

Sexual Identities Of The Malay Male In Karim Raslan's *Go East* And *Neighbours*

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Abstract

This paper explores the construction of sexual identities of fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short stories *Go East* and *Neighbours*. It begins with a discussion on the complexity and fluidity of male sexuality and how it is mediated through the absence and presence of homosexuality, men's articulation of sexuality in the public and private realms and men's fear and insecurity in developing intimate relationship with each other. The paper then presents a brief overview of the depictions of male sexuality in Malaysian literature in English, which is followed by discussions on the absence and presence of homosexuality in *Go East* and the transgression of male sexuality in *Neighbours*. The paper concludes that fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives not only transgress the concept of male sexuality but also the socio-cultural and religious norms and boundaries, offering alternative insights into mainstream ideas about sexuality and sexual identity in the contemporary Malaysian society.

Keywords: male sexuality, homosexuality, gay male sexuality, transgenderism

Introduction

This paper explores the construction of sexual identities of Malay men in Karim Raslan's short stories *Go East* and *Neighbours*. It examines fictional Malay male sexual identities in relation to the complex and fluid concept of male sexuality and sexual identity. The depiction of male sexual identities in the short narratives will be closely examined in terms of the absence and presence of male homosexuality, how male characters articulate their sexuality in the public and private realms, the fear and insecurity when they intimately relate with each other.

The changing sexual behaviours of men and women in contemporary times have been documented in literary works by Malaysian writers in English. However, discussions on male sexualities in these works are relatively inadequate compared to those that focus on fictional representation of female identity and sexuality.¹ Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the sexual identities of fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives with an aim to provide alternative insights into the mainstream views about male sexuality and sexual identity in the contemporary Malay(sian) society.

¹ See Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf and M.A. Quayum (2001), for an insightful analysis of Malaysian women's writings in English