu 146)

Had someone beat him up? Or was it S&M? Did he enjoy being abused? Details, details, I wanted details. Thousands of sexual fantasies entangled me like nightmarish demons, to the point where I was willing to try them out just to satisfy my curiosity. (Goldblatt and Lin 108)

Chu's use of the Chinese phrase 性虐待, which means "sexual abuse," potentially erases the bilateral, interpersonal, and interactive sexual interests and practices under the S&M umbrella, which include, but also extend beyond, a broad range of identities, practices, and communities related to bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and/or sadomasochism (Simula 700). At first glance, Goldblatt and Lin's translation suggests a binary understanding of a master/slave, sadist/masochist relationship, although their inclusion of an ampersand in the capitalized acronym S&M may already hint at a space for ambiguity and uncertainty. But any sense of binarism is problematized by the fact that the translators expand the non-normative, unspeakable desire and fantasy through bringing together that which is visible, semi-visible, and invisible and those who take pleasure from not only using and abusing but also being used and abused. Another way in which Goldblatt and Lin strategically fuck the binaries by covertly subverting sexual norms and politics of sex is made manifest by first, writing "fantasies" rather than the singular, exclusive "fantasy" and, second, in making clear the agency of the "submissive" subject by transferring the subject from '被凌虐的他' (the abused him) to "he" in the question "Did he enjoy being abused?" and adding "someone" (apparently referring to the sadist) as the subject of the question "Did someone beat him up?". This recreates but does not privilege the "dominant" subject's autonomy.

Conclusion

As translation studies has become increasingly intertwined with queer theory to stimulate significant shifts in queering social identities and categories, it has become increasingly clear that, when working across languages and cultures, we need to pay attention to the complex and nuanced ways in which desire, sexuality, and gender are inscribed in languages and translation. While fucking binaries plays a vital role in critiquing what is fetishized as source-target equivalence in translation, considering translation as a queer praxis demonstrates that the translated text is always "a site of supplementarity and difference" (Spurlin 2014, 204). An awareness of this reveals the correlations of translation studies with queer theory, gender, and sexuality and opens exploratory routes for new approaches to queer/queering translation. As Spurlin points out, both *queer* and *translation* mediate between "hegemonically defined spaces, and their critical conjunction offers the possibility of new sites of heterogeneity and difference as a vital heuristic" (181). In other words, both queer and translation are "never finished"; both modes of inquiry are "committed to the endless proliferation of difference(s)" (2017, 181). Queer is not just an issue of sexual rights, nor is translation essentially about "equivalences between languages" (2017, 181). This is why queer translation—which involves "the dismantling of binary models of exchange structured around a fixed and stable origin and a fixed and stable endpoint" (Baer 48)—calls attention to how we can

disentangle some of the established binarism around the relationship between translation and sexuality and the source-target equivalence binarism in translation, question long-established gender roles and heteronormative sexuality, undermine the regime of homolingual address and the model of heterolingual address, and in Baer's words, "undermine the myth of monolingualism and the cultural capital it represents" (35).

Research that explores how queer theory and translation studies potentially intersect, interact, and interrelate has to be based on a productive and mutually interrogative encounter between the two fields, both of which are centrally concerned with "the conceptualization and representation of sameness and difference," and with disruptions of "borders and bordering," as Baer reminds us (12). Just as queer theory challenges the assumed naturalness and universality of "dominant regimes of knowledge/power" (Baer and Kaindal 3) and resists "the model of stability" that defaults to heterosexuality as its "origin" (Jagose 3), queering translation seeks to explore more expansive ways of imagining sexual and gender identities, desires, and practices. Recent scholarly interventions such as Baer's *Queer Theory and Translation Studies*, Christian Bancroft's *Queering Modernist Translation*, Robinson's *Translation, Transgender, Translingual Address*, and Antonio Jesús Martínez Pleguezuelos's "Translating the Queer Body" suggest that the traditional models of mismatches between sex, gender, desire, and body have been ruptured.

However, one possible anxiety that might be mapped onto this project concerns the issue of whether "a generic masculinity may be reinstalled at the heart of the ostensibly gender-neutral queer" (Jagose 3). I use *queer* and *queering* to describe ways of touching, lubricating, and fucking between textuality and sexuality beyond "phallogocentric ways of reading and articulating" difference (Mukherjee 135). By theorizing and doing translation as a queer praxis involving the fucking of binaries, queering translation enables subversion of ideological penetration by linguistic, cultural and sexual hegemonies. Queer translation thus becomes "a place of resistance against the imposed patriarchal and heteronormative structures" (Martínez Pleguezuelos 113). Situating queer/queering translation in the Chinese context offers broadened opportunities to queer how we think about sexual difference, cultural dissimilitude, and linguistic diversity in translation. In particular, it resists the minoritarian framing—which adheres to an established hegemonic hierarchy—of Chinese/Sinophone language and culture as non-Anglophone and/or non-Western, situates them under the Asian umbrella, or reduces them to the category *foreign*. Queering translation in the Chinese context is a potentiality that is always on the horizon and allows for "unveiling the most intimate textualizations of our identities and desires for queering translation" (Santaemilia 13).

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