In this paper, I trouble what I identify as my life quest: the quest to intervene in dominant gender narratives. I see this quest as inseparable from the multiple narratives or discourses (including gender) in which I am constituted and in which I constitute myself. In Western culture, dominant discourses are enmeshed in what Bourdieu (2000) identifies as the ‘androcentric vision’. The ‘androcentric vision’ privileges the masculine over the feminine and is, according to Bourdieu (*ibid.*), inscribed in Western bodies and social structures. It is strengthened by its insertion into a system of binary oppositions which privilege the ‘masculine’ pole over the ‘feminine’ one: culture over nature, objectivity over subjectivity, rationality over emotion, aggression over passivity, the political over the personal etc. (*ibid.*). Butler (2007/1999) maintains that within this binary system, discrete gender identities are achieved and maintained by shaping bodies, through repetition, into socially constructed (heteronormative) genders. She contends that gender is thereby normalised or naturalised, rendering the power structures that produce ‘men’, ‘women’ and gender inequities invisible. This mega-narrative provides the context in which our individual and collective narratives of experience are shaped, told and shared.

The troubling of my life quest is enmeshed, at the micro-level, in multiple other narratives. It is enmeshed in a local newspaper account (written by my journalist husband, Peter Gleeson) of the crowning of a young local woman as ‘Miss Ireland’; an account derived from Miss Ireland’s own account of the occasion (and her mother’s), in an interview with Peter. It is also enmeshed in Peter’s narrative account of himself as a feminist and in his metanarrative of the writing of the newspaper account itself (traces of which are evident therein). It is enmeshed too in the multiple other narratives in which all of us have been constituted and in which we constitute ourselves, including the binary mega-narrative referred to above.

Within the aforementioned mega-narrative women are constituted, and constitute themselves, as symbolic objects; existing for and through the gaze of others (men), which, according to Bourdieu (2000), means engaging in practices directed towards the anticipated evaluation of their bodily appearance; practices directed towards attracting and being attractive to men (Olsen 2003/1978). Such practices have, according to Olsen and Bourdieu, led women to construct themselves as deferential (to men) and are embedded in what Bourdieu (2000) calls the negative co-efficient attached to being female in Western culture.

In the newspaper article, Miss Ireland is described as ‘stunningly beautiful’ and as a ‘girl’. Reference to her ‘figure hugging dress’ underlines her physical attractiveness. She is also quoted as seeing herself as ‘a positive role model for young girls’. In my paper, I interrogate the ways in which both she and Peter claim agency for themselves within normative discourses of femininity and existing systems of power. I also reflect on the ways in which my interrogation has encouraged me to reflect on my quest to intervene in dominant gender narratives and to acknowledge how they can impact differently on others.