

PLURAL FEMINISMS

Navigating Resistance as Everyday Praxis

**Edited by
Sohini Chatterjee and Po-Han Lee**

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

Part II

EMBODIED ANTI-NORMATIVITY AND EVERYDAY RESISTANCE

Chapter 6

AGAINST 'THE DEVIL FROM WITHIN': DOING FEMINISM THROUGH RE-MEMBERING THE MULTIPLE SELVES

Po-Han Lee

Introduction

I am not a good storyteller, but I do tell stories. To me, storytelling has the power to put feelings into words (by speaking and writing) and make sense of those words. Storytelling helps me decide whether to remember or forget those feelings and/or related events. When necessary, I always take some notes that help me, at different moments, *re-member* my present self and connect it to the past one, which is related to, and sustained by, what the world would consider 'trivial' matters. These notes reflect life's vicissitudes, experienced affectively and in an embodied manner. This process reformulates the past through narration and documentation.

Who I feel I am in this moment would like to tell a few stories here, through autoethnography, about the closets where I once hid and some others that I have no idea how to break out of yet. To resituate my-self back in the stories in an effort towards unpacking the generality and particularity of these unpleasant experiences and resist the easiness generated from denying, erasing, silencing and thus forgetting, our life's stories that are an essential element of feminist and queer politics (Stephens 2010). And, acts of remembering enable me to position my own identity in a space where the past is not recalled mechanically; through storytelling, the re-subjectivization process refuses to privilege the future and the present over the past – a past in which injustices were experienced but were not yet describable (Tronto 2003).

My struggles with different closets in life represent a trajectory. They have enabled me to engage with and comprehend diverse versions of feminist thought, even though I have never settled for any version. I understand feminism as a line of flight from a world full of micro-dynamics of violence. When discharging feminist responsibility, I have learned to listen to and care for others and myself. Feminism offers a strategy and a way of critically thinking about 'autonomy and embodiment within a social field saturated with power' (Ahmed 2016: 491), to use Judith Butler's words in an interview with Sara Ahmed. So, feminist remembering

and storytelling are simultaneously personal and political and can dismantle hierarchies and subvert the existing order of things.

Therefore, the most urgent task of feminist politics, in my opinion, is to enable one to counter forces that make people remain unheard (who speak but are not listened to) and even silenced (not allowed to speak at all). Indeed, everyone has vulnerability and needs a way to express it. Around 2015, my family experienced a storm because of my younger brother's sudden decision to marry, without 'a proper conversation' with my parents, to quote my dad's words. My parents did not accept my sister-in-law in the first place. She did not fit in much with the Taiwanese stereotypes of a good wife or mother-to-be; she was tough and often disagreed with my parents and her father. Han-Chinese social expectations about a wife to be resourceful (useful for the husband) and reproductive (useful for the family) are not only gendered but also classist and, of course, ableist. Coming from a middle-class background and having a daughter gives her more leverage to say no, yet the gender norms are less easy to negotiate. My parents are not traditional in many ways but prefer obedience in familial matters.

I called my brother, who knows me the best and has been supportive and helped me cope with many ups and downs in life. 'I don't want to disappoint anyone, but I am so tired, really tired,' he said. It was probably the first time I heard his voice filled with doubt, fear and uncertainty. He had always looked firm, so I was surprised when he showed his vulnerability to me. I was also shocked by my negligence, 'Sorry, I've been running away from home for years, leaving the burden of meeting their expectations of being a "real son" to you.' We both cried during the call. That was the first time I saw the wall between us: I'm the son in exile who regards himself as unwelcome, and he is the one who, hence, needs to be reliable and wanted.

Although silence and powerlessness go hand-in-hand, silence can be powerful if we pay closer attention. Around a year of my brother's marriage, my brother and sister-in-law had a big argument with my mum, again. This time, it was about having a baby. In that fight, my dad stepped aside, taking up the role of a mediator who *appeared* liberal and carefree. That made me wonder why my mum always stands at the front line against us. Does she believe that 'fighting "the good fights" for the family in a traditional sense' is her responsibility? This incident also made me realize that my mother is lonely in these fights, representing a *good parent*, giving a larger space for negotiation and leveraging power for my father – who dominates in terms of open-mindedness, leaving my mum to do power brokering to be a stereotypical wife.

My brother and I have thrown arguments based on the many social and critical theories we have learned against her – striving to force her to accept our challenges. By doing so, we have forgotten to locate the debate in the greater social context where my mother grew up, married, and learned to be a 'good woman.' Instead, we intentionally or unconsciously reduced familial contradictions and complexities into a confrontation between individuals, generations and ideologies. In short, our attack was directed at someone who could be a victim herself due to a loss of freedom of choice. 'Can I say no? Did I ever get to choose?' she once yelled at me.

My mother broke her silence by not repeating what she had learned about being a daughter, a helpful sister, a wife, a daughter-in-law and a mother in Taiwan. The mother-son tension demonstrates the reproduction and variations of gender norms, which entrap people differently. As a queer person, I have been trapped in various closets crafted by my mom, who came from a generation (around the 1960s) where women, including herself, needed to battle gender entrapments for recognition from family, respect from the outside world, and liberation from the closets around them. But what did she mean about *choosing*? She said no more.

Eventually, she cried. 'Is everything okay?' I asked. 'I'm fine. Don't worry!' I was speechless, staring at that abstract closet that had blocked her from being free. The closet looks like mine, which has her behaving like a 'good mom' who disciplines their kids and prevents her from showing vulnerability. Gosh – all too similar. What did she mean by *fine*? Or, what do I mean 'okay' when I probed her that? I have been trying to talk to her, not in a face-to-face interactive way but by sending texts. I ask her to reply when she has spare time, 'no rush, and don't feel obligated to reply. It doesn't matter.' I send messages, talk a bit about my day, and wait for her to reply when she likes.

The narrating subjects are never immune to undetected interference, which, like a ghost, is already entangled in the choice of our words, tones, volume and even emojis. The interference has its power and needs to be identified, whoever the message receiver is. In Mandarin Chinese, we call such invisible interference *the devil from within* (心魔, *xīn mó*). We usually ignore that it is the most significant barrier that prevents us from freely expressing ourselves and listening. In a class on *Self, Voice and Creativity in Research Writing* at the University of Sussex in February 2016, Dr Kim Lasky mentioned Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986) 'trio theory' in conversational interpretation, according to which 'the devil from within' may come from a desire for ownership over the words as well as how they are being spoken and performed. Bakhtin argues:

Everything that is said, expressed ... cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener also has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one). The word is a drama in which three characters participate (it is not a duet, but a trio).

(121–2)

Considering this, a feminist sociological approach to observation and analysis enables me to hear more than what a word means and see more than what a person (or an emoji) expresses. The most 'trivial' little things contain several voices – of unequal volume – from the body, our minds, society and the roles we voluntarily or involuntarily subscribe to. However, we tend to ignore and then forget such complexity. However, *forgetting* it requires us first to get and make sense of it before letting it go; we are forced to remember it – even with the least effort. Rather than denying the trivial moments and unimportant signifiers, which might make

us recall regret and shame, I would argue for the necessity of facing the closet of memory – to re-read the narratives, not for anyone but ourselves.

The combination of feminist politics and symbolic interactionism – encompassing the macro-political and micro-sociological accounts – has provided me with a tool to interrogate the events that happen to me and others, and undertake self-reflection to interpret the interrogations. In the following sections, I will try to explain what I mean by ‘the closet of memory’, which is multi-layered, blocking our way to reconciling our present with our past selves. Every showdown is to be addressed, even if between our multiple selves. Perhaps, there will be no answers, but ‘the devil from within’ will have been exposed and identified. At least, we will have given a voice to many of our past selves who could not find a word to explain their struggles at some point.

Are they mine? The multiple selves

This section and the next were drafted with much emotion, containing old and new stories. Eventually, I decided to share old stories and narrate new ones, starting with how I now understand ‘the self’. These lived realities have been influential enough to make me re-evaluate what my own *selves* mean to me. I want to highlight how random events and other people’s uninvited involvement in our lives can shape and reshape one’s worldview. These events don’t need to be immensely tragic. Tiny changes beyond our notice, informed by mundane and everyday affairs, can leave a profound impact (Scott 2018).

There are things we do not pay much attention to, at least not in the moment when they occur. We would not even bother telling others. We think, ‘That’s nothing. Don’t be dramatic.’ This inattentiveness is what I hope to emphasize here. I was unsure whether I could describe stories towards which others might not feel sympathetic, yet you, as part of the Bakhtinian ‘trio’, are forced into my closets when you read this. Therefore, I will go directly to the experiences with closets, which – may not sound heroic or magnificent – have changed me. Looking at my diaries, I realize I have tended to blame myself for being powerless to fight micro-aggressions. ‘Spelling out the cruelties may be an alternative way of facing them,’ I told myself.

The multi-layered and interconnected closets have shaped how and what one can see in the world. I ask, are they mine – those closets, the layers of the world that penetrate me, and in which I look after myself – and the multiple ‘selves’ that emerge from time to time through coming-out processes? Weirdly enough, performing the role of an activist, who seems capable of making it easier for people to come out of closets, is very different from what I have learned through my own experiences of un-closeting. Of course, life has no guidebook. As an abstract concept, the self is just a reflexive pronoun, intersecting the experiential and the ontological; it is a product contingent on the dispositioning of social relations (Braidotti 2011). The self is simultaneously subjective and objective. When ‘I’ say *myself*, what is the essence that constitutes that piece of the self? Do I know that

part of the self, and how have I approached it? Asking these questions implies that no singular self represents the whole me, yet the whole 'I' is mysterious and constantly transforming. The Deleuzian concept of becoming – instead of being – forms the ontology of the self (Biehl and Locke 2010). More precisely, the Deleuzian becoming is, according to Rosi Braidotti (1993: 44), 'the affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation'. Indeed, this is where I start exploring the various possible ways of reflecting on *who I am (becoming)*.

The 'me' spoken of by others, seen from their eyes, projected by myself, with or without a nickname, in a crowd or alone, can be very different. I began to have the language to describe these observations when I started learning about feminism. Feminist inquiries can be about the body, appearance, a sexual partner or an intimate encounter. I would wonder which part of me was present and dealing with that observation. Through which closet am I looking and learning to speak and behave? I would not notice this if I never felt the nuances between the more vulnerable and the stronger selves I embody in different scenarios. As Eve Sedgwick (1990: 59) writes, 'the paths of allo-identification are likely to be strange and recalcitrant. So are the paths of auto-identification.'

All the F-words: Faggot, fat, foreign

Sexuality had never been a thing until they shamed him

I will now try to explain the strange feeling of mapping out the self with some small stories – in a third-person voice, which displays autoethnographic storytelling by keeping a distance between now and then as a method of strategic *re-membering* (Dillard 2008). He is not the kind of person who can easily express his feelings, except in a diary. Recently he read a news article containing gay people's coming-out stories in Taiwan,¹ which evoked many memories from his adolescent past – vivid but fragmented. He turned to look into the notes from his private blog site, in which specific names of people had been erased. The story began with the day his parents found out about his sexual orientation in 2011 after his ex-boyfriend broke up with him. He cried a lot the night before when he viewed the old photos. He fell asleep when the sun was rising, forgetting to turn off the laptop. Maybe he could not care less. It was a lovelorn night.

'Get out of here! I can't live under the same roof as you anymore. I don't want to breathe the same air as you.' That sentence, word by word, until today, still comes back to him. His relationship with his parents somehow recovered – mysteriously, after nearly a year of losing contact – under circumstances in which no one mentions that particular day and that unfinished conversation. Today, he and his

1. The news article was about the publication of an anthology of essays, *A Gay Man Living Downstairs* (樓下住個GAY, *lóu xià zhù gè gay*), by an ophthalmologist, Dr Ke-Hua Chen, in 2016.

parents can sometimes joke about his new relationships as if he were never driven away from the family due to his queerness. That day is still taboo. He often wonders why he has resisted looking back at himself – so much denial and embarrassment. He does not feel less guilty about not defending himself at that moment, even now.

However, he also wonders whether things would have been easier if he had talked back and argued. Then he remembered an evening in 2009. Some friends had chased him on campus, asking him if he liked boys: ‘Hey, I won’t look down on you because you’re gay.’ He did not know how to respond but kept running away and escaped from the crowd. He was unsure why he did not want to speak out since he was already out to close friends. What concerned him more was ‘what to say’ than ‘not to say anything’. ‘Should I come out to someone when I don’t feel like doing it?’ he wondered, but at the same time, he asked, ‘does it mean I am ashamed of myself if I can’t be honest about it?’ Is it an obligation to come out? This question has haunted him for years.

Moreover, there was a love confession in 2004. It was the first time he left Taipei for college to live alone. He took things too simply, following the dominant discourse that ‘for love, you have to say it out loud’. In return, he got a cold response from the boy: ‘I think it’s kinda disgusting to me,’ handwritten on a small Post-it. They never talked again. He recalled that he was anxious some years earlier than that confession and felt the whole world would explode. He rushed to the school counsellor and asked, ‘have I become like *this* because it is a school for boys?’ Vaguely, he remembers the teacher telling him, ‘Don’t worry, *that* is not a big deal.’ He naively thought *it* was nothing until he was made fun of by schoolmates and thrown into the streets by his parents. The gesture of forgetting – to let go, acquiescently, by people involved, including the hurters and the hurt – renders the feelings suppressed and leaves the violence unspoken, enabling the emergence of *the devil from within*.

The gay world is not for everybody unless you can fit in

Nearly graduating from college, he finally felt ‘settled’ in the gay world – they call it ‘the circle’ (圈子, *quān zi*) in Taiwan. He could leave behind everything *in real life* (outside the circle), go out with friends partying every weekend, stay late in cruising parks, spend nights at gay saunas, and feel no fear. He learned how to be gay. He did not expect that he also had to learn, even sceptically, all the unwritten rules of the gay world. These rules include the judgement of body types, subcultural practices, sexual encounters, age prejudice/preference and the subtlety of biases in the ‘imbalanced’ relationships embodied by people assuming different sexual roles that reflect the power of masculinity over femininity. He once truly believed that the circle was all about freedom; he was wrong.

‘What made you think you could just come here? You’re too chubby for this place,’ he clearly remembers when the butch lesbian bouncer stopped him at the entrance. ‘Nah, I’m just kidding. Of course, you can come in but won’t have any fun there.’ It was the most popular gay club in Taipei, *Funky*. It would be packed every weekend until the nightlife was replaced with house parties and dating apps – shutting the

club down in 2017. Back then, he did not realize that there were many small *circles* within the larger gay circle in the city. One day, someone told him that he belonged to the bear group. It was around 2005 when the bear culture had just emerged in Taiwan. Gradually the bear culture has become dominant, thanks to its members' (relatively) muscular bodies and (presumably) masculine image, along with the rising trend of gym culture in urban Taiwan.

Everyone wants to become and be with a 'classy bear', who has the 'right' body type, 'moderate' amount of body hair, and looks 'just' (not toxic) masculine (Lin 2009) as what Adam Green (2008) defines as sexual capital in the field. The bear *circle* has thus been divided into 'real bear' versus 'piggy' (or 'chub' in gay slang). The *boy*, who was infantilized and made to feel 'emasculated', was reclassified into the latter. He had not thought hard enough about the phenomenon until another factor intervened when he moved to Brighton, England, in 2014. The strange English culture had barred him from approaching and exploring the gay world there. He could not find any 'circle' based on his experience back in Taiwan. 'You are an otter, or at best, a *panda* (he thought it was a joke before a friend mentioned it could be a racist comment).' On his first night out in a bar flying the bear flag, the 'International Bear Brotherhood Flag', 'you are in no way a bear,' someone told him. Again, such brotherhood applies only to men with beefy bodies and facial hair, which a typical East Asian man tends not to have. The hierarchy between body shapes and appearances is unquestionably racial, both colonial and orientalist.

After all, he discovered that he could have been categorized as 'Asian' – a group for all East and Southeast Asians regardless of their nationality, language, and body type. Not many English gay men find members of this group attractive.² Asians seem preassigned, by default, to a given sexual role – bottom, the penetrated and the subordinated – since they are (considered) generally shy, petite, slim, smooth and sexually passive, just as Tan Hoang Nguyen (2014) notes. According to a Thai friend of his, all of these characteristics – or stereotypes, he thinks – justify Asian gay men's effeminacy 'in those blue or green eyes'. For *rice queens* (Caucasian men attracted to East Asian men in gay slang), 'you, such a chubby Asian guy, just don't fit their type,' his Japanese friend told him in a trying-to-be-polite tone. The chubby boy found love after all, but he had never felt part of a gay community before he left England. Classification creates classes and territories, designating and positioning people to 'their' places through spatial and social segregation. Refusers of exclusion get punishment by losing not only attention but also belongingness.

Everyone is hiding something. Learn how to deal with it

While pursuing a research degree in Taipei, he experienced different on-and-off romantic lives, sometimes with a married man. He was waiting for his lover, a

2. Thanks to Sohini's, the editor of this book, introduction to an excellent roundtable discussion on the way in which racialized gay men are forced to leave bars soon after they enter because they are not figured as worthy of being desired (Dinshaw et al. 2007).

married man, in a convenience store. When their secret relationship was exposed, his lover's wife yelled at them and called them 'perverts' and 'monsters'. She did not want a divorce because of their daughter. The story here happened a few weeks before things got messy. He had just landed in Taiwan from a trip to the United States in 2009. Nearly an hour later, a man came into the convenience store, 'I'm sorry, too much traffic.' 'Not at all. We don't get to meet much lately. Don't worry.' He then took out lots of stuff from his bag, 'Hey! I've got something for you, and this is for your wife, and the toy is for your daughter.' 'You don't need to.' 'Of course I do. It'd be odd if I only bought you souvenirs.'

They caught up but did not speak much, hugging each other in a buddy-buddy style. After a long pause, the man asked, 'do you want to come over?' 'Now? Are you crazy? It's going to be too suspicious. I don't want to risk it.' 'Yes, of course, exactly ... I know. I'm *sorry*.' After that day, they lost contact because the man's wife forbade them from seeing each other too often. They had never looked like 'just good old friends', especially with a ten-year age difference. The next time they met, the man asked for a 'cool down'. Neither of them knew what that meant. Suddenly they apologized to each other. 'Sorry for messing up your life!' 'I can't be selfish; I have a family. Sorry, I am a coward.' He could not afford to come out as he was a middle-aged man, even though their relationship seemed no secret anymore. In Taiwan, getting older means stopping 'fooling around' (e.g. frivolous gay life) and assuming family responsibility, which is inherently heteronormative before the debate over marriage equality became heated in Taiwan.

That was a decade before Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage in 2019. After all these years, sometimes the boy still thinks of the man. He wonders whether the story could have ended differently if, in Taiwan, coming out was not considered an irresponsible life choice and divorce was not a resolution that usually harmed the woman more than the man. All of them, the many he-s I mentioned above, form an integral but distinct part of my present *self*. The boys in the stories once suffered from family rejection, peer pressure, unspoken social norms, the burden of sexual identity and categories, and their own and others' closets and messy relationships. Each of them tries not to hate anyone but, for sure, struggles a lot. Have we all had other options? Could there be a second chance to be or not be free of particular gender/sexual/ethnic identities, normative relationships or social norms?

Every encounter with others generates a conversation between my multiple selves – the rational and the emotional one, the sensitive and the indifferent one. Some events may seem unimportant and uninteresting, but they all leave a mark on one's life, in response to which our multiple selves emerge. These memories (including our conversations with others, the existence and absence of actions, and how they are imprinted on us) are inscribed on, and sometimes reinforced in, our performative negotiations with hostilities, exclusions and prejudices (Butler 1990). Feminist teachings have empowered me to feel and face, bravely and critically, the power dynamics between others and me concerning our different subject positions (Mouffe 1992). To borrow Liz Stanley's (1990) words, the 'moments of writing' have allowed me to ruminate over these events and resist heteronormativity and the sizeism and racism embedded in the 'liberal' Taiwanese and English gay worlds.

Micro-political resistance practices

You cannot be a feminist. You can only become one. It is a lifelong process in which you start with observing the world around you, and you feel, ask questions, think, and try to make sense of it – justify or resist, love or dissent, uncertainly. Then, the whole process runs again. You observe, feel, question, think, hesitate, and get angry, over and over again!

That was the first time I learned about feminist thinking in a class on *Gender and Law* at National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, in 2007. There were few module options regarding gender or sexuality issues in law, at least when I did my first degree. Indeed, law schools do not pay much attention to gender and feminist studies in Taiwan, even though Taiwan has experienced robust sexual rights and gender equality social movements since the 1980s when the Martial Law was lifted (Lee 2017). Most legal professionals do not consider gender a 'useful category' (Scott 1986) of social relations. More specifically, they usually take 'the question of women' only from a binary perspective in a dominant/subordinate relational framework, which assumes womanhood as well as femininity to always correspond to a female body, fixing normative gender roles in the legal history of Taiwan (Wang 2004). This variety of legal scholars might not see the fundamental problem of patriarchy and the power asymmetries it induces, including the problem with the men/women gender binary and heterosexism. The sociolegal and educational context in which cis-heterosexism is legitimized through discursive and pedagogical practices and 'hidden curriculum', in Cheng and Yang's (2015) words, has, however, provoked my critical consciousness regarding gender/sexual norms and facilitated my multiple selves to evolve in everyday interpersonal encounters.

That was the context in which I became interested in a series of gender questions that I had taken for granted. Thanks to Prof Wang Hsiao-Tan's inspiration, though not systematically, I eventually detected the power of feminism. Gender has become a helpful lens to identify and analyse problems and make sense of the world, especially in recognizing discomforts with the expectations of family and society associated with how I express myself. It was not enough, nonetheless. Much later, in 2012, through the lectures of Mr Chang Hong-Cheng, I learned about sexuality as another category of social relations in which a set of legal and social discourses is maintained as a truth (Rubin 1984). It is not merely a question of discrimination on a case-by-case basis. Instead, it presents another series of questions regarding one's body, emotions and intimacies, subject to problematization and hence unaddressable simply by law. Therefore, the question starting with 'am I ... ?' is an oxymoron. Could I know who I am without others' recognition?

In addition to intellectual enlightenment, feminist thinking also empowers. The moments of feeling feminist are like undertaking many small adventures of self-understanding and self-help along a journey of subscribing to different roles from a relatively vulnerable position. I sense feminism diversely, to stand up against various enemies and shout aloud. As Eugene Gendlin (1992) would say, it is the feminist *felt sense* – a non-verbal, impulsive and not always readily comprehended moment in which you encounter the need of the self. It is the point of departure to

approach empowerment with or without a proper word to describe the situation. Feminism, in this light, offers the ground from which I have access to liberation and a reconciliation process between me and others who have expected me to be someone else – someone who is more masculine, fit and straight-acting. All interrelated expectations require me to think and behave like a proper man, an obedient son, a beautiful lover and a good citizen.

Feminist sensitivity, countering the social roles assigned by these expectations embodied in my encounters with others, has allowed me to pause, reflect on how these expectations have moulded and worked on me, and, what's more, has given me tools to fight, not just to survive but also to thrive. Sensing and questioning the territorialization of a 'closet' that prevents you from freely living and expressing makes you wonder what has led such prevention to happen – a crucial step towards critically interrogating how the world sees (or wants to see) me and how I respond to their way of seeing: at home, on campus, from Taiwan to England, within and outside the gay/bear circles. When I can analyse and speak about it, I know how to assert better my existence and the right to exist in all my complexities.

I appreciate the tensions and confrontations at the micropolitical level, which I had avoided for a long time. These moments occur to me along with a desire to manage better how I perform my multiple selves and how I interact with others and even resist their illegitimate projections upon me and my body. When it comes to a fight against oppression, the struggle requires a name, such as those regarding my sexual orientation, gender expression, body image and family and cultural background. Feminist sensitivity has helped me expose the repertoire of norms imposed on my social selves. Moreover, it pushes me to initiate communication with those who have forced me to be who I am not, to let them see the power in their hands and how they are also governed by the social norms that give them power in exchange for their freedom and agency.

Conclusion

Applying the indigenous concept of 'devil from within', in this chapter, I have considered the construct and operationalization of closets in everyday life, such as the incidents with my parents, brother, and sister-in-law, as well as the autoethnographic accounts of fat-phobia and casual racism in the mainstream gay world. The autoethnographic reflections on nonbelonging are tied to the generation and complexity of multiple selves. To reconcile these selves requires critical thinking and alliance building as a resistance strategy against structural violence. Before concluding this reflection process, I would like to use a final example to illustrate the increasing difficulty in countering queerphobia in Taiwan and worldwide.

At an academic conference on *Towards Gender Equality: Clashes in Law*, organized by myself and two colleagues in mid-2018, we were fortunate to have many inspiring presentations. At that gathering, feminism was presented theoretically and empirically in very diverse ways. However, not only could we

not come up with a universal strategy to achieve gender equality, but we also could not entirely make sense of the globalization of the anti-gender movement, which has mobilized the crisis discourse (regarding masculinity, 'traditional family values' and social reproduction) (Hemmings 2021; Guney et al. 2022). The tension between the so-called *silent majority* and social justice initiatives has made most governments reluctant to stand with human rights advocates. 'The desire for peace (absence of conflict) curtails all other hopes for justice,' one participant asserted at the conference.

Meanwhile, a final note would be, taking on board what we've learnt from critical theories as I did within and beyond my family, our awareness of not to over-romanticize and/or generalize personalized effort and triumph in negotiating social norms. Such an awareness, however, should not cancel our celebration for ourselves of the bravery and excessive care work one has to offer in everyday life either. So-lived everydayness involves, in a dramaturgical sense (Goffman 1956), navigating – sometimes ridiculously exhaustingly – complex interpersonal relationships, all the 'roles' we identify, counteridentify, dis-identify (Muñoz 1999) and even, not purposefully, non-identify (Lee 2022), and 'dramas' we have to engage and disengage, on front stage and back stages (Scott 2018). Our selves emerge and inhabit in these imposed, chosen and unchosen roles in the daily dramas where conflicts and reconciliations occur.

References

- Ahmed, Sara. (2016). 'Interview with Judith Butler'. *Sexualities*, 19 (4): 482–92.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1986). 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis'. In Emerson, Caryl & Holquist, Michael (eds.), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, pp. 103–31.
- Biehl, João & Locke, Peter. (2010). 'Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming'. *Current Anthropology*, 51 (3): 317–51.
- Braidotti, Rosi. (1993). 'Discontinuous Becomings. Deleuze on the Becoming-Woman of Philosophy'. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 24 (1): 44–55.
- Braidotti, Rosi. (2011). *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, Second Edition*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cheng, Ling-Fang & Yang, Hsing-Chen. (2015). 'Learning About Gender on Campus: An Analysis of the Hidden Curriculum for Medical Students'. *Medical Education*, 49 (3): 321–31.
- Dillard, Cynthia B. (2008). 'Re-membering Culture: Bearing Witness to the Spirit of Identity in Research'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11 (1): 87–93.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn, et al. (2007). 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13 (2): 177–95.
- Gendlin, Eugene. (1992). 'The Wider Role of Bodily Sense in Thought and Language'. In Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine (ed.), *Giving the Body its Due*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Goffman, Erving. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Green, Adam Isaiah. (2008). 'The Social Organization of Desire: The Sexual Fields Approach'. *Sociological Theory*, 26 (1): 25–50.
- Guney, Gizem, Davies, David & Lee, Po-Han Lee. (eds.) (2022). *Towards Gender Equality in Law: An Analysis of State Failures from a Global Perspective*. Berlin: Springer.
- Hemmings, Clare. (2021). 'Unnatural Feelings. The Affective Life of "Anti-gender" Mobilisations'. *Radical Philosophy*, 2 (9): 27–39.
- Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal. (2001). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- Lee, Po-Han. (2017). 'Queer Activism in Taiwan: An Emergent Rainbow Coalition from the Assemblage Perspective'. *The Sociological Review*, 65 (4): 682–98.
- Lee, Po-Han. (2022). 'Struggle for Recognition: Theorising Sexual/Gender Minorities as Rights-Holders in International Law'. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 30: 73–95.
- Lin, Dennis C. (2009). 'Becoming a "Bear": Identity Formation and Sexual/Gender/Bodily Performativity among the Taiwanese Gay Bear Community'. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 76: 57–117.
- Mouffe, Chantal. (1992). 'Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics'. In Butler, Judith, and Scott, Joan (eds.) *Feminists Theorise the Political*. New York: Routledge, pp. 369–84.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. (1999). *Disidentifications Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nguyen, Tan Hoang. (2014). *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rubin, Gayle. (1984). 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality'. In Carole Vance (ed.). *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 267–93.
- Schulman, Sarah. (2016). *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Scott, Joan. (1986). 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis'. *The American Historical Review*, 91 (5): 1053–75.
- Scott, Susie. (2018). 'A Sociology of Nothing: Understanding the Unmarked'. *Sociology*, 52 (1): 3–19.
- Scott, Susie. (2019). *The Social Life of Nothing: Silence, Invisibility and Emptiness in Tales of Lost Experience*. London: Routledge.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (1990). *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stanley, Liz. (1990). 'Moments of Writing: Is There a Feminist Auto/biography?' *Gender & History*, 2 (1): 58–67.
- Stephens, Julie. (2010). 'Our Remembered Selves: Oral History and Feminist Memory'. *Oral History*, 38 (1): 81–90.
- Tronto, Joan. (2003). 'Time's Place'. *Feminist Theory*, 4 (2): 119–38.
- Wang, Hsiao-Tan. (2004). 'What Can Legal Feminism Do? The Theoretical Explorations on Gender, Law and Social Transformation'. *EurAmerica*, 34 (4): 627–73.