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**The 1990s Gender Progressiveness in Taiwan**

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# **The 1990s Gender Progressiveness in Taiwan**

by

**Mu-Min Shih**

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For Ming-I Chang, Yingying Yang,

And those they call sisters

# **The 1990s Gender Progressiveness in Taiwan**

by

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Taiwan has long been obsessed with its own particular idea of progress, a concept that has been heavily influenced by different historical and cultural factors. Throughout its modern history, the island's inhabitants have found themselves under the sway of colonial modernization, an authoritative regime, rapid economic growth, and progressive intellectual discourse. While under the political grip of totalitarianism from 1949 to 1987, the island experienced prosperity to the point of believing that discipline alone leads to progress. When control under martial law became strained due to emancipatory currents, the society of Taiwan in the 1990s sought to curb liberation from getting out-of-hand. With its modern history closely related to material progress, the Taiwanese society and culture seems to utter in the same breath both progress and restraint based on its deep roots of Confucianism. This research focuses on gender and sex in exploration of the notion of being progressive in 1990s Taiwan. The discussion of progressive gender discourse as to prostitution, feminism and homosexuality in this research casts light on the relation the social history of Taiwan has to gender, sex, and sexuality. Gender discourse in 1990s Taiwan ushered in a critical review of Confucian values. What we now call gender bias or stereotypes permeate Confucian teachings. Even though it may seem unrelated at first glance, a close reading shows that Confucian tenets about the roles both men and women play in the family and society, and the critiques of

them, are inherently political. The dissertation focuses on gender discourse to uncover how it really lies behind all progressive politics in 1990s Taiwan.

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## **Introduction**

What is progress? Is it simply a developmental activity that moves a society forward to a state better than the one before? Can progress guarantee a brighter tomorrow? In the name of progress, many people work tirelessly to advance certain views and realize certain dreams. Are these people necessarily progressive? Does progress promise a future where people will commemorate advocates of progress of the past? In this sense, can we say that a progressive person is someone who anticipates her or his own posthumous position in history? On the other hand, does progress, in terms of its common definition, also imply that people are never satisfied with their current situations?

The fact that societies now and then seek to pursue their own definitions of progress prompts me to reconsider what progress means in Taiwan and how it is expressed. More specifically, I am prompted to think about how the society of Taiwan has transformed itself in the name of progress and continues to do so, especially after the Chinese Nationalist Party (中國國民黨) government ended Taiwan's state of exception in 1987. Thirty years later, most Taiwanese people are inclined to believe that the end of martial law exemplified Taiwan's political progress. However, I contend that many Taiwanese people take progress at face value; in fact, many take it for granted. In reality, unreflective views of progress have given rise to thoughts and activities that proved to be backward. Thus, the following questions: how can one define progress in the Taiwanese context? By what standards can one measure and validate progress?

The idea of progress is at the core of Western civilization, especially since the Enlightenment. Rooted in antiquity, the modern incarnation of the concept of progress is synonymous with development, especially in terms of material development. The gist of the Western concept of development is that society advances in a positive direction. With the application of rationality and science, human society is thought to progress from chaos to discipline, from barbarism to civilization, from material scarcity to affluence, and so on. The prospect of development is considered to represent ongoing improvements in the condition of human life.<sup>1</sup>

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which saw the devastation of two World Wars, was a defeat to the positive prospect of what material development would entail. As people saw material development turn on itself and reduce the world to ashes, the emerging cultural and historical scholars of the time, such as those of the Frankfurt School, began to associate the idea of progress more closely with history and, in particular, the concept of time. In other words, to grasp progress requires one to comparatively evaluate the past, present, and future, and move beyond a positivist model.<sup>2</sup> When one aligns development with the current of time, an array of differences emerges. One may see technology, as well as productivity, improve over time. One may also see ideologies, some contradictory to others, proceed in different directions

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the history of the idea of progress, see J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth* and Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin's theses on history are the inspiration for my interpretation of progress. Although a comprehensive philosophy of history is not my intention, I conduct my research with a concept of history in debt to Benjamin's notions of the "dialectical image" of history, which challenges the relation of the present to the past as purely temporal and continuous, and of "historical materialism," which inverts historicism's understanding of the past in relation only to itself. See Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* and the N convolute of his *Arcades Project*.

simultaneously. One may even see advancement in one aspect of the civilization produce a negative impact in another. Viewed through the lens of time, the idea of progress, rather than being unreflectively one dimensional, becomes multifaceted, non-sequential, and historical. Adopting this approach, my goal is to examine how Taiwan as a society articulated progress during the 1990s, with respect to its post-martial law context. Taiwan's history, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, under the strong influences of Westernization and Confucianism, calls for an examination through the lens of progress. The way Confucianism intersects with Western ideas of progress is itself an example of the above-mentioned discrepancies that can occur between aspects of progress. My goal in combing through the progressive activism of 1990s Taiwan, as a convergent point, is to enhance the understanding of the particularity of the idea of progress in Taiwan.

The concept of progress is absent from Confucianism. At the core of the Confucian morality is a relational hierarchy that is closely associated with patriarchal feudalism. The Confucian understanding of social hierarchy holds that conformity to political relations falls under the category of ethical considerations. The state is an extension of the family. The commensurability between political loyalty and filial piety mirrors that between public and private spheres. The implication of relational morality dictates that the relational network is infinitely expandable and the relations are inalterable.

Taiwan is by and large a Confucian society. This inalterability of relations and the unilaterally moralistic nature of Confucianism together make the Taiwanese idea of progress unique. A common narrative trope in Confucian literature establishes that

society slowly but surely moves toward the adulteration of moral stability.<sup>3</sup> This conviction thus prompts Confucian scholars to imagine that there existed a lost paradise in the past. In other words, the preferred goal of Confucianism is the restoration of the lost pristine ethics. It is moralistically anchored in time past, the exact opposite of the goal of progress which looks to the future and is based on the Western notion of positive development that has existed in Christianity as well as the rationalist tradition since the Enlightenment. Although holding different ideas of progress, Confucianism and Christianity converge under the Chinese Nationalist Regime in strengthening the Nationalists' control over Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> As the leader of the Nationalists, Ching Kai-shek confessed to practicing Christianity and Confucianism. The combination of Christianity and Confucianism constructed a traditionalist set of values.<sup>5</sup> This value system invoked the Chinese Nationalists' claim of retaining the essence of the Republican Era of China as both a modern state-nation and an heir to Chinese culture, despite losing the Chinese Civil War. In the following chapters, I will describe how this particular combination of Confucian and Christian ideas of development, inherited through immigration and Sinicization, clashed with Western ideas of progress that had been brought by colonial modernization, and ultimately, how this clash affected the activism of 1990s Taiwan.

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<sup>3</sup> For the regressive historicity in Confucianism, see Tang, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Hereafter, by Confucianism, I specifically refer to the Chinese Nationalists Party's reinvented Confucian ideas after its resettlement in Taiwan after losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

<sup>5</sup> While Mandarin Chinese-speaking Christian Churches conformed to the Chinese Nationalist Party's traditionalism, the Taiwanese Min toplect-speaking Presbyterian Church aligned itself with political progressivism, resisting the Chinese Nationalist Party's authoritative regime in the martial law era. For detailed information about the two strands of Christianity in Taiwan after 1949, see Zeng, 2017 and Zheng, 2017.

I focus on gender and sex in my exploration of the notion of being progressive in 1990s Taiwan. Scholars and politicians alike have the tendency to link gender to all aspects of sociocultural life and political debate. A close reading of gender discourse in the 1990s is, by way of association, a close reading of Taiwanese society. To the end of understanding the idea of progress in Taiwan, I discuss progressive gender discourse in order to cast light on the relation the social history of Taiwan has to gender, sex, and sexuality.

Gender discourse in 1990s Taiwan ushered in a critical review of Confucian values.<sup>6</sup> What we now call gender biases, or stereotypes permeate Confucian teachings. Even though they may seem unrelated at first glance, a close reading shows that Confucian tenets about the roles both men and women play in the family and society, and the critiques of them, are inherently political. I focus on gender discourse to uncover how it really lies behind all politics in 1990s Taiwan.

In this dissertation, while the activists and groups promoting gender-related social movements do not necessarily claim to be progressive, they have one thing in common. They all find the status quo unacceptable. Their respective understandings and critiques of those departures motivate them to improve what they see as inadequate, or oppressive. In a sense, their being progressive lies in their objectives to “right the wrongs.”

My take on their progressiveness focuses on how they look at, and articulate, those wrongs. I also focus on their strategies to correct those wrongs; and, perhaps most

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<sup>6</sup> Josephine Ho (何春蕤) and Naifei Ding (丁乃非) were among the first to introduce critical gender theory to Taiwan. See Ho, 1993 and Ding, 2000.

importantly, on how their agendas and their activism evolve. We shall see the 1990s gender movements, by being progressive, sometimes intersect with one another; create tensions, and pave the way for new meanings of progressiveness. The activists find themselves in the historical context of a society recently free of the restrictions of martial law and fascinated by the newly found material prosperity resulting from the trend of global neoliberal deregulation in the 1980s. It is also a society under the influences of Confucianism as well as colonial modernization. At the juncture of the 1990s, the progress that greeted Taiwan included a thriving economy, material affluence, and democratizing politics. This progress created an environment where, social inequities revealed themselves, and where these activists found that they had the agency to address those issues, thanks to the lifting of martial law. I chose sex work-related social movements, women's movements, and the activism of gays and lesbians to demonstrate my perspective of the gender progressiveness of the 1990s.

Sex work-related social movements heralded the wave of post-martial law social movements. The evolution of this activism, on the other hand, summarizes the gender progressiveness of the 1990s by that fact that progressive movements had to negotiate with pushback from conservatism. Sex work-related activism began with the campaign to rescue juvenile prostitutes. At the beginning of the campaign, the Presbyterian Church, feminist groups, and many other organizations converged to form a bloc. Their objective clearly emphasized human rights. In addition, because most underage girls sold into prostitution are aboriginals, social issues like ethnicity and class also emerged. Around the same time, a new form of journalism, like that of the *Renjian Magazine* (人間

雜誌), helped make inequities visible with its in-depth reportage and realistic photography.

In the mid-1990s, this activism gradually refocuses on mobilizing public concern over prostitution. In this later reorientation, prostitution comes across as less harmful to underaged, aboriginal and disadvantaged girls. However, it was framed as jeopardizing family values. In a sense, this rescue effort becomes a vigilante campaign. The mission had been to save underaged prostitutes, framing the traffickers as villains who profit from prostitution. Now the mission became an effort to eradicate prostitution once and for all. In this dissertation, I call this shift in orientation the rise of a regime of abstinence. This new regime targeted sex, especially sex outside marriage, and overlooked issues like ethnicity and class, which also contributed to prostitution. In the late-1990s, this activism culminates in a crackdown on the sex industry in Taipei City.

Feminist activists who took part in the rescue of juvenile prostitutes also had to face Confucianism and the family values directly connected to it in their activism. The life and death of the feminist Peng Wan-ru (彭婉如) play an integral part in revealing the dynamics between progressive feminist agendas and Confucian ideas. In the trajectory of the 1990s women's movement, I find that the activists begin with critiquing and challenging the Confucian gender hierarchy within the family setting, but end up reaffirming the very order they tried to undermine.

The prominent figures in the 1990s women's movement were intellectuals. Both Peng Wan-ru and her predecessor Zheng Zhihui (鄭至慧) sought to rupture the



Confucian gender hierarchy from an intellectual angle. Their writings reveal their awareness that Confucianism is a cultural institution comprised of symbols, convictions, and norms. Despite also engaging in grassroots activism, Peng Wan-ru and Zheng Zhihui invested much of their efforts in disrupting Confucianism with their intellectuality.

Peng Wan-ru's murder and the murder of Pai Hsiao-yen (白曉燕) in the mid-1990s, however, caused a shift in the women's movement causing it to be more grounded in politics. After the death of Peng wan-ru, the Peng Wan-Ru Foundation, established in her memory, began to establish nation-wide community network. The campaign put an emphasis on creating a supportive network for double-income families. Since families, by then, precluded same-sex couples, the orientation of Peng Wan-Ru Foundation's activism was heterosexual. In addition, its prioritizing of motherhood conforms to Confucian ideas about family. It is in this sense that the late-1990s women's movement intersected with lesbian and gay movements as well as the emerging population of immigrant workers. Feminist activism in the 1990s chose to stay within the heterosexual terrain and overlooked the issues of ethnicity and class that the immigrant workers embodied.

Confucian heteronormativity, and the need to confront it, play a significant role in the 1990s lesbian and gay movement. This dissertation, in contouring lesbian and gay activism, seeks to lay out the historical context of lesbian and gay activism. I find that gays and lesbians respectively adopted different strategies to further their causes. For gay activism, anonymity holds significance in the 1990s. The society of Taiwan, in the 1990s, still closely associated male homosexuality with deviant sexual acts and AIDS.

Prejudice toward gays led to the Changde Street Incident (常德街事件), which revealed that, when under public pressure for security and stability after Peng Wan-ru's murder, the law enforcement also targeted gays. The lesbian movement, on the other hand, had to fight for visibility. The 1990s lesbian activists found issues concerning lesbianism overlooked in the intellectual tradition of the feminist movement. In order to prioritize their agenda, lesbian groups opted for secession from the feminist women's movement.

Although taking different routes, gay and lesbian movements faced the same set of ideas that affected their approaches. Namely, Confucian heteronormativity. I use *The Silent Thrush* to exhibit the values and ideas surrounding the heteronormativity of Confucianism. *The Silent Thrush* was the first piece of fiction that dealt with same-sex desire to garner prominent literary prize. I analyze the reception of the novel, rather than just the narrative itself, to tease out the way that the society of Taiwan perceived homosexuality. What critics and commentators had to say about *The Silent Thrush* shows that, during the 1990s, homosexuality was perceived of more as a symptom than as an identity. A particular paradox is that people often mentioned homosexuality in connection to the decadent commercialization of a runaway capitalist society, while, as in the case of *The Silent Thrush*, people also attributed same-sex sexual acts to economic hardships. In reaction to this kind of prejudice, the late-1990s saw the emergence of a call for homosexual subjectivity.

Following this analysis, I then connect a shift in terminology in academia during the 1990s to the same-sex marriage debates in the 2010s, to demonstrate the contingency of “being progressive” in Taiwan. As progressive as the 1990s academia's effort to

address sex-related text as “erotic (情色)” rather than “pornographic (色情)” was, they also conform to heterosexual norms by looking at homosexuality as a strand of eroticism, or, pun intended, a state of exception. This mentality continues in the debate over the same-sex marriage bill. The dynamics between conventional ideas, like Confucianism, and concepts that arise from modernization, determines and shapes the 1990s gender progressiveness. It continues to shape people’s ideas of progress now.

### **Chapter Outlines**

The first chapter of this dissertation looks at the status of prostitution-related to social movements in the 1990s soon after the abrogation of Taiwan's martial law in 1987. On the threshold of political liberalization, the society of Taiwan saw the juvenile prostitute rescue movement as a new kind of activism. In spite of its unprecedented degree of mobilization and agency, progressivist social movements that took place during the post-martial law era were actually rooted in the earlier period of martial law. In particular, one of the modernization projects was associated with Christianity and its missionaries, dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the first chapter, factors needed to understand the 1990s progressiveness are described by unveiling the agendas of the Taiwanese public assembly and rallies as a façade for the progressive movement. While the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church spearheaded the juvenile prostitute rescue, three additional factors contributed to the initial stage of post-martial law progressiveness. The first and the most prevalent factor was the loosening of political restraints. The lifting of martial law and its aftermath facilitated democratization in Taiwan that took place in 1987. The demise of the

Chinese Nationalist Party's authoritative rule, leading up to the second factor, is best summed up by the trajectory of post-martial law activism that moved from ideological positions to agenda-driven actions. When the martial law era ended, a homogeneous resentment toward political oppression compelled activist groups to coalesce behind broad concepts, such as human rights and equality. In fact, it was those general concepts that fueled the juvenile prostitute rescue effort, although the cause behind the activism for equality seemed to be more specific. Over time, activism for human rights and equality diverged to support of many other causes, thus paving the way for the third defining factor. The aboriginal juvenile prostitute rescue campaign, while progressive enough in its ideology of ethnic equality, was gradually transformed into an abstinence regime that emphasized stability and family values and aligned itself with ideals often associated with capitalist bourgeois conservatism. The Confucian doctrines in Taiwan further enhanced and caused these ideals to become intertwined.

The second chapter of this dissertation looks into the feminist activism of the 1990s in terms of how the feminist activists criticized, and at the same time were influenced by, Confucian doctrines. The counteractions Confucian doctrines inspired, in turn, shed light on ways the 1990s feminist activism was progressive in nature. In particular, this chapter discusses the history of the 1990s feminist activism, the language employed, and the organization that eventually exposed the limits of its progressiveness. The trajectory of the feminist discourse echoes that of the post-martial law activism detailed in the first chapter, supporting my thesis regarding the inherent limits that define progressiveness in Taiwan.

The second chapter covers the sisterhood of the Awakening Foundation and Fembooks, the life and murder of Peng Wan-ru, and the reaction of Taiwanese society to violence against women. It would be inaccurate, however, to identify this narrative as a purely character-oriented discussion. This specific cohort of feminist activists was representational in the sense that the group embodied the ideological pivot point at which progressive American intellectuality and traditional Confucian doctrines intersect. Caught between these ideologies, the feminist activists told a story that elucidates the significance of Taiwan as a U.S. protectorate as well as a destination for American cultural exports. As a result, the landscape of 1990s feminist activism is viewed as a confrontation between American influences and deep-seated Confucianism. The flip side of the movement reveals obvious elitist, bourgeois, and even heteronormative inclinations. The elitist and bourgeois character is most pronounced in the murder of Peng Wan-ru and the pervasive fear her death provoked. Even at its grassroots level, the activism following Peng's murder all too often glosses over, if not altogether steers clear of, issues of class and immigration.<sup>7</sup> As the 1990s drew to a close, the inherent heteronormative agenda of the feminist cause left a catastrophic chasm at the center of its activism.

The third chapter of this study is devoted to the gay and lesbian activism of the 1990s in Taiwan. It should be noted that I refrain from referring to the movement as LGBTQ activism. My attention to word choice derives from the fact that the nuanced cause was yet to emerge in 1990s Taiwan, where heteronormative institutions at that time

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<sup>7</sup> The elitist character of grassroots as well as community feminist activism in Taiwan is, while in accordance with what Gramsci envisions as intellectual hegemony, right inclined.

were oppressive to the extent of homogenizing all voices of opposition as simply homosexual and of further simplifying the spectrum to include only male homosexual gays and female homosexual lesbians. Even the homosexual activism movement imposed this gender assigning mechanism on itself.

There are two themes that run through 1990s homosexual activism in Taiwan. The fact that these two themes are heavily gendered exemplifies what connects the 1990s homosexual progressiveness. Strategies of lesbian and gay activists were decisively different in that lesbian activists sought to establish the particularity of their cause incommensurable to that of feminism, while the gay community sought to further its cause and, at the same time, maintain anonymity. The two defining themes of homosexual activism were in fact rooted in the same patriarchal conventions as the Confucian family order. In an institution anchored by the proliferation of male heirs, male homosexuality is stigmatized as rupturing the blood line and bringing shame to the family. The patriarchy ostracizes gays. On the other hand, this Confucian ideology, while overlooking female subjects from the outset, deploys the same oppression to lesbians. Fighting against the same patriarchal negligence, lesbian activists sometimes find themselves strategically indistinguishable from their feminist cohorts. This chapter assesses documents pertaining to lesbian and gay activism as they are shaped by inherently connected contexts that impede homosexual subjects from realization. At the same time, I delineate homosexual progressiveness by drawing attention to how acknowledging homosexuality has become a chic, progressive stance that merely decorates a Confucian society.

The conclusion of this dissertation attempts to broaden an understanding of progressiveness, politically and culturally, within the Taiwanese society. I wrap up discussion in the three preceding chapters by connecting it to Taiwan's imagination of progress. I also bring into my thesis the global influences on Taiwan's progressive discourse. Finally, based on my assessments of the 1990s progressivism and contemporary developments thirty years later, I propose situating the legacies of 1990s progressiveness in Taiwan within a global framework of neoliberalism. Although on the surface, people's evaluation and practices of sex, sexuality, and gender appear to be mostly locally conditioned, I argue they are not as removed from the global economic order as we would like to believe.

As the writing of this dissertation draws to a close, Taiwan finds itself in the wake of another period of social activism worthy of calling itself equal to the 1990s social movements. Many factors that defined that earlier period of progressiveness still linger, harking back to the question this dissertation raises at the outset: What is the progressiveness of a given progressive discourse? The answer in the case of Taiwan lies in the historical as well as ideological challenges Taiwan faces domestically and internationally.

## **Chapter One: From Prostitution To Abstinence**

How does the post-martial law progressivism work its way into a less than progressive control over sex? Is it possible that a presumably progressive agenda does not progress accordingly and may end up regressing? Can it be that our discussion about progressiveness actually belies its progressive appearance? To answer these questions, one has to confront such inquiries as how the status quo, from which a progressive stance departs, can be in opposition to social inequities; or, how can a progressive stance, when perceived in a different light, come across as radical? In an attempt to address the proposed questions, I look into the complex and heterogeneous discourse surrounding sex work-related social movements in 1990s Taiwan. In my narrative of the trajectory of the sex work-related activism, I examine the ways in which such activism intersected with both domestic political agendas and international views of human rights. I also contour the metamorphosis of the activism concerning prostitution from a liberation campaign into an ideologically conservative discourse of abstinence. The case of prostitution in 1990s Taiwan informs my argument about progress.

Besides defining “progressiveness,” in this case, as a quality or a stance that noticeably and critically reviews and revises the existing representation of prostitution, I chose my examples to call attention to the 1990s discourse of prostitution: its undertone of social (in)justice, and its paradoxical regressive transformation into a social control mechanism, both of which deserve more scholarly attention. Moreover, I emphasize that the progressiveness of gender discourse in the 1990s anticipated future ideologies in



relation to capitalism, identity politics and nation building, which fluctuate between furthering and being at odds with issues of sexual liberation.

In 1986, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan launched the Rainbow Project (彩虹專案) to “rescue” (救援) underage sex workers. Widely known as the Juvenile Prostitute Rescue (救援雛妓), the Church’s attempt is a prism through which to review the women’s activism movement that was gathering momentum at the time. News reports, literary works and criticism, as well as entertainment programs followed the development of women’s activism to comment on prostitution. Many of them not only helped increase public understanding of sex and gender issues, but also offered new ways of thinking about the notions of sex and gender. These publications are what I call “progressive texts,” in the sense that they implemented narrative tropes that defied stereotypical ways of talking about sex.

In this chapter, I do not intend to compile an exhaustive, let alone complete, list of progressive texts, even though such a compilation will no doubt aid future inquiries into the topic. Rather, I focus on close reading to tease out the underlying concerns shared by a few representative progressive texts, and to systematically explain how they differ from texts produced in the 1970s and 1980s in terms of ideology and narrative approach.

*The Joint Proclamation of Nationwide Women, Aborigines, Human Rights and Religious Groups in Demonstration Against Human Trafficking* (全國婦女、山地、人權暨教會團體嚴重抗議人口販賣共同聲明), spearheaded by the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, is an exemplary progressive text that deserves close analysis.

Before the mid-1980s, accounts of prostitution resorted to including provocative materials and graphic language. Such sensational narratives were not so much critiques of prostitution as tales of moral admonition. From the 80s to the 90s, media coverage of prostitution underwent a certain transformation. Where the selection of cases and a colorful representation of human trafficking gave the 80s reports their popular features, the 90s saw the rise of in-depth analysis of prostitution in relation to sociocultural conditions and legal implications (Chang, 2009). During this time, well-reputed journals such as *Nanfang* (南方), *Renjian* (人間), and *Zonghe Yuekan* (綜合月刊) launched their investigations into prostitution. Their findings further urged the public to recognize the issue of ethnic and class inequality in the prostitution of underage aboriginal girls and characterized this as a serious social problem. Taking its cue from the emerging public awareness, the *Joint Proclamation* quoted Article 4 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (U.N. General Assembly, 1948). Most simply put, this quotation signaled the change that owed much to a growing awareness of the principles of human rights and made the 90s more progressive than the preceding decades.

In addition to journalism, other reports of juvenile prostitution in the 1990s also drew attention to the issue of ethnicity. Critiques of prostitution in the 90s began to shift from denouncing the immorality of the aboriginal women’s body to exposing and criticizing the sex industry as an exploitative system. By criticizing the pain inflicted upon aboriginal peoples, these critiques helped bring public attention to issues such as

economic and educational disadvantages. They also revealed that government offices and policies not only tended to overlook aboriginal people's rights, but also turned a blind eye to human trafficking, disrupting the integrity of aboriginal communities.

Many in Taiwanese society at the time advocated for a complete elimination of prostitution. Conversely, a number of scholars as well as former sex workers challenged such views and criticized them as equally oppressive. Yet it was also at this juncture that discourse surrounding prostitution took a turn. The path it took saw urban bourgeois values, which aligned with Confucianism, take center stage. As a result, the activism gradually inched the physical bodies of underage prostitutes, which embodied the inequities of commodification and modernization, out of focus. Later in the chapter, I will examine two theme songs of the 1993 Anti-Underage Prostitution Campaign, Hsiao Fu-te's *A Flower on the Huâ-se Street* (華西街的一蕊花) and Jutoupi's *Hope She Grows and Flourishes* (望伊大穰), in my analysis of this discursive reorientation. Although focused on social inequality at the outset, both songs hinted at the activism surrounding the issue of juvenile prostitution, tapping into a more general sentiment about family values.

### **Christian Initiative in Juvenile Prostitute Rescue**

The progenitor of the post-martial law juvenile prostitutes rescue campaign, the Taiwan Presbyterian Church, although active in spreading the Gospel in Taiwan as early as 1865, was a relative latecomer to the long line of Christian ministries on the island. In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company laid the cornerstone of Fort Zeelandia in southern Taiwan. This stronghold cemented Dutch commercial rule

over Taiwan and, along with it, provided a base for Calvinist missionaries. Their earliest ministries ranged from providing modern medical service to creating a system of transcription of the local aboriginal language, Siraya. Today a Sirayan translation of the Gospel of Matthew, the endeavor of a Daniel Gravius, still exists in the Netherlands (Jing Tsu, 2010). These Sirayan New Testament translation projects were denied consummation with the destruction of the Dutch outposts in 1661, when Zheng Chenggong, then referred to as Koxinga, claimed the sovereignty of Taiwan by expelling the Dutch East India Company from the island. Since then, the ebb and flow of Christianity in Taiwan has been tied to the vicissitudes of economic and colonial control over Taiwan. Perennial and uninterrupted Christian establishments were not perpetuated until the late nineteenth century.

The Presbyterian ministry in Taiwan began in the 1860s. In 1865, English Presbyterian missionary James Laidlaw Maxwell (馬雅各) established his ministry in today's Tainan City. It would become the first Presbyterian ministry in Taiwan. A few years later, in 1871, northern Taiwan would see George Leslie Macay, commissioned by the Canadian Presbyterian Church, arrive on the shore of Tamsui and base his ministry there. Both ministries introduced modernized medical practices; Macay was renowned in periodontics, while Thomas Barclay laid the foundation for the education of the visually impaired in Taiwan. Their ministries, again, attempted localization through romanized transcription of the Formosa vernacular. This time, they gained success in completing a Taiwanese translation of the New Testament, as well as in initiating a printing industry in addition to the field of Taiwanese journalism. The *Taiwan Church*

*News*, then *Tâi-oân-hú-siâ<sup>n</sup> Kàu-hōe-pò* (台灣府城教會報), written in the Roman alphabet, was first published in 1885. Continual localization sustained the Presbyterian ministries during the turmoil of the Japanese takeover of Taiwan from Chinese Qing Dynasty and through the two World Wars. After the 1949 resettlement of the Chinese Nationalist Party regime in Taiwan, the Presbyterian Church would again shepherd its flocks through authoritarianism and political persecution.

Throughout the Martial Law Era (1949–1987), the Taiwan Presbyterian Church garnered a lustrous impression of political dissent. The Church actively took part in the resistance against the Chinese Nationalist totalitarian regime, which contributed to its becoming a victim of Nationalist censorship. In 1975, the Nationalist government banned and confiscated the Church-commissioned new Taiwanese translation of the New Testament, then referred to as the *Red Cover Bible*, for its violation of the Nationalist monolingual policy. The Taiwan Presbyterian Church's prominence in championing liberty was further solidified with the *Three Proclamations* concerning human rights in Taiwan over the course of the year 1970.<sup>1</sup> However, what ultimately brought the Taiwan Presbyterian Church and the child prostitutes rescue activists into collaboration in the 1990s lay deeper than the Church's dissident reputation during the Martial Law Era.

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<sup>1</sup> The Three Proclamations refer to the *Statement on Our National Fate by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (台灣基督長老教會對國是的聲明與建議) in 1971; *Our Appeal by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, Concerning the Bible, the Church, and the Nation* (我們的呼籲) in 1975; and the *Declaration of Human Rights by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan* (人權宣言) in 1977. All three documents challenge the Nationalist Party regime's political ideology. By referring to Taiwan as a nation, rather than merely an area from which the Chinese Nationalist Party wielded its sovereignty over China, the three proclamations have created tensions between the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church and the Nationalist government.

The Taiwan Presbyterian Synod adopted the *Three Proclamations* in 1971, 1975 and 1977 respectively. The formation of the Synod by presbyteries embodied the Protestant tradition of representative democracy, for which the Presbyterian Church has long been known. In his memoir, the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama remembered what he was told by the Taiwanese Presbyterian church leader Shoki Coe: “the Gospel must be culturally contextualized, of which the uttermost example was the incarnation of Jesus Christ” (Nanzhou Chen, 1996). In Coe’s own words, the Taiwan Presbyterian ministry ought to be “theologia in loco,” contextualized theology. The chronology of the Presbyterian ministry in Taiwan reified Coe’s vision by corresponding representative democratic administration and localization by taking the local identities into its ministries. The localization effort was evidenced in the Church’s Taiwanese aboriginal ministry, which came as a resolution adopted as of the termination of the Japanese colonization in 1945, even earlier than the *Three Proclamations*.

The involvement of the Taiwan Presbyterian Church in the post-martial law juvenile prostitutes rescue campaign was administrative. Liao Biying (廖碧英), one of the first administrators of the Rainbow Project, laid down most of the rationales concerning the juvenile prostitutes rescue campaign. Liao penned a report, *The Problem of Lechery* (色情問題). People generally considered it the starting point of the rescue campaign. Liao first presented it at the 1985 annual *Asian Church Women Conference* (亞洲教會婦女會), which was coordinated by the Taiwan Presbyterian Church and titled *Tourism and Prostitution* (Li, 2016). *The Problem of Lechery* provided statistical

demographic data, compiled during the course of the church's ministry, on the issue of underage Taiwanese aboriginal females being systematically sold into prostitution. The finding indicated that 60% of the prostitutes in Taiwan were aborigines, of which 80% came from the Atayal tribe (泰雅族) (Michael Rudolph, 1993). Despite its pioneering significance to the post-martial law rescue of child prostitutes, Liao's fieldwork and seminal report was chronologically the outcome, rather than the triggering factor, of a ministry dedicated to the aboriginal communities in Taiwan. In the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War, the Taiwan Presbyterian Church Synod resolved to strengthen its involvement in the aboriginal ministry, which led to church-commissioned research. The early collaboration between Liao and the activists of women's organizations was based on her scientific knowledge of the aboriginals as an expert and witness. The statistical and demographic approaches applied to understanding the issue of underage prostitutes was in accordance with the missionary modernization project that began as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Early Activism for the Rescue of Juvenile Prostitutes**

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1987, half a year before the abrogation of martial law, the Rainbow Project transformed from a Presbyterian Church ministry to a rally and social campaign. The publication of the 1987 *Joint Proclamation* first toned down the particularity of The Rainbow Project as a Christian ministry. This joint proclamation incorporated a quotation from *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, "Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms" (U.N. General Assembly, 1948). As a demonstration

rally organized by fifteen non-governmental organizations, including the Taiwan Presbyterian Church and the Awakening Foundation among others, the 1987 rally was the harbinger of post-martial law social activism, with people asserting their right to assemble and to express opinions. The rally began with a manifesto titled *Opposing Human Trafficking, Caring for Juvenile Prostitutes* (反對販賣人口，關懷雛妓). A procession of activists, chanting anti-human trafficking slogans, ventured into the vicinity of Huaxi Street (華西街), in Taipei City's Wanhua District, an infamous enclave of brothels.

The 1987 rally later also made an appearance in *Renjian Magazine*. The 17<sup>th</sup> issue, published in March of 1987, was dedicated to the coverage of juvenile prostitute-related issues. The word “appearance” might sound problematic, if not oxymoronic, considering how the 1987 rally was presented. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, *Renjian Magazine* represented a progressive way of examining late 1980s Taiwan. The page layout of the magazine and its bold design often included page-besiding photos that spoke volumes, as if the textual reportage was merely a caption. The realist style of photography presented the juvenile prostitutes and their alleged traffickers as human beings with emotional weight, unlike the martial law era sensational reportage that aimed at moralistic admonition.

A famous photograph showed brothel owners as the observers of the 1987 rally, framing a dim space that looked like a living room. Several motionless and expressionless figures were either seated in a leisurely fashion or standing beside the doorframe, closely observing the rallying activists. Through the window frame, in the



limited space between the torsos of the observing figures, one could follow their line of sight. They were observing the demonstrators who held up juvenile prostitute rescue banners as they marched onwards. The caption revealed that the brothel owners, aware of the rally, had temporarily shut down business and were photographed as indifferent spectators of the proceedings.

The 1986 rally appeared in the *Renjian Magazine* coverage only as an event that many spectators contrived to neglect. Also included in the coverage was a report by Zeng Shumei (曾淑美) that set out to challenge the society and law enforcement's negligence towards juvenile prostitution as a social issue. The title of Zeng Shumei's journalistic work, *The Record of Prostitutes Crying Out to Heaven* (娼奴籲天錄), was an homage to the worldwide struggle for human rights, as well as an appeal to increase public awareness of inequity. The title, *Changnu Yutian Lu* (娼奴籲天錄), was reminiscent of the 1901 Mandarin Chinese translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*. Based on account of Stowe's novel, the late Qing Dynasty literatus Lin Shu (林紓) translated the novel into Classical Chinese (Shu Lin, 1901). Lin's terse literary Chinese bestowed an alternative title on the novel, *Heinu Yutian Lu* (黑奴籲天錄), literally, "the record of black slaves crying out to heaven." Crying out to heaven, in Chinese culture, represented the ultimate plea made when a grievance had been denied all forms of justification or outlet. As the first American novel to be translated into literary Chinese, Stowe's work has since carried great significance in the representation of freedom, democracy, and even modernization. The

title of Zeng's work, echoing that of the Chinese adaptation of Stowe's, aligned the inhuman hardships endured by child prostitutes with the American slavery. Moreover, concerns about slavery are present in the Chinese title, which aimed at provoking a society proud of its affluence and modernization with the accusation that it nonetheless harbored a centuries-old, savage institution. And just as Stowe's work "[made] the big war (Stowe, 1911)," to quote President Abraham Lincoln, Zeng's journalism raised a furor that transformed the way people perceive the issue of prostitution.

Readers of *The Record of Prostitutes Crying Out to Heaven* found the accomplices to human trafficking disturbing. Zeng's journalism exposed those who cooperated with and profited from prostitution, other than procurers and traffickers, and who have infiltrated every sector of the exploitive economy. In 1986, Zeng visited the halfway house and job training facility in Yunlin, where she was able to interview rescued underage prostitutes. One of the interviewees, a former prostitute with the alias of Chunlan, was sold into prostitution by a local legislator who promised her family job interviews. Another interviewee, alias Yuhua, had to watch as her own father was imprisoned for the charge of selling her to traffickers, while the evidence in the case was forged under the collaboration of the traffickers and members of law enforcement. A particularly shocking narrative in Zeng's work depicted how Chunlan managed to escape from the brothel, only to be apprehended seconds before she could board her getaway train. She narrowly missed freedom due to the actions of a station staff member serving as an informant for the brothel. Chunlan's account described the standard operating procedure of the station informant who, after spotting a woman chasing the train in a

colorful and enticing outfit, would place a phone call to the brothels inquiring whether they were missing any girls (Zeng, 1987).

The readers who carefully examined the interviewees' accounts would inevitably recognize themselves in the obstacles facing the juvenile prostitutes who wished to get out. For the stigma attached to prostitution had been preventing the rescued sex workers from leading normal lives. Yuhua confessed that she had been divorced twice, after her spouses found out about her past. In addition, she struggled to find employment after rumors and finger-pointing eventually exposed her days of prostitution. The story of Xiulian, however, was particularly heart-wrenching. She began to work as a prostitute after being introduced to a wealthy, middle-aged man, who offered monetary compensation for her virginity. Xiulian became accustomed to this way of monetary gain, but quickly found that her rate decreased as the days went by. She ended up in a Huaxi Street basement, earning only 50 TWD more per transaction than involuntary child prostitutes. The wealthy, middle-aged man calls to mind the young male character in Teresa Teng's 1973 hit song, *Don't Pick the Roadside Wildflowers* (路邊的野花不要採), in which an ambitious young man sets off from his hometown to pursue prosperity in the big city. His lover sent him off with an admonishment not to indulge in licentious romances. The lover anticipated his success in the city and beseeched him not to deviate from being true to her. Zeng linked her delineation of the plights of prostitutes in a wealthy society to the wealth-seeking society that had, at the height of its economic growth, turned a blind eye to social inequality.

Zeng proposed from the outset to tackle prostitution in context. Setting her narrative apart from that of the journalistic accounts that preceded the abrogation of martial law and focused on morality and stability, Zeng began her report on prostitution from the vantage point of sociological definitions of slavery. In so doing, she not only theorized prostitution as a form of slavery, but also exposed the class and economic determinants of prostitution, especially in the case of aboriginal underage prostitutes. Even though she didn't further pursue, or statistically back up, her observations, Zeng did introduce a point of view that had escaped critical discussions of underage prostitution. This viewpoint was, namely, the institutional consequence of the aborigines' increasing economic dependence on the ethnic Han. As the ethnic majority in Taiwan, the Han people have adopted the capitalist way of production, which marginalizes and oppresses the aboriginal economy. It has forced the aborigines to depend on the economy of the ethnic Han. They found themselves at a further disadvantage because they didn't have equal access to education and the opportunity to develop literacy, both of which may, but does not always, them in a capitalist society. Their disadvantages took the form of poverty and resulted in a widening chasm between classes that often manifested itself in the guise of ethnic issues such as the problem of child prostitution.

Before the juvenile prostitutes rescue in 1986, however, there was another event that arrested people's attention: the murder case of Tang Yingshen (湯英伸). Tang Yingshen was a handsome and bright aboriginal teenager. In order to finance his studies, Tang left his hometown in Jiayi County and traveled north to Taipei. Tang's journey was identical to that of many aboriginals who had so opted due to a lack of

literacy and vocational credentials. But his case proved less fortunate than most, and more illustrative as to the disadvantages aboriginals had long been suffering.

Tang's quest suffered a setback shortly after his departure. He responded to the hiring advertisement of a restaurant without knowing that it was, in fact, an advertisement of an employment agency in disguise. Tang was sent to a laundromat and was 3,500 TWD in debt, for the broker fee. Adding to this grievance, Tang's employer confiscated his citizen ID to prevent him from making a complaint to law enforcement. The ill treatment from his employer made Tang impatient. He finally erupted and, after verbal as well as physical quarrels, murdered the employer, his wife, and their infant daughter in January 1986. Tang was later indicted on the charge of murder and sentenced to capital punishment. In July 1987, after failed petitions to suspend his execution on the grounds that he was unjustly targeted as an aborigine, as the murder case had revealed, Tang became the youngest person ever to be executed since the Chinese Nationalist Party seized control over Taiwan in the mid-1940s.

Both the Tang murder case and the juvenile prostitute rescue rally led to questions about ethnic equality and rule of law, and the recognition that aborigines were disproportionately exploited in several fields, economic, educational, and social. Public furor rose to demand accountability from state institutions.

### **Fighting Bureaucratic Inertia**

After the 1987 rally, activists involved in the first juvenile prostitute rescue rally found themselves striving against government bureaucracy in addition to human trafficking. The Taipei Municipal Police Force responded to the 1987 rally with

*Operation Disciplinarity* (正風專案), an operation targeting brothels that took advantage of juvenile prostitutes. The effect of the operation, however, was severely limited. The brothel owners and traffickers were not prosecutable due to lack of human trafficking entries in the Taiwanese Penal Code. Other than that, the law enforcement on brothels' payrolls had proved more solid than mere rumor. In 1988 concerning this, the juvenile prostitutes rescue took action again. And, as before, the activists were not shy in proclaiming their cause. They referred to the 1988 rally as *Jiuyuan Chuji Zaichuji* (救援雛妓再出擊), or *Another Strike to Rescue Juvenile Prostitutes*.

Almost exactly a year after the 1987 rally, child prostitute rescue campaigners brought their demonstration back to Huaxi Street, on January 9, 1988. The procession was significantly augmented, as the result of the increase in NGOs signing on board, a total of more than 20 added from the previous year. These new additions were largely academic, including many student organizations, which foreshadowed the student activism in the 1990s Taiwan. As a result of the protest, brothels again closed their doors. The activists grew strategically aggressive. The whole procession was led by female aboriginal activists shouting in aboriginal languages, Atayal and Amis in particular. The content of their chanting, besides urging child prostitutes to attempt escape, was about the rescuing units' phone number. Their chanting spelled out the number in aboriginal languages unfamiliar to the ethnic Hans' ears. Activists also slipped pens and flyers containing the rescue phone number onto windowsills, so that by dialing the number, the child prostitutes could identify themselves and specify the location where they were being held. The campaign, although successful in provoking

sympathetic sentiments and exposing the inhumane environment imprisoning child prostitutes, ultimately had to redirect its efforts towards rallying state intervention and promoting judiciary provisions aimed at combating human trafficking and juvenile prostitution.

The 1988 rally has caused a sensation and drawn public attention to the issue of aboriginal children sold into prostitution. Yet, upon seeking judiciary intervention, activist groups found slim legal grounds for terminating human trafficking in Taiwan. Not only were there practically no entries in the Taiwanese Penal Code addressing trafficking in people, but traffickers were also indictable only upon complaint in a legal procedure as opposed to trafficking itself being considered an indictable crime. As if this were not frustrating enough, they were only punishable for offenses infringing on marriage and family, personal liberty, and morals. In other words, sexual atrocities inflicted upon children were not punishable due to the lack of legal grounds.

Similar to the general attitude toward prostitution in the martial law era, the legal system, upon the lifting of martial law, once again revealed its inadequacy. Post-martial law discourse on the subject aligned with an earlier mode of thinking. The old way framed the issue in terms of morality, which was seen as a vehicle of social equality, and addressed prostitution purely from the position of its obstruction of family values. Seeing prostitution in the light of immorality, instead of injustice, further hindered the denial of its roots in ethnic- and class-based injustices. It also created a situation that punished not only the traffickers but also the child prostitutes themselves. The latter were indictable for the infringement of offense against marriage and the family. Legally

speaking, this mindset, and the laws associated with it, incriminated children for being sold into slavery. Viewing prostitution as disruption of the family thus put child prostitutes in a predicament, in which the violation and assault of their bodies simultaneously indicted them as violators of the law.

Through the events of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1988, the activists, seeking to right this wrong, confronted the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Yuan. An alliance of 55 NGOs, including the Taiwan Women's Rescue Association (台灣婦女救援協會), the Rainbow Project of the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, and the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會), drafted a demonstrative petition, which they intended to submit to the Judicial Yuan, the highest governmental judicial organ, as well as the Ministry of Justice, the highest executive branch. The petition demanded the governmental branches' acknowledgement of their political and executive responsibilities in shaping the state's response to human trafficking, and the judiciary provisions associated with this issue. An addition, they called for changes to the Penal Code, which would criminalize as well as punish trafficking in persons. Most importantly, the desired judiciary provision would free involuntary prostitution from the stigma of immorality it currently carried, and place it under the scrutinizing eye of a justice system that differentiated victim from perpetrator.

The petition was faced with bureaucratic indolence. A journalistic report in the Journal of the Awakening Foundation documented the verbal exchange between the petitioning activists and the director of the Department of Prosecutorial Affairs (Li, 1988).



The conversation turned procedural and, unexpectedly, even constitutional, before the issue of prostitution was finally touched upon. During the confrontation, Chen Yaodong (陳耀東), then director of the Department of Prosecutorial Affairs, in a refusal to acknowledge the demonstrative petition, adamantly maintained that it was not mandatory for a government branch to lend a listening ear to the people's demonstration, or *kangyi* (抗議) in Mandarin Chinese, at least not in the constitutional provision. Moreover, Chen maintained that there were administrative procedures and channels for people to submit petitions, or *qingyuan* (請願) whereas he found no regulations to follow in processing *kangyi*. Activists, including Shen Meizhen (沈美真), then president of the Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation, Cao Ailan (曹愛蘭), from the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會), and Liao Biying, director of the Rainbow Project, retorted with the assertion of freedom of speech as constitutional right. Unfortunately, the remainder of the debate then centered on this rhetorical conundrum between *kangyi* and *qingyuan*.

One aspect in the above-mentioned journalistic report, however, stood out amongst the post-martial law activism that called for progressive social reform. The juvenile prostitutes rescue campaign has since been perceived of as the first grassroots social movement whose progressive stance aligned with the post-martial law liberal atmosphere. However, the confrontation between the bureaucrat and the child prostitute rescue activists suggested otherwise. It was the lingering conservatism, in this case the punctiliously evasive bureaucracy, and the activists' reaction to it, that shed light upon

post-martial law progressiveness. In the 1988 demonstration, from the rupture between *kangyi* and *qingyuan* that prevented activists from asserting political opinions, arose the recognition and construction of legal personhood as activism.

The 1987 and 1988 campaigns not only created awareness of prostitution as a social issue, but also increased awareness of the amalgamation of activist agencies. The cause of rescuing child prostitutes itself saw several project-oriented groups ascend to cause-oriented, non-governmental organizations. During the course of 1987 and 1988, organizational transitions between the two rescue campaigns included such changes as the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church giving the Rainbow Project an office and inaugurating the Center of Rainbow Ministry (彩虹事工中心); the founding and registering of the Taipei Women Rescue Foundation (台北市婦女救援基金會) (its previous incarnation was the Taiwan Women Rescue Association); and the transformation of the Garden of Hope Foundation (勵馨基金會) from its earlier role as a shelter for rescued child prostitutes.

The founding of these NGOs signaled an alternation in the activist approach to this issue, from project-based to institutional maneuvers. With the *Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act* (兒童少年福利法) as a direct judiciary outcome of the 1988 campaign, social movement organizations began steering away from the Christian-related, moralistic regulations toward Confucian family values, in this case the characterization of juvenile prostitution as an infringement on familial integrity rather than on human rights. The trajectory of this activist construction of legal personhood

could soon be traced to the state-building nationalistic campaign that sought the *de jure* independence of Taiwan in the 1990s. In this way, the confluence of changes in identity politics and the legality of child prostitute rescue created an alternate narrative with regard to the progressiveness of child prostitute rescue, as I will discuss in the following section.

### **The Activism Reoriented to Family Values**

The aforementioned Garden of Hope Foundation started out as a halfway house for teenagers and children rescued from prostitution, and the service it provided enabled the foundation to conduct interviews with child prostitutes in an attempt to reconstruct the operation of the sex industry. The materials it accumulated from these interviews resulted in a research report, authored, in 1990, by the foundation's own executive officer, Liang Wanghui (梁望惠). This report estimated that Taiwan was experiencing a human trafficking scale of 40,000 to 60,000 underage girls (Liang, 1992). The Garden of Hope Foundation held a road running event in 1993 to raise public awareness of the prevalence of underage prostitution. As in the case of its late-1980s predecessor, the ultimate agenda for the event was to formalize some kind of congressional legislation. Its impact finally came in 1995, with the passing of the *Act of Prevention of Child and Juvenile Sexual Transaction* (兒童青少年性交易防治條例). According to this legal provision, the transgression of profiting from underage prostitution could finally be prosecuted. This piece of legislation invested 40% (17 out of 39) of its total items in detailing the punishable offenses of human trafficking.

The Garden of Hope Foundation had adjusted its mission since its first involvement in the 1987 campaign. In the course of carrying out its original mission of empowering the victims of child prostitution, the foundation resolved to expand their service. All underage girls who had experience any form of sexual abuse and assault, including prostitution, were to be included. The proceedings and theme of the 1993 event clearly reflected the adjustment.

The 1993 campaigners designed the event to be family friendly. Issues that evoked strong public sentiments, such as “child prostitutes” and “human trafficking,” were less emphasized than more holistic, positive topics like “jogging” and “health.” Ji Huirong (紀惠容), then the executive director of the Garden of Hope Foundation, stated in an interview that the foundation tuned the event to appeal to the general public through a humorous and pleasant tone (Huirong Ji, 1993). In fact, the 1993 event had all the signature elements of a capitalist, bourgeois campaign. In order to harness some celebrity prestige, the event commissioned its theme song from a popular entertainer. In addition, the campaign replaced the banners and slogans of its 1980s predecessors with commercials and sponsorship from consumer products that conveyed a healthy and athletic image. Among other recreational activities that expressed an urban bourgeois identity, road running rose to wide popularity in Taiwan in the early 1990s. Participating in this activity not only required next to no qualifications or skills, but also projected a modern and affluent image, which helped to maximize the turnout. One of the main attractions of the 1993 campaign was a jogging event. The jogging event also drew endorsement from such celebrities as Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), the then-Minister of

Justice and rising star in the political arena, who was well known for jogging through his neighborhood every morning. The campaign even had its own theme songs, composed and performed by singers such as Chen Mingzhang (陳明章) and Jutoupi (朱頭皮), who, despite not really being teen idols, had won public supports with their sophisticated and progressive style.

The Christian undertone originally introduced by the Taiwan Presbyterian Church was still there, but slight alternations were discernible in the message, which also distinguished the 1993 event from the 1986 campaign. In an interview given to the UDN (聯合報), Ji Huirong's response to a question about whether the Garden of Eden Foundation was of Presbyterian background was worth noting. Ji maintained that the Garden of Hope Foundation, while founded by American missionary Angie Golmon, was successful in garnering support from many others, in addition to Presbyterian churchgoers: "Donations came also from other denominations and organizations, amongst them the Taiwan Chapter of the World Vision international (台灣世界展望會)" (UDN, 1993).

Despite efforts not to appear too exclusively affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, the Christian message of the 1993 event sounded more religiously militant than its 1986 counterpart. The Presbyterian involvement in the 1986 campaign was an extension of its mission in alignment with the Christian practice of serving the poor and disadvantaged. The 1993 message, on the other hand, tilted more toward the recurring battle theme in the Old Testament. During the same interview mentioned above, Ji

invoked the Bible, citing *Joshua chapter 2* in reference to the road-running route. The jogging route surrounding the Hoaxi Street vicinity, Ji stated, recalled the downfall of the walled city of Jericho, which was brought about by the Israelites marching around it seven times, according to God's command. The militancy of the Israelites conquering pagan gentiles might appear incompatible with, if not contradictory to, the intended mellow undertone. Yet Ji's statement about the underlying message of the road running event was, in fact, consciously shifting the original focus of the 1986 Rainbow Campaign. The 1993 event concentrated on engaging the largest possible audience to form an opposition between the general public and an industry that targets underage girls. This new focus was also evident in the theme songs chosen for the event.

*"For She is Our Precious Baby," I Sī Lán ê Pó-puè (伊是咱个寶貝)* in Taiwanese, was a song commissioned for the 1993 event. Chen Mingzhang, who wrote the lyrics and composed the song, later confessed that the idea for the song emerged when he was tucking his daughter into bed. The first few sentences of the lyrics read:

*"A flower was given birth into this world, utterly cherished  
by her dad and mom. If the wind blows, they cover her up  
with a blanket, lest she wither and fall into darkness.*

一蕊花生落地，爸爸、媽媽疼上濟。風若吹，愛蓋被，  
毋甘予伊墜落烏暗地。<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The lyrics in Taiwanese are as follows: "tsit-lui-hue senn-loh-tē, pa-pa, ma-ma thiànn-siōng-tsuē. hong-nā-tshue, ài-kah-phuē, m̄-kam hōo-l tui-lòh oo-àm-tē"

The other theme song for the event, a collaboration between the lyricist Lin Liangzhe (林良哲) and singer Jutoupi, elaborated on the flower motif. Titled *Hope She Grows and Flourishes*, Bāng-I Tuā-tsâng in Taiwanese, the lyrics begged the listener to heed what happens to a prematurely picked flower, and to cherish each bud in the hope of its blossom. Similar narrative devices to those found in Chen's *For She is Our Precious Baby*, some copied verbatim, were conspicuously plentiful in Lin and Jutoupi's work. The exact description of a flower bud yet to bloom, buē-khui--ê hue (未開个花) in Taiwanese, appeared in both songs and was intended to represent the underage juvenile sold into prostitution. Representations of the hardships it suffered included blowing wind and relentless cold, in both songs. The resisting and harboring mechanism they unanimously conjured was the outstretched hand of solidarity. Yet despite such similarity, one incongruity that distinguished them from each other also marked the divergence between two disparate juvenile prostitute rescue legacies.

Both *For She Is Our Precious Baby* and *Hope She Grows and Flourishes* made use of re-imagination and re-contextualization. Namely, both songs invite the listener to put themselves in the victims' shoes, although on different grounds. The beseeching tone of *Hope She Grows and Flourishes* emphasized empathetic feelings, in accordance with Jutoupi's Christian background and the context of the child prostitute rescue effort as a Presbyterian Church ministry in the 1980s. *For She Is Our Precious Baby*, on the other hand, conferred a personal attachment on the empathy being evoked. The song invited the listener to imagine that the underage girl who was being sold into prostitution was one's own daughter, as delicate and vulnerable as a flower. The re-

contextualization here involved transferring sentiments and expectations perfectly appropriate in a family setting to the setting of a brothel, where it rang brutal and callous, to the extent that the probability of its existence was unimaginable.

This introduction of personal empathy to the agenda of juvenile prostitute rescue significantly altered its trajectory as a social movement. The attention invested in the issue of prostitution was, at this juncture, gradually refocusing and readjusting as it unfolded. In a way, by shifting the undertone of prostitute rescue from social justice to a family friendly message, the Garden of Hope Foundation not only broadened their services but also the imagination of possible afflictions. The crux of post-martial law activism concerning prostitution was, along with it, under a transformation that altered its agency from that of a human rights campaign, vis-à-vis the liberating post-martial law atmosphere, to a sentiment aligned with the Confucian ideas about family, society, and the state. Ultimately, as the following section of this chapter shows, it was transformed to the discourse of sex.

### **The Nationalistic Undertone in the Activism**

In less than ten years, *For She Is Our Precious Baby* would become the very representation of Taiwanese solidarity and sovereignty. The song's rise began in the aftermath of the Jiji Earthquake of September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999, which claimed over eleven thousand lives and caused 10 billion dollars' worth of damage. The reconstruction campaign adopted *For She Is Our Precious Baby* as its theme song. It was the first time the "she" in the song was used to refer to Taiwan as a whole, as in the general public, rather than only victimized, underage prostitutes. In 2004, millions of Taiwanese



people found themselves watching the footage of the 228 Hand-in-Hand Rally (二二八牽手護台灣), in which an over 110-mile-long human chain covered the whole length of Taiwan, while the soundtrack of a children's choir cooing "hand in hand, heart to heart, we stand together, for she is our precious baby" played in the background. The next year, the Chinese Communist Party passed the Anti-Secession Law. It was generally considered as solidifying China's hitherto merely rhetorical "non-peaceful means" of annexing Taiwan. Demonstrations protesting the Chinese Communist government's hostility culminated on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, with people marching down Roosevelt Road chanting *For She Is Our Precious Baby*. The song has since become indispensable to rallying for solidarity and a Taiwanese nation, so much so that, in the context of the nationalism movement, many in the enthusiastically chanting crowds didn't necessarily remember that the song had originated from child prostitution rescue efforts.

The partisanship of the Taiwan political scene also tokenized *For She is Our Precious Baby* as an emblem of Taiwanese-ness. In the last years of Chen Shuibian's tenure as President, alleged corruption threatened to mar his legacy as the first Democratic Progressive Party president. Chen's administration was known for its assertion of Taiwanese sovereignty and independence, and also constantly found itself at odds with the Chinese Communist government. The irreconcilable differences between the Chen administration and China also antagonized the political faction that held dear the concept of Chinese-ness in Taiwan. Chen's questionable dealing with campaign funds gave these opponents leverage to criticize his policy-making, as well as the Taiwanese identity Chen's Democratic Progressive Party had been championing since the

lifting of martial law. In the rallies against the Chen administration, demonstrators often ridiculed *For She Is Our Precious Baby*. Anti-Chen campaigners played on the homonyms in the song. The sound of yi, the Taiwanese pronunciation of “she,” was phonetically adjacent to tsînn, which is “money” in Taiwanese. Thus, the demonstrators adapted *For She is Our Precious Baby* to “For Money is Our Precious Baby.” However, the caricature unexpectedly reinforced the connection between *For She is Our Precious Baby* and the so-called Taiwanese identity.

Jutoupi and Xiao Fude, the authors of the now-famous song, were both Presbyterian Christians. The beginning of their careers, in the late 1980s, coincided with the end of the martial law era. Both of them rely heavily on the Taiwanese language as their creative vehicle. Their choice of expressive medium was simultaneously a continuation of the long-ago Presbyterian translation ministry as well as the post-martial law progressiveness. In spite of the fact that the Taiwan Presbyterian Church had been building its ministry on the Taiwanese language, the monolingual policy of the Chinese Nationalist Party had resulted in the Taiwanese language’s absence in the public sphere, and in the limitation of its expressiveness. Martial law era Taiwanese songs, if they survived censorship, had been circumscribed in exercising their arguments, and instead were coerced into staying within the bounds of lyrical content. Jutoupi and Xiao thus belonged to a cohort of post-martial law songwriters that ventured into bringing the Taiwanese language back into the arena of formatting arguments and statements in the lyrics of dissident songs.

The release of the album *Furious Songs* (抓狂歌), by Studio Black List, in 1989, heralded the new trend of dissident songs. In addition to the many singles in the album that accused the Chinese Nationalist regime of poisoning Taiwanese society as a whole, the title of the production studio was itself a critique of the regime's blacklisting of people for merely asserting their Taiwanese identity during the martial law Era. The year after the album's release saw an unprecedented number of student rallies calling for political reform. This became known as the Wild Lily Student Movement (野百合學運). Students from all corners of Taiwan convened in front of the Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall, the monument of an authoritative regime, calling for the dispersal of a Parliament that had not been re-elected since 1949. A cassette by Studio Black List, singing about the public impatience with the stagnant democratization process, found its way into the hands of protesting students. The main theme of the cassette, shared by all the singles in it, was to criticize and ridicule the Chinese Nationalist Party's regime for its decades long manipulation of Taiwan.

The trajectory of the increasingly nativist and progressive inclination of popular songs in identity politics not only intertwined with that of the burgeoning post-martial law social movements, but also shed light on how prostitution was perceived in a perennially capitalized society. The following section further discusses this perception.

### **Economic and Cultural Implications of the Lyrics of Popular Songs**

*Moving Forward* (向前走) was a 1990 hit. Lim Giong (林強), the writer and singer of the song, became a phenomenon overnight. Proclaiming "Oh, nothing scares

me; oh, I'm moving forward" in the music video, Lin and his fellow dancers hopped and jumped with in front of the newly-constructed Taipei Main Station. Like the most current landmark it portrayed, the entire production was provocatively new. The style of Lim's hairdo, his outfits and his body movement all echoed those of stars like of Michael Jackson and Madonna. And, more importantly, he was singing in Taiwanese.

The presence of the Taiwanese language in the production of *Moving Forward* was at once subversive and affirmative. Hearing the Taiwanese language in the context of fashionable dance music contradicted the general impression of the language as outdated and retrospective. Major music production companies had primarily catered to a Mandarin Chinese-speaking audience until Lim Giong came along. His hit *Moving Forward* represented the change of tide, in which the industry sought to provide products that resonated with audience who understood and appreciated the Hoklo topolect. In *Moving Forward*, Lim sings of a young man bidding farewell to his parents and friends in the hometown in southern Taiwan. He is amazed at the scale and the pace of metropolitan Taipei but is determined to make his goals a reality. His use of the Taiwanese language re-affirms his modern and enlightened mentality against the backdrop of the robust 1990 Taiwanese economy. In this way, *Moving Forward* gave a voice to the generations of Taiwanese pursuing the affluent "Taipei Dream." Only this time, the voice actually echoed the language they used, and this time it also exuded confidence.

Xiao Fude's *A Flower on Hoaxi Street*, a song about society turning a blind eye to the suffering of prostitutes, coincided with Lim Giong's hit album. A real-life embodiment of the protagonist in Lim Giong's song, Xiao Fude started out as a

hardworking salesman by day and restaurant singer by night, who only felt comfortable conversing in Taiwanese. In spite of the attraction of the overwhelmingly forward-moving economy of Taipei at the time, Xiao chose to direct observations, in his debut album, to the areas overlooked by a society with its eye fixed on economic growth. There is also a young man in *A Flower on Huaxi Street*. Amazements compete for his attention. The young man in the song recounts the attractions of the Huaxi Street night market, well-known to tourists and consumers, including the seafood porridge and the preparation of fresh snake soup. One day he went to the market for some porridge and noticed other activities that he had previously overlooked. Brawling hooligans and men soliciting prostitutes catch the young man's attention. He finds himself looking more closely and sees bruises on the girls' faces, indicating the procurers' abuse, and notices their underage appearance. The young man then discovers that he is the only one perceiving this saddening situation, while others were merely looking on. Those casually tea-sipping onlookers are none other than the local police officers.

The narrative of *A Flower on Huaxi Street* accused the society of being indifferent to the issue of underage prostitution. The "flower," representing the underage prostitutes, would most likely have been overlooked had the young man got the seafood porridge he came for, or been drawn into the foreign tourists' amazement at the dissecting and skinning of the snake. Yet the fact that she was noticed by the young man was made even more depressing when he then had to witness the law enforcement officer overlooking the child prostitutes' suffering.

The 1973 hit by Teresa Teng (鄧麗君) *Don't Pick the Roadside Wild Flowers* elaborated on the context of prostitution as a social issue. Although it did not directly address prostitution, the song painted a picture of the tendency of men to exercise their economic clout by acquiring and possessing women. In it, Tang sang of a woman sending her lover off to seek success and prosperity, like so many others, outside of their hometown. Upon saying goodbye, the woman urged her lover not to forget about her as she awaited his return, but to be true to her and not to pick “the wildflowers” on the roadsides as he went. The woman’s worry was not unwarranted. Indeed, it had been confirmed long before, in a 1957 hit by Pan Xiuqiong (潘秀瓊) called *How Does A Domestically Grown Flower Compare to A Wildflower* (家花哪有野花香), the lyrics of which described the unequal competition between two femininities on either side of marriage: one awaits, the other allures. By always appearing more enticing and lively, wildflowers constantly win over men’s attention and interest. They are the wildflowers because they have yet to exchange wedding vows. Both Pan’s and Teng’s hits painted an image of married men as easily succumbing to seduction. Under close examination, the image and the dichotomized representations of married and unmarried women were all subject to one determinant: the notion of monogamy. Unmarried women, the extreme of which being prostitutes, came across in both Pan’s and Teng’s singles as potential home wreckers. As *How Does A Domestically Grown Flower Compare to A Wild Flower* suggested, women outside of marriage were not self-sustained, but were rather defined by their potential threat to the chaste women within marriage. In this

sense, prostitution moved further away from being considered an issue of social inequity, and toward that of a threat to family values. The efforts to eradicate prostitution, the objectives of which were once united under the pursuit of class and ethnic equality, now became a divisive factor. Now it was as if the activism, in the name of protecting the family, was targeting the prostitutes themselves, rather than the unjust institution they labored under. This deviation would eventually lead to the 1997 controversy over the abrupt crackdown on the sex industry in Taipei City.

### **The Progressives Turned Oppressive**

The Taipei City Mayor Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) abolished licensed prostitution in the city on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1997. Leading to this action was Chen's determination to exhibit his executive prowess as the first DPP political figure to hold a position as significant as mayor of Taipei. Since taking office, Chen had promised safer and more policed neighborhoods for Taipei City. Among his executive orders was a crackdown on the night-life entertainment industry, sex work and gambling, the intricacies of which were then more widely referred to as the "eight major trades" (八大行業). Law enforcement was ordered to target sex workers and brothels that had formerly operated unnoticed in residential quarters. This administrative operation was known as "sweeping the yellow" (saohuang), in which "yellow" colloquially referred to sensual massage and activities of a pornographic nature. Before long, however, Chen's policy ran into the conundrum of government-licensed sex work. Opponents in the Municipal Council criticized Chen's administration as contradicting itself by clamping down on sex work while licensing it at the same time.

The history of registered sex workers in Taiwan dates back to the Japanese Colonization Era. Only one year after the annexation of Taiwan as a colony, the Japanese government began regulating sex work. The colonial government subdivided licensed sex workers into categories that operated along ethnic divisions as well as job description. Taiwanese sex workers were categorized as entertainer-prostitutes (藝旦), while their Japanese counterparts were further subdivided into *geisha* (entertainer, 藝伎), *shakufu* (waitress, 酌婦), and *yūjo* (licentious woman, 遊女). The categories *shafuku* and *yūjo* indicated the class of prostitutes (Takenaka, 2001; Yang, 1999). The end of colonization saw the Chinese Nationalist Party government fluctuate between outlawing prostitution and allowing it. In 1956, eight years after signing the *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* (聯合國禁賣婦孺及賣淫公約), the Chinese Nationalist government found itself promulgating the Administrative Regulations of Prostitution in Taiwan Province. The Regulations' design of gradually abolishing prostitution over a period of two years later proved unenforceable due to the fact that the administration itself kept issuing licenses to prostitutes (Ke, 1991). In 1960, the Regulations were replaced with the County Regulations of Prostitution in the Province of Taiwan. After its rezoning as a special municipality, Taipei City enacted the Administrative Regulations of Prostitution in Taipei City in 1973. The Regulations in Taipei City were in effect until their abolishment in 1997, under Chen's administration.



The 1997 abolishment of licensed prostitution in Taipei City has been criticized as abrupt and ill-advised. The series of protests and controversies that erupted in the immediate aftermath not only cost Chen Shui-bian his reelection in 1999, but also marked the definitive watershed of progressive gender and sexuality discourse, as well as the imagination of Taiwan as a society and a sovereign state. The momentum for the action was initiated when, during the “sweeping the yellow” operation, unlicensed prostitutes were found to be employed by licensed brothels. Under severe pressure and opposition coming from the Nationalist Party city councils, Chen first promised to stop issuing prostitution licenses, before eventually entertaining the idea of eradicating licensed prostitution altogether. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1997, the Taipei City Council voted to suspend the Regulations of Prostitution that had been in effect since 1973. The resolution dictated that the licenses of sex workers would cease to apply on September 4<sup>th</sup>. As a result, from September 6<sup>th</sup> on, licensed sex workers would face prosecution if found providing sexual services.

After the abolishment of the Regulations, only 128 licensed prostitutes remained. The change in policy cost not only their jobs, but also the fringe benefits that the government provided, including weekly screening of sexually transmitted infections, periodical physical examinations, and law enforcement protection from client violence. Protests broke out as a result. Former licensed sex workers formed alliance protesting the deprivation of their right to work. But the Chen administration remained unfazed. The campaign of the former licensed sex workers lasted well into 1999, after Chen lost

his office to the Chinese Nationalist Party candidate Ma Ying-jeou, who promised, upon assuming office, a two-year grace period for former licensed sex workers.

The 1997 controversies surrounding the abolishment of licensed prostitution first saw the emergence of prostitutes themselves as activists. Guan Xiuqin (關秀琴), among others, was the first to venture into activism from voiceless anonymity. In protest against Chen Shui-bian's policy of abolishing licensed prostitution, former licensed sex workers formed the activist group later known as the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (日日春關懷協會). During their demonstration rallies, while most of the former licensed sex workers chose to remain anonymous, Guan, as the first president of their collective, confronted the stigma attached to prostitution head on. She did not limit herself to the disclosure of her name and life story, but ventured further into visually challenging society by exposing the scars and bruises she had acquired from prostitution. The assertion—"I was a licensed prostitute. I want to rightfully work as one"—was made famous during the rallies she championed.

Although the campaign Guan led succeeded in procuring a two-year grace period for the prohibition of licensed prostitution, she eventually lost her license in 2001. She was then reduced to running an unlicensed brothel and, under financial pressure, committed suicide in 2006. While recounting Guan's last days, one colleague in the Collective came to the conclusion that the 2006 repeat of the "sweeping the yellow" operation, which threatened her business and raised the expectation to pay off loan sharks, was the last straw. Ironically, the Ma Ying-jeou administration, which in 1999

responded favorably to Guan's campaign, carried out the 2006 operation that claimed Guan's life.

### **A Licensed Sex Worker's Death as The Limit of Progressivism**

On the surface, a critic might sum up Guan Xiuqin's tragedy as an unsuccessful attempt of Taiwan to ban prostitution by imposing on former sex workers other career choices. The societal factors that ultimately made the career choice of prostitution impossible to entertain, however, ran deeper. To quit prostitution was commonly referred to as *congliang* (從良). The inherent meaning of *congliang*, a term consisting of the Chinese characters *cong* (從) and *liang* (良), was deeply patriarchal and heteronormative. *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Scripts* (說文解字), the first Chinese dictionary, written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, lists the character *cong* under the category of the radical *chuo* (辵)<sup>3</sup>, which was a compound radical and a combination of two man radicals<sup>4</sup>. The two-man radical *chuo* acquired its meaning ideographically from two persons forming a queue. *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Scripts* thus explained that the character *cong*, "in falling under the classification of radical *chuo* means "to follow". The definition further presents the meanings "to observe," or "to abide." The character *liang*, at its face value denotes, means "good, superior, virtuous and docile in quality." The meaning of the word *congliang* thus paints the image of a female following a virtuous way of life. The superiority of this way of life was defined, as in the discourse familiar to us from the underage prostitute rescue efforts, by what prostitutes were denied,

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<sup>3</sup> Radical 162 in The Kangxi Dictionary (康熙字典).

<sup>4</sup> Radical 9.

namely, marriage and child-rearing. While the institution of heterosexual marriage, and the procreation it entailed, were the designated “good,” prostitution was implicitly defined as the opposite.

The opposite of *congliang* is *congchang* (從娼). Similar to the breakdown of *congliang*, *congchang* means to lead a life of prostitution. The character *chang* ironically hints at the controversy and predicament of the 1997 abolishment of licensed prostitution. Falling under the category of radical of woman 女, the character *chang*, meaning “prostitute” or “to prostitute,” was exclusively associated with femininity.<sup>5</sup> There is also a gender-specific script for a female courtesan, *ji* (妓). The woman radical in the scripts *chang* and *ji* denoted females offering entertainment services, including sex, in exchange for compensation. The words *congchang* and *congliang* thus posed a conundrum to the 1990s feminist activism in Taiwan that was heavily defined by its struggle against prostitution as an institution. With the superiority of *congliang*, “to follow good behavior (or something),” and the immorality of *congchang*, “to prostitute,” the quest to liberate women by outlawing prostitution became futile. For the *congliang* former prostitutes merely migrated from what Confucian patriarchy would define as the immoral walk of life to another similarly-defined, gendered role of mothering. Despite

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<sup>5</sup> The derivation of the character also aligns with its patriarchal connotation. In fact, the character *chang* with a woman radical was nowhere to be found in *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Scripts*. Instead, there was *chang* with a gender-neutral man radical (人). The character in this sense denoted person equipped with the ability to entertain the royal presence. The gender-neutral connotation of entertainment was not transcribed with the woman radical *chang* until the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the diversification of the vocation of musical entertainment.

the fact that feminist activism has set out to right the wrong of patriarchy, the remedy it provided, according to Guan's case, proved somehow less applicable.

Also inherent to the conundrum of *congliang* and *congchang* was the problem of women's agency in society, namely, the question of the extent to which a woman was active in playing her part in society? The 1997 debate over prostitution exposed the unfortunate fact that whether a woman was to lead a "virtuous" life or to prostitute herself it was never quite as self-determined as the words *congliang* and *congchang* suggested. The Rainbow Project, or the Juvenile Prostitutes Rescue, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, showcased involuntary sex work as an evil that capitalist Taiwan had chosen to overlook. The discourse surrounding the rescue of child prostitutes established human trafficking, the economic disadvantage of aborigines, and law enforcement inertia as interconnected. Upon the abolishment of licensed prostitution, and the discussions surrounding it, consideration of the woman's role in pursuing the option of *congliang* opened up the rift that defined the limit of the 1990s feminist progressivism concerning prostitution.

### **The Prevailing Abstinence**

The divergence between the 1987 campaign and the 1993 campaign concerning prostitution was evident in the development of their campaign slogans. The participants of the first rally in 1987 showed deep "concerns" (*guanhuai* 關懷) about underage prostitutes. The follow-up demonstration in the following year set out to "rescue" (*jiuyuan* 救援) child prostitutes. On top of that, this rally employed a military metaphor—"striking again" (*zaichuji* 再出擊), which implicitly identified the traffickers

and brothel owners as their target to strike down. A significant banner in both rallies stated that “A Prostitute Also Has Her Human Rights” (jinü yeyou renquan 妓女也有人權). No doubt human rights concerns were closely associated with the child prostitute rescue movement in its early stage. But the banner alluded to an underlying message that inherently differentiated “child prostitute” from “prostitute.” The implication of this differentiation was that the making of the former was a form of exploitation, while the latter was a vocational choice. Upholding these early activists’ views was an entry in their mission manifesto calling for a union for prostitutes. In the first two rallies, under the banner of either concern (guanhuai chuji 關懷雛妓) or rescue (jiuyuan chuji 救援雛妓), underage prostitutes were referred to as violated individuals, whose presence established the exploitive aspect of the vocation of prostitution. The 1993 campaign, known as the Anti-Underage Prostitution Movement (fan chuji 反雛妓), on the other hand, was a different case. Here, the campaigners steered clear of the troubled waters of gender critique by opposing anti-underage prostitution to anti-pornography (fan seqing 反色情). Maintaining that their campaign had no intention of challenging the entire patrinnormative social structure, or having the ambition to do so, the activists limited their goal to eradicating underage prostitution as an institution. The working perception later shifted from righting how certain individuals were wronged to a more conceptual goal of righting the wrong.

The achieved legislation and state intervention, evidenced by the 1995 Act of Prevention of Child and Juvenile Sexual Transaction and the 1997 prohibition of all

forms of prostitution, also belied the discursive shift that occurred, from denouncing the immoral servitude of the aboriginal female body to the castigation of sex out of marriage. It was in this sense that the trajectory of the discourse surrounding prostitution in 1990s Taiwan transformed from a progressive social movement addressing social inequalities to a campaign favoring abstinence based on family values.

It has been generally accepted that the lifting of martial law created a political environment conducive to the emergence of contesting social movements in 1990s Taiwan, the proliferation of which have since inaugurated the 1990s as the Heteroglossic Era (Wang, 2001). In an effort to narrate the social and cultural history of that era, scholars find themselves encountering a field characterized by intertwining discursive relations. The consensus has always seemed to be the prominence of democratization as the zeitgeist of the 1990s. Doris T. Chang claims, in her book *Women's Movement in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, that “the [1987] political climate... contribute[d] to the diversification of feminist discourses” (Chang, 2009). In the consensus Chang shared with fellow scholars, the loosening up of the Nationalist regime's ideological dominance enabled activists to lift their self-censorship. The consequence of this was, according to Chang, “the emergence of diverse strands of feminist discourses previously suppressed within the authoritarian political milieu.” (Chang, 2009)

The climate of democratization, however, cannot explain the relations between the discursive strands. As the instance of juvenile prostitute rescue efforts has shown, the aftermath of the Rainbow Project, as well as the Anti-Underage Prostitution Movement, saw the widening of an ideological chasm between liberation and bourgeois

penchant for stability. Besides this ideological rift, the mid-1990s found the division between elite-sustained and grassroots efforts gradually prevailing amidst gender and sex related activisms. And it always surrounded the set of values embedded in the Confucian familial setting.



## **Chapter Two: The Confucian Paradox**

How did Confucian teachings exert influence on people, especially those in the middle class, in a capitalist society such as 1990s Taiwan? Following the May Fourth movement, Chinese intellectuals began to seriously reconsider the tradition of Confucianism and the ways in which it had been controlling people. This reflective tendency continued after the Chinese Nationalist settlement in Taiwan, while the authoritative regime further tightened its ideological grip. The martial law mentality, favoring traditions and conformity, largely suppressed the reevaluation of Confucianism in the mid-twentieth century. With the martial law institution gone in the 1990s, Confucianism once again faced the pressure of reassessment. Criticism of Confucianism as being fundamentally patriarchal started to gather momentum in the liberal, post-martial law social atmosphere.

In this chapter, I examine both the texts written by women's rights activists and the trajectories of their lives to show the spectrum and development of feminist discourse in a society that was decisively patriarchal and capitalistic. The rebellion of feminists against patriarchal and gender-based injustice, through their textual contributions as well as their activism, offers a critical perspective from which to review the negotiation between progressive thinking and divergent political agendas in Taiwan during the 1990s. My discussion intends to contour the emergence of the middle-class feminist activist identity of the 1990s. I will also tease out how this specific cohort of feminist activists positioned themselves in an era where progressive feminist activism, violence against women, and political maneuvers converged. At the end of this narrative, we shall see

how the progressiveness that propelled the 1990s feminists also initiated the emergence of the gay activist identity.

Following the abrogation of martial law, the feminist discourse of the 1990s found itself at another crossroads, as it reflected upon gendered roles of women. Some feminists, such as Peng Wan-ru (彭婉如) and Zheng Zhihui (鄭至慧), reviewed gender roles in Taiwan from the perspectives of the housewife, the career woman, and the activist. Their extensive writings on the topics of gender autonomy and sexual liberation for women were characteristic as to how 1990s feminist intellectuals discursively took part in advancing women's rights. They investigated the roles woman had to fulfill, both within the family and in the society at large. The feminist critique of traditional gender roles that emerged from these texts urged the public to reconsider Confucian patriarchy and its rigidity. In the most extreme case, feminist critics began to take issue with the category of "woman" in the hope of better revealing exploitations and oppressions enacted in the name of Confucian values.

The activists that either took part in or under the influence of the *Juvenile Prostitute Rescue* in the early 1990s did not dwell on underage sex workers exclusively. Before long, they turned its attention to issues other than the exploited aboriginal female body. In 1996, the DPP candidate Chen Shui-bien (陳水扁) won the election and became the mayor of the city of Taipei. Soon after he assumed office, Chen began reinforcing the policing of prostitution and revoked the work licenses of sex workers. Arguably, Chen's crackdown on Taipei's sex industry was a response to activists such as Peng Wan-ru and Liu Yu-Hsiu (劉毓秀), who critiqued prostitution as a representational

form of gender injustice that allowed men to put price tags on women. Their essays and theories commented on prostitution as a byproduct of patriarchy. In summary, they analyzed the Confucian familial order as the basis of the patriarchal social setting in which men exert their influence on gender and over the female body by means of sex and restrictive gender roles (Huang, 2011).

Peng Wan-ru's career, however, was cut short by her untimely death, falling victim to the very power relations she had set out to improve. On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1996, three days after she had been reported missing, Peng Wan-ru, the then-director of the Women's Development Department of the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨婦女部), was found dead. The coroners report indicated that the murderer had sexually assaulted Peng before killing her. To this day, the person who raped and murdered Peng remains at large. Such sexual violence against women enraged activists involved in the women's movement, as well as the general public. Less than six months later, the murder of Pai Hsiao-yen (白曉燕) shocked Taiwanese society. Pai Hsiao-yen was the only daughter of Pai Ping-ping (白冰冰), a popular TV star. A small group of criminals led by Chen Chin-hsing (陳進興) kidnapped the celebrity's daughter for ransom. They killed the girl before they got their money.

Many people believed that the two tragedies were the result of deep-seated gender inequality and a culture of hostility toward women. Popular and academic critiques of this widespread gender inequality then led to the congress (Legislative Yuan 立法院) passing the *Law for the Prevention of Sexual Assault* (性侵害犯罪防治法) in 1997.

Two years later, the congress added a chapter on infringements on sexual autonomy (妨害性自主罪) to the Taiwanese Criminal Code. The new provisions, for the first time in the judicial history of Taiwan, stipulated that sex should be consensual. Sexual conduct without consent was indictable as infringing the victim's autonomy over his, or her, body. At the same time, the administration of President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) established the *Gender Equality Education Committee* (性別平等教育委員會) and the *Commission for the Promotion of Women's Rights* (婦女權益促進委員會) under the Executive Ministry (Executive Yuan 行政院). Both offices aimed at furthering gender awareness of the systemic hardships imposed upon women at an administrative level.

As we have seen, reactions to prostitution and crimes against women resulted in an increased gender consciousness in 1990s Taiwan. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which feminist critics built their narratives and critiques upon this emerging awareness of gender inequality. Feminists criticized the existing gender hierarchy and exposed the ways the patriarchs were subjugating women at home and in society. Their textual contributions helped the public to see how certain long-held values might exploit femininity and cast women as unwaged, domestic laborers. Meanwhile, feminist critics further challenged the existing linkage between prostitution, sexual assault, and moral concerns. My close examination of their narratives revealed that their approaches to assessing the female gender role rooted in Confucianism, and the literary culture in the same vein, confined women in domestic as well as social settings.

In this chapter, I also explain the ways in which feminist concerns intersected with the politics of sexuality in the 1990s. The 1997 crackdown on the sex industry in Taipei, initiated by the DPP mayor, Chen Shui-bien, was a case in point. Critics and activists used the crackdown to further their own agendas, which were at times in opposition to each other. In the 1990s, Chen Shui-bien championed a petit bourgeois inclination that sought social stability. As discussed in the previous chapter, that sentiment soon gave way to an abstinence doctrine that was inherently heteronormative. Suddenly the 1990s feminists found themselves caught between pursuing the gender equality they had envisioned and addressing their homosexual colleagues' complaints of neglect in this very inequality by the very token. I analyze and explain this rift in the 1990s feminist camaraderie as an emerging dilemma; namely, the growing discontent between women's activism and a dysfunctional heteronormative gender order.

### **Violence Against Women as a Catalyst for Gender Awareness**

The history of the 1990s women's movement was traumatic. In the late 1980s, the movement had garnered significant traction as the juvenile prostitute rescue campaign made the public increasingly aware of gender injustice. The campaign drew attention to inequities of ethnicity and gender, specifically the deep-seated hostility toward aboriginal, underage female bodies. In the previous chapter, I trace the shift in the undertone of the campaign. The theme of liberation as well as that of human rights, a post-martial law motif, gradually gave way to a public quest for social discipline and stability. By the mid-1990s, the activism and public concern surrounding prostitution found themselves asserting the values rooted in the norm of the bourgeois nuclear family.

The general public's attitude toward issues of prostitution and other infringements that victimized women was less concerned about inequality than the jeopardizing of the social order and, eventually, family life. The deaths of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiau-yen raised public and personal fears over the safety of women.

In the mid-1990s, Peng Wan-ru was relatively unknown to people who did not pay much attention to news. Peng had participated in the women's movement for nearly a decade and made a name for herself in political circles. In addition to contributing to newspapers and magazines, Peng had also risen as a promising leader in the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

As 1996 was drawing to a close, Peng Wan-ru traveled to Kaohsiung for the 1996 Democratic Progressive Party national convention. Sadly, she never arrived. Peng was last publicly seen entering a taxi after leaving a meeting prior to the convention. Her DPP colleagues reported Peng missing on December 1<sup>st</sup> when they had to proceed without her presence as the director of the DPP's Women's Affairs Department. Peng's presence at the convention was eagerly anticipated, due to the scheduled voting on the issue of affirmative action for women in the DPP bylaws. Peng had been advocating for a minimum of one fourth of the elected seats in the DPP to be reserved for female party members. Following disputes which caused the assembly to bring forth the issue at the previous convention, Peng redoubled her efforts in lobbying for women to be represented proportionally within her party. Her perseverance in this matter earned her the nickname "One Fourth Peng" (彭四分之一). The "One Fourth" article passed on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996, two days before Peng's body was discovered in an abandoned

orchard warehouse in Kaohsiung county. A forensic investigation found stab wounds on Peng's face and torso. Evidence of sexual assault was also apparent. Peng was 47 years old and was survived by her husband and son.

Peng's death, as much as it was a traumatic setback to the women's movement, soon ascended to the status of martyrdom. The immediate aftermath of her death saw a dramatic increase in women's rallies demanding government intervention to promote women's safety. Responses from the public sector in Peng's name included the delayed legislation of the *Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act* (性侵害犯罪防治法), which came to fruition in Parliament; the founding of the *Committee of Women's Rights Promotion*, in the Executive Yuan; and the sexual assault response units that were instituted by local governments. Peng's violent death and society's efforts to address it did not, however, mark a milestone in the successful prevention of violence against women, but, sadly, rather heralded a notorious period of violent crimes, one of which was the kidnapping and murder of Pai Hsiao-yen, which occurred less than six months later.

On April 14<sup>th</sup> 1997, Chen Jinxing, Gao Tianmin (高天民) and Lin Chunsheng (林春生) kidnapped Pai Hsiao-yen, the daughter of Pai Ping-ping, a popular entertainer at the height of her fame. During the 1990s, Pai Ping-ping's singles, sung in the Ho-lo topollect, were guaranteed hits. Her fervently sought-after TV appearance made her a household name. The wall-to-wall coverage of the kidnapping of Pai Hsiao-yen exploded, after several aborted arrangements for delivery of the ransom, when Pai Hsiao-yen's body was found on April 28<sup>th</sup> in the Taishan Township of Taipei County. The

coroner's examination determined that Pai Hsiao-yen had been murdered eight to ten days prior to the discovery of her body, while ransom negotiations were still underway. From the earliest news of the kidnapping to the confirmation of Pai's demise, news coverage displayed nude photos of Pai, as well as photos of her severed finger that had been sent by the kidnapers to Pai Ping-ping. Depictions of Pai's victimization and suffering became even more explicit before the whole case finally came to a close.

The kidnapers remained at large for months after the murder. In fact, they went on to kidnap the Taipei County Counselor, Cai Mingtang (蔡明堂), and an entrepreneur named Chen, in June and August respectively, and managed to get the ransoms in both cases, because the victims were too terrified to come to the police. These kidnappings only came to light, however, after the kidnapper Chen Jinxing was apprehended in November. In the meantime, the contradiction between the secrecy of the criminal investigation and the explicit exposure of these stories in the press shrouded the three fugitives in mystery and rumor. The three fugitives resurfaced on August 11<sup>th</sup>, in Taipei City, but, after exchanging fire with the police force, they managed to escape yet again. To make matters worse, the public later found out that the August 11<sup>th</sup> confrontation was due to the three men having been discovered with three other female hostages – a fact the law enforcement concealed. The scandal caused by the release of this news eventually led to the resignation of the director of the National Police Agency.



The apprehension of Chen Jinxing<sup>1</sup> later confirmed the urban legends that had arisen regarding Chen, Gao and Lin's atrocious actions during their months-long flight from justice. The interrogation record revealed that Chen had committed more than 19 sexual assaults between April and November. Not only would Chen rape his victims in front of their family members, he would even reside with his victims, for days on some occasions. Chen's behavioral strategy aimed at intimidating the victims into reticence, during the time of cohabitation, as well as during its aftermath. The social shame attached to victims of sexual assault, and the secrecy that so often surrounded these acts, helped Chen Jinxing cover up his whereabouts. And the elusiveness and unpredictability of Chen Jinxing raised the public terror about the frailty of feminine sexual autonomy to an unprecedented level.

Weeks after Pai Hsiao-yen's body was found, the 504 Rally, named for the date on which it took place, saw such an enthusiastic turnout calling governmental interference in terminating the surging rate of crimes against women on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1997. The rally was repeated on May 27<sup>th</sup>. On both days, Katagalan Boulevard, in front of the Presidential Palace, saw a massive assembly, the largest since the 1992 Wild Lily Student

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<sup>1</sup> The apprehension of Chen Jinxing took months. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, a shootout broke out between the fugitives and the police on Wuchang Street. One of the suspects, Lin Chunsheng, was killed on site. For the first time, the Taiwanese TV audience saw real-time, live coverage of a shootout between a police SWAT team and criminal suspects. The remaining suspects fled and, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Chen and Gao broke into a plastic surgery clinic and murdered the plastic surgeon, his wife, and a nurse. The coroner's examination confirmed that Chen and Gao had raped the nurse before murdering her. The police were able to put down Gao in another shootout on November 17<sup>th</sup>, which was again broadcast live, nationwide. The very next day, the remaining fugitive, Chen Jinxing, took the South African Armed Forces Attaché, Edward McGill Alexander, and his family hostage at their residence. Chen's desperate move began a live coverage marathon that involved major television news networks, renowned politicians, lawyers and negotiators. After a standoff lasting many hours, Chen Jinxing gave in and surrendered himself to police custody.

Movement (野百合學運). This served to highlight the scale of the social movements of the mid-1990s. While the Wild Lily Movement successfully forced Lee Teng-hui, then President of Taiwan, as well as Chair of the KMT, to promise the parliamentary reform, the 504 Rally, with its incessant chanting of “Mr. President, apologize! Mr. Prime Minister, step down!,” pressured the administration to address the public outrage that had been growing since the murders of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiao-yen. The Minister of Justice, Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), was the first cabinet member to respond to the discontent expressed toward the KMT government’s failure to maintain social order; he resigned with an open letter that criticized his party and announced his withdrawal from politics. Ma’s resignation added the last straw to the camel’s back and eventually led to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Lien Chan (連戰). The Lee administration found itself facing unprecedented and insurmountable pressure from the general public concerning the safety of women. The overarching fears came from Chen Jinxing’s extensive criminal record that made every individual feel like a potential victim.

The 504 and 527 rallies not only drew record numbers of participants, but also created a never-before-seen alliance of activist blocs. The major collaborator, the Humanistic Education Foundation, which had been championing a corporal punishment-free educational environment, shared with the PWR Foundation the cause of abolishing violence against women and children. Yet those participating the campaign represented a wider spectrum of activism. Counselor Lin Yi-hsiung (林義雄), whose mother and twin daughters were murdered in 1980, as a result of his resistance against the institution

of martial law, brought his Chilin Foundation (慈林教育基金會), founded in memory of his mother and daughters, into the alliance. By the time the May 27<sup>th</sup> rally was held, the activist organizations enlisted in the campaign included causes as various as women's rights, education reform, housing rights, Taiwanese independence, and others.

The murders of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiao-yen engendered a fear that permeated society. The May 4<sup>th</sup> and May 27<sup>th</sup> rallies, demanding law and order, embodied this fear on a national scale. On a more personal level, the fear of falling victim to sexual violence became a defining characteristic of feminine sentiment in mid-1990s Taiwan. The nature of the violence inflicted upon Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiao-yen reinforced this anxiety along the lines of identity rather than class politics. Peng Wan-ru had been an educated career woman, a homemaker, and the at-home supporter of a double-income family. These identities, instead of signifying a specific social class, were seen as being related to Taiwan's identity as a capitalist, bourgeois society. In this way, Peng's demise came across alarmingly to a wide range of Taiwanese women who shared with Peng either her educational background or gender role within the family. The gratuitous nature of the newsfeed and live broadcast of Pai Hsiao-yen's murder, on the other hand, amplified the anxiety over the threats against women. The call-to-action of the May 4<sup>th</sup> rally began with Pai Ping-ping's plea to President Lee as a mother. In November, Chen Jinxing personally confirmed the media presentation of him as a threat to the whole of society by holding the entire Alexander family hostage. The menace known as Chen Jinxing conjured fear in Taiwan as a stability-seeking, middle class, bourgeois society.

The terrifying deaths of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiau-yen revealed to the general public the hostility and violence to which women were subject. They also gave feminist activists leverage to demand state intervention in order to create a safer environment for women. The opposite side of this was, however, the reinforcement of the current regime, in an effort to restore discipline and order. Throughout her career as a feminist activist, Peng Wan-ru's mission had been to lay bare the inherent, structural disciplines that conditioned and restricted women in a Confucian society. Her death, while advancing the cause of women against violence, inadvertently reinforced the structure she sought to dismantle. I discuss this further below.

### **Peng Wan-ru's Confucian Paradox**

Peng Wan-ru's untimely demise, while tragic, enhanced her impact as an activist. Despite the fact that she did not necessarily transcend its boundaries, her critiques of Confucianism as a patriarchal disciplinary mechanism were representative of the examination of the post-martial law women's movement.

On November 30<sup>th</sup> 1997, exactly one year after Peng Wan-ru was murdered, Fembooks Press (女書出版) published the posthumous collection of her essays, titled *Wanru the Firefly* (宛如火金姑), in two volumes. The titular firefly was to symbolize Peng's transient yet illustrious activism, as well as her sacrificial martyrdom. The word choice of firefly (火金姑), which was supposed to be read *hué-kim-koo* in Taiwanese, was intriguing to Peng's paradoxical life of dismantling as well as living out Confucianism. The word preceding firefly was *wanru* (宛如), a homonym of her name

alluded to *just like*, or *as if*, was once under the linguistic scrutiny of Peng's reflection of her feminist awareness, and to be borrowed once again in a community service project of the PWR Foundation, founded in Peng's memory. Peng Wan-ru's life story, in addition to highlighting the trajectory of the women's movement in 1990s Taiwan, was one that intertwined with gender, language, and nation-building, all set against the backdrop of a nascent democracy challenging China-centrism and patriarchy.

In *Wanru the Firefly*, reader first sees Peng as a teacher of Mandarin Chinese, then a Taiwanese mother. Both roles exhibited Taiwanese woman politicized vis-à-vis the Confucian patriarchal order. The first impression that readers get of Peng comes from her handwriting. Careful comments, made in red with a brush in between the lines of her students' manuscripts belie Peng's own assessment of herself inattentive and inefficient teacher. The curves and strokes of Peng's annotations and comments speak volumes about her mastery of calligraphy. This red ink, diligently laid down in a filigreed, cursive style, and Peng's insights into Classical Chinese, fittingly converge to create the desirable image of a modern Chinese lady. In this early stage of her life, before her involvement in the women's movement, Peng clearly embodies the very expectation of the feminine role: well-educated, caring, sensitive, and interested in educational work.

We next see Peng accompanying her mathematician husband in his pursuit of a doctoral degree. Marriage has taken Peng away from her teenage students and to the United States, where she invests the educational skills acquired during a decade of teaching in her last 'student,' her son. Her efforts with her son are detailed in *Wanru the*

*Firefly* under the title *A Record of Parenting Overseas* (海外課子記). By parenting, Peng meant introducing her son to Sinitic scripts.

Peng closely observes the Chinese Character Classification (六書) in *A Record of Parenting Overseas*. The journey of Peng and her son toward literacy begins with pictographs such as sun (日), moon (月), mountain (山), water (水). Peng guides her son in drawing out these characters. The drawing then becomes ideographic. Peng explains the character *origin* (本) was drawn by laying down a stroke, indicating the origin, at the bottom of the character that stands for tree (木), and the opposite of which, *end* (末), by a stroke, indicating where the extension of a tree ends, at the top of the character tree.

Since many pictographic and ideographic characters also function as radicals and phonograms, Peng then goes on to spend the majority of their time teaching the phono-semantic compounds and compound ideographs that compose the vast majority of Chinese characters. As examples of compound ideographs, Peng explains characters such as bright (明), which alludes to the joint brightness of the sun (日) and the moon (月); woods (林), which represents multiple trees (木); and forest (森), which, by tripling the character tree, indicates an agglomeration of trees. Recognition of characters eventually evolves into the higher level of literacy required by memorizing phrases and axioms. The simple, familial intimacy portrayed in this account of ‘parenting’ give little indication that Peng Wan-ru, the feminist of the future, will one day inquire more deeply

into the mechanism of how these Chinese characters are structured and ultimately read patriarchal undertones into the conventions of Chinese Character Classification.

The topics Peng frequently visited in her early works included childcare, education, the enfranchisement of women and feminist discourse in America. Her quotidian accounts primarily featured her son, the only child born to her and her husband, the women of local support groups, and various items of news that either concerned her as a Taiwanese immigrant or as a woman. The narratives Peng built around these subjects usually began with activities as intimate and mundane as teaching her son to read or running errands while nurturing her son. They quickly evolved, however, into reflections on the situation of those who, like herself, were caught between Taiwanese and American cultures. Peng's articulation of this out-of-place sentiment came from the perspective of a stereotype. As a Taiwanese housewife, Peng observed traditional conventions in her domestic life. Her experiences in public, on the other hand, whether watching the American women's movement unfold or encountering American culture in general both inspired and allowed Peng to evaluate her prior knowledge of the category and role of "woman" in a different milieu.

Another selection of Peng's essays is grouped under the title *Dismantling Graphs, Analyzing Scripts* (拆文解字), which best exhibits Peng's critiquing patriarchy on both the empirical and semiotic levels. This title bears significance, for a feminist audience, because of its subversive wordplay and allusion to the much older title *Explaining Graphs, Analyzing Scripts* (說文解字). Often simply referred to as *Explaining Graphs* (說文), this book was a 2<sup>nd</sup> century character dictionary and the first of its kind to analyze

the structure of characters, and the rationale behind it, as well as to classify them under the categories of *radicals* (部首). Literacy was the exclusive domain of men at the time when Xu Shen compiled *Explaining Graphs*, and for a long period of time following. The title of this group of Peng's essays, *Dismantling Graphs*, did not necessarily project an oppositional agenda. After all, the essays we have discussed so far all present Peng fulfilling the gender role that the Confucian familial order assigned to a mother. Peng's progressivism resided in her audacity to insert her feminist opinions into her accounts of normative practices.

In two articles that deal with the characters *wan* (婉) and *jie* (介) respectively, Peng is able to tease out how the belittling and disciplining of women are embedded in the textual culture. Peng begins to uncover this implicit verbal and textual misogyny by taking apart *wanru* (婉如), the symbols that represent her. In the transcript of an interview with Peng, titled *Seeing Patriarchal Regulations Through the Lens of Sinitic Scripts*, Peng proposes that the restrictions and disciplines imposed upon women have their roots in writing. *Explaining Graphs, Analyzing Scripts* records 269 characters containing the feminine radical, *nü* (女). Among these 269, more than 160 characters have meanings that either denote or comment upon desirable feminine qualities. Peng uses her given name, Wanru, as an example, since both characters that make up her name contain the *nü* radical. *Wan* describes the appropriate posture, personality and speech of a lady as being reserved and agreeable, while *ru* implies that conformity is categorically essential to feminine beauty.



In *Merely A Powerless Woman* (yijie ruonüzi, 一介弱女子), a survey of the meanings and usage of the character *jie* (介) focuses on the interchangeability between *jie* and *jie*, the latter being insignificant grass leaves. When the measure word *jie* (介) borrows from the herbal *jie* (芥), it alludes to modesty, or self-effacement. In a conversational context, its usage is often exclusively self-referential. Peng points out that while *jie* is contextually reserved for a self-effacing purpose, it is often actively employed to condition women. Whenever a woman is the subject of public discourse, no matter how illustrious her achievement may be, her story always begins with “merely a powerless woman.”

Peng Wan-ru’s other writings also comb through the factors that contribute to the stereotypical notion of women as powerless. *Where Does A Runaway Housewife Go?* contours the mind-splitting effect of having to simultaneously function as homemaker and career woman. The narrative covers Peng’s personal experience of Peng as, extremely frustrated with the burden of coordinating her career and household chores, she runs away from home.

The first thing that occurs to Peng, having just stormed out of her home, is naturally the contemplation of where to go. Peng enumerates the possible options not only by the people she can reach out to, but also by the advice, consolation, and even admonition she would likely receive from them. Turning to her mother would mean, Peng determines, listening to a reiteration of the conventional feminine responsibilities of assisting one’s husband and educating one’s children (相夫教子). On the other hand,

turning to friends would merely initiate an exchange of laments over having to meet the expectations of being a virtuous wife and a caring mother. Peng concludes that both options would lead either to an exposition of domestic infamies (家醜外揚) or to intrusion into others' households. To worsen the dilemma, Peng admits that both of these would serve as signals of the failure and incompetence of a woman.

What is revealing about this story is not the depiction of the stressfulness of multitasking, but the depiction of the context that molded the environments of women in 1990s Taiwan. For Peng Wan-ru and her cohort, their context comprised the domestic as well as the public space and preconditioned them for activism.

Peng's account demonstrates the Confucian understanding of how the division of labor ought to function in a household, and the stigma attached to failing to conform to this understanding. Also touched upon is the spatiality concerning the domestic division of labor. Irregularities and complaints, and the discussion of such, are to be confined to a private setting. Allowing these complaints to travel outside of the household is a transgression, for which women are to be blamed. The expectation that the difficulties that burden women are to remain undiscussed keeps Peng from reaching out for any form of assistance or comfort. Peng ends up by herself, and her solitude and lack of direction are a stark answer to the title of her story: Where *does* a runaway housewife go? The essay paints a vivid picture of the Confucian social conditions. The gender relations and norms within the family as an institution actually prevented Peng from reaching out to a supportive group of women.

The narrative continues with an even more alarming episode, as Peng tries to check herself into a hotel. The awareness of spatiality apprehends her as she, a housewife as well as a career woman, ventures into a public space. At the moment Peng steps into the hotel, the well-lit lobby suddenly takes on a metaphorical meaning. The fluorescent interior convinces Peng that the hotel does not accommodate the sex trade. Having confirmed the integrity of the space, Peng's scrutiny immediately turns onto herself. She suddenly wonders if her attire will draw unnecessary attention. The way Peng phrases her concern is characteristic of the paradoxical gender order that confronted many 1990s women: "I'm in a modest suit. Does it make people look at me in a devious light?" (Peng, 1997). The word Peng uses is '端莊,' meaning proper and decorous. Peng fears that her very propriety and decorum might project an invitation to wayward appreciation, for which Peng uses '看歪,' meaning to view askew or from an angle. Peng's apprehension here operates on several symbolic layers. The semiotics-switch process begins with the interchange between the language her garment 'speaks' and the expectations society places on women. These expectations stand within both the domestic and work spaces. In the work space, a 1990s woman was to take on the role of home supporter. In Taiwanese, supporting a household was described as *thàn-tsiàh*. Yet linguistically, *thàn-tsiàh* does not go well with the word for woman, *tsa-bóo*. For *thàn-tsiàh tsa-bóo* exclusively indicates a prostitute, or any woman involve in sex work. The intriguing revealing point of Peng's article *Where Does A Runaway Housewife Go* springs forth right at this moment when Peng steps into the hotel lobby, where several

social and semiotic restrictions, as well as a variety of social stigma cast upon women, all converge.

### **The Confucian Ideology Behind the Activism Peng Inspired**

The death of Peng Wan-ru and its aftermath painted quite a different picture than she could ever have envisioned. After her murder, Peng's husband and her feminist cohort founded the PWR foundation (彭婉如基金會) in her name. The fledgling PWR Foundation invested its effort in community policing, which bore the traumatic memory of commemorating the death of the titular activist. Initially located in Taipei City, the PWR Foundation then went on to set up local offices in other parts of Taiwan. The community services efforts it provided also included childcare and counseling.

Although the PWR Foundation originated as a means to cope with an unequal gender hierarchy, it closely associates itself with Confucian social orders, which are inherently patriarchal and somehow deny representations of discourse that are not heteronormative. The guiding principles of the PWR Foundation worked toward the goal of providing a community welfare system with five aspects. The system aimed at establishing a support network that directed its care towards women, children, teenagers and elders. The envisioned ideal community followed the blueprint laid out in Liu Yuxiu's manifesto for the PWR foundation. Liu's manifesto described the community as being governed by the body of residents as a whole, according to a principle of affinity that sustains the quality of community services. In this vision, both genders shared the responsibility of governance. Gender attributes dictated an individual's workload and

aspect of responsibility.<sup>2</sup> The community services should be affordable to the middle-class family. Affordability was the goal of the whole design because it channeled the resources toward producing the next generation of citizens. Since residents shared the community services, they ceased to be commodities and observed non-profit-making priorities. Additionally, the services provided by the support network, such as nurseries and childcare, would create jobs for housewives (Huang, 2011).

The stated aims and focal points of the PWR Foundation's community support network bear a close resemblance to the Confucian social ideal. The *Book of Rites* (禮記) and the *Record of the Peach Blossom* (桃花源記) best summarized the Confucian imagination of an ideal community. In the *Great Unity* (禮運大同篇) projected in the *Book of Rites*, the world is a community in the sense that love and caring are not exclusive to one's own kin, but are inclusive of one's elders and the children of others.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this unity, the society is ordered in the fashion of men fitted to their proper responsibilities and women to desired ends. As for the resources and labors that sustain the society, the *Great Unity* envisions them in a relational light. People keep resources from being wasted by not hoarding them, and they exert their strength but not by applying it only for the sake of themselves. In the original text of the *Great Unity* concerning resources and strength, and the subjugation of "one's own" projects to the good of the community.

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<sup>2</sup> As much as the manifesto emphasized shared responsibility between genders, it operated along a heteronormative line. The PWR Foundation envisioned community-delegated aspects of responsibility to operate in accord with preconceived gender attributes.

<sup>3</sup> In Mandarin Chinese, 人不獨親其親，不獨子其子。

The imagination of a paradisiac community as described in the *Great Unity* finds identical representation in *The Record of the Peach Blossom*, using similar tropes. As in the *Great Unity*, here the fourth century author Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) paints the picture of an ideal community with the registries of “elders and children appearing to be happy and contented” and “fields checkered and connected with trails and paths [that] run between them (Tao, 1953).” As we see here, the analogy between the PWR Foundation’s project and the ideal Confucian society sums up the particulars that characterize a desirable community: concern for the welfare of both ends of the demographic spectrum and well-defined relations between members. Yet it is the difference between the texts that illustrates the progressiveness of the PWR Foundation. The harmonious relations in *The Record* are, first and foremost, part of a fictional writing. That said, Tao Yuanming’s account of that harmony appears as an equilibrium of relations among the tenants. The PWR Foundation manifesto, on the other hand, seeks to impose such harmonious relations on any given community.

The textuality of *The Record of the Peach Blossom* is not to be overlooked. The common narrative trope of a tunnel leading to an allegorical realm sets up the plot of the protagonist discovering the fabled land of the peach blossom. In this narrative, the peach blossom land exists against a chaotic and tumultuous background. The protagonist is told that the township of Peach Blossom came into being as an escapist enclave from the social disorder of the Qin Dynasty (秦). This mention of the Qin Dynasty is not without its symbolic meaning. The entire establishment, duration and downfall of the Qin Dynasty, the first dynasty in Chinese recoded history, spanned only

fourteen years. That short period of time saw the extremity of the concentration and abuse of political power, and the complete disarray that ensues when a feudal society collapses. The chaos and turmoil that the founders of Peach Blossom sought escape from also alluded to the social upheaval that was occurring at the time in which the *Record* was written. Tao Yuanming wrote *The Record of the Peach Blossom* as a prelude to a collection of his poems entitled *The Poetry of the Peach Blossom*, which was compiled in 421 AD, roughly at the time when the Jin Dynasty was dissolving. These parallels establish the orderly nature of the relationships among the inhabitants in the imaginary world as a response to the trauma of lawlessness.

Liu's manifesto that lays out the PWR Foundation's project draws attention to the divergence that exists within the discourse of gender. The limitation of the PWR Foundation's community work reveals itself especially when dealing with issues of class. In the late 1990s and 2000s, these issues primarily concerned migrant workers, as I will discuss in my concluding chapter.

It is especially ironic that the PWR Foundation's community childcare service should call itself *wanru mama* (宛如媽媽). This appellation plays on the homonyms Wan-ru, the name of the deceased activist, and *wanru* (宛如), literally "just like," or "as if." Calling the childcare service providers "wanru mama" carries the connotation of not having to worry about the entrusted children because they are under care of those "just like Mother," with a capital M. The very emphasis projects a specifically nurturing Motherhood, which rates the performances of all mothers. Following the implications of this title to their fullest expression, however, risks tokenizing "mother" as

a domestic role embodying conventional gender expectations. This mechanism entails associating a set of domestic labors, as well as a set of expectations, to the essential femininity of ‘mother.’ Yet tokenizing femininity is exactly what Peng Wan-ru criticizes when she expresses her dissatisfaction with her name. To Peng, her very name, *Wanru*, is but one of the many ways in which the Confucian patriarchy incorporates gender archetypes into everyday expressions, which people tend to gloss over and take for granted.

In addition to being semiotically tokenizing, *wanru mama* is also at odds with the experience of motherhood in a capitalist society. Just like Peng Wan-ru, a large percentage of married women in 1990s Taiwan were expected to take on the roles of both homemaker and career woman. The expectation had its most recent cause in Taiwan’s orientation as an export economy since the martial law era. Decades of dirigiste campaigns for domestic entrepreneurship, stating “your living room is your factory,” created the image of women as being integral to the labor force. Taiwanese women in the 1990s found themselves in a social context where modernization and convention intersected. While educational as well as industrial modernization created a labor market relatively neutral to men and women, the conventional social norms, especially those of Confucianism, continued to demand that women fill the role of caretaker, in the name of domestic duty and filial piety (Blundell, 2012).

The commonality of the burden that living in a double-income nuclear family lays upon the woman is the reason that services like daycare and after-school childcare have become necessities. Taiwanese women in a career- and profit-driven society have little



choice but to delegate some of the domestic duties associated with motherhood to a service provider outside the home, such as the PWR Foundation. Calling these volunteering caretakers *wanru mama*, which euphorically affirms them as being “just like Mother,” diminishes the motherhood of career women, in spite of the good intentions that exist on all sides. By utilizing the childcare service provided by volunteers who are “just like Mother,” career women are reduced to being considered “less Mother-like.” On the other hand, the designation of homemaking and childcare as “mother-like” precludes the role of career woman from also fitting this category. In Confucianism, labors are ethically gendered, as shown by the axiom “men go out in charge of breadwinning, while the women’s place is in homemaking” (男主外, 女主内). It is important to pay attention to the fact that the Confucian gender expectations are not mere “desirables” on the individual or domestic levels, but are actually political projections of social stability through governance. It is not coincidental that the PWR Foundation’s mission of community organizing looks less like a grassroots initiative than a top-down imposition. The objectives of the foundation, in desiring stability, are symmetrical to those of Confucianism. The preclusion of breadwinning from being Mother-like, again, reaffirms the gender order of Confucian ideals.

### **Activists as Housewives and Career Women**

Peng Wan-ru’s death in 1996 may have shaped the trajectory of the women’s movement, but her career and involvement in it is equally representative of the 1990s feminist activism. Before Peng’s demise, women’s activism in Taiwan gave an impression of elitism as well as heteronormativity. In the introduction to *Wanru the*

*Firefly*, the editor, Li Yuanzhen (李元貞), comments on Peng's career as a feminist activist as having been "transient, merely eight years since her 'awakening,' but fruitful nevertheless" (Li, 1996). The eight year period Li comments on saw Peng Wan-ru serve as the first Secretary-General of the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會); collaborate with, as well as take part in, several women's activist NGOs; obtain a degree in gender studies at the State University of New York at Albany; and assume the directorial seat of the preliminary Women's Affairs Department of the Democratic Progressive Party. These 'awakened' years were preceded by a decade-long career of instructing Mandarin Chinese, and another decade as a housewife in the U.S., accompanying her husband as he pursued his doctoral degree in mathematics. The arc of Peng's life story resonates with that of housewife, career woman, those who are both.

Peng Wan-ru began her involvement in the women's movement as an immigrant housewife. In early 1980, Peng found herself dependent on her husband, Horng Wang-sheng (洪萬生), as he pursued a doctoral degree in the United States. During their stay in America, Peng started participating in community service activities and serving as the chief editor of a local Chinese newspaper. Peng not only edited the newspaper, but also regularly contributed columns that had, as their target audience, native Chinese-speaking immigrants from Taiwan, many of whom were female. Taking into account the concerns of her primary audience about raising a family in a different culture, Peng's writing style at this time was strictly empirical. Most of her early writings saw Peng direct her observation toward the role of a woman in a Taiwanese household.

After her husband concluded his studies in the U.S., Peng found herself back in Taiwan and among feminist sisters who shared her U.S. experiences in one way or another. The nature of the sisterhood Peng shared with her cohort was made most obvious in the inconsolable grief that pervaded the collection of eulogies to Peng, which formed the second half of *Wanru the Firefly*. In these eulogies, many of Peng's colleagues and comrades recounted the time they shared with her, a time replete with fervent debates and enthusiastic collaboration. Without exception, what figured largely in their recollections was time spent in the office of the Fembooks Press (女書店).

Established in 1995, Fembooks took pride in being the first feminist bookstore in the Chinese-speaking world. Upon its establishment, it shared the same space with the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會), then the foremost organization of the women's movement. The adjacency of Fembooks and the Awakening Foundation made the space they shared the brain and headquarters of 1990s feminist activism in Taiwan. In the spirit of feminist icon Virginia Woolf, it was in every sense 'a room of their own.' A portrait of Virginia Woolf still graces the interior of Fembooks to this date.

The Awakening Foundation was the direct result of the women's movement in the martial law era. The first decade of its life saw the antecedent of the Foundation registered as *Awakening Magazine* (婦女新知雜誌), a strategic coalition created in response to the institution of martial law. Registering as a publishing house created a façade that disguised its true status as a non-governmental organization, which would have been outlawed under martial law. The editing board of the magazine was an

extension of that of *Trailblazer Magazine* (拓荒者雜誌), which Lu Hsiao-Liam (呂秀蓮) founded in 1976. Lu Hsiu-lien was a recipient of the Asia Foundation Award, which subsidized her study at Harvard University. Following her return to Taiwan, after the completion of her studies in the U.S., Liu's activism involved working as a publisher and an organizer of reading groups. Her efforts saw the publication of *Trailblazer Magazine* and the development of fellowships of women who met to read and discuss emerging feminist trends in the United States. Lu steered *Trailblazer Magazine* as a vehicle for introducing U.S. feminist discourse to Taiwan until 1979, at which time she was imprisoned as a result of her involvement in the Kaohsiung Incident (美麗島事件). Despite her absence, Lu's cohort at both the magazine and the reading groups continued to pursue their cause, ultimately in the form of the new *Awakening Magazine*. As its predecessor had done, *Awakening Magazine* found ways to operate around the censorship of the KMT regime.

The founding members of *Awakening Magazine* included a group of American educate women. Championing the editing board was Li Yuanzhen (李元貞), who studied theatre arts in Oregon and California. Most of her colleagues at the magazine held graduate degrees from American academic institutions. Bo Qingrong received her degree in business administration in New York. Wu Jiali studied chemistry in Wisconsin and Seattle. Zheng Zhihui's (鄭至慧) pursuit of a comparative literature degree brought her to Seton Hall University, Rutgers University and, eventually, Boston

University. Cao Ailan's degrees in education were from the University of Texas at Austin. Ku Yenlin (顧燕翎) received her PhD in education from Indiana University.

These female activists soon found they not only had their educational background in common, but also their marital status. At the establishment of *Awakening Magazine*, all of the above were married, except for Li Yuanzhen who had been divorced since 1973. According to Li Yuanzhen's recollection, *Awakening Magazine* arose from the living rooms of the founding members as much as from the void of Lu Hsiu-lien's imprisonment. The financing of the publication was also deeply connected to the double-income family setting that was the result of the capitalist and developmentalist society that characterized 1980s Taiwan. The funds for the establishment of the magazine's editing board came from its founding members: one hundred thousand NT dollars a piece. To sustain the operation, every founding member also made a monthly donation of one thousand NT dollars. The amount and the continuity of these donations could only be afforded by bourgeois families, and in most of these cases the female contribution to the family income came from college teaching positions. These female activists, who once called themselves trailblazers under the leadership of Lu Hsiu-lien, would precede generations of feminist leaders that shared the same identity. This identity would also set the tone and direction of their elitist, heteronormative activism well into the mid-1990s, before Peng Wan-ru's murder and the rift in the Awakening sisterhood.

With the lifting of martial law, which loosened up the KMT's regulations on non-governmental organizations, *Awakening Magazine* changed its registration to the

Awakening Foundation in 1987. Zheng Zhihui, the first editor-in-chief of *Awakening Magazine*, called this change a farewell to “the legal façade covering up the illegal political activism (Zheng, 1997).”

Zheng Zhihui was also on the editing board for Peng Wan-ru’s memorial anthology, published under the *Nüshu* series. The lives and careers of Zheng and Peng, as feminist activists, were like mirror images with a decade in between. Both women came to awareness as feminists during their sojourns in the United States, Zheng in the 1970s and Peng in the 1980s. Zheng returned to Taiwan in the late 1970s, after marrying her mathematician husband. Like Peng a decade later, Zheng devoted herself to the women’s movement as a career woman and a homemaker. Also like Peng, she served as an editor and incorporated U.S. feminist theories into her writings and her methods of approaching gender issues in Taiwan. Peng would not only go on to repeat Zheng’s activism, but even served as her successor in several activist positions. The similarities between Zheng and Peng were discernible in their writings as well as in their resumes, originating from their personal experiences as women taking on both domestic and career roles. As if foreshadowing Peng Wan-ru’s feminist awakening through her examination of Chinese literary culture, the beginning of Zheng Zhihui’s career as an activist came from her exposure to the *Nüshu* script.

*Nüshu* was first discovered in Jiangyong County, in the Hunan province of China. A syllabic script, *Nüshu* featured a rhomboid structure that differentiated itself from the rectangular, logographic Chinese characters. Combining modified logographic Chinese characters and a purely phonetic character, *Nüshu* significantly reduced the numbers of

strokes needed compared to Chinese characters. This feature attested to its creation along the lines of gender segregation, in which women enjoyed less access to education and literacy. The nature of *Nüshu* limited its circulation among ‘sworn sisters’ in the peasant communities of Jiangyong County (Zheng, 2010). A large part of the *Nüshu* codified literature, known as the *Book of Bridal Congratulations* (三朝書), consisted of poems and songs presented to sworn sisters who had to leave the circle of secrecy due to marriage, to the sorrow of their friends. Sending off sisters into this patriarchal institution, lamenting their loss but hoping for their happiness, became an encompassing motif of these *Nüshu* texts. The generic tone of this kind of *Nüshu* literature was called *sukelian* (訴可憐), meaning ‘pouring forth miseries.’

The introduction of *Nüshu* in Taiwan told a story of solidarity that went beyond peasant sisterhood. Zheng Zhihui was introduced to *Nüshu* during the First Chinese Women Studies Conference (第一屆中國婦女研究學術研討會), held in Zhengzhou in Henan Province, China. While most Chinese scholars dismissed *Nüshu* as possessing little literary merit, Zheng was enthralled by its significance. Fascinated, Zheng altered her course and ventured into the then-seldom frequented, mountainous Jiangyong County. After extensive fieldwork, Zheng was able to publish *Nüshu: The Only Feminine Writing System in the World* (女書：世界唯一的女性文字) in Taiwan, in collaboration with the Awakening Foundation. The discovery of a ‘script of women’s own’ kindled an idea that, for Zheng, echoed Virginia Woolf’s words (Zheng, 2010).

### **Challenging the Heteronormative “Two Sexes”**

The post-martial law liberalized political environment prompted the Awakening activists to broaden their approach. Their transformation from a publishing house to a foundation signaled their attempt to step out of the general criticism of gender inequality and target gender politics on policy level. In 1988, the Awakening Foundation launched its first campaign against institutionalized gender prejudice with a paper that bore the title *The Brochure on Equality Between Two Sexes* (兩性平等教育手冊).

The murders of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiao-yen facilitated the enactment of the bill on the prevention of sexual assault into law in 1997. An item in this new law demanded the incorporation of education on gender equality into middle school and elementary school curricula. Provided with this legal basis, the Ministry of Education established a permanent office in charge of gender equality education. Although the legislation had been proposed as early as 1998, the catalyst for this new attention to the safety of women and the issue of gender equality was generally attributed to Peng's martyrdom. What should not be overlooked is the terminology of this series of legislations and responses from the public sector that Peng's demise set into motion.

In 1988, the Awakening Foundation published *The Brochure on Equality Between Two Sexes*, challenging the stereotypes that tied women to specific domestic activities and expectations of the kind found in textbooks. The brochure set the tone of the resolutions with which women rights organizations put pressure on the KMT administration up until the eve of Peng Wan-ru's murder. In the brochure, as well as in many other proposals and petitions, gender equality was initially termed 'equality between the two sexes' (兩性平等) rather than 'equality among genders' (性別平等).



The concept of ‘equality between the two sexes’ was dominant throughout the 1990s, to the extent that every aforementioned law and committee mentioned that very phrase. This terminology persisted into the early 2000s, when the committee commissioned the drafting of a bill on gender equality education, which, bearing the signature phrase, was titled the *Equality Between Two Sexes Education Act* (兩性平等教育法草案). This title was not altered until 2002, before it was introduced to the Parliament floor, when it was changed to the *Gender Equality Education Act*. Unfortunately, yet another tragic loss of life halted the progress of this act: the death of Ye Yongzhi (葉永鋕), which will be further touched upon in Chapter Three.

With its publication in 1988, *The Brochure on Equality Between Two Sexes* came across as the catalyst of gender awareness in Taiwan. It presented the results of a quantitative examination of the compulsory education curriculum. Under scrutiny were textbooks that covered language, history, and civic education. The result showed a disproportionate representation of the male sex. This disproportionate representation spread across appearance count, roles attribute, and moral character, etc. Within the textbooks under examination, over 90% of the characters mentioned were male. These characters represented a variety of occupations, ranging from heads of state to beggars. It is interesting that the brochure presented the male roles as being so various, while the few female characters were discovered to be limited to domestic roles.

This lopsided representation was also found in textbook illustrations. Besides the pure number of appearances, what was startling was the implicit gender bias, if not outright misogyny, embedded in the unequal representation. In the illustrations that

depicted forms of civil rights, such as freedom of speech, of peaceful assembly, of complaint, and others, there was only one female presence, in a single illustration. This illustration, intended to represent freedom of religion, showed a female character kneeling down and burning incense in prayer. While her male counterparts in other illustrations were seen to be exerting their civil rights – such as delivering speeches, casting ballots, and attending conventions – in a public setting, the lone female character was depicted praying in a domestic space. The Awakening Foundation, which compiled the brochure, criticized this gender-based line, drawn between males and females, as “failing to observe and represent the change of social landscape that modernization has brought about in Taiwan” (The Awakening Foundation, 1988). This criticism was acute, in the sense that it explicitly teased out the tie between 1990s gender discourse and both the economic progress and limitations of modernization.

With the commentary on the modernization of 1990s gender discourse came also a criticism of the discourse of sex, as represented in the curriculum being examined. The editor of *The Brochure on Equality Between Two Sexes* counted only four female characters in the whole twelve volumes of the elementary school civic education textbooks. The four characters included Mazu (媽祖), the all-loving deity worshiped as Heavenly Mother by the immigrant society; Luo Zu (螺祖), the ancient goddess of knitting, whose origin is closely tied to creation legends; the Empress Dowager (慈禧太后), the late Qing Dynasty figure generally portrayed as a figure of frivolous decadence; and Huang Bamei (黃八妹), a female gun-slinger whose patriotism was well-known

during the Second Sino-Japanese War. These four female characters, according to the *Brochure*, were not considered “worthy of emulation,” and this, coupled with the generally scant female presence, was said to have “left the whole curriculum void of modern role model for female students.” Not to be overlooked here was the temporal distinction between Huang Bamei’s life and times and the publication of the brochure, which was a gap of merely forty years. The “modern” time to which the brochure referred was marked by the martial law era.

The aforementioned discourse of sex was also a criticism of capitalist modernization. The end of World War Two delivered Taiwanese society from Japanese colonization. Into the vacuum left by the departure of the Japanese came the authoritarian KMT regime that, with aid from the United States, molded Taiwan into a capitalist-driven economy. This period of industrial modernization roughly overlapped with the martial law era. During this time, the small- and medium-enterprise based economy brought forth a new identity of the ‘career woman,’ which was inhabited by women such as Peng Wan-ru and Zheng Zhihui. The sense of under-representation uncovered by the *Brochure* stemmed from the fact that the roles and careers women had taken were still largely considered to be part of the male domain.

Taking all of these things into consideration, the terminology of gender equality as equality between two sexes raises questions about the nature of this gender progressiveness in the 1990s that was initiated by Peng and her colleagues. The law enacted in 1997 demanded that school curricula acknowledge the equality of men and women. But this legally ordained equality operated more closely along the line of sex

than gender. By limiting this legal equality exclusively to men and women, the discourse of gender equality in the 1990s was inherently heteronormative. It acknowledged only the two sexes and, without mentioning sexualities, presupposed that every individual is heterosexual.

### **The Limit to the 1990s Feminist Progressivism**

That heteronormativity dominated the women's movement until the second half of the 1990s is evident in Liu Yuxiu's commentary on her name as a critique of patriarchy. Liu Yuxiu went by the name Huang Yuxiu in the early days of *Awakening Magazine* and the Foundation. The name of Huang Yuxiu appeared in meeting minutes and records that documented the development of the Awakening Foundation. Although never officially affiliated with the editing board of *Awakening Magazine*, Huang Yuxiu shared similar background with many members of the board. Her serving as an instructor in the English Department at the National Taiwan University, while also working as a homemaker, made her empathetic to the Awakening activists having to fill the roles of both housewife and career woman. Gu Yanling, a founding member of the Awakening Foundation, recalled Huang Yuxiu's presence in board meetings and her pivotal role in decision-making.

The Huang Yuxiu whose presence graced the women's movement in the early 1990s, changed her name to Liu Yuxiu in 1994. Liu Yuxiu proclaimed her new surname a symbol of her rebellion against patriarchy, as well as a covenant with her critics. Liu was the family name she inherited from her mother. The covenant between Liu, as a feminist activist, and the larger Taiwanese society anticipated the

equality she sought between the genders of woman and man. Liu suggested that when society finally rid itself of patriarchal oppression, it wouldn't matter whether a child bore the paternal or the maternal surname. Then, Liu stated, "I might as well change my name back to my father's" (Huang, 1994).

Yet it is simultaneously paradoxical that it didn't matter in the first place whether Liu bore her mother or father's name. The ubiquity of the patriarchy inherent in by familial conventions makes Liu's activism ceremonious yet ultimately futile. What renders Liu's stance less effective is related to the Taiwanese funerary customs. In a traditional Taiwanese funeral, the indispensably integral unit of every funeral procession is the incense burner and the person holding it. The action of holding a rice container in a funeral procession is called *phâng-táu* in Taiwanese. The person designated to *phâng-táu* must be the first-born grandson of the deceased. If there is no male heir eligible to *phâng-táu*, not only are the family and the deceased disgraced, but this also spells out the extinction of the family lineage. This widely observed practice exhibits the callousness of the patriarchy, whose obsession over male sex, as well as the duration of the male name, encompasses the span of three generations. It is through such conventions that the responsibility for family lineage is cast upon men. A man is responsible for making sure that not only does he beget a male heir, but that that his own heir does also, or he risks disgrace in death.

The implication of the *phâng-táu* convention, or the other side of the coin, is the total disdain of the female sex. Over a long period of time in Taiwan, the *phâng-táu* practice has created countless arranged marriages in which a man is married into

prosperous family that lacks a male heir, with the condition that his first male heir will bear the mother's family name. Technically speaking, the only purpose of that male heir bearing his mother's name is to *phâng-táu* for his maternal grandfather. This practice, so closely associated to the *phâng-táu* convention, is called *ti-bó-suè*, literally "the sow's taxation." The social mechanism that functions around the conventions of "*phâng-táu*" and *ti-bó-suè* debases women to the extent that they are viewed as little more than breeding swine. It also exposes marriage as merely a patriarchal institution that is based on reciprocal economic transaction, in which the financial gain expected by a male entering into marriage is 'taxed' with the requirement to beget a male heir for his benefactor. These conventions give rise to a culture that sees women as destined to bear someone else's name and to breed for families other than her own. It is in this sense that the act of Liu Yuxiu changing her name, while rebellious on a personal level, amounts to almost nothing, practically speaking, if situated in a patriarchal and heteronormative framework. Liu's choice to bear her mother's name does little to invert or destabilize the disdainful patriarchal culture that expects her to bear a name other than her father's in the first place. Indeed, though it is the last thing Liu would have wished, the heteronormativity at the heart of the Confucian family order would eventually lead to a rift within the Awakening sisterhood. The event that saw lesbian activists part ways with their heterosexual feminist colleagues also made even more clear the problematic stance of 1990s feminist activists criticizing Confucianism while simultaneously living it out. Further discussion of this contradiction, and the tension it engendered, is found in Chapter Three.

## The Sexuality Rift within Feminist Activism

Roughly one year after Peng Wan-ru's demise, a notice of internal personnel change set off what was to become known as 'the family catastrophe' inside the Awakening Foundation. The administrative board of the Foundation convened at the end of October 1997. Minutes of this meeting recommended the induction of Wang Ping (王蘋) to the next administrative board, and Ni Jiazhen (倪家珍) to the executive committee. Wang and Ni previously served as executive officers in the Foundation, yet both were now to be demoted to unpaid positions. Sparring, in the form of a series of open letters, broke out between Wang and Ni, and the administrative supervisors. Both parties debated over due process, transparency, and workplace ethics in the foundation. After several showdowns that drew media attention, Wang and Ni left the Awakening Foundation in early 1998. The bitter wrangle was widely covered as "a rift between activist sisters," "so much of the feminist sisterhood," and has ever since registered as 'the family catastrophe.'

This unfortunate rupture happened amongst the fiery zeal of the abrogation of licensed prostitution in Taipei City. Wang and Ni, who represented the executive branch of the Awakening Foundation, also disagreed with the administrative board on issues concerning prostitution and homosexuality. These disagreements were not without causes. As early as 1995, *Awakening Magazine* devoted five consecutive issues to gender theories, engaging with homosexual and, even more broadly, LGBTQ issues under the title *Implosive Feminism* (內爆女性主義). The title seemed to foresee the crisis lurking within the feminist activism of the 1990s. At the center of the crisis were

the heteronormative notions inherent within Confucianism and the feminist critiques of these notions. The pieces that comprised the *Implosive Feminism* series hinted at the lesbian strand of feminism imploding heteronormativity and at the imminent divergence of the activism. The aftermath of these publications saw the Foundation, as well as Li Yuanzhen and her generation of women's rights activists, draw criticism for steering clear of gender issues that were not compatible to a heterosexual setting, and avoiding class issues that the bourgeois elites were not comfortable with. When the Mayor of Taipei City, Chen Shui-bian, moved to outlaw any form of prostitution, and the licensed prostitutes rallied against the infringement of their right to work, the activist "sisterhood" that had been celebrating female solidarity suddenly also began to experience the challenges of division. Having to invest more executive agency in order to reach a consensus on issues like prostitution and homosexuality, *Awakening Magazine* began to experience an increase in missed deadlines and postponements. The divergence of opinion, manifested itself in inefficiency, and eventually afforded room for the development of internal feuds.

It was bitterly ironic that people should remember and refer to the parting of the feminist activists as 'the family catastrophe.' One of the works of the celebrated modernist novelist Wang Wenxing (王文興) bears the same name. *The Family Catastrophe*, as a modernist masterpiece of Taiwan Literature, depicted the fall from grace of a patriarch. The events leading up to the disappearance of the protagonist's father were enacted in domestic and mundane settings. Wang Wenxing succeeded in codifying the criticism of patriarchy as a capitalist institution in the flow of melodramatic



trivialities. The namesake ‘family catastrophe’ of the Awakening Foundation, whilst also stemming from a critique of the patriarchal institution, ultimately unfolded as a divergence among women rebelling against aspects of patriarchy. Although both were seen as family catastrophes, in Wang’s novel as well as in the case of the Awakening Foundation, the key events were portrayed as being primarily domestic. Both criticisms of patriarchy operated on the observation that Confucianism has always deployed family as a metaphor of state (國). Issues of prostitution and homosexuality lay outside the Confucian familial order that was so central to state order, and so they destabilized the homogenous feminist outlook that was also ultimately based on the heteronormative categories that were embedded within Taiwanese society as a Confucian society.

### Chapter Three: Homosexual Activism in the 1990s

The history of lesbian and gay activism in 1990s Taiwan is one that defies prejudice. In this chapter I discuss the progressiveness of lesbian and gay activism. Such activism paid particular attention to gender issues and sought to disrupt prejudice against non-heterosexual sexual orientations. Biases toward lesbians and gays were not exclusive to Taiwan at the time. However, the prejudices facing lesbian and gays in 1990s Taiwan were constructed by a particular combination of Confucian conventions and a society increasing in affluence. In the following I examine the divergent strategies employed by lesbian activists and their gay counterparts as they asserted their progressive agendas. While their methods differed, the challenges both groups faced were the same. The spectrum of prejudices they encountered ranged from a dismissive attitude that saw homosexuality as relationally contingent and skewed perception of homosexuality as consisting of negative sexual acts, to the total rejection of homosexuality as devious and perverse.

The progressiveness of the 1990s lesbian and gay activism was the opposite of the prejudices against homosexuality in terms of how the activism exposed such prejudices. In this chapter, I introduce the activism of gay activist Chi Chia-wei and lesbian groups such as *Girl Friends* (女朋友) and *Between Us* (我們之間), and discuss several social intellectuals' involvement in lesbian activism. In addition, I include a discussion of the novel *A Silent Thrush* (失聲畫眉) in my study of the prejudices and conventions. The novel offers a nuanced view of the ways in which such prejudices and conventions limited the expression of homosexuality in 1990s Taiwan. It is, however, imperative to

point out that my intention is not to establish this fictional work, or any others, as being wholly representative of social biases regarding homosexuality. I apply my close reading not only to the text, but also to its critical reception, teasing out what the 1990s readers of the novel had to say about its representation of homosexuality. The reception of the novel, I argue, transcended the confines of fiction and contoured the perception of homosexuality in 1990s Taiwan. In fact, in accordance with my observation that prejudices predetermine progressiveness, concepts in relations to Confucianism continued to carry weight in the shaping of progressivism in the 2010s. The 2010s progressivism vis-à-vis Confucianism also shed light on our understanding of gender progressiveness in Taiwan.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the crowd in front of the Legislative Yuan erupted into cheers when the Constitutional Court in Taiwan announced the passing of interpretation No. 748, regarding the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. The fervently anticipated ruling declared that the provisions of the Civil Code, by not allowing two persons of the same sex to create a marriage union, violated of the people's right to freedom and equality, and were thus unconstitutional. Amidst the triumphant cries and cheers, the news media congratulated Taiwan on becoming the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage.

In hindsight, this outcome was not all together unexpected. The occasion also garnered another 'first time ever' title. An English-language press release disseminated, in advance, amongst various news media outlets accompanied the official Constitutional Court interpretation for the first time in the judicial history of Taiwan. Homosexual activists confessed to having breathed a sigh of relief upon learning that there was to be

an English translation of the interpretation. One of them even confided to me that “it was certainly a sign. If the ruling was not in favor of same-sex marriage, there would not have been an English version. They were after international recognition, hence the English press release.”<sup>1</sup>

This comment brought to mind a Chinese saying, “*jiachou bu waiyang*” (家醜不外揚), which translated loosely to “wash your dirty linen at home.” There was a discrepancy between the Chinese axiom and its English equivalent, however. In the English version, home functioned as the boundary between private and public, without a specific value attached to it. Its Chinese counterpart, on the other hand, while also implying the dichotomy of private and public, used *jiachou*, meaning “familial blemish,” to indicate something which must be concealed. The syntax of associating *jia*, the family, to *chou*, the blemish, established a mechanism of shame, which always functioned with respect to a collective unit. In the comment I received from that particular activist, the collective shame that threatened to tarnish the reputation of Taiwan was the continued lack of any legal provisions for same-sex marriage and the projection of a regressive image as a country. Yet where did this attitude of shame about Taiwan’s social regressiveness come from?

The constitutional interpretation No. 748, rather than merely allowing same-sex couples to marry, opened up a conception of the family that many consider progressive.

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<sup>1</sup> I befriended this source in 2008, before I began writing this dissertation. Using the alias Chalynn LC, my friend has been involved in both lesbian and gay activism. She was one of a core group of activists responsible for a series of rallies after the same-sex marriage bill was introduced on the congress floor. The quotation was from our online conversation prior to the release of constitutional interpretation No. 748 on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2017.

As shown in the two previous chapters of this dissertation, the 1990s gender progressivism, from the juvenile prostitute rescue campaign to the activisms of the PWR and Awakening Foundations, criticized the unequal power relations between women and men. As much as it challenged a gender order that disadvantaged women, its critical focus stayed within the setting of the heterosexual family unit. Deeply intertwined with Confucianism, the institution of the family in Taiwan projected stability in a societal framework, which encompassed a spectrum of relational spheres, from something as personal as domestic filial piety to a relation as grand as that of loyalty to state. The limit to the 1990s gender progressivism was the heterosexual family order based on Confucian patriarchy.

In this chapter, I look into the lesbian and gay activism that, since its inception, teased its commensurability with the gender order that was inherently heterosexual as well as rooted in Confucianism. Although strategically separated from each other, gay and lesbian activisms in the 1990s each fought for their position in a heteronormative society. We shall see that the pathological stigma of AIDS ostracized gay activists, while lesbian activists had to confront neglect by their feminist compatriots.

It is imperative to point out that this focus on the gay and lesbian activism of the 1990s should not eclipse the fact that, while it has its limits, feminist activism can be heterosexually progressive. Activists such as Zheng Zhihui, Peng Wan-ru and Liu Yu-hsiu established themselves as critically acute without subverting heteronormativity. However, the Confucian, heterosexual family values would converge with Chinese Nationalist ideology, during the debates over same-sex marriage in the 2010s, to form a

conservative bloc against sexual liberation. The trajectory of the 1990s feminist movement from heterosexually progressive to sexually regressive, in retrospect, sheds light on our discussion of progressiveness from the vantage point of the equilibrium between social progress and the urge to hold it at bay.

### **An Activism of One**

What posed the challenge to the Constitutional Court, and Taiwanese society as a whole, and led to constitutional interpretation No. 748 was a joint petition by the Taipei City Government and homosexual activist Chi Chia-Wei (祁家威). This petition was initiated by a sequence of events, beginning with Chi and his gay partner being barred from registering as married couple, to the Taipei High Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court both ruling against Chi's case. This was not, however, the first time Chi had petitioned for the cause of same-sex marriage. For that cause, the related authorities had repeatedly denied Chi's petitions, dating as far back as 1986. The authorities wouldn't even hear his case in 1986, instead issuing a written response that stated that "homosexuality was an abnormal minority position, which sought only to satiate erotic desires" and was "thus in contradiction to the virtuous customs of the society (Judicial Reform Foundation, 2011, p. 207)."

In 1986, a year before the end of the martial law era, Chi Chia-Wei stormed into public focus as the first openly gay person in Taiwan. Chi's coming out to the society involved a press conference at a MacDonald's restaurant, which drew the attention of international news media outlets such as the Associated Press, Reuters and L'Agence France-Presse. In addition to being dogged by martial law censorship, Chi's press

conference was under the cloud of paranoia surrounding the death of the first HIV-positive person in Taiwan less than a month prior. Adding to the fear of the newly-revealed epidemic was the threat of a shockingly brief life expectancy once infection was confirmed. The first local person contracted HIV was pronounced dead less than a month after his case was first reported. Although Chi was HIV negative, his coming out was deeply intertwined with the public conception and fear of the disease. In the press conference, Chi not only revealed his sexual orientation, but also the fact that he was a volunteer for the AIDS prevention effort, “closely working with the Disease Control Center (Zeng, 1988, p. 14).”

The MacDonald’s restaurant in which the press conference took place was inadvertently representative of how Taiwanese society conflated homosexuality and HIV with the West. The arrival of the fast food chain in 1984 acquainted the Taiwanese with a dining experience that was particularly western. Ironically, MacDonald’s was not the only thing imported from the West in 1984. In that year, a passenger making a flight connection in Taiwan confessed and was later confirmed to be HIV positive, thus introducing Taiwanese society to the AIDS epidemic. MacDonald’s and AIDS, both things with a western orientation, and thus eye-catching, needed analytical attention. Even Chi couldn’t shun the West as a wholly tainted symbol. In his statement, pleading with the homosexual community in an effort to appease the public prejudice against homosexuality, Chi asked his fellow gays to “avoid sexual intercourse with foreigners, or, specifically, with westerners, and people of Chinese ethnicity who live in the western countries (Cai, 1986, p. 3).”

Chi Chia-Wei's gay activism, in comparison to its western counterpart, was as paradoxical as the common perception of the West, simultaneously deemed advanced yet radical in Taiwan. In appearance, Chi's coming-out seemed to be a measure of resistance. Western homosexual activism had emphasized this means of coming-out since the Stonewall Riots. Chi's individual coming-out was, however, a twofold strategy aiming at the opposite effect of its western model. While the sheer number of western coming-outs secured a friendlier space for the homosexual community, Chi's coming-out negotiated anonymity for his compatriots, or the Clique. A report in *Renjian* (人間) magazine, in 1988, recounted Chi's daily routine. In the mornings, Chi would often grace the streets of Taipei with his presence, fundraising for AIDS prevention and control, or persuading gays to get blood tests, while guaranteeing them anonymity. In the afternoons, Chi's errands included retrieving blood samples and test results from the NTU hospital, calling to inform gays of their HIV test results, and providing counseling for gays via phone calls, his number openly circulated among homosexuals. Chi would then spend evenings frequenting gay bars, not for the purpose of dating, but for monitoring the actions of people who were HIV positive, exclusively to his own knowledge of course. He would remind them to conduct safe sex while simultaneously offering a listening ear. Before the end of the day, Chi would visit Taipei New Park and Changde Street, an enclave for rendezvous known within the clique as "the firm" (公司), and "Hanover Street," respectively.<sup>2</sup> Again, Chi would invest his

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<sup>2</sup> The nickname of "the firm" denoted a place visited daily by gays, as one would visit the workplace, whereas "Hanover Street" was named after the 1978 film of the same name, which depicted same-sex



time there in passing out condoms and emphasizing the importance of safe sex. The interviewer recounted her visit to a gay bar with Chi and their encounter with one of Chi's ex-lovers, with whom Chi shared some information about recent hostile assaults against homosexuals. Throughout the article, only Chi was addressed by name, a go-between connecting society and the underworld.

Chi Chia-Wei also amplified his individual activism by becoming a spectacle in his own right. An iconic image in *Renjian* magazine presented Chi's gaunt torso covered only by a wrapped skirt made with condoms. Not shying away from being ridiculed or reduced to caricature, more often than not Chi tended toward provocative dressing. Referred to, in Mandarin Chinese, as being *outlandishly dressed* (奇裝異服), the wearing of unusual garments carried with it the stigma of decadent promiscuity. Chi's outfits thus functioned in drawing attention to him, as a representational, if not the only, openly gay man. By drawing attention to himself, Chi earned time and space for other gays to come to terms with their sexual orientation and to decide if and when they wish to come out. On the other hand, the conspicuousness of Chi Chia-Wei refocused the public attention on AIDS, drawing attention not to the horrors afflicted by the disease, but to the campaign for its prevention and control.

The effect of Chi's activism was best represented in Lü Qiang's (履彊) novella, *All Due to Chi Chia-Wei* (都是那個祁家威). The phrase "all due to" established Chi Chia-wei as a source of influence without distinguishing whether that influence was positive or negative. Thus, the title of the story introduced the ambiguity of either

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desire.

reading “thanks to Chi Chia-Wei,” or “blame it on Chi Chia-Wei.” In fact, Chi Chia-Wei did not appear in the narrative as a character, but only as a name with a certain significance. The protagonists were a closeted gay couple. As the narrative progressed, their identity was gradually revealed to the reader. The secret of their sexual orientation remained intact from all except for the physician who conducted their blood tests (Lü, 1994). The narrative was obviously triggered by Chi Chia-Wei’s advocacy of HIV screening.

Chi Chia-Wei’s individual activism did much to hold the public fear and prejudice against gays at bay. Yet Chi’s coming-out did less to alter the status quo in terms of the anonymity imposed on homosexuals by the public prejudice. In spite of the progress made by Chi Chia-Wei’s activism, an event in the second half of the 1990s brought forth the question, was it enough for gays to merely stay out of sight?

### **The Changde Street Incident**

In late July of 1997, the Changde Street Incident shocked the gay community of Taipei, if not Taiwan as a whole. According to the police report, the incident involved tens of gay loiterers, being taken into custody. To the general public of Taiwan, Changde Street was less well known as a location for homosexual trysts than Taipei New Park, (known as 228 Memorial Park when the incident took place). Changde Street, which connected the park and the new NTU Hospital Complex, was more of an inside knowledge among gays. While relatively brief in length, Changde Street was held dear by the homosexual community, so the incident sent shockwaves. Two decades later, the title “Changde Street Incident” (常德街事件) is used to indicate the police assault on

Changde Street on the night of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1997. In fact, it was a series of events that led to the actions of that particular day.

In 1975, a curfew was imposed on Taipei New Park in response to a series of assaults in the vicinity of the park. On February 26<sup>th</sup> of that year, a veteran was found stabbed to death near the park. Several additional cases of stabbing occurred after that murder. Within a single week, six people were reported wounded. Members of law enforcement later apprehended the suspect and, after interrogation, found out that the victimizer disliked homosexual acts and was specifically targeting gay men. The suspect confessed that he had consented to anal sex in exchange for monetary compensation. The shameful feelings that arose from unwanted approaches from *waisheng* (外省), or mainlander, veterans drove him to commit the vengeful assaults (“Xingongyuan mingan xiongxian,” 1975). In the decades that followed, the novel *Niezi* (*The Crystal Boys*), by Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇), portrayed gay men cruising in Taipei New Park at night times. The curfew that forbade loitering in the park after midnight forced gays looking for a rendezvous to move to Changde Street, an ill-lit channel famous for the Corinthian columns of the old NTU Medical School on the one side and the wall of the Taipei Guest House (台北賓館) on the other.

The events of July 1997 were only months away from the murders of Peng Wan-ru and Pai Hsiao-yen. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, a gay man who called himself Bruce suffered an unwarranted spot check from the police. He was forced to present his ID, which was later confiscated, and was taken back to the police station. His complaint about his

unwarranted arrest was ignored. Bruce was held in custody and later bailed out by his parents. Antagonized by the police brutality he had experienced, Bruce posted the details of the event on the Internet. The *China Times* (中國時報), then the most widely circulated newspaper in Taiwan, printed Bruce's story ("Linjian guodang?" 1997). His high-profile protest triggered a huge surge of spot checks in Changde Street on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Police claimed that their actions were in response to a noise complaint and a tip about a possible theft. The action resulted in tens of people being held in custody without legal grounds. As the police moved to transfer the apprehended individuals to the station, a fervent confrontation broke out between the police and the arrested. Many gays under arrest protested that the police had violated their privacy by unlawfully photographing them.<sup>3</sup> When the arrests led to no charges, the police were heavily criticized for their abuse of power. This discrimination against the sexual minority, evidenced by a desire to purge them from the public space was also mentioned in the newly popularized Internet forums. The Changde Street Incident was, in addition to being a watershed event of homosexual activism, a pivotal point where discourses of gender, national identity, and technologies of communication converged.

Released only a month after the Changde Street Incident, Tsai Ming-liang's film *The River* (河流), *The River*, addressed the issue of repressed homosexuality. In one scene, the protagonist, played by Lee Kang-sheng, visited a sauna, a popular place for gay people to meet. The setting was portrayed as being even worse lit than Changde

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Penal Code, law enforcement can only photograph a detainee when a suspicion of trespassing the law is established.

Street. A hallway, with doors on both sides leading to private quarters, was barely discernible in the gloom. The panorama shot showed gay customers wandering the hallway, hopping from one room to another, where they engaged in sexual intercourse with strangers in total darkness. The audience witnessed the protagonist Lee Kang-sheng's character in this setting. Then he walked into a room where his father was. The darkness not only blotted out their mutual recognition, but also reduced the audience to the role of voyeurs in an incestuous exchange of masturbation. The movie proposed an antithesis to the homophobic rhetoric, in that same-sex marriage was seen on the same level as incest, which would spearhead the anti-same sex marriage campaign of the 2010s. In that antithesis, the audience witnessed the assertion that it was the banishing of homosexuality from sight that led, ultimately, to incest.

Homosexual activism in Taiwan, from Chi Chia-wei's actions onward, struggled at the threshold of anonymity and visibility. The lesbian strand of the activism, although strategically different, confronted identical challenges. The predicaments in which lesbian activists found themselves were personal, even in *A Silent Thrush* (失聲畫眉), a novel that did not explicitly position itself as a homosexual novel.

### ***A Silent Thrush as A Representative***

In 1990, after withholding its Grand Prix for the previous four contests, the Independence Evening Post Novel Award honored *A Silent Thrush* with its first prize. The unanticipated triumph of *A Silent Thrush* marked the first time a fictional narrative invested in same-sex desire won a major literary honor. Adding to the surprise was the fact that the author Ling Yan (凌煙) landed the coveted prize as a relatively unheard-of

newcomer. Ling Yan's prize-winning publication predated Chu T'ien-wen's (朱天文) *The Journal of a Desolate Man* (荒人手記) by four years and Qiu Miaojin's (邱妙津) *The Journal of a Crocodile* (鱷魚手記) by seven. While Chu and Qiu's works have been considered classics of literature that deals with same-sex attraction, garnering cult followings, *A Silent Thrush*, despite its prestigious early recognition, has remained an unsung pioneer among homosexual narratives.

The critical reception of *A Silent Thrush* may shed light on the discursive field within which the homosexual activism of the 1990s was situated. Despite the fact that the desire for realism on the part of the author, who confessed the novel's close connection to reality, was well-documented, the fictional nature of the story prevented *A Silent Thrush* from being a sourcebook of lesbian practices. In fact, it was integral to a discussion of progressiveness not by how it represented homosexuality, but how homosexuality was imagined and how that imagined homosexuality was perceived by the Taiwanese society. Ling Yan contoured her portrayal of lesbian desires according to the gender context in which her protagonists were situated. Although fictional, Ling's narrative was representative of the anxieties and discontent over the ruptures and imagined continuity between sex, sexuality and gender roles. I will argue that the perception of the first readers of *A Silent Thrush* was exactly the state of neglect that confronted the subject of homosexuality in the 1990s.

Even Ling Yan herself was hesitant about the categorization of her work as a narrative about same-sex desire. Ling maintained, as scholastic consensus has pointed

out, that her narrative paid equal attention to heterosexual desire and was also about the decline of a traditional performing art as well as the rural economy. The plot of *A Silent Thrush* recounted the hopelessly sinking fate of an itinerant Gua-á-hì (歌仔戲), or Taiwanese opera, troupe. Gua-á-hì often makes use of cross-dressing on its stage. The most common form of cross-dressing among Gua-á-hì troupes was female performers having to play male characters. As a form of Chinese theatre, Gua-á-hì was no exception to the universal plot device of “scholars and beauties” (才子佳人). More often than not, an all female cast acted out love stories between male and female characters. *A Silent Thrush* paid detailed attention to how cross-dressing and gender as performance on stage continued after the show was over. The novel also explored the tension experienced by characters whose lives and loves depended on a declining performing art. The narrative, told from a teenage girl’s point of view and set in late 1980s Taiwan, delineated the mundanity of life in a struggling show business, and the lust and desire of those whose livelihoods depended on it. The girl, Muyun (慕雲), ran away from home and school to join the troupe after dreaming of becoming a star in Gua-á-hì. Not only was Muyun kept far away from achieving her goal throughout the story, she was also not the true protagonist in *A Silent Thrush*. The real focus of the novel was actually a spectrum of lowly, undesirable kinds of love. The narrative followed two lesbian couples, but also paid significant attention to heterosexual relationships. The accounts of love and desire, homosexual or otherwise, occupied a realm outside of heterosexual, monogamous sex, including such forms as adultery, prostitution, and public

sex. Ling confessed that the narrative voice of Muyun was, as a matter of fact, her own. The narrative and the characters had originated from what she saw and experienced in a traveling troupe as a teenage performer of Taiwanese opera. To her, Ling stated, “that was what it is.” She would later challenge the legitimacy of categorizing her narrative as lesbian-related, since “they didn’t call themselves lesbian, or have that identity.”

Upon the publication of the novel, critiques generally agreed with the realism of Ling Yan’s portrayal, although the opinion of this was not entirely favorable. Judging from today’s current detailed and thorough analysis of identity politics, the portrayal of lesbians in the novel was unexpectedly accurate, with an almost naturalistic depth. In light of recent decades’ elaboration on gender as performance, the title of *A Silent Thrush* was revelatory, if only accidentally. *Huamei* (畫眉), the Mandarin Chinese counterpart of “thrush,” literally meant to draw an eyebrow, or “the painted eyebrow. The action of painting the eyebrow was particularly representative of the image of Taiwanese opera performers. As with most Chinese theatre traditions, Taiwanese opera performers painted their faces like masks. The action of painting the eyebrow while looking into a mirror became a symbol of performers becoming characters they played. The two lesbian couples stood out of the narrative, representing how gender and sexuality were performed and negotiated.

Jiafeng and Aiqing were a lesbian couple in their twenties. In the opera they performed, Jiafeng was the divo, or *xiaosheng* in Mandarin Chinese, while Aiqing was the diva, or *xiaodan*. In Taiwanese opera, the *xiaosheng* character was often portrayed as a young, educated, and handsome male, who was usually romantically involved with



the *xiaodan*, a young woman, feminine, attractive, and serene in temper. Jiafeng and Aiqing's relationship and gender characteristics were in alignment with the roles they played. Both in character and in life, Jiafeng projected a devil-may-care attitude and daring persona. Aiqing, on the other hand, was caring as well as obedient to the tomboy with whom she was infatuated. The gender roles they inhabited were so in accordance with those of the characters they played, that Ling Yan's portrayal of lesbian desire was subjected to the criticism of being merely an imitation of heterosexual relations.

The other lesbian couple in the novel was composed of Douyou Ge and Achun. Douyou Ge, with *ge* as the Taiwanese equivalent of "buddy," was a middle-aged butch who played the clownish character in the opera. By butch, it is meant that Douyou Ge displayed behaviors stereotypically associated with masculinity, such as using vulgar language and chewing betel nut. The depiction of Douyou Ge in the novel described her physical appearance, such as her flat chest and hint of Adam's apple, in such a way that it blurred the line of whether she was a butch or transgender. Her partner, Xiaochun, was equally enigmatic. Xiaochun played a *wusheng*, character with a martial arts background, whose performance was heavily choreographed and physically demanding. Xiaochun's predicament was that she longed to play a character that more closely corresponded to her own gender characteristic, which was *xiaodan*, the unity of femininity and the feminine gender.

Upon the release of *A Silent Thrush*, all critiques, without exception, commented specifically on its portrayal of homosexuality. Also without exception, they invested their opinions in the contingency of homosexual behaviors that appeared in the narrative.

Ye Shitao (葉石濤), a champion of nativist realism (鄉土寫實), lamented the moral decadence of 1980s capitalist Taiwan, which was not only self-destructive, but also intoxicating to the already hierarchically and patriarchally regressive traveling troupe (Ling, 1991, p. 264). Ye summarized his observations of the novel by criticizing the alienating consumerism that, in addition to its inherent defects, introduced homosexual behaviors to the Taiwanese opera troupe, as a new form of vice attached to greed and desire.

A different point of view, coming from Yao Yiwei (姚一葦), focused on the disadvantages suffered by the performing artists (Ling, 1991, p. 262). As a scholar of the history of Chinese theatre, Yao Yiwei was familiar with the stereotypical prejudices against theatre performers. Historically, theatre performers, especially itinerant ones, were subject to degrading speculation and contempt. Best summarizing this prejudice was the Chinese saying “prostitutes lack true feelings and performers lack integrity,” (婬子無情, 戲子無義) a saying which implicitly related the performing arts to prostitution. Ling Yan’s narrative concerning the traveling troupe was, in Yao’s opinion, accurate in its depiction of a deviant and therefore disdained walk of life. Yao found it most successful in its portrayal of homosexuality as an anomaly.

Also commenting on the aberrant environment of the traveling troupe, critics Shi Shu (施叔) and Ji Ji (季季) proposed the use of an empathetic lens in coming to terms with the brazen depiction of lesbian behavior. They both directed their attention to the cross-dressing practice common in traditional theatre. A representative expression was

that the world of the theatre was a world of cross-dressing, which denoted sexual impersonation, whether on-stage or off. Life in a traveling troupe, with its limited space and cramped quarters, more often than not enhanced the extension of sexual impersonation that occurred on the stage, so much so that the boundaries between on-stage and off-stage relations became blurred, as well as those between social gender divisions. Shi and Ji furthered this line of observation by pointing out that Taiwanese opera was an unprivileged art form. Denied the canonical status of other arts, the Taiwanese opera performers were thus forced into a debased form of artistic expression, or, in Shi's words, forced to "go down the path [of abnormal sexual acts] (Ling, 1991, p. 261)."

Shi and Ji's comments on *A Silent Thrush*'s depiction of lesbianism thus came full circle, harking back to Ye Shitao's opinions. All of the critical responses to the presence of lesbian sex in the novel operated along the line of contingency that assigned the presence of homosexual relations to the cause of either abnormality or environmental determinants. In this sense, when critics first discussed the narrative of *A Silent Thrush* in the early 1990s, they understood homosexuality, whether represented by homosexuals or homosexual practices, as a symptom of a cause. What was at stake was in fact not homosexuality itself, but societal crises, or diseases, such as the worsening divide between urban and rural areas and the sufferings resulting from the relentless advance of capitalism and modernization. The early 1990s discourse about homosexuality was an example of symptomatic reading, albeit a paradoxical one, as attested to in the criticisms

of *A Silent Thrush*. It looked at homosexuality by overlooking it and landed on the undesirables.

Also paradoxical was the fact that homosexuality in the early 1990s was simultaneously underrepresented and ostensibly representative. It was underrepresented in terms of the fact that the individual actions of Chi Chia-wei and his colleagues were the extent of homosexual activism in that part of the decade. It was ostensibly representational in the sense that, as shown in the reception of *A Silent Thrush*, it was always mentioned in the same breath as the more undesirable consequences of modernization, westernization, and capitalism. For these reasons, a discourse about homosexuality was established that viewed it as representative of the decadence and unwelcome side-effects of a thriving capitalist economy. While modernization, as westernization, has long been registered since Japanese colonization, homosexuality was perceived as extrinsic because it was associated with westernized capitalist growth. In the same vein of reasoning, homosexuality acquired visibility in its representation of social undesirables and was deemed a target for excision, when the state moved to eradicate various social dangers, by not being inherent to the society.

Critics have placed *A Silent Thrush* opposite two other classics of homosexual literature, *The Journal of a Desolate Man* and *The Journal of a Crocodile*, with respect to its supposed detailed representation of sex between lower class persons. In addition to homosexuality, the downward spiral of the traveling troupe's struggle to survive led to mind-boggling sexual acts. In a scene in the novel involved the owner of the troupe feeding his crying infant son while shouting into a microphone as he cheered on an

ecstatic crowd. Rambunctious and boisterous, the mob was anticipating the full-frontal nudity of the striptease show from the desperate troupe. This event might not seem so out of place if the stripper was not the troupe owner's wife and the mother of the crying infant. The narrative did not shun a visceral description of how the stripping mother's dark brown nipples urged the crowd into a zealous frenzy. While fervently welcome to the onlooking mob, the scene left readers aghast over the fact that the nurturing nipple had been taken away from the infant to the lewd appreciation of the audience. Critics singled out such scenes in their praise of Ling Yan's keen observation and their representation of a society laden with greed.

These aspects of the critical perception offered an argumentative angle as to the visibility of homosexuality in 1990s Taiwan, and the homosexual progressiveness that emerged as a response to the societal neglect. Many scholars had approached the *A Silent Thrush* as a text that introduced an alternative lesbian subject. This alternative, they argued, subdivided the seemingly homogenous practice of homosexuality along lines of class best represented by the ever-expanding chasm between the urban and the rural. The crux of this argument lay in the association of homosexual desire with the absence of economic clout. The latter was embodied by the term, *xiaorenwu* (小人物), the nonentity, which was commonly found in summaries of *A Silent Thrush*. *Xiaorenwu* was, from the point of view of literary history, the protagonist of Nativist Literature (鄉土文學) as a whole. It represented a category of insignificant people who usually fell under the radar of the bourgeoisie. The Nativist Literature tradition had been invested,

since its birth, in teasing out the disadvantages and sufferings that conditioned the lives of *xiaorenwu*. In this sense, *xiaorenwu*, when used in the context of literary criticism, functioned less as a nuanced and distinguishing term than as a homogenizing one. The observation that the narrative of *A Silent Thrush* was a text about the sexual practices of *xiaorenwu* therefore raised a question of precision.

I propose to take the motif of theatre performance that appears in *A Silent Thrush* as a trope in the examination of *xiaorenwu*'s sexual practices. When seen in this light, the homosexual narrative comes across not as an alternative view, but rather as emblematic of how homosexuality was situated in 1990s Taiwan. The agency of theatre performance involves two primary elements, as distilled by Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski: on-stage revelation and observation from the auditorium (Brook, 1968). While the events onstage are fictional, appreciations and opinions take shape as soon as these events are subjected to the audience's observation. Theatre performance as a trope focuses on the opinions that arise from the juncture of revelation and observation as representative. The theatre performance in *A Silent Thrush* is representational on two levels. Intrinsically, it presents the tension between on-stage and off-stage gender performance as well as the provocativeness of sex appearing in the public space. Extrinsically, and symbolically, it alludes to the convergence of critical perceptions and the idea of the fictional narrative as a performance. It is in this extrinsic setting that the criticism of the sexual practices of *xiaorenwu* dwells. The negative light in which critics of *A Silent Thrush* perceived these practices does not apply solely to lesbianism, but to a whole spectrum of sex-related, and not exclusively homosexual, behaviors.

According to the critical opinions, the sexual acts in the narrative of *A Silent Thrush* are unanimously symbolical. The negative judgment of these acts also carries over, in the eyes of the critics, to the alienating modernization that comes with capitalism. Scholars who operate within the Nativist Literature tradition claim that the critical opinions of Ye Shitao, Shi Shu and Ji Ji presuppose a quintessential nativeness as an innocent status quo and a paradise lost. I would argue that this is not the case.

Comments on the negativity of the sexual acts and the afflictions of modernization in *A Silent Thrush* projected a discourse of sex. That discourse was the flip side of the discontent over run-away capitalism. The loss-of-innocence motif in the narrative laid out the trajectory from a relatively primitive economy to a capitalist one, which coincided with the historical evolution of Taiwan. In spite of advancements and prosperity, an anxiety over the unequal distribution of wealth, and the suffering this produces, found its way into the intellectual discourse. The critical responses to *A Silent Thrush* represent the sentiment of a bourgeois society seeking to contain the chaos it has produced. Abstinence was its ultimate resort. The results of this abstinence acquired the shape of admonitions against sexual deviations as a symbol of social decadence. It is in this sense that the abstinence-focused discourse of sex does not focus on one particular class, since it sought the compliance of the society as a whole. Following the same operational logic, the homogenizing discourse of sex, while implementing the category of *xiaorenwu*'s sex, subjected all sexual practices to its scrutiny. *A Silent Thrush*, and the ensuing responses to its homosexual narrative, did not imply a lower class subject, but rather established a general condition that was biased against

homosexuality. The prejudices against homosexuality both predated and determined the progressiveness of the lesbian activism of the 1990s. In reaction to the prejudices, the lesbian activism of the 1990s projected a rigorous intellectual tendency toward dissecting the environment in which the lesbian activists found themselves.

### **The Intellectuality of the 1990s Lesbian Activism**

The lesbian activism of the 1990s began within groups of well-educated and well-read feminists. In *The Emerging Lesbian*, Tze-lan D. Sang detailed how the 1990s Taiwanese lesbian activists negotiated the agency of their activism through public fora (Sang, 2004). I seek an alternative approach in relating the lesbian activists to the tradition of intellectuality that was apparent among their feminist predecessors. Much like the previous generation of feminists, which included as Zheng Zhi-hui and Peng Wan-ru, it was intellectuality that equipped them with the insight into what confined women, regardless of sexuality. The lesbian feminists would distinguish themselves in calling out the limits of 1990s feminist progressivism.

The literature of LGBTQ studies in Taiwan has treated the founding of the periodical *Between Us* (我們之間), in February 1990, as the beginning of the lesbian activism. Originating from feminist support groups, its inception and life trajectory was the opposite of the individual effort of Chi Chia-wei. According to the accounts of its founding members, Y Studio (Y 工作室) preceded *Between Us*. The members of Y Studio were women who identified themselves as feminists. As a group of feminine solidarity, the studio invested itself in the sharing and discussion of feminine life experiences that were not necessarily lesbian-oriented. Instead, members found



themselves immersed in an atmosphere of sisterhood, or even of a parent-child relationship. The confidentiality the group provided also empowered the revealing of lesbian identity in some cases. A former Y Studio member, and later one of the founders of *Between Us*, commented that the eventual discussion of lesbianism as an exotic desire was only natural, given the intimate relationship between members of the group. The recognition of lesbian presence in Y Studio led to the founding of *Between Us*, the first exclusively lesbian group in Taiwan.

The early stages of *Between Us* were, however, less well-documented than its eventual landmark significance. In spite of its vigorous agency – *Between Us*, upon its establishment in 1990, participated the First Pan Asia Homosexual Conference, in Thailand – its activism stayed within the operational scale of a support group. The scarcity of scholarly works treating the emergence of *Between Us* resulted not only from the anonymity that the lesbian activism of the early 1990s had to suffer, but also from the yet-to-emerge lesbian discourse. A recollection of the early stages of *Between Us* admitted that the group suffered severely from a lack of solidarity, or, to quote one of its members, “from dispersiveness” (Lin, 2014, p. 78). The core administrative members tried hard to remedy this dissolution by the introduction of task-oriented projects, which brought forth the publication of a periodical known as *Girl Friends* (女朋友).

The first issue of *Girl Friends* was published at the end of 1994, almost four years after the founding of *Between Us*. By the time *Girl Friends* entered the discursive arena of lesbianism, there was only one other publication of its kind in publication, the *Love Paper* (愛報), a student-edited periodical that preceded the publication of *Girl Friends* by

only one year. The editing board of the *Love Paper* shared the same genesis as *Between Us*. The female college students that started the *Love Paper* met one another in the university classroom of a feminist theories seminar. The frustration of being excluded in a discussion on the sociology of the family prompted them to come out to one another. Then the shared dejection of having to suppress their homosexuality in their familial settings inspired the creation of *the Love Paper*. *Girl Friends* and *the Love Paper* shared the same feminist ideologies, as the composition of their editing boards might suggest. In fact, some members of the editing staff of *the Love Paper* came from Y Studio, the very source of *Between Us* and *Girl Friends*. While *Girl Friends* and the *Love Paper* targeted an audience of young professionals and campus lesbian communities, respectively, the publications shared a quest for visibility that would come to define the lesbian activism of the 1990s.

The distribution of both *Girl Friends* and the *Love Paper* roughly covered the west vicinity of the campus of the National Taiwan University, later known as the Wen-Luo-Ting (溫羅汀) area, a neighborhood bounded by Wenzhou Rd., Roosevelt Rd., and Tingzhou Rd. The Wen-Luo-Ting area was noted for its liberal and intellectual environment, its night clubs, coffee shops, and radical and vibrant underground culture, as well as its progressive bookstores such as Fembooks, a store dedicated to feminism and the works of female writers. Thus the dissemination of lesbian periodicals such as *Girl Friends* and the *Love Paper* in this area gradually formed a community within a community already known for its intellectuality and progressiveness. Furthermore, in 1994, *Eslite Reading* (誠品閱讀), the periodical of the Eslite Bookstore, dedicated an

issue to *the Love Paper* and piloted the soon to be released *Girl Friends*, which declared the presence of lesbian issues in the intellectual domain.

The Eslite Bookstore was a post-martial law establishment founded, in 1989, by Wu Qingyou (吳清友). According to its founder, the name of the Eslite Bookstore aimed to demonstrate a pursuit of cultural taste that was capable of matching the rapid surge of the Taiwanese economy. In other word, the Eslite Bookstore was a product of as well as a response to the capitalist transformation of Taiwan. As a surrogate of the Eslite Bookstore's mission, *Eslite Reading* covered critical social issues, avant-garde art products and literary trends, but its focus was less on journalism than on exhibiting the current trends in the intellectual community. In this sense, *Eslite Reading* commenting on the emergence of the *Love Paper* and *Girl Friends* constituted the coming out to Taiwanese society of a particular form of lesbian identity as a whole, despite the anonymity of its practitioners on the individual level.

The editor-in-chief of *Eslite Reading*, Zheng Zhihui, steered its journalistic style in an intellectual direction. Coverage of homosexuality in *Eslite Reading*, following Zheng's own works discussed in the introduction and the previous chapter, paid close attention to textual and aesthetic resources that helped construct a comprehensive representation of lesbian experiences. Zheng Meili (鄭美里), a colleague of Zheng Zhihui on the editing board of *Eslite Reading* and a lesbian activist, would later further cultivate that level of intellectuality in the area of lesbian activism.

### **How Was Homosexuality Visible?**

Zheng Meili's pen name, Yuxuan Aji (魚玄阿璣), summarized her intellectual adjacency to that of Zheng Zhihui. The alias Yuxuan Aji was a parody of Yu Xianji (魚玄機), a female poet of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Tang Dynasty. Famous for her capricious lyric style and her prowess in creating outlandish textual imagery, the premodern poet stood out amongst the predominantly male literati of her time. In addition to inspiring Zheng Meili's pen name, Yu's life and her literary contribution has inspired a great body of work dedicated to capricious yet strong femininity.

Zheng, then the executive editor of *Girl Friends*, published 'The Right to Marry or Not Marry (結婚權與不結婚權)' under her alias Yuxuan Aji, in the 153<sup>rd</sup> volume of the *Awakening Magazine*, in February of 1995. The same article also appeared later in *Girl Friends*. Indicatively, though not exclusively invested in the discussion of the questionable universality of marriage, the article itself embodied the progressiveness of questioning the limits of being progressive in terms of gender order within a family setting. Yuxuan Aji directed her scrutiny toward the activism of the Awakening Foundation, as well as to the women's movement at large. After reflecting on marriage as an institution exclusively reserved for heterosexual union, Yuxuan Aji lamented the fact that "being relatively progressive as they are, the organizations invested in the women's movement have not been attempting to shake up the established institution of heterosexual marriage (Zheng, 1995, p. 14)."

Yuxuan Aji emphasized the notion of *jijin* (基進) which I translated as *progressive*. This *jijin-progress* is not to be confused with its homophone *jijin* (激進),

which is often translated as *radical*. In the phonic adjacency of the two *jijins*, the two Chinese characters for the sound of *ji* were what made the difference. The character 激 denoted straightforward, unimpeded, rapid current. In the Mandarin Chinese context, it was more closely associated with impetuous advances, in disregard of consequences.

Yuxuan Aji's choice, the *jijin* with the character 基, was a moderate alternative.

*Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Scripts* provided the explanation of 基 as that "on which the wall was built (Xu, 1981, p. 684)," or the cornerstone. I see Yuxuan Aji's usage of 基進 as "being progressive" and as indicating the quintessence of progressiveness as the problematic roots from which the progressive discourse has sprouted. What Yuxuan Aji might not have noticed was that her understanding of the feminist progressiveness also determined the trajectory and strategy of the activism that she found less satisfying.

The dissatisfaction of Yuxuan Aji with the women's activism of the early was significantly concerned with the incipient homosexual identity. In 'The Right to Marry or Not Marry', Aji recounted, with grief, the way in which homosexuality appeared in the heterosexual institution known as marriage. The way that it had become visible was not a desirable one. The transition from invisible to visible, according to Yuxuan Aji, coincided with the achievements of feminist activism in the early 1990s. The background of her narrative was the passing of the *Education on Equality Between the Two Genders Act* (兩性平等教育法) in 1993, and the amendment to the Civil Code concerning marriage in 1994. The 1993 legislation, although celebrated and marked as

a major triumph for the women's rights campaign, was diminished by leaving out sexual orientations beyond the male and female binary. To the homosexual community's dismay, the 1993 concept of "gender equality" was reduced to a sexist underperformance. In a legislation that ostensibly claimed equality between genders, the observance of heteronormativity demonstrated a problem particular to the Chinese context, in which a gender-related title was conferred on a sexually-oriented maneuver. In her writing, Yuxuan Aji combed through the 1993 legislation and laid out the examples of heterosexual sexism that opted to ignore homosexuality. The recognition of this sexism later proved traumatizing.

The 1994 amendment to the Civil Code "discovered" homosexuality, but, discouragingly, in a negative light. The Awakening Foundation and the Wanqing Foundation (晚晴基金會) proposed that the amendment be introduced to the congress floor. The amended provisions concerning civil union determined that it was exclusively heterosexual. It appeared in the entries that regulated the dissolution of civil union. The inserted Article 1052 stated that the sexual involvement of a spouse with a same-sex individual was grounds for filing for a divorce. Instead of being under the protection of the right to marry, homosexuality was made visible as a punishable offense. The fact that homosexuality could only be seen as punishable troubled Yuxuan Aji. What she did not pursue in her article was the relationship between the visibility of homosexuality and progressiveness.

The visibility that unsettled Yuxuan Aji stood astride the line between homosexual intercourse and homosexual identity. In the 1994 amendment to the Civil

Code, a heteronormative piece of legislation from a heterosexual activism, homosexuality was reproachable as a sexual practice, rather than an identity. Contributing to the heteronormativity was the light in which homosexuality was seen at the time, namely the agenda underlying the 1994 legislation. The Awakening Foundation and Wanqing Foundation endorsed legislation that set its eye on the agency of married, heterosexual women. From a heterosexual standpoint, it was sexual relations out of wedlock that jeopardized marriage, rather than any specific sexual orientation. The absence of homosexuality as an identity in the legislation championed by the women's activism of the 1990s was compatible with the wholly female conditions this activism was trying to address.

### **The Divergence of Lesbian Activism and Feminism**

In 1997, the rupture between activists for gay rights and the non-supporters in the Awakening Foundation marked the divergence of the 1990s women's movement in Taiwan. Disputes among activists over critical issues such as prostitution, gender, and sexuality terminated the monolithic center of feminist activism that had existed under the umbrella of "sisterhood." Beginning with disagreements between the administrative and executive bodies, the discord gradually unfolded in a series of legal statements from both sides and resulted in the departure, or expulsion from the administrative point of view, of members Wang Ping (王蘋) and Ni Jiazhen (倪家珍). Wang's and Ni's involvement in lesbian activism and their opinions on prostitution were at odds with the counseling board and this spoke louder than the surface administrative differences. The disagreement within the Awakening Foundation entailed the reconfiguration of the landscape of

feminist activism, after which a discursive partisanship became discernible. The series of events came to be known as the “Family Catastrophe” (新知家變), and was catastrophic to the Awakening Foundation, and to the women’s movement in Taiwan as a whole.

The Family Catastrophe also left a series of textual footprints in the unfolding of the discussion on the problems and limits of the feminist activism and discourse of the 1990s. The discussion began with lesbian activist Yuxuan Aji’s *The Right to Marry and Not Marry* (結婚權與不結婚權). Although primarily a critique of marriage as a heterosexual institution, the text touched upon the hitherto avoided issue of how the lesbian identity was situated in feminist activism. The *Awakening Magazine* responded to the topic opened up by Yuxuan Aji with a transcribed round table discussion, and by devoting several subsequent issues to the relations between feminism and lesbianism. The contributors to the debate included Yuxuan Aji, Chang Hsiao-hung (張小虹), Chang Chuanfen (張娟芬), Gu Mingjun (古明君), Hu Shuwen (胡淑雯), and Wang Ping, among others. The textual back-and-forth that took place over several months was first labeled *Women Identify with Women* (女人認同女人), and later *Implosive Feminism* (內爆女性主義).

In her response to the aforementioned article by Yuxuan Aji, Chang Hsiao-hung addressed the issue of the visibility of lesbian identity with her own article, ‘Seeing Each Other in Tension’. The Mandarin Chinese title was “Zai zhangli zhong huxiang kanjian” (在張力中互相看見). Chang Hsiao-hung presented her argument by first



acknowledging the tension between feminism and lesbianism. She then continued to tease out the history of that tension in a Western context, and the local factors that had been contributing to its unfolding in Taiwan. One of these factors was the dependence of Taiwanese lesbian discourse on that of feminism, which Chang demonstrated by quoting a widely-circulated sentiment that lesbian activism was fostered, especially in academia, under the wing of the women's movement. Chang's argument emphasized less the agency of fostering than the passiveness of being situated in a foster relationship. The way Chang situated the tension between lesbianism and feminism also connoted the circumscription of lesbianism, for which the delimitation was exactly the same as that of feminism. The particularity of Chang's approach to this tension implicitly diminished the significance of Chang's differentiation of lesbian feminist from heterosexual feminist, and feminist lesbian from non-feminist lesbian. The fact that lesbianism had to confine itself within the reach of feminism rendered Chang's effort at identity politics futile. Chang argued that the tension between lesbianism and feminism facilitated mutual recognition as well as negotiation. But the overlapping limits of each made Chang's argument come across as a theoretical juxtaposition, rather than a lens that made the lesbian subject visible to feminists (Chang Hsiao-hung, 1995).

Chang Chuanfen's 'Like a lesbian' also attempted a different approach in conversation with Yuxuan Aji (Chang Chuanfen, 1995). The crux of Chang Chuanfen's argument was the determinant physical conditions of the two sexes. Her article began with an introduction to the character of the man with a progressive mindset about gender and sexuality. She proposed that the reader consider a setting of pitch-black nighttime.

Despite his empathy for the oppression women are subject to, the man with the progressive mindset possessed the right to walk in pitch-black nighttime. The same right was inaccessible to whether lesbian or heterosexual women due to their physical limits in fending off the potential risk lurking in the dark. Chang based her argument on this narrative, in which physical traits determined gender identity. This determination precluded the man, no matter how progressive he might be, from assuming the identity of a feminist subject. The same preclusion, while logically also applicable to a heterosexual woman, revealed the possibility to be bypassed when it came to what separated heterosexual and homosexual women. Impersonation would do the trick for heterosexual women. The physical similarity endowed heterosexual women with the capability of impersonating lesbians (Chang Chuanfen, 1995, p. 9). Chang also maintained that by impersonation, the heterosexual woman would expose herself to the prejudices and stigma attached to lesbianism.

Gu Mingjun's 'What can feminists do besides "seeing" and "crossdressing" (看見和扮裝之外，女性主義者到底能做什麼)' was a direct response to the articles of Chang Hsiao-hung and Chang Chuanfen. In it, Gu argued that both Changs' approaches would not help advance lesbian activists' causes (Gu, 1995, p. 9). Chang Hsiao-hung's urging of heterosexual feminists to come to a mutual recognition with those of a different sexual orientation presupposed a homogeneous feminist agenda. Chang Chuanfen's impersonation proposal, while noble in its empathetic intention, was incapable of transforming the hostility toward lesbians. In fact, this method, Gu admonished, risked reaffirming the homophobic discourse by encouraging self-victimizing. All in all, the

feminist activism of 1990s Taiwan as a whole was reduced to an imitation of the society at large, both homophobic and oppressive.

Gu termed the reduction of the feminist activism the closet phenomenon in women's movement. The presence of this phenomenon in feminist activism was the practices of self-censoring. Gu laid out how the society manipulated lesbianism as a stigmatic label and attempted to encumber feminist activism with it. A hostile attitude not uncommon in commentary on the women's movement was to label the campaign as categorically lesbian. The usage of the term "lesbian" in the 1990s Taiwanese context was less about the description of sexual deviation than about the portrayal of a social outcast who failed to conform to heterosexual norms and harbored a vengeful agenda. In response, feminist activism associated itself with emblems of institutional heteronormativity such as marriage. The need to react to the negativities imposed by the patriarchy on feminist agendas more often than not determined the strategy the feminist activists adopted. Under the influence, feminist activists were more likely to postpone addressing lesbian-related issues. Although the lesbian presence in the women's movement was undeniably emerging, feminist organizations opted to tone down the focus on lesbianism within their agenda for administrative reasons such as fundraising. Gu reasoned that what both Changs had proposed would achieve little in remedying the closet phenomenon within the women's movement.

Gu called for an internal "emancipation from the state of exception" (解嚴) within feminist activism (Gu, 1995, p. 11). While translatable as an abrogation of martial law, the "emancipation" connoted more than authoritative legal action in Gu's mentioning.

A translation of Gu's usage of emancipation would be liberation from heteronormativity. A full-blown challenge to the rigid heteronormativity would come in the form of Chang Chuanfen's *Lesbians Like This and That* (愛的自由式), published in 2001.

### **Toward A Homosexual Subjectivity**

The publication of *Lesbians Like This and That* marked the first anthropological attempt to create a comprehensive yet nuanced documentation of lesbianism in Taiwan by compiling extensive accounts of interviews with lesbians. Chang Chuanfen began by confronting the butch-femme binary and also several debates that have long lingered in the lesbian community. The author described her project as being “towards butch-femme aesthetics” that were not a replica or imitation of heteronormativity (Chang, 2001, p. 20).

Addressing the debates and discussions on the visibility of the femme identity derived from butch/femme roles. Chang pointed out that the dilemma lay in the butch identity being a subversion of a heteronormative gender role, while the femme identity was not. The question that lingered in Chang's narrative was how the femme identity, not only in a lesbian relationship but also in society at large, might be different from her feminine counterpart in a heterosexual relationship.

An epiphany that set the writing of *Lesbians Like This and That* in motion, according to Chang, occurred upon hearing one feminine lesbian complain that “all lesbian theory reads like a theory dealing with masculine women (Chang, 2001, p. 18).” Chang sums up the vision of her book as “progressively recognizing the nuanced lesbian characteristics, excavating the history of the resistance of the femme in the lesbian

movement, and perpetuating a certain kind of “lesbian femininity (Chang, 2001, p. 24).” At stake was the way she localized Taiwanese lesbian experiences concerning the butch-femme issue.

The jargon that denoted the roles among lesbians did not make use of the terms *butch* and *femme* in Taiwan. Instead, the *butch* identity was known as *T*, alluding to the word “tomboy,” whilst the *femme* was generally termed *po* (婆). Taiwanese men called their wives *laupo*, so *po* was taken to mean “the wife of T.” A quote from Sue-Ellen Case’s work in fact reads “towards a *T-po* aesthetic (朝向 T 婆美學)” in Mandarin Chinese. Chang further showcased variations of the *T-po* jargon. There are *iron-T*, referring to extremely masculine Ts, *vanilla-T/po*, who vehemently reject the *T-po* differentiation, and *T Nouveau*, who project an aura of attentive and caring masculinity (Chang, 2001, p. 26).

The local linguistic derivatives of butch-femme jargon accompanied Chang’s discontent with queer theory, as championed by Judith Butler (Butler, 1993). Chang acknowledged Butler’s arguments in refuting heteronormativity as an “original” to be imitated (Chang, 2001, p. 22). However, she also recognized that Butler’s theory has yet to be empirically tested in Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> The linguistic incommensurability Chang presented led her to tread beyond the trail Butler had blazed.

Chang’s critique of Judith Butler’s model began with the issue of the visibility of the femme, or *po*, role, the recognition of which was inspired by her reading of the

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<sup>4</sup> Chang’s opinion corresponds to Kristin G. Esterberg, “... theories of lesbian identity must be rooted in empirical accounts,” in ‘A Certain Swagger When I Walk (Esterberg, 1996, p. 261).’

American performance troupe Split Britches' works (Chang, 2001, p. 27). She related visibility to authenticity, since it was difference that stood out against a homogenized femininity. And, again, to ask how *po* was different from a heterosexual woman was actually asking what *po* represented and how the *po* identity took form.

The interview materials Chang compiled showed that most of her interviewees were not initially aware of the butch/femme binary. They had to be enlightened as to its existence, either by their own experiences in relationships, or through encountering the practice of butch/femme. A significant number of interviewees confessed that they first came to self-identify as *po* in the course of wooing. They were attracted to someone and started courting, yet noticed a latent uneasiness. They then found out that the uneasiness came from their own mindset that a female usually did not woo. It was through this process that they discovered their "position" in a lesbian relationship, as "female." For this reason, Chang proclaimed femininity as the keyword in the *po* identity.

The discovery of *po* as female, however, actually came from the discovery of the desired, which was *T*. Before long, both Chang and the *po* interviewees noticed that, in order to approach what constituted the *po* identity, they inevitably took a detour through the account of how each *po* found her *T*. This was not to say that *po* was not under *T*'s gaze, or that *T* is necessarily passive in a lesbian relationship. It simply demonstrated that, ultimately, "finding one's own *T*" could be decisive of "becoming *po*." "Becoming" as a rite of passage differed significantly between the *T* and *po* identities. The subversive resistance to the hegemonic heterosexual gender construction for *T*, as Judith Butler and Sue-Ellen Case have argued, did not prove as important in *po*'s case (Chang,

2001; Case, 1996). “Becoming *Po*” did not lead to dramatic rebellion against gender norms. Other than being attracted to *T*, *po* was in every way identical to a heterosexual female. “Fell in love with *T*” was thus the only factor that defined *po*.

Many of Chang’s interviewees came to a sense of loss at this point, recounting their experiences of proving their genuineness as *po*, or of having to be vetted before being accepted as *po*. Several interviewees confessed that for them, as *po*, entering a relationship was like applying for “membership” of a certain group, for which *T* was the reviewer evaluating whether or not they should be admitted. And even if they were to be admitted, what they received was a membership that expired with the end of each relationship. Every new relationship meant a new application. Summing up these stories of “becoming/being *po*,” Chang referred to Split Britches’ *Belle Reprieve*, in which Lois Weaver’s character, Stella, was “a woman disguised as a woman (Chang, 2001, p. 170).” Chang commented that *po* often suffered from being viewed as a “woman disguised as lesbian,” where “woman” automatically meant heterosexual woman, which again effaced the unity of lesbian and woman (Chang, 2001, p. 174).

Chang argued for the separation of femininity, or at least lesbian femininity, and heterosexual gender consignment, and of the act of sexual desire and its object, as an approach to free *po* from striving to be viewed as an “authentic female” and “genuine lesbian,” thus addressing the visibility issue. Moreover, the separation of desire and desired nullified the notion of *T* defining *po* and at the same time echoed Split Britches’ definition of lesbianism more as desire rather than identification. Chang brought up the story of Xiaohui in developing her argument.

Xiaohui was a lesbian who, though not unfamiliar with the butch/femme binary, had never given any thought to whether she was a *T* or a *po*. In the lesbian community, Xiaohui had the reputation of “having an entourage of admirers and followers,” yet her partners had been anything but straightforward *T*. Most of her *T* partners confessed to having a crush on her ultra-femininity and envisioned her making an excellent *po* (Chang, 2001, p. 87). Xiaohui dismissed such admirers as transsexual rather than lesbian, a critique aimed at their fantasy of heterosexually defined gender appropriateness. For her own part, Xiaohui was attracted to a variety of traits in her partners, such as devil-may-care sweetness<sup>5</sup> and caring, all of which she emphasized as being “gender-neutral (Chang, 2001, p. 89).” At the same time, Xiaohui knew of the butch/femme and *T/po* distinction from the Internet and various readings, but she nevertheless resisted categorization herself. She did not deny that most of her partners, after dating her for a while, tended to be seen as more *T*-like according to others. “[Yet] that *T/po* thing was but an inadequate way of classification, with limited explanatory capacity. In fact, I always saw *po*-ness that out-feminined me in my partner (Chang, 2001, p. 105),” she said. Chang herself confessed that she was not sure if including Xiaohui in her discussion of *po* formation was a proper move. Then she quoted the poet Xiayu (夏宇), saying “maybe it’s because the terminology [*po*] is not interesting enough (Chang, 2001, p. 105).”

Chang then moved on to discuss the ontological aspect of the issues of authenticity and visibility. Sociologist Kristin G. Esterberg once conducted a field

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<sup>5</sup> What Xiaohui refers to as a devil-may-care attitude is usually translated as *shuai* in Mandarin Chinese, meaning a combination of handsomeness and joviality.



survey of the difference between homosexual women and heterosexual women. She noticed that the interviewees in both categories shared a reluctance to specify the difference and a resistance to the categorization (Esterberg, 1997). Chang found her interviewees exhibited the same reluctance. Comparing and contrasting the categories of “homosexual” and “heterosexual” implied that there were homogenized or universal qualities of homosexuality and heterosexuality. The validity of authenticity and visibility, in this case, was based on a comparison that implied homogenized ontologies of the compared objects. Chang thus concluded that the quest for authenticity and visibility risked overlooking exceptions and nuances.

In concluding the discussion of femme visibility that was derived from her reading of *Split Britches*, Chang proposed “chivalric tenderness” (俠骨柔情) as a possible definition for the formation of *po* (Chang, 2001, p. 93). The descriptor “chivalric,” which corresponds to the phrase “chivalric to the bone” in Mandarin Chinese, was usually perceived as a masculine marker, whilst “tenderness [in sentiment]” was a feminine one. “Chivalric tenderness” celebrated the exceptions and nuances in the exhibition of masculinity and femininity as social constructs. While anecdotes and legends accentuated the appropriate duo of the chivalric male and tender female, these strictly followed heteronormative norms. Using “chivalric tenderness” to denote the nature of being femme/*po* was thus immediately subversive. Last but not least, the juxtaposition of chivalry and tenderness functioned as a reminder that cautioned against conflating sexuality and desire. In fact, the very existence of homosexuals and heterosexuals attested to the impracticality of any system of classification. At stake,

therefore, was not only visibility, but also the lurking flow of desires that contoured the landscape of lesbianism.

Chang's representation of lesbianism, and homosexuality as a whole, proposed a mechanism of reimagining sexuality. Hers was a framework that inverted the existing, gendered terminology, coining terms such as "chivalric tenderness," to accommodate sexualities that did not fit into socially constructed norms. In other words, Chang used her familiarity with the discursive resources that were originally heteronormative to turn the limits of heteronormativity against themselves, much like her feminist predecessors.

The trajectory of lesbian and gay activism, from the 1990s activists to Chang Chuanfen, represents the development in which activists re-evaluated conventional concepts and convictions that shaped Taiwan as a society. As we have seen, the degrees of their success varied. In fact, my study points out the way in which heterosexually progressive agendas could succumb to Confucian ideas and become oppressive to their homosexual counterparts. It is also true that the emergence of a progressive activism, and a set of progressive agendas, does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of the conventional ideologies it sets out to challenge. The findings of this research also demonstrate that progress, rather than being one-dimensional and chronological, is multi-faceted. As my chapters have shown, the progresses of the women's movement, the lesbian and gay movements, and even of society as a whole, are not chronologically symmetric, but respectively under the influences of ideas such as Confucianism, Christianity, and capitalism. The convictions and ideologies such as Confucianism and

Christian beliefs further distanced progressive activists and conservatives when global neoliberal impacts set in in the 2010s, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

## Conclusion

Are there limits to progress? If so, what may the limits of progressivism be? And who determines those limits? More specifically, are there limits to gender progressiveness? LGBTQ activism in Taiwan has been vibrant since the 1990s and many consider it one of the legacies of the 1990s progressive gender discourse. Two decades later, we have enough distance to offer a critical review of the development of this LGBTQ activism and ask: where is it leading us?

In 2014, the Taiwan Alliance for Promoting Civil Partnership Rights (台灣伴侶權益推動聯盟), hereafter *Banlumeng*, with the support from DPP congresswoman Yu Mei-Nu (尤美女), proposed an amendment to the Civil Code which would provide legal status for same-sex marriages as well as civil partnerships. The Legislative Yuan, the Taiwanese congress, held a series of hearings on the proposed amendment between October 2014 and February 2015. Many congressmen and women on the Domestic Affairs Committee (內政委員會), members of the *Banlumeng*, and representatives from religious groups opposing the proposed amendment were among those who attended the hearings. In one of the hearings held in February 2015, a man named Andrew Chang (Zhang Shouyi, 張守一) expressed his concerns about same-sex marriage or, more broadly speaking, the gender discourse that he believed was getting out of control: “the implication [of the same-sex marriage amendment] is that this legislative endorsement on homosexuality must, by logical extension, eventually accommodate incest, bestiality, pedophilia, polyandry, and polygamy (Chang, 2015).”

Andrew Chang was, at that time, the chief executive officer of the *Alliance of Taiwan Religious Groups for the Protection of Family* (*Hujameng*, 護家盟), an ultra-conservative coalition of religious denominations against LGBTQ causes. Members of the Alliance claim to side with people of different religions, from Buddhism, Christianity and Taoism to Islam. They also draw extensively from Confucianism to emphasize that marriage is between a man and a woman and that a heterosexual couple is the core of family.

Chang's conservative Confucian view of same-sex marriage appeals to and upholds a simplistic and problematic distinction: any relationship that is not heterosexual and monogamous is perverse. From his perspective, because non-opposite sex marriage and non-opposite sexual behaviors threaten the familial foundation of society, there is very little or no room for the debate over same-sex marriage. Since only opposite-sex marriage and sexual behaviors are normal, any same-sex discourse has to be deviant, rather than progressive. Chang's belief and argument prompt me to reconsider progressiveness from a different perspective. Here, I am not so much concerned with "What does being progressive mean?" as with "What may being progressive reveal about Taiwan as a society?"

In this concluding chapter of my dissertation, I tie the threads of my discussion of the previous chapters together to reflect upon the dominant ideology in the 1990s that construed the society of Taiwan as Confucian. Throughout my dissertation, I examine and explain what makes the discourse of gender and sex in the 1990s progressive. Beyond my inquiry, other questions such as "Are there limits to gender progressiveness?"

and “Are there limits to progress?” await further critical discussion. The *Hujiangmeng*’s and Andrew Chang’s warning against same-sex marriage suggests that same-sex marriage will lead to bestiality. Chang’s warning, which exemplifies the fear that contemporary gender discourse is going too far, leads me to ponder: Can one continue to become more progressive after what the LGBTQ community is fighting for, for instance same-sex marriage, becomes a reality? Can a society truly progress beyond heteronormativity? To be progressive, suffice it to say now, is to recognize the limits to one’s perspective and perception. Being progressive does not mean moving forward blindly; rather, it is about showing prudence and demonstrating compassion and a knowledge of history as we shape society for a future with decisions and policies that best suit our time. Indeed, some of our agendas may become outdated, but there will also be others that preempt future debates and offer a possible way ahead for not only the present but also the future.

### **A Different Approach to Addressing Sex in the 1990s**

During the 1990s, writers and scholars in Taiwan attempted a new way of discussing sexuality and sex. This change of approach emerged in the same decade that was marked by the post-martial law women’s movement. The narrative and discussion of previous chapters has touched upon this change in how people talked about sex-related issues. It is not an exaggeration that the activism of the juvenile prostitutes rescue efforts and the fight for women and LGBTQ rights were the catalysts for this different approach to sexuality and sex.

The Teacher Chang Press (張老師出版社) published its Mandarin Chinese translation of *The Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex* (金賽性學報告) in 1992. Although the original report was published in 1948, pre-dating its incarnation in Taiwan by almost half a century, the publishing entity in Taiwan managed to tap into its still-controversial status. The report was known for venturing into tabooed territory. Despite receiving its fair share of criticism for its methodology, the report has since established itself among the most influential scientific writings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Mandarin Chinese title managed to emphasize the scientific nature of the report by labeling it a report on the subject of *xingxue* (性學), literally the studies of sex. Here the Chinese character *xue* (學) functioned as an illustrious categorization in that it connoted scientific and objectified approaches to sex. The publication of the Kinsey Report in Taiwan heralded the first proposition to analyze sex in the public forum.

It would be oversimplifying, if not altogether misleading, to cite the publication as an indicator of the post-martial law penchant for liberation. The publisher, Teacher Chang Press, first came into being as the Teacher Chang Youth Guidance Center, under the China Youth Corps. The latter was a Chinese National Party-owned institute that, from its inception, promoted anti-communist propaganda. Through the *Teacher Chang Monthly* (張老師月刊), the state-subsidized guidance center was famous for its dedication to the psychological health of children, youths and married couples in a family setting. After the publication of the Mandarin Chinese translation of *The Kinsey Report*, the Mandarin Chinese translation of Shere Hite's *The Hite Report* on female sexuality

followed. A series of articles in the *Teacher Chang Monthly*, interviews and workshops concerning sexuality and sex followed (Ho, 1996).<sup>1</sup> The objectives of the Teacher Chang Press, as a state-subsidized institute, imbued the publications with an emphasis on mental hygiene. The series of publications culminated in *The Taiwan Report on Eroticism* (台灣情色報告). Press releases touted the publication as the equivalent of the Kinsey and Hite reports and a Taiwanese contribution to the science and literature of sexuality and sex.

*The Taiwan Report on Eroticism* also helped coin and introduce the term *qingse* (情色), which stood for eroticism. By the time the Taiwan report was published, the *Teacher Chang Monthly* had been testing the waters by throwing in the new term *qingse* into its articles. Before the coinage of *qingse*, people used *seqing* (色情) to refer to pornography. *Seqing* suggested a gratuitous and graphic presentation of sexuality. By flipping the word order, *qingse* anchored the explicit presentation of sex to *qing* (情), affinity and feelings. The coinage of *qingse* did not merely legitimize the action of looking into sensual materials. The term acknowledged and emphasized the role of affinity in even purely sexual relationships. In a Chinese-speaking context, relationships modified marital loyalty, filial piety, and pretty much everything that fell into the category of social order. Even if the material in question depicted relationships out of wedlock or in a deviant power structure, *qingse* granted that a certain visceral investment or connection came before sexual incitement.

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<sup>1</sup> Josephine Ho also confides, in her preface to *Haoshuan Nüren* (豪爽女人), that the books came from the materials she compiled for her workshops for the Teacher Chang Institute (Ho, 1994, p. 4).



The term *qingse* also quickly tapped into the categorical meaning of “discipline.” Following the Teacher Chang Press’s legitimizing of *qingse* material, other publishing houses created their own book series reserved for *qingse*, erotic narratives that dealt with sex and desire, although their terminology varied and was not limited to “*qingse*.” The years 1995 and 1996 saw a flood of publication of “erotic” literary works that included *The Deviant Vampire Stories* (異端吸血鬼列傳) by Lucifer Hung (Hung Ling 洪凌), *The Journal of the Femme Fatale* (惡女書) by Chen Xue (陳雪), *The Sensual World* (感官世界) by Chi Ta-wei (紀大偉), and *The Whispers of Love* (愛情私語) by Li Yuanzhen (李元貞), to name a few. These publications quickly suggested an imminent literary genre, which was dubbed *Qingse* literature (情色文學). Academia responded with conferences devoted to *Qingse* Literature, amongst the first of which resulted in the publication of *The Intercourse Between Lace and Whips: Theories on Contemporary Qingse Literature in Taiwan* (蕾絲與鞭子的交歡：當代台灣情色文學論).

The above mentioned-works, which largely touched upon homosexuality and queerness, and the scholarly discussions surrounding them, were all included in *The Intercourse Between Lace and Whips*. The new literary genre, and its academic reception had, at this stage of progressivism, implied homosexuality as erotic expression or a representation of human libidos. The trajectory extending from the publication of *The Kinsey Report* to that of *The Intercourse Between Lace and Whips* presented a regime that reflected a deep-seated heteronormativity. In that, the knowledge that empowered people to explore their sexualities, while liberating, existed in a form that

tokenized homosexuality as erotic, if not devious, behavior and a radical reaction to social norms. This very regime persisted well into the 2010s.

### **The Progressivism of the 2010s and its Opponents**

The society of Taiwan still saw clashes between LGBTQ activism and Confucian social norms throughout the 1990s. Thirty years after the lifting of martial law and twenty years after the Changde Street Incident, Taiwan prided itself on being a democratic society. Much to the LGBTQ activists' dismay, however, Taiwan was yet to legalize same-sex marriage. Gay activist Chi Chia-wei had been petitioning for his right to marry since the 1980s. As seen in the third chapter of this dissertation, Chi largely kept his activism within the circle of the gay community. He would, in the 2010s, find himself involved in a same-sex marriage campaign that, in scale as well as intensity, exceeded his own. Thanks to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the latest rallies for marriage equality mobilized tens of thousands of participants. As expected, a large amount of the population, using the same technology, formed a platform in opposition to the same-sex marriage agenda. As much as the latest developments in communication technologies made these social movement looked unprecedentedly sophisticated, at the core of these social movements the differences between notions of progress remained. In hindsight, the fact that LGBTQ-related causes still had to confront conventional Confucian doctrines decades after their first conflict did not look like much progress. Yet this "lack of progress" helped demonstrate what progress and being progressive really entailed in Taiwan.

The legislator Huang Kuo-Chang provides an interesting case for further discussion. Huang was one of the pushing hands behind several civil movements such as the Sunflower student movement. While serving as a research fellow at the Institutum Iurisprudentiae, Academia Sinica (中央研究院法律學研究所), Huang frequently criticized the incumbent President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) policies as to the cross-strait relations with China. Huang's criticism centered on the neoliberal inclination of the Ma administration in its attempt to facilitate a more integrated market of Taiwan and China. Huang's outspokenness inspired a large number of college students to rally against the economic policies of Ma. The student activism reached its peak in 2014, when students occupied the Legislative Yuan (立法院) in protest against the Cross-Strait Service Trades Agreement (兩岸服務貿易協定) being negotiated between the Ma administration and the Chinese Communist Government. The occupation of the legislative chamber lasted for several weeks and was commonly referred to as the Sunflower Movement. The core objective of the movement was to promote a liberal view of social justice. The movement made Huang a celebrity of civic activism and eventually earned him a seat in the congress in 2016.

As I wrote the last few pages of this dissertation a recall election against legislator Huang Kuo-Chang took place. As a prominent figure in liberal politics, Huang has been vociferous in his support for the same-sex marriage bill. The anti-marriage equality groups called for the election in response to Huang's support of same-sex marriage.

Huang was eventually able to secure his position in the congress, but with a narrow margin.

The significance of the recall election vis-à-vis progressive discourse is not limited to the political domain, however. Huang was but one of the legislators threatened with a recall for supporting same-sex marriage. Controversies surrounding same-sex marriage arose well before Huang and his fellow congressmen were sworn in, as early as the last congress. The Ma Ying-jeou administration, in late 2012, saw a failed attempt to introduce a same-sex marriage bill to the congress floor. The Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights drafted the Civil Code revisions. The proposed revisions, known as the Diversified Family Bill (多元成家法案), progressively included not only same-sex marriage, but also civil partnership and multi-person families. Believing that the bill undermined Christian monogamy, oppositional groups formed the Taiwan Religious Groups Family Guardian Coalition, later generally referred to as the *Hujiameng*, to rally against the Civil Code revision. Months of debate on public forums prevented the proposed revision from being enacted.

It was not until 2016 that the congress reviewed the proposal to revise the marriage-related entries in the Civil Code, strictly confining the aim of the proposal to the legalization of same-sex marriage. This curtailing of the agenda on the part of the LGBTQ activist group did not lessen the oppositional intensity, however. On the contrary, the introduction of the same-sex marriage bill antagonized the religious conservatives. The intensified anger toward the possible passing of the same-sex marriage bill gave rise to a proliferation of oppositional groups, such as the Baby's

Breath Layman Front (滿天星素人連線) and the Stable Force Alliance (安定力量聯盟), for example. The tension rose during the last couple months of 2016, while a Democratic Progress Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) congress seemed less than determined to pass the same-sex marriage bill despite its majority seats. Activist groups on both sides convened in front of the Presidential Palace or the Legislative Yuan on weekly basis, on some occasions simultaneously, although the turnouts disproportionately tilted in favor of the same-sex marriage campaign. The furor peaked on December 10<sup>th</sup>, when a LGBTQ concert rally drew a record 250,000 participants petitioning for same-sex marriage.

The debate was eventually settled, not on the congress floor, but in the constitutional court. In March 2017, the Council of Grand Justices heard the case of Chi Chia-wei versus the Taipei City Government, regarding the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. It was the third attempt by Chi, the gay activist mentioned in the previous chapter, to obtain a constitutional interpretation from the Council of Grand Justices. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the council ruled in favor of same-sex marriage in Interpretation No. 748. This interpretation postulated that, by not providing same-sex persons a legal channel to engage in marital contracts, the entries related to marriage in the Civil Code were unconstitutional. The Council of Grand Justices gave the legislature two years to create a new law and to correct the current violation to the freedom of marriage and equality among citizens, regardless of sex. While the ruling occasioned celebration among LGBTQ groups, it did not curb the opposition from the religious conservatives. They threatened to call for a referendum confining the meaning of marriage to a contract

between two persons of different sexes and continued to target the legislators that had voiced support for same-sex marriage.

In addition to holding several legislators responsible for supporting the same-sex marriage bill, the religious conservatives reprehended them for altering the middle school sex and gender education curriculum. They accused people like Huang Kuo-chang of planting sexually explicit material in the curriculum, the consequence of which, according to the conservatives, would be a total breakdown of chastity and morality among teenagers. Although the legislative focus was same-sex marriage only, a wide spectrum of sexuality-related issues, gathered together under a broad homophobic sentiment, gradually took center stage.

The antagonism of the religious conservatives toward the LGBTQ-related causes operated along the lines of a specific rhetoric, namely, an emphasis on family values and children's welfare. Their concern about these two issues is made abundantly clear in the titles of their causes, such as the Family Guardian Coalition, the Happiness of the Next Generation Alliance (下一代幸福聯盟), and the Stable Force Alliance. Their stance against LGBTQ causes branded such movements as subversive to the institution of family and a threat to the next generation. Their accusation mobilized local parent groups in demonstration against the gender education curriculum they opposed. For months, the public was alarmed by accusations based on inaccurate information, fearing their children were being taught about sex and gender equality via pornography and sex toys. By positioning themselves in direct opposition to the LGBTQ radicals, the

conservative groups were successful in skewing public opinion on same-sex marriage, even if they were not otherwise able to disrupt the legislation on the matter.

It would be limiting to consider the recall election and the same-sex marriage controversy merely in the domain of political maneuvering. Same-sex marriage had been a prevalent cause in the burgeoning stage of gay activism in Taiwan. In the presentation of Chi Chia-wei's activism in the previous chapter, we have seen the progressiveness of early gay activism as a construction of the homosexual subject through negotiation on visibility. Yet the whole same-sex marriage campaign of the 2010s, and the 2017 recall election that came about as a result, hold an alternative implication. The 2012 Diversified Family Bill, besides revitalizing the decades-long cause, was also the very first piece of legislation introduced to the congress floor via civil petition. This particularity came about due to grassroots activism in the form of diffusion of information and knowledge, collecting signatures, etc. These same strategies were also employed by those in opposition to the bill. Furthermore, since to pull off a recall election involved exactly the same process, these tactics were also employed in the matter of the Huang Kuo-Chang recall election. The vibrant grassroots activism of a nascent civil society, however, belied the decades-old inherent incongruity between notions of progress.

### **The Conundrum of Progress**

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, contradicting its public image as as champion of human rights and equality since the authoritative era, became a major hindrance to the passing of the same-sex marriage bill in the 2010s. The Church, whose

involvement in juvenile prostitute rescue in the 1980s opened up my discussion of progressive social movements, remained indifferent, if not hostile, to the legislation throughout the campaign. The ambivalent attitude of the Church contributed to the aforementioned DPP inertia in passing the bill. Throughout the martial law era, the Church supported the resistance against the Chinese Nationalist autocracy. The Chinese Nationalist government persecuted and imprisoned several Presbyterian pastors, including Kao Chun-Ming (高俊明), for rallying for democracy. It would not be exaggerating to say that the Church was integral to the DPP Taiwanese independence ideology. In addition, the Church garnered prestige of supporting human rights in the authoritarian era. During the movement for same-sex marriage legislation, the incumbent DPP president, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), personally visited Pastor Kao to seek his support, with limited success. On a local level, the society of Taiwan saw Presbyterian churches, in absence of a platform, participate in anti-marriage equality demonstrations. The same-sex marriage controversy inadvertently exposed that the progressivism of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan had limits.

The Presbyterian Church was not alone in, however unreflectively, harboring the limits of progressivism. My discussion in both the first and second chapters found that, when examined through the lens of gender, a large sector of 1990s social activism sought progress in a heteronormative direction. The sector covered a wide spectrum of activism ranging from the human rights-oriented juvenile prostitute rescue, to the feminist critiques of Confucian gender order inspired by Peng Wan-ru, to the nationalism-oriented Taiwan independence movement. A detailed review of Taiwan



independence movement did not relate to the domain of gender progressiveness and so is outside the scope of the paper. Prominent figures in my discussion, such as the Presbyterian Church and feminists like Peng Wan-ru and Liu Yuxiu, nevertheless all participated in the independence movement, although the degree and type of their involvement varied. Scholarly consensus maintains that the post-martial law social movements coalesced into an anti-Chinese Nationalist Party authoritarianism platform (Chen, 2006, p. 303). I find that the coalition was also a heteronormative and gendered one.

In hindsight, the 1990s feminist activism was progressive in its attempt to disrupt the Confucian heteronormativity, but not progressive enough. Peng Wan-ru and the PWR Foundation best exemplified this conundrum. Peng and her colleagues represented the generation of feminists who sought to right the wrongs of the Confucian gender order without replacing the order itself. Compared to their male comrades in the independence movement, the 1990s feminists were progressive in terms of their gender awareness. They were progressive enough to have challenged the Confucian society-constructed gender order that burdened women. When it came to community work and dealing with the hardships of a profit-driven society, we saw feminists like Liu Yuxiu promote an “improved” set of Confucian ideals, or family values, and demonstrate a willingness to resort to state intervention. Looking back at the feminist activism of the 1990s, a trajectory emerged, in which female activists initially criticized Confucianism but eventually succeeded in upholding the very ideals they originally opposed, in the interests of maintaining social order and stability.

The groups against same-sex marriage in the 2010s took the Confucian aspects of the Taiwanese notion of being progressive to a more extreme level. The rhetorics of the aforementioned Family Guardian Coalition, Happiness of the Next Generation Alliance and the Stable Force Alliance, in opposition to the potential legalization of same-sex marriage, were an amalgamation of heteronormative Confucian ideals, religious convictions, and the tokenizing view of homosexuality as solely radical and erotic behavior. These groups imagined a trajectory of development that, with same-sex marriage as the departure point, led ultimately to polygamy, incest, and bestiality. Andrew Chang, whose comments on same-sex marriage made him a celebrity, went as far as to ask, without any humorous intention, “[after legalizing same-sex marriage,] what if someone asks to marry a Ferris wheel (“Zhang Shouyi,” 2016)?”

As far as this dissertation is concerned, simply dismissing Chang’s question, and others’ questions of that nature, does not suffice. Brushing off these questions risks missing the opportunity they present to address the Taiwanese idea of progress. Although Chang’s question in no way carried the same critical weight, his sentiment was, in fact, identical to that of the critics of unchecked material progress who asked “where does it stop?” and “where does it lead to?”

These questions tie my discussion back to progress in relation to the concepts of history and time. Of the anti-marriage quality groups’ objections, the most prominent were the disruption to harmonious relations between two sexes, the violation of family values associated with proliferation and filial piety, and the fear of an apocalyptic extinction of humanity as the result of the perpetuation of “unnatural relations.” Their

strand of thinking was foreseeable, given that their whole campaign began with the *Alliance of Taiwan Religious Groups for the Protection of Family*. The roots of their objections could be plainly traced: concern for harmony between the sexes stemmed from Taoism, a regard for family values and filial piety from Confucianism, and fear of apocalypse from Christianity. More importantly was how this combination of concepts was representative of the Taiwanese idea of progress as being caught between conventions and different strands of modernization.

The anti-marriage equality groups were confused as to what being progressive implied, as the greater society itself often was. The conception of progress held by these groups conflated the Confucian concept of historic development, which was focused on retrieving some lost, innocent past, with the Western Christian idea of progress that anticipated perfection in the future. Marrying these two drastically different, if not entirely contradictory, strands of thought, these groups were left torn between the future and the past. Their determination to uphold the Confucian ideals of the past contradicted the forward-looking concept of progress inherent in the Christian belief. That very contradiction impacted their view of the future, which in Christianity entailed perfection, and placed within their knowledge the apocalypse rather than God's eternal reign of peace that was to follow. More often than not, one finds the same conundrum in examining the history of the idea of progress in Taiwan. Taiwan as a society, when confronted with progress, has always had to come to terms with its history of modernization. As much as modernization spoke of progress in nature, Taiwan encountered modernization first in the context of colonization and then authoritarianism.

The Taiwanese idea of progress was one that sought advancement through discipline and stability. The incommensurability between the ideas of progress as a concept of advancement and stability as a motionless one left the idea of progress in Taiwan always at the juncture of negotiation between these two poles.

As we have seen, the controversy over same-sex marriage in the 2010s, like that of the 1990s, revealed a tension between notions of progress. This tension, in turn, circumscribes the gender progressivism. The question to ask is therefore less “where does progress stop,” or “what is the limit to progress,” but “how do the historical context and ideologies of a society limit progress?” In the case of Taiwan, those limits consist of factors bound up in aspects of cultural heritage, such as Confucian morality; to the means of colonial modernization, such as the Western European trade expenditures of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Japanese colonization; and to the contribution of Chinese Nationalist regimes. This research on the gender progressiveness of 1990s Taiwan anticipates further research, through the lens of progress, on issues related to modern Taiwan, such as nationalism, identity politics, and language reform. I also envision this study contributing to the discussions and reflections on progressivisms in East Asian societies that share, with Taiwan, the Confucian influences, colonial histories, and post-war trajectory of prosperity and its repercussions.

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