

Imagining the Other:
Non-Fiction Media & the Politics of Gender & Sexuality

This paper focuses on multi-platform non-fiction films and features that center around and address questions of non-normative sexuality and gender variance in the non-Western world and/or its diaspora. These non-fiction media directed toward and easily available online for transnational audiences function as discursive nodes that enable, constitute, and produce a universal discourse of non-normative gender and sexuality aligned with the politics of sexual citizenship in the Euro-American center. Any deviations from such universal ideals present the dilemma of lack with no recourse to context or history. The value of the center's preeminence and abundance is constructed in comparison to the inadequacies and deficiencies that constitute the other. Others are configured as lagging behind in the first in Euro-America and then elsewhere structure of time foreclosing other possibilities of gender variance and non-normative sexuality outside of its temporal schema. The arrival of the other on the platform of modern gender and sexual citizenship is constantly delayed by their lack. While contemporary gender and sexual politics within Euro-American center retains its capacity for critique, introspection, and transformation, the transnational media deploy tropes that devoid its non-Western others of any epistemological agency, historical specificity, and contextual complexity. This paper highlights such discourses of exclusion and belonging that these media enable within the frameworks of freedom and oppression, abundance and lack, and timeliness and belatedness. In this paper, I closely read documentary films and features such as *Transgenders: Pakistan's Open Secret* (2011), *Oriented* (2015), and *How Gay is Pakistan* (2015) and demonstrate how they function individually as well as in cohesion with one another to produce a dominant discourse.

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Bio:

Shehram Mokhtar is a doctoral candidate in media studies at the University of Oregon. Trained in film/television production, he has taught in media and communication departments in the United States and Pakistan. He works as a teaching fellow in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Oregon. His research interests in media, performance, and cultural studies lie at the intersection of gender and sexuality studies, transnational politics, and postcolonial theory. His dissertation project examines discourses of non-normative gender embodiments and sexuality as produced, represented, performed, and contested in the figure of *khwaja sira* in Pakistan.