

# Being and Performing the Masculinity in Karim Raslan's *Go East*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the concept of being and performing masculinity in Karim Raslan's short story *Go East*. Torn between being a man in his own terms and performing socially endorsed masculine roles and sexual desires, the protagonist, Mahmud, negotiates and transgresses gender borders, resulting in his inability to sexually perform with women and incapacity for emotional and physical intimacy with men. Yet, he overcomes his impotence through heterosexual intercourse despite imagining making love to men.

**Key words:** masculinity, male homosociality, homosexuality, homoeroticism, gender borders

Male masculinity is complex and fluid. Connell discerned that masculinity, or more specifically (Western) hegemonic masculinity "encapsulate [s] both the diversity and potential fluidity of the processes involved in men being men" (quoted in Pease and Pringle, 2001, p. 2). However, this concept does not represent other forms of masculinities, for instance, the non-Western and non-hegemonic forms. This may have contributed to Connell's idea on a global expansion of researches on men and masculinities that would represent more diverse, complex and fluid forms of masculinities from around the world. The only setback to this is the relatively small and inadequate number of researches on the subject matter that have been carried out in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The dearth of research in this area especially in the Southeast Asian countries is readily informed by, among others, the lack of concern over gender and sexuality issues in Malaysia.<sup>2</sup> On similar note, men in

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<sup>1</sup> See Taga (2004), for a review on men and masculinities studies in East Asia.

<sup>2</sup> See Peletz (1996), for his analysis on reason and passion, and the representation of gender in Malay society.