

Transdualism

Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment

ZAIRONG XIANG

Abstract The author introduces the concept of transdualism to critique dualism without relying on a dualistic model of critique, the *modus operandi* necessary for a critique against sexual dualism and hetero/cisnormativity. Transdualism offers an opportunity to dwell within that operation by staying *below* (not beyond) the “dualism,” that is, *below* the logic of either/or. The essay will explore the notion of “transdualism” through the hexagram Tai of the *Yi Jing*, which is often used in medical contexts to illustrate the body-of-orifices of *Huangdi Neijing* or the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*. The author reads this body-of-orifices, which is primarily represented by its nine major bodily tunnels, with yinyang philosophy as gender/sex indeterminant and shows that the *Inner Canon’s* yinyang body-of-orifices points to something more transgressive, which could unsettle from within the naturalism of gender and sexual dualism and the nature/culture as well as other dualistic divides that have informed contemporary critical rethinking of embodiment. By unpacking the hexagram Tai alongside *Inner Canon’s* body-of-orifices, as well as contemporary feminist, queer, and transgender theorizations of the body and sexuality, this essay aims at rethinking the materio-discursive complexity of the body-of-orifices, which has been either dualistically separated into antagonisms between man and woman, sex and gender, body and discourse, yin and yang; or one-sidedly reduced to a function of “social construction,” knowable only through language—or problematically lumped together in a gender-is-fluid postmodern “both-and,” which supposedly overcomes the metaphysico-theological “either/or.”

Keywords yinyang, dualism, embodiment, either/or, *Yi Jing (I Ching)*

In the classic of traditional Chinese medicine, *Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon—Simple Questions* (黃帝內經—素問), Qibo the erudite doctor answers Huandi or the Yellow Emperor’s question regarding the body and its relationship with the four seasons. Qibo gives a detailed explanation of the nine bodily orifices (*qiao* 竅) and their connectivity with the five corresponding inner organs of the body. This body-of-orifices is often seen as corresponding to hexagram Tai of the *Yi Jing* or *Book of Changes*. Fundamental to both medical and philosophical understanding of the body in these Chinese sources is yinyang theory.

In this article, I will closely examine the *Inner Canon's* body-of-orifices through yinyang theory and the hexagram Tai, aiming at complicating the dualism of male/female and masculinity/femininity, as well as the dualism of sex/gender and matter/discourse, central to contemporary feminist, queer, and trans theorizations. This yinyang body-of-orifices, I suggest, provides a rich model for rethinking the body and embodiment as a materio-discursive formation that goes beyond, or rather, *below* the either/or logic, and it could potentially unsettle from within the naturalism of gender and sexual dualism and the nature/culture, matter/discourse as well as other dualistic divides that underlie contemporary critical rethinking of embodiment. I call this materio-discursive yinyang correlation mapped onto the porous body “transdualism.”

Transdualism furthers the critiques of dualism *without* relying on a dualistic model of critique, the *modus operandi* necessary for a critique against sexual dualism and hetero/cisnormativity. The essay will explore the notion of “transdualism” through yinyang theory and hexagram Tai, as well as contemporary critical theorizations of sexual embodiment, especially in the context of trans and queer theories. First, we will conceptualize a decolonized and “de-straightened” yinyang theory with the help of both an etymological inquiry into the concept and its originary philosophical articulations in foundational texts such as the *Yi Jing*, *Huangdi Neijing*, and *Dao Dejing*. Then, we will move to examine hexagram Tai of *Yi Jing* with Qibo’s body-of-orifices as a transdualistic theory of the body and further discuss its implications for our radical rethinking of embodiment and sexuality, joining the broader debates in feminist, queer, and transgender theories. The article will end by reexamining contemporary debates between theorists on the issue of materiality central to theorizations on trans embodiment through the lens of yinyang transdualism.

By unpacking the hexagram Tai alongside *Inner Canon's* yinyang body-of-orifices as well as engaging with contemporary feminist, queer, and trans theorizations of the body and sexuality, this essay ultimately aims at rethinking the materio-discursive complexity of the body-of-orifices, which has been *either* dualistically separated into antagonisms between man and woman, sex and gender, body and discourse, yin and yang, *or* one-sidedly reduced to a function of “social construction,” knowable only through language, *or* problematically lumped together in a gender-is-fluid postmodern “both-and,” which supposedly overcomes the metaphysico-theological “either/or.”

Contraria Sunt Complementa

In Chinese (and to a large extent East Asian) cosmology, woman and man, moon and sun, and other dualistic pairs are shorthand for the two fundamental forces, yin and yang. Since yin is conveniently interpreted as female/moon/passivity and

yang as male/sun/activity, it seems to be nothing more than just another heterosexual cosmologic dualism, not very different from the dominant dualism in Western metaphysics that has been under critical examination by feminist, transgender, queer, as well as postcolonial and decolonial thinkers. The long history of masculine domination and pervasive heteronormativity in China further confirms this kind of reductive reading of yinyang. Then, what is yinyang, the utterly familiar yet often misapprehended concept that captures cosmic propensities? And what does yinyang have to do with our discussion of trans issues?

The short transliteration “yin and yang” or “yinyang,” already shows an unconventional order of words: “yin and yang” and therefore “woman and man,” “moon and sun,” “passive and active.” The masculine habit of appearing first is reversed at least at the linguistic level. Since one would never say “yangyin” or “yang and yin,” one might at least pause for a moment before rushing into turning yinyang into another representation of (hetero-)masculine domination.

Etymologically, *yin* means the northern, shadowy side of the mountain and *yang* the southern, sunny side.¹ Already in this observation, we can see that the attribution of yinyang to the different sides of the mountain depends on a geographical feature of China, whose location in the northern hemisphere makes it possible to relate the mountain’s northern side to “shadowiness.” Yinyang is a contextual cosmology. If we take the northern hemispheric location for granted, the boundary between the northern side and the southern side of the mountain also depends on the movement of the sun. Since the sun’s movement changes (according to an unchangeable route), the boundary between yin and yang and also their differences are very clear yet difficult to demarcate, although it is by no means random or unpredictable.

The problematic understanding of yinyang as a dualistic pair can be seen, for example, in Alenka Zupančič’s “Sexual Difference and Ontology,” in which she lumps yinyang with other “traditional ontologies and traditional cosmologies,” which she claims to be “strongly reliant on sexual difference, . . . [such as] Ying-yang [*sic*], water-fire, earth-sun, matter-form, active-passive—this kind of (often explicitly sexualized) opposition was used as the organizing principle of these ontologies and/or cosmologies . . . based on them” (2012). Mladen Dolar similarly claims, via Lacan’s ill-informed interpretation of yinyang as a “primitive science . . . of sexual technique” (Lacan 1998: 151), that “Aristotelian ontology is like our Western version of yin-yang, it makes analogous assumptions about *hyle* and *morphe*, matter and form, the feminine and the masculine, the passive and the active.” (Dolar 2012). Although there are dualistic components in yinyang, an important and often misapprehended point to which I will return later, the two contradictory tendencies are at the same time in the process of constantly

becoming each other. That is to say, they are *not* two ontologically separated entities that would be joined together with *and* as in the very term *yin and yang*. To tease out the complex yinyang relationality and to avoid misapprehension of yinyang as a sort of ontology of sexual difference, it is important to stress that the yin and the yang are *either* mutually restraining (克) *and* mutually generative (生).²

Yinyang marks an unchangeable principle of (non-)changing. Very different from the binary oppositional dualism that dominates Western philosophy, yin and yang is/are *either* different and the same. It is precisely the reason yinyang is rarely referred to as “yin *and* yang” in Chinese, but rather as 陰陽—yinyang. This two-as-oneness of yinyang indeed posits a linguistic problem in English: yinyang *is* or yinyang *are*? To mark the philosophical specificity of the term, the coinage “yinyang” and the third-person singular will be used. However, *yinyang* is not a complete merging of *yin* and *yang*. Their togetherness retains their differences. Examples abound where the yin and the yang are separately mentioned: the Confucian commentary on the *Yi Jing* titled 繫辭 or “Commentary on the Appended Phrases” puts yinyang separately: 一陰一陽之謂道 (one yin and one yang, this is called Dao) (B. Wang 2011: 345); and in the Daoist classic 道德經 or *Dao Dejing*: 萬物負陰而抱陽 (all things carry yin yet embrace yang) (chapter 42). Ultimately, however, the yin and the yang are *either* different *and* the same, just as it is stated in the beginning of *Dao Dejing*, 此兩者，同出而異名 (these two, they come from the same place yet bear different names) (chapter 1).

Capturing the dynamics of yinyang by way of understanding them/it as the spiritual and the material, François Jullien claims that “the spiritual and the material are bound together here, indissociably linked, continuously depend; . . . They are the dual, joint dimension of all process and do not let themselves be formed into separate levels of domains” (2015: 85). He also states in the previous paragraph, “Some twenty-five centuries later . . . , [yinyang] is *still* a matter in China” (84; my emphasis). It is worth pondering on this *still* for a moment, and I will also elaborate what I mean by a “decolonized and de-straightend” yinyang theory.

Jullien’s statement might echo what Johannes Fabian has famously termed “the denial of coevalness,” that is, the idea of a timeless “Orient” locked in history (2014). Contrary to the Orientalist tendency of seeing yinyang as an unchanging or unchangeable “Chinese concept,” yinyang undoubtedly has a long history of change, especially after it entered philosophical treatises after the Warring States period. A very important example of yinyang’s drastic transformation dates to the Han Dynasty and the work of the eminent Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE). Robin Wang points out that Dong’s transformation of yinyang harmony (和, he) to a regulating unification (合, he) has philosophically prepared for the long-lasting patriarchal subordination of women in China (2005a). In

Dong's formulation, yinyang is very much understood as yin and yang, not very different from its modern, misunderstood form. Arguably, from Dong on, observations of yinyang as static gendered roles become more common. For example, Zhou Dunyi (1017–73) of the Song Dynasty in his influential treatise on the Taiji symbol has theorized that “the dao of Qian gives birth to man; the dao of Kun gives birth to woman” (乾道生男，坤道生女), a sexual dualism that cannot be found in the original *Yi Jing* text (Wang 2005b: 310).

Let us go back to the question of Orientalism within the scope of the coloniality of knowledge. Another significant risk of the critique of Orientalism is to retain the West as the one and only speaking subject, even when it is being criticized. I mean to say that the critique of the Orientalist projection of an East that never changes should *not* impede us from seeing, recognizing, and appreciating the possibility of nonchangeability (as part of change), that is, something that is enduring, everlasting, and *still* relevant, from time immemorial. “Twenty-five centuries later, it is *still* a matter in China.”³ If we agree that a decolonized reading means methodologically foregrounding non-Western and nonmodern cosmologies, then it is important to dwell a bit on this changing-nonchanging correlation within the critical tradition of yinyang and *Yi Jing*.

Let us look at the title of the foundational text of Chinese philosophy, which the above-mentioned work by the French Sinologist is about, the *Yi Jing*. Consisting of sixty-four hexagrams based on a complex multiplication of the two cosmic propensities of yinyang, *Yi Jing* attempts to represent cosmic phenomena and their constancy and mutations. The tension and correlation between yin and yang is captured in the title of the book, 易經 (*Yi Jing*). Often translated as “Book of Changes,” *Yi Jing* could be more accurately translated as the “Unchangeable Script of (Non-)changeability.” While 經 (*jing*) etymologically means “the warp”, that is, the unchangeable line of weaving, 易 (*yi*) connotes at once effortlessness (簡易), changeability (變異), and nonchangeability or invariability (不易).⁴ *Yi Jing* as unchangeable scripture of (non-)changeability is made possible by the dynamic correlation of yinyang: while yang ascends and vaporizes, yin descends and concretizes, yin's propensity for rigidity and stillness is equally as forceful as yang's propensity for flexibility and mutation. In light of this, I argue that while it is necessary to critique the Orientalist “denial of coevalness,” it is at best only a partial “decolonization.” The critique should not automatically overlook the (possibility of) unchanging relevance or “haunting” of a concept from the past in the present. Yinyang *still* matters in contemporary China, despite and because of its long history of mutation.

Further, in the intellectual history of yinyang philosophy, Dong Zhongshu's reinterpretation of yinyang as a hierarchical order of yin's subordination to yang stands out as an early form of heteronormativity. Long before “the invention

of heterosexuality” or the modern/colonial heterosexuality (Katz 2007; Lugones 2007), yinyang was already made into a rather explicit heteronormative ideology. A further step of decolonization is to resist reinforcing the West’s “monopoly of evil.” The benevolent critique of Eurocentrism, more often than not, reinscribes the West as both the origin of all evil and the sun of all truth. This can be seen in the phenomenon of progressive scholarship criticizing the “West” while habitually relying solely on Western thinkers (the most prominent examples being white cis-male French postwar thinkers) and being reluctant to engage with any non-Western intellectual works, in particular those not written in English, French, or German.⁵ Precisely because of its lasting relevance in Chinese culture, yinyang with its heteronormative underpinning needs to be de-straightened and its reading decolonized so as to pave the way for a queer, transdualistic yinyang to emerge as a theoretical source for contemporary debates on gender/sexuality and embodiment.

The above-mentioned brief example of yinyang’s modification, transformation, and solidification within Chinese intellectual history alerts us against an Orientalist imaginary of the unchanging “ancient wisdom” whose flip side is always that of an indistinguishable swamp, deprived of history and difference, politics and struggle (Chiang 2012). While it is true that yinyang is “only employed to express a relation; one notion is the opposite of the other, the one is positive, the other negative” (Alfred Fork in R. Wang 2012: 7), it is dangerous and unhelpful to suggest that “yin and yang do not mean anything in themselves at all” (8), suggesting an inability or unwillingness to distinguish between them. This convoluted question leads us back to the question of dualism. Rather than dualism, a stronghold of Western metaphysics and Christian theology, Robin Wong suggests, for example, that yinyang thought “appeals to integrated processes rather than divided dualisms” (14).

It is true that yin and yang need to be understood in relation to each other and that their relationality enables yinyang to be nonessentialist, nondeterministic, and also nondualistic, at least in theory.⁶ However, it is also correct to insist that yin *is not* yang, although it *might be* and is in fact *becoming* yang (and the other way around). Fung Yu-lan admirably illustrates this complexity as follows:

Everything can in one sense be *Yang* and in another sense *Yin*, according to its relation with other things. For instance, a man is *Yang* in relation to his wife, but *Yin* in relation to his father. The metaphysical *Yang* which produces all things, however, can only be *Yang*, and the metaphysical *Yin* out of which everything is produced can only be *Yin*. Hence in the metaphysical statement: “One *Yang* and one *Yin*: this is called the *Tao*.” (2007: 278)

That yin *is not* yang is vividly shown in *Yi Jing*'s rich visual reservoir: for example, the earliest visual images 河圖洛書 deploy black-and-white dots to depict yin and yang, a strategy continued in the influential treatise of Taiji by Zhou Dunyi mentioned earlier and the well-known Taiji symbol. That the two cosmic propensities are represented with black and white, but not gray, which would be their integration, evades the facile postmodern “both . . . and.” In color theory, we learn that black is produced by the “subtractive method” by adding all colored pigments together, while white is produced by the “additive method” by adding all colored lights together. Yin and yang, very much like black and white, posit a challenge to thought: how to understand their coexisting difference and distinguishable sameness. If metaphysical and theological dualism is a logic of “either/or”—a pitfall that underlies much of modern colonialism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia—the (postmodern) critique seeking to overcome it prefers a liberal “both . . . and” or a Deleuzian enumerative “and . . . and . . . and” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 36). “Gender is fluid” (together with “gender is socially constructed”) has almost become a new axiom. The linguistic turn’s enormous impact on gender theory cannot be overstated. However, the “turns” more often than not reproduce a dualistic either/or at the very moment of the turn. The old phallogocentric “either/or” is overcome *dualistically* by a new paradigm of “both . . . and” or “and . . . and . . . and.”

Body-of-Orifices

In chapter 4 of *Huangdi Neijing—Suwen*, titled “Jinkui zhenyan” (金匱真言, “The True Words from the Golden Closet”), Qibo explains the correspondences between inner organs and bodily orifices (*qiao* 竅) as well as their connections to the four seasons, and a wide range of natural and cultural experiences such as colors, musical notes, and tastes. The liver has its orifice in the eyes, the heart in the ears, the spleen in the mouth, the lung in the nose, and the kidney in the “two yin orifices,” namely, the genitals and the anus.⁷

Hexagram Tai of the *I Ching* is often invoked in medical theory and theory of the body to illustrate what I call “body-of-orifices.” In *Shanju Xinyu*, Yang Yu writes 蓋自此 [人中] 而上，眼耳鼻皆雙竅；自此而下，口暨二便皆單竅；成一泰卦耳 (from this point [the philtrum] above, the eyes, the ears, and the nostrils are all double orifices; and from this point below, the mouth and the two openings [the genitalia and the anus] are all single orifices; [together they]



Figure 1. Hexagram Tai

form hexagram Tai) (2006: 209). Like other hexagrams, the hexagram Tai is a combination of two trigrams. Each trigram is a combination of two kinds of lines: the open/short lines signifying yin and the full/long lines meaning yang (fig. 1). In this particular hexagram, the upper trigram is

made of three yin lines and the lower trigram of three yang lines. The “great stability” or “peace” (Tai) has an all-yin upper trigram, known as *kun* (坤) and an all-yang trigram known as *qian* (乾). *Kun* is above and *Qian* is below. Since yin has the propensity to descend and yang to ascend, the hexagram actually embodies a status of intermingling or coitus. The great stability is made of the dynamic interaction of two contradictory propensities of the universe.

If we agree with the relational account of yinyang, that yin is the negativity of yang, this mingling of yinyang potentially balances out gender. Yet these contradictory propensities are not mathematical in that “A + (-A)” and their addition would lead to annihilation represented (strategically) by the number zero. By “strategic,” I want to remind the reader that “zero” posits both nothingness (無, not having) and potential (有, having had). As the commentary accompanying the *Yi Jing* on the Judgment, *Tuan* (象), states, 天地交而萬物通也 (Heaven and Earth interact, and the myriad things interchange smoothly).⁸ The intermingling of the oppositional-complementary propensities, instead of producing annihilation, gives rise to a status of stability that resembles a temporary erasure of differences while retaining constant propensities for differentiations. Their mingling initiates, substantiates, and is instantiated by the “ten thousand things” (萬物). “Things” (物) is not “‘entities in isolation’ (what in European philosophy would be ‘substance’), but rather phenomena, events and even histories” (R. Wang 2012: 49). Léon Vandermeersch puts it succinctly: “La pensée chinoise saisit la nature des choses non pas comme *sub-stancielle*, c’est-à-dire comme fondamentalement stable, mais comme *sub-mutationnelle*, c’est-à-dire fondamentalement changeante” (Chinese thought understands things not as *substantial*, that is to say, as fundamentally stable, but as *submutational*, that is to say, fundamentally changing) (2013: 111–12). In this sense, the seemingly genderless hexagram Tai is pregnant with all possible variations of genders and nongenders. Each one has its own place in the cosmos (after all, yinyang is a cosmology that attempts to capture the myriad things in the universe), yet the boundary between the discrete ones is never clearly demarcated. The porosity of the body exemplifies this permeability. However, what is at stake here is not to simply debunk the ontology that assumes the *substantial* self-sufficiency of entities, a task that has been performed throughout history even within the conveniently overarching category of “European philosophy.” What I want to ask, with the help of the *submutational* yinyang, is how can we take into consideration both discreteness and porosity, or a trans-feminist politics “resistant to any fixed difference as well as to any indifference to difference” (Keller 2003: 166).

1. *The Unobstructed Bodily Openness*

Huangdi Neijing, as noted earlier, explains the human body through its inner-outer connectivity. Putting aside the link between the inner organs and their

corresponding orifices, I will dwell on the *qiao* or orifices. The hexagram Tai is here to help us on a visual and abstract level to rethink profoundly what is a body. We observe that the upper trigram of hexagram Tai is made of three yin lines (fig. 1). They can be seen as representing three pairs of bodily orifices: the eyes, the ears and the nostrils; whereas the lower trigram consists of three yang lines representing three single orifices of the body: the mouth, the genitalia, and the anus. Here I want to emphasize that the porous body is understood through its open orifices, in which the penis is nothing more than an orifice, undifferentiated from the vagina. They are both called “yin orifices” (陰竅) and are represented in hexagram Tai with yang lines in the yang sphere of Qian (乾) situated on the lower part of the hexagram. Anatomically, the penis, belying all attempts to make it phallic (that is, only penetrating), does contain a hole, the urethra that one needs to keep unblocked and penetrable (*tong* 通). The Chinese word *tong* 通 (unblockedness) is used in *Xugua Zhuan* (序卦傳) to explain hexagram Tai: “hexagram Tai, that is unblocked-ness” (《泰》者，通也).

This smoothly unblocked, or porous and penetrable body is both material and discursive. Social constructivism alone cannot provide an adequate explanation. At this moment of the visual abstraction of the human body in the hexagram Tai, the body is neither sexed nor gendered. This transgressive and sexless/genderless body full of orifices seems to have gotten on the nerves of Chinese intellectuals throughout history. Qian Zhongshu, for example, recounts several contestations that are quite unhappy with the gender/sexual ambiguity implied by the hexagram. For example, in 《逸周書·武順解》 *ren zhong*, or philtrum, is here referred to as the “middle of the body,” meaning the (male) genital (2007: 1:25).

2. *The Nonheteronormative Reproductivity*

Looking at hexagram Tai as a “representation” of the body, we observe some intriguing facts. The body is understood through its “absence”; its holes could have been potentially cast as “nothing to be seen” à la Freud. The yin trigram Kun is above the yang trigram Qian, that is, the natural order of sky (Qian) above earth (Kun) has been reversed in this hexagram. This reversal seems to be disturbing to Wang Bi, who was very likely influenced by Dong Zhongshu’s dualistic interpretation of yinyang as a static hierarchy. He feels the necessity to insert a commentary on hexagram Tai: 上下大通，則物失其節 (When what is above and what is below achieve interaction on such a grand scale, things lose their proper place and time).⁹ This observation is not supported in the original text of hexagram Tai (泰。小往大來，吉亨 [*Tai* is such that the petty depart, and the great arrive, so good fortune will prevail]) or in the two original commentaries, for example, 彖曰：泰。小往大來，吉亨，則是天地交而萬物通也，上下交而其志同也 (Commentary on the Judgments: “The petty depart, and the great arrive,

so good fortune will prevail.” That is, Heaven and Earth interact perfectly, and the myriad things go smoothly. Those above and those below interact perfectly, and their will becomes one).¹⁰

Richard John Lynn, translator of the annotated version of the *Yi Jing* by Wang Bi, further spells out what Wang means here in a footnote: “At a time of such fructification, nature is, in effect, out of control, and it requires a true sovereign to bring order to things” (1994: 210). “Fructification” and “order of things” call to mind what in queer theory would be called “reproductive heteronormativity.” Much energy has been spent on disputing heteronormativity, for which reproduction or “fructification” indeed serves as a central target for critical reflection and deconstruction. From the critique of the “child” to “reproductive futurism,” further to chrononormativity, reproduction seems to be undoubtedly antagonistic to queerness. Queerness has been understood as “the exception to the conventional ordering of sex, reproduction and intimacy” (Chen 2012: 11). The theoretical sophistication and political usefulness of these critiques notwithstanding, aligning the queer with antireproduction or nonreproduction seems to be rather *straightforward*. Is queerness antithetical to reproduction? Or are reproductivity and heteronormativity interchangeable? Is a nonheteronormative reproductivity, or even nonreproductive heteronormativity, possible?

The answers to these questions might be found in *Yi Jing*'s two hexagrams: hexagram Tai and the one that follows. They seem to promise a reversal or at least de-straightening of the certainty of heteronormativity and, to some extent, of the critique of it, namely, the queer theory of antinormativity/reproductivity. As if to preempt the attempt to heteronormativize hexagram Tai, the hexagram that follows Tai does resemble the “natural order,” in which the yang-Qian-sky is above yin-Kun-earth. This hexagram is Pi (否), Stagnation, or Obstruction. Hexagram Pi represents the missionary position, one of the many cultural signifiers for reproductive heteronormativity. It summarizes the old hierarchy of man over woman, supposedly confirmed by the straightforward natural order of sky-above-the-earth, which is also, through metonymy, masculinity (sky) above femininity (earth). If we translate these duals into yinyang vocabulary and the hexagram, it would be exactly the hexagram Pi (否) that consists of the all-yang trigram Qian above the all-yin trigram Kun. Pi is the reversal of Tai.

Since yang ascends and yin descends, in the hexagram Pi the two propensities depart from each other, without communication, stagnated. The noncomplementary contradictions or the nonassimilating differences result in stagnation: each one transcends into annihilation. The word 否 is part and parcel of negativity. Commonly used to connote “denying” (pronounced as *fou*), 否 (here pronounced as *pi*) means wickedness or stagnation. The commentary on the images accompanying hexagram Pi clearly states, 象曰：天地不交，否 (Heaven and Earth do

not interact: this is the image of Obstruction).¹¹ The hexagram that immediately follows hexagram Tai associates the heteronormative order of things with negativity and stagnation, which resonates with the “death drive” or “no future” signature of queerness à la Lee Edelman and the “antisocial thesis” of queer theory (Edelman 2004; Caserio et al. 2006). As Edelman states in his influential *No Future*, “The queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity” and that “rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, this ascription of negativity to the queer, we might . . . do better to consider accepting and even embracing it” (2004: 4). I am not making an exception out of Edelman’s proposition on negativity. On the contrary, when he suggests that we embrace it, “it” points not to negativity per se but to “this ascription of negativity to the queer.” To embrace this ascription means “to withdraw our allegiance, however compulsory, from a reality based on the Ponzi scheme of reproductive futurism” (4).

But, what if negativity is ascribed to the “natural order of things”? What if the “bar to every realization of futurity” lies not in queerness per se but in the very *straight-forwardness* of these orders, particularly the order with a missionary position of heaven-masculinity-man above earth-femininity-woman? Is it not the case that reproductive futurity, indeed a Ponzi scheme, predicated on a promise of a future, ultimately secures a “future” predicated on death?

Tang Dynasty philosopher Kong Yingda further elaborated on Wang Bi’s commentary on hexagram Tai: “When things lose their proper place and time, then winter is warm, and summer is cold; autumn begets things, and spring puts them to death.” This can be rephrased, following the decolonized and de-straightened reading of the two hexagrams we just performed (not against its grain but following its original course), as follows: when things follow their straight orders of the so-called proper place and time, then winter is warm, and summer is cold, autumn begets things, and spring puts them to death.

“Reproductive heteronormativity is put in the service of the mode of exploitation, mitigating risk and enabling ruin, because the world is imagined to have this great capacity to reproduce itself infinitely” (Anderson et al. 2012: 85). If we follow Edelman that “the Child as futurity’s emblem must die,” from an ecological point of view, with which *I Ching* is primarily preoccupied, questions of heaven and earth, the Mother (Nature, Panchamama, Mother Camp) must not. What is queerest about us is probably not a will, a “willingness to insist intransitively—to insist that the future stop here,” but that queerness is the very *natural* condition for futurity *and* no future. Again, the dualism of life/death, queer/Child might be rethought *below* the heteronormative logic of binary opposition. “Reproductive heteronormativity, that most cherished and fantastical notion . . . may in fact threaten the exact world that gives it rhetorical strength” (Azzarello 2016: 138). Taking his conclusions from the neo-Confucian cosmologist

Shao Yong's theory on the evolution of things, a theoretical development departing from the *Yi Jing*, Fung Yu-Lan suggests that "[according to] the universal law . . . everything involves its own negation, a principle that was stressed both by Lao Tzu and the 'Appendices' of the *Book of Changes*" (2007: 454).

Either . . . And

Now let us go back and take a look at the two components of yinyang: the yin and the yang. As I have shown earlier, yinyang is either misapprehended as simply another dualism with two separable and ontologically fixed components, yin and yang, or it is understood as a relational and reciprocal "ancient wisdom," largely ahistorical and apolitical, resembling a quasi-postmodern swamp, the infamous "everything goes" that overlooks or denies the discreteness of the two propensities. As dualistic components or actons, to borrow vocabulary from quantum physics (Barad 2007), yin and yang are never and can never be the same, although one needs to remember that they are constantly becoming each other. These constant transformations take a rather counterintuitive route. The process in which yang becomes "bigger," that is to say, when the propensity of yang becomes fully realized, is the moment when yin is pregnant within yang. For the sake of clarity, if we temporarily equate yang to masculinity and yin to femininity, masculinity becomes femininity at its crescendo (and vice versa).

The tendency of yang-masculinity is to turn into yin-femininity. The moment of reversal, so to speak, is not when yang's masculinity diminishes, as it would be in a homophobic logic that sees "emasculatation" as a result of the weakening of masculinity. Instead, yang needs to reach its climax (to realize its full potentiality) in order to become yin. The visual rendering of yinyang, such as in the *Taiji* symbol, chooses to represent yin and yang as black and white, not gray. The moment of changing into each other occurs gradually, following each other's maximization. The running into each otherness of yin and yang is made possible not because of their sameness but because of their difference, distance, and dissidence. *Taiji*, one of the best-known symbols of yinyang, which has also been used by some as an emblem of the trans community (changing the black-white coloring to that of blue and pink), suggests that yin and yang are not static, enclosed notions or ontological entities but incessantly transforming or *transing* propensities.

Instead of understanding yinyang as a monist or nondualistic philosophy, the concept of "transdualism" works on the "nonseparable differences" and "distinguishing sameness" of yinyang, which is *either* different *and* the same. Transdualism takes "dualistic" pairs as operative in making sense of the world immanently but transforms them queerly in a way that keeps them both discernibly different and porously one and therefore ultimately belies dualism. This

move below the logic of “either/or” might in English be captured with the illegitimate pairing “either . . . and.” *Either* marks their separately differentiable qualities: private and public, inside and outside, and certainly male and female, masculinity and femininity, yin and yang. *And* marks their *transing* capacity by way of “yinyang.” “Either . . . and” retains the necessary distance and difference between the two propensities, and meanwhile it reminds us of their inseparability, “sameness,” and “porosity.” In short, transdualism takes dualistic pairs as strategies and propensities, operatively distinguished in the making sense of the world but dissenting and *transing* queerly at any given moment of fixity that would become an orthodoxy, naturalized and essentialized.

Trans in transdualism points not only to the Chinese concept of *yi* 易 but also to debates around the trans question in feminist, queer, and trans theories. If queer theories preoccupy themselves too readily with the discursive, transgender and especially transsexual critiques distinguish themselves by the very insistence on the importance of embodiment, that which cannot and should not be explained only by ways of discursive formation, linguistic construction, and representational citationality. What a transdualistic account tries to avoid is the pitfall of the social constructivist refusal to comprehend the bodily experience of surgically interfered transsexual subjects.

One eminent example around this debate is Jay Prosser’s argument with Judith Butler. He is particularly preoccupied with “the limitations over the figure of the transsexual and the literality of the sexed body in her [Judith Butler’s] work” (2006: 261). The literality of the sexed body is the insistence on bodily matter, on the embodied experience that informs but also belies discursive practice of the body. He argues, for example,

Because the subject often speaks of the imaginary body as more real or more sensible, . . . this phenomenon illustrates the materiality of the bodily ego rather than the phantasmatic status of the sexed body: the material reality of the imaginary and not, as Butler would have it, the imaginariness of material reality. That the transsexual’s trajectory centers on reconfiguring the body reveals that it is the ability to feel the bodily ego in conjunction and conformity with the material body parts that matters in a transsexual context; and that sex is perceived as something that must be changed underlines its very un-phantasmatic status. (271)

Gayle Salamon in her *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* joins this debate. She finds Prosser’s appeal to an uncomplicated material reality of the bodily ego of the transsexual, especially his recourse to psychoanalysis, “fantastically strange” because Prosser’s insistence on the “unimpeachably real” transsexual body “ends up landing him squarely in the Real, that domain of

plenitude and fullness [that] not only exists outside of language, but, indeed, is fundamentally impossible [*sic*] with subjectivity itself” (2010: 41).

It is not my intention to go into the details of this debate; however, I’d like to direct the reader’s attention to a kind of dualistic grammar and thinking structure of “either/or” that can be felt from both sides. Prosser emphasizes the “materiality of the bodily ego *rather than* the phantasmatic status of the sexed body” (2006: 271). Salamon deems it impossible to think beyond language: “Any insistence on a bodily materiality outside and opposed to discourse about bodies is not, of course, located outside discourse: the call itself proceeds discursively” (2010: 40). Although she correctly identifies the aim of Prosser’s *Second Skins*—as a critique of “queer theory’s focus on the constructedness and discursiveness of bodies,” a critique that she suggests is “emblematic of a trend in trans studies that appeals to bodily materiality” (37)—her insistence on the linguistic and discursive equation of the question leads her to quickly dismiss these attempts at dwelling in materiality: “The usefulness of the body image for theorizing gendered embodiment is precisely not that the body image is material, but that it allows for a resignification of materiality itself” (38). An opportunity for thinking beyond the omnipotence of language is missed, in a way that Karen Barad identifies as symptomatic of the linguistic turn, “of the extent to which matters of ‘fact’ (so to speak) have been replaced with matters of signification (no scare quotes here)” (2003: 801).

This debate points to a big philosophical question that this essay does not pretend to solve. What interests me here, or rather what I believe yinyang transdualism and its ramifications analyzed in previous sections could offer, is a *transing* of the theoretical certainties that have been strongly held on either side. Taking into consideration the actual overlapping and nuances between the so-called sides across a diverse body of theories that could be conveniently summed up as “feminist, queer, and trans theories,” I would like to venture into positioning these debates as discrete yinyang propensities: the never-outside-language thesis could be seen as following a yang propensity, while the embodied-materiality-matters argument could be regarded as following a yin propensity. I hope it is clear by now that neither yin nor yang should be taken separately, nor should any side of the transdualistic pair dominate the stage.

Psychoanalysis might be useful for the yang side of the question; it is quite unhelpful, as we have seen, in addressing the “material realness of the body.” If still suspiciously if not overtly hostilely received among certain feminist and queer scholars (Stryker and Bettcher 2016), trans theorization is unique in its insistence on pushing us (back) to rethink the body. Central to both Prosser and Salamon’s debate is how to approach the “bodily materiality” especially of trans people, which could be said to be the yin side of the question: the material and the



concrete. The invocation of the psychoanalytic, and in fact the Lacanian definition of “the real” here is, as Salamon puts it, indeed “fantastically strange,” precisely because the Lacanian “real” means “to be outside of language, outside of meaning, outside of the symbolic, outside of relation, outside of desire. It is a motionless and meaningless stasis equated with radical abjection and death—not a productive position from which to theorize subjectivity, trans or otherwise” (2010: 41).

What is more important in the task of forging decolonized trans theories is the urgent task to caution against granting a certain theoretical apparatus an exclusive power. Salamon opens her book by stating, “Psychoanalysis, *perhaps more than any other discourse*, has provided the most thorough and detailed examination of the elaborate set of mechanisms by which a subject ‘knows’ her own body” (13–14; my emphasis). It is an epistemic violence to impose an arguably rather transphobic theory and dress it up as merely a question of “knowing,” or to dismiss the real experience of embodied transsexual subjects, however “phantasmatic” that experience might be. The propensity of yin to concretize and to materialize should not be subjugated to yang’s tendency toward discursivity.

The quick brush-off, “any other discourse,” brings us back to the question of decolonization. I want to suggest that while foregrounding non-Western, nonmodern cosmologies as part of an ethical commitment to epistemic diversity,¹² a decolonial approach does not mean to overthrow “Western” thinking. It does mean, however, to call for serious engagement with rich and diverse thoughts and cosmologies side by side with trendy theoretical apparatuses such as psychoanalysis to answer pressing questions of the world. Toward the end of the article “Sexual Difference and Ontology” mentioned earlier, Zupančič claims radicalness for “sexual difference” in the psychoanalytic sense: “Sexes are not two in any meaningful way. Sexuality does not fall into two parts; it does not constitute a one. It is stuck between ‘no longer one’ and ‘not yet two (or more)’” (2012). This uncannily resonates with the yinyang transdualism that I try to show throughout this essay. Very unfortunate and indeed unnecessary in Zupančič’s theoretical move is that her excellent observation should have been made against a theory of “traditional ontologies and traditional cosmologies,” for which she invokes yinyang again: “Differences like form-matter, yin-yang, active-passive . . . belong to the same onto-logy as ‘gender’ differences. . . . If sexual difference is considered in terms of gender, it is made—at least in principle—compatible with mechanisms of its ontologization” (2012). A good companion to psychoanalysis to combat gender/sexual essentialism is crudely made into yet another traditional or even “primitive” ontology of (sexual) difference.

All said, this essay has only slightly touched the core of its question: the embodied materiality *despite* language, the yin side of the questions that are different from, indissociably linked with, and yet by no means subjugated to the

yang side. Yin, while constantly *transing* into its “full plentitude,” is moving toward the very moment that it leaks into the sphere of yang, the “discursive” and “linguistic” sphere. How do(es) the yin and yang “sides” interrelate in future terms of feminist, queer, and transgender theorizations? This is an urgent question I hope yinyang transdualism enables us to confront. The question also urges us to look beyond or rather below the logic of “either/or” to imagine new ways of theorizations able to attend to *either* materiality *and* discursivity, *either* embodiment *and* representation, *either . . . and . . .*

Zairong Xiang is a postdoctoral researcher with the German Research Foundation-funded Research Training Group “Minor Cosmopolitanisms” at Potsdam University where he is working on a book project on Chinese and Latin American queer literature and art. His first book, *Queer Ancient Ways*, is forthcoming.

Notes

1. 《說文解字》陰：“水之南，山之北也”；陽：“高、明也” (*Shuowen Jiezi* or *Interpreting the Ancient Pictographs, Analyzing the Semantic-Phonetic Compounds*), vol. 15 阜部, s.v. “Yin,” “That is to say, south of the river; north of mountain”; s.v., “Yang,” “That is to say, high and bright”; ctext.org/shuo-wen-jie-zi/bu44. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from non-English sources to English are mine.
2. I will explore the potential of the improper English syntax “either . . . and” in the last section of the essay.
3. More often than not, influenced by a Cold War division of intellectual labor, the so-called premodern China has been seen only as an object of study waiting to be discovered by Sinologists. This article seeks to disobey that tradition and insists on seeing these non-modern thoughts as invaluable contributions, as knowledge in its own right that can help us in theorizing and addressing contemporary issues.
4. 《周易乾鑿度》：易，一名而含三義：所謂易也，變異也，不易也。 (*Discussion of the Yi*: “It is said that the name of the Yi has three meanings: [1] easiness and simpleness, [2] transformation and change, and [3] invariability”) (quoted in Fung 2007: 276).
5. For an excellent critique of queer theory’s Eurocentrism, see Liu 2015.
6. This explains the attraction to yinyang thinking in feminist and transgender scholarship and activism. For example, one of the vernacular transgender symbols is that of a yinyang *taiji* symbol with blue and pink colors.
7. For translation and annotation, see Unschuld, Tessenow, and Zheng 2011.
8. Citations of *Yi Jing* in the original Chinese are all from the annotated version of *Changes of Zhou* by Wang Bi of the Wei Dynasty (2011: 69–76); for the sake of clarity, no pagination will be included in the text.
9. The English translation is quoted from Lynn 1994 (206).
10. The other original commentary is 象曰：天地交，泰。後以財成天地之道，輔相天地之宜，以左右民 (Commentary on the images: “Heaven and Earth perfectly interact”: this constitutes the image of Peace. In the same way, the ruler, by his tailoring, fulfills the

Dao of Heaven and Earth and assists Heaven and Earth to stay on the right course: in so doing, he assists the people on all sides) (Lynn 1994: 206).

11. The commentary on the judgments states, 彖曰：則是天地不交而萬物不通也，上下不交而天下无邦也 (That is, as Heaven and Earth are estranged, the myriad things do not interact, and as those above and those below are estranged, there is no true polity in the world) (Lynn 1994: 212).
12. I fully share Pedro Javier DiPietro's (2016) and others' calls for decolonization in the field.

References

- Anderson, Jill E., Robert Azzarello, Gavin Grown, Katie Hogan, Gordon Brent Ingram, Michael J. Morris, and Joshua Stephens. 2012. "Queer Ecology: A Roundtable Discussion." *European Journal of Ecopsychology*, no. 3: 82–103.
- Azzarello, Robert. 2016. *Queer Environmentalism: Ecology, Evolution, and Sexuality in American Literature*. New York: Routledge.
- Barad, Karen. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3: 801–30.
- . 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Caserio, Robert L., Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Tim Dean. 2006. "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory." *PMLA* 121, no. 3: 819–28.
- Chen, Mel Y. 2012. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Perverse Modernities. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chiang, Howard, ed. 2012. *Transgender China*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1980. *Mille plateaux (A Thousand Plateaus)*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
- Dolar, Mladen. 2012. "One Divides into Two." *E-Flux Journal*, no. 33. www.e-flux.com/journal/33/68295/one-divides-into-two/.
- Edelman, Lee. 2004. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2014. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fung, Yu-lan. 2007. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy 中国哲学简史 (Bilingual Version)*. Translated by Fulan Zhao. Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Press.
- Javier DiPietro, Pedro. 2016. "Of Huachafería, Así, and M' E Mati: Decolonizing Transing Methodologies." *TSQ* 3, nos. 1–2: 65–73.
- Jullien, François. 2015. *The Book of Beginnings*. Translated by Jody Gladding. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Katz, Jonathan. 2007. *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Keller, Catherine. 2003. *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*. London: Routledge.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton.
- Liu, Petrus. 2015. *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lugones, María. 2007. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1: 186–209.
- Lynn, Richard John, translator. 1994. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Prosser, Jay. 2006. "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex." In *The Transgender Studies Reader*, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, 257–80. London: Routledge.
- Qian, Zhongshu. 2007. *Limited Views* 管錐編. Vol. 1. Beijing: Sanlian Shudian.
- Salamon, Gayle. 2010. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Stryker, Susan, and Talia M. Bettcher. 2016. "Introduction: Trans/Feminisms." *TSQ* 3, nos. 1–2: 5–14.
- Unschuld, Paul U., Hermann Tessenow, and Jinsheng Zheng, translators. 2011. *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di's Inner Classic—Basic Questions*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vandermeersch, Léon. 2013. *Les deux raisons de la pensée Chinoise: Divination et idéographie (The Two Aspects of Chinese Thought: Divination and Ideography)*. Paris: Editions Gallimard.
- Wang, Bi. 2011. *Annotated Changes of Zhou* 周易注 (附周易略例). Edited by Yulie Lou. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Wang, Robin R. 2005a. "Dong Zhongshu's Transformation of Yin-Yang Theory and Contesting of Gender Identity." *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 2: 209–31.
- . 2005b. "Zhou Dunyi's Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained ('Taijitu Shuo'): A Construction of the Confucian Metaphysics." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 3: 307–23.
- . 2012. *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yang, Yu. 2006. *Shanju Xinyu with Commentaries* 山居新語: 點校說明. Edited by Dajun Yu. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zupančič, Alenka. 2012. "Sexual Difference and Ontology." *E-Flux Journal*, no. 32. www.e-flux.com/journal/32/68246/sexual-difference-and-ontology/.