

Imaginative assemblages of transcendent/desire: Non-heteronormative Malaysian men speak up and talk back

Joseph N Goh

School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University, Malaysia

Abstract

Many non-heteronormative Malaysian men find themselves on the receiving end of political, socio-cultural, and religious condemnations of their sexual identifyings and expressions. Their lived realities are often considered invalid, including from religious and theological perspectives. This article is a queer socio-theological project that examines the lived realities of six non-heteronormative Malaysian men who speak up and talk back on their sexualities and spiritual sensibilities. Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology, and aided by the theological musings of Marcella Althaus-Reid and a document of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences as analytical frameworks, this article analyzes and theologizes the complex processes of transcendent/desire, or negotiations of the "Profoundly More" and sexuality in the narratives of these men. This article suggests that transcendent/desire can be imaginatively assembled in three interrelated forms: (i) as embodied connections with the transcendent; (ii) as a vocation; and (iii) as an imperative to flourish.

Keywords

Asian theology, bisexual, gay, Malaysia, non-heteronormative men, queer theology

In this article, I analyze and theologize the various ways in which six non-heteronormative men who adhere to various belief systems understand their spiritual sensibilities and sexualities in relation to each other.¹ I refer to this complex relationship as "transcendent/desire." I use the term "non-heteronormative men" in reference to male-bodied,

Corresponding author:

Joseph N Goh, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia, Jalan Lagoon Selatan, 47500 Bandar Sunway, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Email: joseph.goh@monash.edu

men-identifying subjects whose notions and expressions of masculinity and/or sexuality are incongruous with normative socio-cultural, political, and religious expectations, including men who identify as gay and bisexual. My notion of spiritual sensibilities, or more specifically, the “transcendent” or “transcendence” refers to human *experiences* of realities such as religiosity, spirituality, philosophy, “human sacredness” and/or other belief systems, and/or an umbrella term for what is popularly considered as “God.” As feminist liberation theologian Lisa Isherwood (2000: 32–33) posits: “the grounded reality of our lives . . . gives us a transcendent quality [which] does not imply a moving beyond but rather broadening of vision.” Isherwood’s point highlights the diverse strategies with which human subjects negotiate with embodied complexities in ways that afford them numerous opportunities for greater meaning-making in life. Hence, my use of “transcendent” or “transcendence” refers to the “Profoundly More,” who/which is immanently present and laboring with-and-in human subjects, not “the ‘wholly other,’ infinitely above human beings and all creation” (Kwok, 2000: 75).

Inspired by queer theorist Judith Butler’s (1999: 23) vantage point of “the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice,” or how the performativity of certain sexual acts gives shape and form to sexual attraction, I use “desire” for “sexual orientation” and the complex sexual self-descriptions and expressions of non-heteronormative men. The use of a forward slash in “transcendent/desire” suggests an interpenetrability between a sense of the transcendent and desire, in which the transcendent can be experienced in desire and desire can inform the transcendent. Hence, transcendent/desire is a dynamic of deepening of, not rising above the subject. I understand “imaginative assemblages” as purposeful constructions that arise upon discernment “that something is not fitting,” in order “to search for new images, and to arrive at new patterns of meaning and interpretation” (Kwok, 2005: 30). Imagination is also at work “when one attempts to crystallize one’s experience of God” (Office of Theological Concerns, 2000: 413).

I deploy a Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology for a careful analysis of the narratives of Skidiver, Aadesh, Alex, Babbling Drunk, Kunci, and Shanghai Fun.² A Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology builds theory from, and grounds theory in data. It understands that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010a; Charmaz, 2005), and that the researcher–participant relationship is crucial in generating knowledge (Breckenridge et al., 2012). A Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology also calls for a balance between a knowledge of the field through familiarity with extant literature and an openness to research findings (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010b: 19–20). The selection of these men is based on the explicit manner in which they speak up on issues pertaining to transcendent/desire, and talk back to destructive homonegative and binegative rhetoric. My theologizings are primarily aided by the works of queer liberation theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid and the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC).

Thus this article, written by a queer-gay Malaysian in Malaysia, strives to be a queer socio-theological project that draws on the wealth of imaginative assemblages of transcendent/desire by non-heteronormative Malaysian men. An important aspect of “queer” is that it is “a critique of norms,” which “implies reflection on one’s own relationship to norms and the ways in which one refuses and/or reproduces them” (Cornwall, 2011: 19–20). A queer approach permits me to reflexively and critically approach my own assimilations and rejections of theological norms over time, and to analyze the narratives of my research participants by using similar subversive implements. It allows for a confluence of queer and Asian

theological frameworks “to interrogate, transgress, deconstruct, reimagine” (Goh, 2012: 223) alternative ways of theological framing, analysis and interpretation.

In what follows, I first provide an overview of attitudes towards non-heteronormative subjects in Malaysia. Thereafter, I discuss some interlacing insights from Althaus-Reid and a document of the FABC before turning my attention to a theological analysis of the various narratives of my six research participants.

The Malaysian scene

Malaysia comprises 28.3 million inhabitants. Although Muslims constitute the majority at 61.3%, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and practitioners of “other” beliefs make up 19.8%, 9.2%, 6.3%, and 3.4% of the Malaysian population, respectively (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2010). As such, Christianity in Malaysia finds itself in constant negotiation with other religions, including instances of religious conflict (Bong, 2014: 149–152). Malaysia closely monitors issues of gender and sexuality among its inhabitants, and often from religious viewpoints. The Malaysian Penal Code (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 1997) criminalizes oral and anal penetrative sex, which are often associated with non-heteronormative men (Lee, 2014). Malaysian *Syariah* (Islamic) laws (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2006: 25, 28) also prohibit same-sex expressions and cross-dressing among men. A *fatwa*, or a religious opinion “which can . . . be gazetted [and] carry the force of law” (Lee, 2011: 103), has been issued against *pengkids*, or “masculine-acting” Malaysian women (Jawatankuasa Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan, 2008).

Various state-wide seminars and programs continue to be implemented against non-heteronormative Malaysians in a bid to “curb” such “problems” (The Star Online, 2013). Islam is often wielded as a tool for moral credibility and political mileage (Liow, 2004), and has filtered down to issues of gender and sexuality (Goh, 2014a; Zainah, 2005: 123). Most Malaysian Christian churches proscribe homosexuality and recommend reparative therapy (Goh, 2013, 2015; National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia (NECF), 2013). As such, many non-heteronormative Malaysian men find that they are coerced into shutting up and prohibited from talking back. They find that their lived experiences, insights, and circumstances are often rendered invalid and inconsequential from numerous perspectives.

Marcella Althaus-Reid and the FABC: Intersecting socio-theological frameworks

Numerous scholars have investigated the complex relationship between transcendence and non-heteronormative sexualities, including struggles with ecclesiastical disapprobation (Goh, 2014b; Wu, 2000; Yip, 1997), theological ethics in non-heteronormative sexualities (Jordan, 2002; Rudy, 1997), and the role of the transcendent in same-sex partnerships (Bong, 2011). Queer theologians have been particularly forthright in annexing transcendence to non-heteronormative genders and sexualities through theoretical and empirical studies (Althaus-Reid, 2000; Córdova Quero, 2008; Goss, 2003; Hero, 2012; Heyward, 1989; Loughlin, 2007).

My article foregrounds the theological insights of Marcella Althaus-Reid, based on her inclusion of socio-cultural, political and economic issues in queer theology, and her deep understanding that theology steers the “normalization” of epistemologies that relate real sexual experiences and transcendence to each other. Her theological radicality is a response

to the inability of liberation theology to include “indecent” human subjects such as sex workers, victims of sexual violence, gay-identifying men, and cross-dressers in its vision. Therefore, she rallies for subversive deconstructions of exclusive, “respectable” theologizings, and demands for greater inclusivity for the said “indecent” human subjects (Althaus-Reid, 2000). In other words, I draw on Althaus-Reid’s emphasis on the need to acknowledge non-heteronormative desire as a blind spot in the theological enterprise, and her sense of urgency to include non-heteronormative categories in theological endeavors. These insights hold particular significance for my theologizing of non-heteronormative subjects in Malaysia who are invariably regarded as “indecent” and excluded from theological discourses, with the exception of being portrayed as epithets of theological disapproval who are in dire need of “repentance” and/or “conversion” from deviant ways.

Hence, this article leans on Althaus-Reid’s (2004: 146) affirmation that “the starting point of Queer Theology is Queer lives and Queer relationships.” I also look to her notion of theology as “a reflection on God closely related to loving arts of intimacy with the Beloved” (Althaus-Reid, 2004: 99). Thus, flesh-and-blood realities of non-heteronormative subjects, including erotic connections, constitute important contextual resources for queer theologizings. Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, Althaus-Reid’s approach to queer theology is not concerned solely with subverting and reconstructing categories of gender and sexuality from theological perspectives. It is also interested in how such categories intersect with socio-cultural, political, and economic structures. This approach resonates with Asian theologizings.

Asian theologian Jonathan Y Tan (2014: 95–96) describes the FABC as “a transnational body comprising fifteen Asian Catholic bishops’ conferences [which] has made a significant impact on the development, orientation, and growth of the spiritual and theological life of the [Roman] Catholic Church in Asia.” In the document *Methodology: Asian Christian Theology*, the FABC (Office of Theological Concerns, 2000: 363) encourages “new resources of cultures, religions, peoples, their history, struggles, movements, their sufferings and hopes, as well as economic and political realities as *loci theologici* [to see] in them the action of the Spirit.” *Loci theologici* refer to “contextual realities [which] are considered resources of theology... together with the Christian sources of Scripture and Tradition” (Office of Theological Concerns, 2000: 356). The FABC does not insist that such realities be mined only from Asian Christians. Such theological strategies pursue “ways to integrate the experiences of Asia, the experience of [Asian peoples’] own forebears, and [Asian peoples’] own psyche, into their Christian faith” (Office of Theological Concerns, 2000: 331). Although the FABC does not refer specifically to non-heteronormative subjects in its vision of *loci theologici*, I am extracting and building on its theological sense of openness and dialogue for this article. The FABC is an important feature of this socio-theological framework, as it connects queer theologizing with Southeast Asian theologizing. As queer theology is largely unknown or viewed with suspicion and incredulity by many Southeast Asian Christian hierarchies and communities, my annexation of queer theology to the FABC’s theological vision is crucial to foreground theological commonalities that can hopefully contribute to effective theological dialogue and transformation in the future.

Moreover, the FABC’s position that “Asian theology is a new enterprise marked by a certain experimental character, a certain ambiguity, uncertainty and tenuousness” (Office of Theological Concerns, 2000: 331) encourages me to perform theological experimentations, even at the risk of transgressing and expanding conventional theological boundaries. First, I include the lived realities of Malaysian *non-heteronormative men*—who are often regarded

as theologically aberrant—as theological resources. Second, I derive insights from both *Christian and non-Christian* non-heteronormative men, which echoes Asian theologian D Preman Niles' (2013: 308) ecumenical outlook that “what God has done in Jesus Christ is but one pattern among many of the ways in which God relates to all God’s peoples.” Nevertheless, I am not trying to impose Christian ideas on non-Christian faith systems, or (re)colonize non-Christian faiths, or engage in religious pillaging during which, as Niles (2013: 168) describes, “the best could be taken and the worthless discarded.” Rather, I attempt to learn from such valuable resources as ignition devices to enhance and augment extant Christian queer theologizings.

Thus, I argue that both the queer thought of Marcella Althaus-Reid and the theological trajectories of the FABC demonstrate intersecting frameworks for the experimentation, enrichment and expansion of Christian theological insights in terms of starting from real, human lives. I am keen on examining the intersections between transcendence and desire among Malaysian non-heteronormative men without succumbing to what Althaus-Reid (2004: 99) describes as a “displac[ement of]... bodies by transcendental configurations.” In other words, I engage in a queer socio-theological task that is derived from and prioritizes the concrete lived experiences, insights and circumstances of Malaysian non-heteronormative men as theological resources.

Imaginative assemblages of transcendent/desire

Having expounded the intersecting relevance of queer and Asian theological frameworks, I now present three perspectives of transcendent/desire based on my analysis of the selected narratives of the six aforementioned research participants. I propose that transcendent/desire can be imaginatively assembled as (i) embodied connections with the transcendent; (ii) a vocation; and (iii) an imperative to flourish.

Transcendent/desire as embodied connections with the transcendent

For some non-heteronormative men, their sense of transcendent/desire is inextricably connected to a cognizance of their own bodily operations. My interview with Skidiver, an elderly, married, white health worker and Anglican Christian who has been residing in Malaysia for many years reveals how he encapsulates and articulates the negotiations between his sense of the transcendent and his desire through his body:

... this is a little bit embarrassing (laughs nervously), but you know er there was a time some years ago, you know, I like to, share with people about... the evangelistic way, about Jesus Christ, OK, so when I talk to people about the love of God, and Jesus Christ, I experience some sexual sensations (half-laugh), I, was a bit mystified because some, now I only know what to call it, I sort of became wet... people call it pre-cum... wow, I couldn't understand, and what was happening, actually, just to talk to people about the love of God and about Jesus Christ, being a way of life, caused this to happen in me... in the sharing, there was no particular sexual attraction or anything like that. So there I began to see a sort of, a vague, a blurred line between different areas, of one's thinking and one's personality.

Skidiver speaks as a married bisexual man who feels sexual attraction to other men and shares intimate bodily connections with them. This narrative occurs within the context of Skidiver's sharing of personal struggles in making sense of himself as a bisexual man.

He extends his sharing by reminiscing on physiological transformations that unexpectedly reveal a connection between his sense of the transcendent and his desire.

His notion of the transcendent is imagined as God according to his Christian tradition. He divulges that he “like[s] to...share with people about...Jesus Christ” in the “the evangelistic way,” meaning that he actively converses, dialogues and discusses with others on his Christian faith tradition in “wanting as many as possible to share as fully and as explicitly as possible in that belief and in all its consequences” (Sykes, 1991: 414). In a rather unanticipated turn of events “some years ago” which left him “a bit mystified,” Skidiver “sort of became wet [with] pre-cum” when he “just...talk[ed] to people about the love of God and about Jesus Christ...being a way of life.” Although Skidiver insists that these bodily stirrings emerged “just in the sharing” about his faith without any “particular sexual attraction” involved, he is implying that these stirrings *also* occur when he *does* experience sexual attraction. In this manner, he draws a parallel between transcendence and desire.

Skidiver’s experience of sexual arousal when he shared on “the love of God and Jesus Christ” is noteworthy, as it demonstrates how “human sexuality is disorderly, potentially chaotic and ambiguous” (Althaus-Reid, 1997: 50) and I would argue, including in manifestations of transcendent/desire. In other words, it symbolizes an intimate correlation between the erotic workings of desire and theological imaginings of divine love. The nexus between desire, human love, and divine love exists intimately in human–divine connections. Therefore, the sexual subject is entrenched in an intimate human–divine communication in which God desires to communicate God’s self, and the strivings of the sexual subject towards the utmost in life can be both a response to and manifestation of that communication.

Skidiver also confesses that the mystifying experience prompted him “to see a sort of...vague...blurred line between different areas, of one’s thinking and one’s personality.” Based on the context in which this conversation took place, I understand Skidiver’s notion of “thinking” as alluding to theoretical constructions of God and faith, and his notion of “personality” as suggestive of the practical, experiential living out of quotidian realities. The experience of embodied triggerings in Skidiver helps him realize that the boundaries between the theoretical presumptions of God and practical life experiences as a bisexual man are “vague” and “blurred,” and are not as neatly dichotomized as he thinks. From this, I propose that transcendent/desire is not always a conscious and anticipated bridging of God and desire. Instead, transcendent/desire is sometimes the unanticipated *transcendental eruptions of embodiment* and *embodied eruptions of transcendence*. Here, the notion of transcendence does not suggest a rising above the human condition, but an attitude of openness and a penetration into human experiences.

Alex is a 29-year-old gay-identifying Malaysian who works in the arts, calls himself “mixed” by way of ethnicity, and identifies concomitantly as Muslim, agnostic, spiritual, and a theist. His experiences of shared bodily closeness with another man also evoke a sense of transcendence:

Interviewer: ...I’d like to probe a bit more. That shared experience, that shared enjoyment...what do these moments do for you?

Alex: Em, they don’t make me feel so lonely...I think that’s it, er, loneliness to be, knowing that I’m not alone. Knowing that...some feelings...emotions can...transcend my body like, I can share it with someone...

Interviewer: ...You said, transcend my body. Could you say something about that?

Alex: ... Basically you know how when you're with a guy, and then you start kissing, then there is this need ... penetration, it's basically like you're almost wanting your bodies to become one ... without hurting each other ... that's what I mean by transcendence, because when you know that you're getting the pleasure out of receiving someone, or giving to someone SOMETHING, some part of your body, and they're gaining pleasure from receiving or giving it to you ...

When I ask Alex what "moments of shared experience [and] enjoyment ... did for him," his initial response is that these moments "don't make [him] feel so lonely." He acknowledges that the "feelings [and] emotions" that arise from shared moments allow him to dispel his "loneliness." He proceeds to describe that these experiences enable him to "transcend [his] body" as "[he] can share [his body] with someone." Alex continues in his reflexive musings on the pursuit of intimacy by referring to "kissing" and "penetration" as shared activities "with a guy" in which "[he's] almost wanting [their] bodies to become one ... without hurting each other."

I suggest three ways of understanding Alex's sense of transcendence from a "shared experience" of sexual activity. First, transcendence is the elimination of loneliness through the desire for, and act of intimate connection in actual bodily union with another. Alex elaborates this point by sharing his experience of "getting the pleasure out of receiving someone, or giving to someone SOMETHING, some part of [his] body, and they're gaining pleasure from receiving or giving it to [him]." Second, transcendence is also the reciprocity and mutuality of pleasure that accompanies the sharing of bodies. Alex's subtle description of "receiving ... or giving to someone ... some part of [his] body" that produces pleasure for both parties underscores the deed of gifting in sexual penetration. The embodied workings of Alex's desire place importance on genital gratification, but his experience of transcendental fulfillment also includes an emotional connection in which he *gives his body to*, and *receives the body of another* in an act of mutual gifting. Alex's experiences offer insights for a theological methodology that can be premised on "mapping God in sexual relationships" (Althaus-Reid, 2001: 243). In other words, the sexual body can act as a crucial interface for recognizing and understanding human–divine interrelationalities.

As sexual subjects, non-heteronormative men hold the capacity to pierce more deeply into the interconnecting mysteries of human embodiment and the transcendent in their own unique contexts. Gender and religious studies scholar Sharon A Bong (2009: 66) observes from her own research on non-heteronormative subjects of faith that "through their fidelity to their bodily integrity, they become the embodiment of the sacred." Thus, the imaginative assemblage of transcendent/desire as embodied connections with the transcendent heeds and manifests in a clearer way the inextricable connection of one's desire to one's relationship with the transcendent. Although the process can sometimes be opaque, to listen keenly to one's body as well as to willingly submit one's body in communion with sexual others can be a way to both respond to and manifest the transcendent.

Transcendent/desire as a vocation

Transcendent/desire is perceived by some non-heteronormative men as a vocation to a greater understanding of their sexual subjectivity as purposeful. I understand "vocation" as an inner inclination to carry out a task and or to live out one's life in accordance with a vision or a certain set of principles that is compatible with one's sense of meaning in life, and which contributes to one's identity formation. Aadesh is a 41-year-old

Malayalee-Indian-Malaysian in the entertainment industry who identifies as gay and a non-practicing Roman Catholic. He recounts the complexities of his lived experiences that have led him to focus on the idea of his gay-identifying as a “gift,” a vocation to “find [his] own sense of God”:

... at a very, very young age... I realized that I was gay, but at nine realized that a great way of sort of denying who I am although I know this whole thing in retrospect, was to say that I wanted to become a priest... because priesthood, because of the celibacy, em requirement, was the perfect ground to sort of disassociate from your body... I realized that... I used religion as a way to, to become a structure to hide... being gay forces me to, not rely on the structures... I finally realized, the gift of being gay, has forced me out of the circle. And therefore I have, had to... find my own sense of God.

As Aadesh muses retrospectively on how “[he] realized that [he] was gay” from “a very, very young age,” he suggests that his “denying [of] who [he was]” in this incipient recognition of desire constituted the early stages of internalized homonegativity. In other words, Aadesh progressively distanced himself from his desire even as he grew in recognition of that desire. He sought strategies to maintain his self-denouncement as a gay-identifying man. One such strategy was conceived “at nine,” when it dawned on him “that a great way of... denying who [he was]... was to say that [he] wanted to become a priest... because of the celibacy... requirement.” As “the perfect ground to sort of disassociate from [his] body,” this non-negotiable aspect of the ministerial priesthood that demanded a voluntary relinquishment of sexual activity in all forms was a method for Aadesh to avoid any confrontation with his desire.³ That Aadesh used “religion as a way [and] structure to hide” his desire discloses the instrumentality and collusion of institutional religious structures in his disengagement from desire. For a time, Aadesh proved successful in using the very structures that disapproved of non-heteronormative sexual expressions to strategically conceal his desire.

I suggest that Aadesh’s admission of being “forced... out of the circle” when he “finally realized... the gift of being gay” alludes to two matters. First, he is referring to the structure of institutional religious authority as a circumambient system, which acquaints him with religion and God, yet simultaneously rehearses and reinforces his internalized homonegativity. Second, it is this system with its attendant denial of desire that successfully obscures his spiritual journey. Aadesh’s alliance with the ecclesiastical structure proves inadequate and counterproductive in helping him deny his desire and “discover” the transcendent, which he describes as God, through that denial. Instead, it is a burst of personal agency in “not rely[ing] on the structures” and becoming cognizant of his desire as a “gift of being gay” that leads him to sever ties with institutional religious authority that had long obstructed his quest for God. Aadesh’s pursuit of “[his] own sense of God” is not found in the denial of his desire, but in its acceptance and recognition as a gift.

I also suggest that Aadesh’s realization of “the gift of being gay [which] forced [him] out of the circle” of ecclesiastically-sanctioned celibacy—and by extension a formalized repression of his desire—to “find [his] own sense of God” is his way of acknowledging and heeding a vocation to locate the purpose of his desire, which is “[his] own sense of God.” Aadesh’s experiences reveal that “God is in direct and indirect relationship with every person [and that] this is the first source of our knowledge of and union with God” (Balasuriya, 1980: 18). His response to this vocation is actually a human–divine interaction that subverts the borders of ecclesiastical authority. This radical rupture of a destructive circle stems from a reflexive, life-giving, therapeutic veracity. Aadesh’s subversive experience bespeaks

“a healing theology which dismantles false coherences and ideological scripts in theology in order to allow people to stand up as human beings against a perverse ethics and a perverse theology” (Althaus-Reid, 2004: 108). I am not suggesting here that perversity lies in the ideals of celibacy, but in the manipulation of the celibacy requirement as a “valid” and “godly” means of concealing and denouncing one’s own desire.

Therefore, it is an interior, agentic “shove” in the direction of self-acceptance as a gay-identifying man that leads Aadesh to recognize the need to find “[his] own sense of God.” The “gift of being gay” as such, refers to Aadesh’s appreciation and meaning-making of desire that leads to the heeding and “doing” of a vocation to “find [his] own sense of God,” and to connect with it. In the realization that he is gifted with gay-identifying, Aadesh uncovers a catalyst that accords him the freedom to engage in explorations of transcendent/desire that do not demand a “disassociat[ion] from [his] body.” Similar to the experiences of Skidiver, Aadesh shows that the experience of God is intimately connected to a recognition and comprehension of bodily operations.

Kunci, a 46-year-old gay-identifying Hokkien-Chinese-Malaysian who works in insurance and who describes himself as spiritually open, also sees his sense of transcendent/desire as a vocation:

Interviewer: Do you believe in a concept of God?

Kunci: . . . To me, God is er universe . . . nature. That’s my God . . . My God can be Jesus, my God can be Buddha, can be Allah, anything, that’s what I think.

Interviewer: What are the characteristics of this God?

Kunci: Love . . . they are only love.

Interviewer: . . . Do you have something like a rule of life . . .?

Kunci: . . . maybe I don’t thought of that er consciously, but subconsciously I think that I should have . . . don’t lie to yourself . . .

Interviewer: On the one hand you have your spirituality, on the other hand you have your sexuality as a gay man. Do you see these two elements conflicting . . . or do you see them related to each other, or both?

Kunci: No conflict. Related. They are actually related to each other. . . There is no conflict but this is actually, meant for it, to me . . . I’m actually here, to do something in the world before I die, that’s what God want me, or the universe, or some kind of energy, or they want me to do that. So, they put me as a gay man. So, I have to do it. . . so there must be a message which in me to spread . . . or to perform, it is love.

Kunci’s assertion that there is “no conflict” between “spirituality” and “sexuality” for him suggests several important perspectives. First, the transcendent does not condemn his gay-identifying. Second, a connection between the divine and the sexual for him is constituted by an absence of conflict. Third, that “spirituality” and “sexuality” are not only devoid of conflict for him but are “actually related to each other” implies both the absence of a spirituality-sexual dichotomy, and the presence of a spirituality-sexuality symbiosis that energizes him with a sense of purpose, an existence for which he is actually “meant for.” Kunci’s sense of transcendent/desire provides an impetus to revisit theological proscriptions of sexual expressions among non-heteronormative men that can produce what queer theologian Rose Wu (2000: 76) describes as “a split personality,” or a destructive fragmentation of the sexual subject due to accusations of deviance and iniquity.

By describing the transcendent as “God,” “the universe,” “nature,” “Jesus,” “Buddha,” “Allah,” and “some kind of energy,” Kunci exercises an inclusive and diverse understanding of transcendence. This understanding may influence, or be influenced by his

self-comprehension as a gay-identifying man. Furthermore, by understanding the transcendent as “only love,” he conscripts love as an indispensable force in his formulation of transcendent/desire. It is this sense of transcendence that forms the basis of a personal injunction to not “lie to [him]self” and, by extension, to love himself.

Kunci’s self-acceptance “as a gay man” spurs an imaginative assemblage of transcendent/desire that offers valuable insights for queer theologizing. That Kunci understands transcendent/desire as a “rule of life” “subconsciously” suggests an intuitively-evoked embodied epistemology that gradually guides him towards self-acceptance and self-love in his personal formation of transcendent/desire. Kunci’s understanding that “[he’s] actually here . . . to do something in the world before [he dies]” is centered on his desire “as a gay man.” Hence, his desire becomes the means through which he is able to fulfill this vocation. Kunci’s perception of transcendent/desire as a calling heightens his reflexivity, in that he gradually understands that he is the receiver of a “message” that he is meant “to spread” and “to perform,” and that he identifies as “love.” By conceptualizing his transcendent/desire as a vocation to spread and perform love *in and through himself*, I suggest that Kunci is learning to locate the purpose of his desire, to locate transcendence within his desire, and to locate his desire within transcendence.

Thus, transcendent/desire among non-heteronormative men is imaginatively assembled as a vocation of self-acceptance and self-love. This vocation charges one with the task of locating the purpose of one’s desire, and of locating transcendence within that desire. The self-acceptance and self-love, which are premised on a personal sense of all-loving transcendence, may sometimes demand a relinquishing of structures that purport to offer experiences of the transcendent, yet which in reality preclude one from such possibilities.

Transcendent/desire as an imperative to flourish

Several non-heteronormative men perceive transcendent/desire as a drive to flourish as sexual subjects. Feminist philosopher and theologian Grace Jantzen (1998: 161–162) describes human flourishing as “growth and fruition from an inner creative and healthy dynamic.” I wish to extend Jantzen’s perspective by suggesting that to flourish as a sexual subject is to embark on an interminable life-giving process towards self-cognizance, self-acceptance, and mental and emotional well-being. Babbling Drunk, a 27-year-old Chinese-Buddhist-Malaysian who works in the arts, and who describes himself as “gay” and “homosexual,” explains how Buddhism prompts him in this direction:

Interviewer: Can you explain what that means to you, being a Buddhist?

Babbling Drunk: Okay. Buddhist is a teaching. It’s always been part of living and learning . . . I feel, in Buddhism, like I said, they do not dictate what and how we should live our lives . . . as a gay man, I feel er, it just makes me as a person . . . as a homosexual man.

Interviewer: So from a Buddhist perspective, how would you see yourself as a homosexual man, engaging in homosexual acts?

Babbling Drunk: As a Buddhist man? (pauses). It’s just, me respecting myself as a human . . . fulfilling the needs of love and relationship . . . there’s no direct saying that what we should do. So when I first talk about Buddhism, I was saying that, em, it gives us the idea, the principle, the philosophies. So, he cannot tell you what to do. Because YOU would have to decide what you’re gonna do, because you would thinking . . . I do that it will affect me.

As “[Buddhism] is a teaching” for him, Babbling Drunk sees the transcendent as providing him with spiritual guidance. He insists that Buddhism is devoid of the tendency to

“dictate what and how [one] should live [one’s life].” Rather than proving to be a dominating force that regulates his life, the transcendent is a “part of living and learning” that instructs him and fosters personal agency in his daily realities. As such, the practice of Buddhism is not a religious codicil, but a beneficial interiorization of beliefs and values that steer him through life. Babbling Drunk includes his desire as a “gay” and “homosexual” man within this vision of Buddhism. This enables him to formulate a sense of transcendent/desire that delegates the responsibility of living truthfully as “gay” and “homosexual” man to himself, in which he actively engages in “[making himself] as a person.” Babbling Drunk qualifies this notion of self-making by describing it as the act of “respecting [him]self as . . . human [and] fulfilling the needs of love and relationship.” His desire is enveloped, embraced and embedded in his ‘being-himself-ness’ as a human subject.

In extending this idea of self-making to incorporate his desire as a “gay” and “homosexual” man, he conceives of his self-making as a process of self-respect, and the fulfillment of love and relationship. Babbling Drunk understands that the task of self-making as a human subject is concomitantly the task of self-making as a “gay” and “homosexual” man. Buddhism contributes valuable resources and guidelines towards this pursuit by “giv[ing] the idea, the principle, the philosophies.” As “he”—a shorthand for Buddhism—“cannot tell [one] what to do,” Buddhism does not dominate the meaning-making of transcendent/desire for him. Instead, Buddhism as understood by Babbling Drunk urges him “to decide what [he’s] gonna do” by inciting him to ponder on how his decisions “will affect [him].” This perspective of action and consequence reflects the principle of karma. Although the understanding of karma is greatly varied, I propose its meaning in this present context as “the principle that beings are reborn according to the nature and quality of their past actions [that] leave a trace on the psyche which will lead to future results” (Harvey, 2012: 39).

Hence, the issue of being “gay” and “homosexual” “from a Buddhist perspective” dislocates notions of an ontological sexual flaw. It foregrounds an ethic of desire that considers consequences, and which is premised on a careful adherence to “the idea, the principle [and] the philosophies” of Buddhism. Through these means, Babbling Drunk “makes [himself] as a person” by striving towards meaningful living. Transcendent/desire is thus for Babbling Drunk a *reflexive trajectory of becoming* and a *project of self-making in pursuit of respect, love and relationship*. Although Babbling Drunk’s notions of transcendence are not explicitly identified with the idea of God, they bear immense significance and relevance for theologizing. Wu (2000: 85) reminds us that God participates in, and becomes even more “present” in activities that boldly “embrace the totality of life in its relational form and its vulnerability, that is, its openness to being touched and changed by what is experienced”. Babbling Drunk’s insights fuel queer theological notions that to flourish in life is to live life fully and responsibly as a sexual subject.

Shanghai Fun, a 34-year-old, gay-identifying, Malay-Muslim Malaysian government official who understands the transcendent as God,⁴ holds ideas that are similar to Babbling Drunk’s in connecting the transcendent and the sexual:

Interviewer: So . . . what do you think that God is saying to you in terms of your sexuality?

Shanghai Fun: That I should be responsible, and I should, think of him, as a Muslim, I should abide, the good deeds that Islam is preaching . . . the only thing I can’t change the nature of who I am, so I have to live with it. People say that I might be psycho for saying that but no . . . I think, you live the life that you lead with the principle being a Muslim . . . and so happened to be that you’re a gay, and you can’t change yourself, and . . . being not true to yourself. How are you supposed to face God if you’re not even sure what you are . . . that’s my belief . . . I would think

that every action will have consequences, so what I think he's saying to me like, as long as you follow... the right way of living a life, following the principle of Islam that they have laid out for me then I'll be OK.

For Shanghai Fun, the exercise of transcendence demands that he “should... think of [God and] abide [by] the good deeds that Islam is preaching.” Adherence to these religious tenets constitutes the praxis of Islam for Shanghai Fun, positions him in a ‘sameness’ with other Muslims, and affiliates him with the larger Malaysian Islamic institution. Shanghai Fun sees his desire—“the nature of who [he is]”—as the sole element that disrupts this “sameness.” Although he acknowledges this disruption, he actively negotiates with it by stating that his desire is his “nature;” it is something which he “can’t change” and which he has “to live with.” In so doing, he constructs an understanding of his desire as an integral part of who he is.

Rather than relinquish his desire for the sake of his religious adherence, or renounce Islam in order to maintain his desire, Shanghai Fun allows both realities to occupy a shared space. In so doing, his sense of transcendent/desire becomes an *interstitial religio-sexual space of religious livability*. In other words, his sense of transcendent/desire enables him to occupy an “in-between” space of negotiating religion and desire, and in which he is able to identify and live as both gay and Muslim. In locating himself within this space, he is able to flourish and “live the life that [he] lead[s] with the principle of being a Muslim” by “following the principle of Islam that they have laid out for [him].” I suggest that Shanghai Fun’s mention of “they” alludes to the regulations and expectations of both popular and hierarchical Malaysian Islam. I further suggest that this allusion reveals the significance of popular and hierarchical religious opinion on Malaysian Malay-Muslim men like Shanghai Fun.

Shanghai Fun understands that to be both gay and Muslim requires him to be self-aware and be “true to [him]self” as a subject who occupies a double-belonging to realities that are officially (and often, popularly) held as being hostile towards each other. For Shanghai Fun, to be a gay-identifying Muslim man is to recognize the irreconcilability of transcendence and desire in the usual sense, but thereafter to construct an alternative perspective that nourishes him with a sense of validation. Borrowing his insight for my theologizing efforts, I suggest that this validation interrogates the “ideological construction of God from the idealist discourse” (Althaus-Reid, 2000: 24). It rails against metanarratives of what “ought to be” in the connection between transcendence and desire.

This alternative perspective is thus life-giving insofar as he is “true to [him]self” to the best of his ability in his “in-between” religio-sexual space. Moreover, to be “true to [him]self” is to “face God” as who he is—it is to conscript God within a personal project to flourish as a sexual subject through self-honesty and self-acceptance, and without fear, guilt and apprehension. Thus, this imaginative assemblage of transcendent/desire provides a comforting assurance of a personal arrangement between him, God and Islam. “As long as [he] follow[s]... the right way of living a life” according to Islam, “[he]’ll be OK.” His specific context delivers a powerful theological reminder that “the divinity is always to be met in the transgression of the compulsory heterosexual order” (Althaus-Reid, 1997: 52).

Transcendent/desire among non-heteronormative men is imaginatively assembled and understood as the imperative to flourish as sexual subjects. This process is multimodal. Non-heteronormative men deepen their reflexivity, self-honesty, and personal agency towards a greater sense of being true to themselves and their desire. They strive towards meaningful forms of self-making through self-respect, and through engagements in love and relationships. They also seek out spaces in which they are able to straddle hierarchical

religious dictates and desire in manageable, meaningful ways. Through these myriad processes, non-heteronormative men evince the dynamics of flourishing as sexual subjects.

Conclusions and possibilities

In this article, I have analyzed and theologized the myriad ways in which non-heteronormative Malaysian men speak up on transcendent/desire—or the relationship between their sexualities and the ‘Profoundly More’—and talk back to charges that they are sexually, theologically and religiously flawed. First, I have shown how transcendent/desire is imaginatively assembled as embodied connections with the transcendent. The body often emerges as a crucial interface of transcendence and desire, notably in the increasing knowledge of the self as a sexual subject and during sexual encounters with sexual Others. Second, I have explained how transcendent/desire is conceptualized as a vocation to understand the purpose of desire, to locate transcendence in desire, and to locate desire in transcendence. This can be accomplished through self-acceptance, self-love and a personal sense of a loving transcendence. Third, I have demonstrated how non-heteronormative men understand transcendent/desire as the imperative to flourish. They do this in a variety of ways, including cultivating greater reflexivity, personal agency, and self-honesty in relation to themselves and their desire. In so doing, they engage in a project of self-making as sexual subjects that is constituted by self-respect, and love and relationships with sexual Others. Nonetheless, these diverse understandings and doings of transcendent/desire may be uneven and ambiguous processes that involve radical measures. Such measures may include a severing of ties with a religious institution, or the construction of “in-between” spaces to negotiate official religious pronouncements and desire.

This article may prove useful as an alternative departure point for theological discussions on non-heteronormative men, and perhaps other sexual subjects as well. Such considerations include the need to return to the sexual body in a more holistic, affirming and inclusive manner as a valuable theological resource. There must also be alternative perspectives of non-heteronormative desire that are not prefaced by notions of sin, deviance, condemnation, and pathology. The focus needs to be on, borrowing from Asian theologian Tissa Balasuriya’s (1980: 25) words, a “more human-centered” theological angle, or a theological outlook that respects the insights, voices and experiences of non-heteronormative men as sexual subjects and subjects of faith in their own right. Therefore, the task of theologizing must constantly listen to and be informed by actual lived realities and meaning-making, rather than by theoretical abstractions or idealized tropes that have little—if anything at all—to do with real, human lives.

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to thank Philip Wickeri, Bonita Aleaz, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies (IASACT) participants for their comments on an earlier version of this article which was presented at IASACT 2015, the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Funding

This work was supported by the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia.

Notes

1. This article is based on a larger qualitative research project in which I conducted face-to-face, in-depth interviews with 30 non-heteronormative men in Malaysia on their sexual identifyings, sexual practices, and faith negotiations. In this article, I showcase narratives from six men who *explicitly* articulate their experiences of the connection between transcendence and sexuality in their lives.
2. These are all pseudonyms chosen by the men themselves. All six men are educated, upwardly-mobile urban dwellers. The interviews were conducted in English, albeit with varying degrees of proficiency on the part of the research participants. The narratives of these six men provide specific vignettes, not general representations of the complexities of transcendent/desire among non-heteronormative men in Malaysia.
3. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “In the Latin Church the sacrament of Holy Orders for the presbyterate is normally conferred only on candidates who are ready to embrace celibacy freely and who publicly manifest their intention of staying celibate for the love of God’s kingdom and the service of men” (John Paul II, 1997: 1599).
4. Throughout the interview, Shanghai Fun used the English term “God” instead of “Allah.”

References

- Althaus-Reid M (1997) Sexual strategies in practical theology: Indecent theology and the plotting of desire with some degree of success. *Theology & Sexuality* 4(7): 45–52.
- Althaus-Reid M (2000) *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Althaus-Reid M (2001) Sexual salvation: The theological grammar of voyeurism and permutations. *Literature and Theology* 15(3): 241–248.
- Althaus-Reid M (2004) Queer I stand: Lifting the skirts of God. In: Althaus-Reid M and Isherwood L (eds) *The Sexual Theologian: Essays on Sex, God and Politics*. London, UK: T & T Clark, pp.99–109.
- Balasuriya T (1980) Towards the liberation of theology in Asia. In: Fabella V (ed.) *Asia’s Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology: Papers from the Asian Theological Conference, 7–20 January 1979, Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, pp. 16–27.
- Bong SA (2009) Not ‘for the sake of peace’: Towards an epistemology of the sacred body. *Asian Christian Review* 3(1): 50–68.
- Bong SA (2011) Negotiating resistance/resilience through the nexus of spirituality-sexuality of same-sex partnerships in Malaysia and Singapore. *Marriage & Family Review* 47(8): 648–665.
- Bong SA (2014) In the name of Allah: The containment of trauma and memory in Malaysia. In: Bong SA (ed.) *Trauma, Memory and Transformation: Southeast Asian Experiences*. Selangor, Malaysia: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, pp.145–167.
- Breckenridge JP, Jones D, Elliott I, et al. (2012) Choosing a methodological path: Reflections on the constructivist turn. *Grounded Theory Review* 11(1). Available at: <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/06/01/choosing-a-methodological-path-reflections-on-the-constructivist-turn/> (accessed 3 December 2014).
- Bryant A and Charmaz K (2010a) Grounded Theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account. In: Bryant A and Charmaz K (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, pp.31–57.
- Bryant A and Charmaz K (2010b) Introduction: Grounded Theory research: Methods and practices. In: Bryant A and Charmaz K (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, pp.1–28.
- Butler J (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Charmaz K (2005) Grounded Theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In: Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, pp.507–535.
- Córdova Quero H (2008) This body trans/Forming me: Indecencies in transgender/intersex bodies, body fascism and the doctrine of the incarnation. In: Althaus-Reid M and Isherwood L (eds) *Controversies in Body Theology*. London, UK: SCM Press, pp.80–128.
- Cornwall S (2011) *Controversies in Queer Theology*. London, UK: SCM Press.
- Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2010) Population distribution and basic demographic characteristics 2010. Available at: http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/download_Population/files/census2010/Taburan_Penduduk_dan_Ciri-ciri_Asas_Demografi.pdf (accessed 4 May 2013).
- Goh JN (2012) Mary and the *mak nyahs*: Queer theological imaginings of Malaysian male-to-female transsexuals. *Theology & Sexuality* 18(3): 215–233.
- Goh JN (2013) Repent or believe in the closet: When pastoral care is anything but. *Queer Eye for God's World*. Blog. Available at: <http://josephgoh.org/?p=125> (accessed 21 December 2014).
- Goh JN (2014a) Fracturing interwoven heteronormativities in Malaysian Malay-Muslim masculinity: A research note. *Sexualities* 17(5–6): 600–617.
- Goh JN (2014b) 'You must follow our belief or else you can't receive God': Constructing a sexual bi/theology of Eucharist. *Dialog* 53(2): 149–158.
- Goh JN (2015) Reflections on the play 'The Third Way: Same Sex Attraction and the Catholic Church' at Holy Family church, Kajang. *Queer Eye for God's World*. Blog. Available at: <http://josephgoh.org/?cat=17> (accessed 13 April 2015).
- Goss RE (2003) *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press.
- Harvey P (2012) *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hero J (2012) Toward a queer theology of flourishing: Transsexual embodiment, subjectivity, and moral agency. In: Boisvert DL and Johnson JE (eds) *Queer Religion*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, pp.143–165.
- Heyward C (1989) *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Isherwood L (2000) Sex and body politics: Issues for feminist theology. In: Isherwood L (ed.) *The Good News of the Body: Sexual Theology and Feminism*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, pp.20–34.
- Jantzen G (1998) *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Jawatankuasa Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan (2008) Hukum wanita menyerupai lelaki (pengkid). *E-Fatwa: Portal Rasmi Fatwa Malaysia*. Available at: <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my/fatwa-kebangsaan/hukum-wanita-menyerupai-lelaki-pengkid> (accessed 23 May 2014).
- John Paul II (1997) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed (E-Book). Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Available at: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm> (accessed 15 October 2013).
- Jordan MD (2002) *The Ethics of Sex*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Kwok P (2000) *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press.
- Kwok P (2005) *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Lee JCH (2011) *Policing Sexuality: Sex, Society and the State*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Lee JCH (2014) Constructing and obstructing identities: Ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In: Steger M, Battersby P and Siracusa J (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Globalization*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, pp.683–696.
- Liow JC (2004) Political Islam in Malaysia: Problematizing discourse and practice in the UMNO-PAS 'Islamisation Race'. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 42(2): 184–205.

- Loughlin G (ed.) (2007) *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia (NECF) (2013) Gay church: A response. *Berita NECF Articles*. Available at: <http://www.necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=2&action=view&retrieveid=930> (accessed 11 July 2013).
- Niles DP (2013) *The Lotus and the Sun: Asian Theological Engagement with Plurality and Power*. Barton, Australian Capital Territory, Australia: Barton Books.
- Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (2000) Methodology: Asian Christian theology. In: Eilers F-J (ed.) *For All Peoples of Asia: Documents from 1997 to 2001*. Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, pp. 329–419.
- Rudy K (1997) *Sex and the Church: Gender, Homosexuality, and the Transformation of Christian Ethics*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Sykes S (1991) An Anglican theology of evangelism. *Theology* 94(762): 405–414.
- Tan JY (2014) *Christian Mission among the Peoples of Asia*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia (1997) Malaysian penal code. Available at: <http://www.agc.gov.my/Akta/Vol.%2012/Act%20574.pdf> (accessed 24 July 2013).
- The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia (2006) Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997. Available at: <http://www.agc.gov.my/Akta/Vol.%2012/Act%20559.pdf> (accessed 9 June 2013).
- The Star Online (2013) 16,000 attend seminars on how to curb LGBT. *The Star Online*, 1st February. Available at: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2013/2/1/nation/12655988&sec=nation> (accessed 1 June 2013).
- Wu R (2000) *Liberating the Church from Fear: The Story of Hong Kong's Sexual Minorities*. Kowloon, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Women Christian Council.
- Yip AKT (1997) Dare to differ: Gay and lesbian Catholics' assessment of official Catholic positions on sexuality. *Sociology of Religion* 58(2): 165–180.
- Zainah A (2005) Law-making in the name of Islam: Implications for democratic governance. In: Nathan KS and Kamali MH (eds) *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 121–134.

Author biography

Joseph N Goh is a Lecturer in Gender Studies at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia. He holds a PhD in gender, sexuality and theology, and his research interests include queer and LGBTI studies, human rights and sexual health issues, diverse theological and religious studies, and qualitative research. Goh is the co-editor of *Queering Migrations Towards, From, and Beyond Asia* (2014), and his work has appeared in numerous journals including *Theology & Sexuality*, *Dialog* and *Sexualities*. His personal weblog is at <http://josephgoh.org>.