

# On the Phenomenon of "Gender Reversal" from the Perspective of Gender Performance Theory

## -- Take the Example of Tik Tok Named "Duoyu and Maomao Sister"

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### Abstract

The article starts with the phenomenon of male anti-stringing, and selects Tik Tok named "Duoyu and Maomao Sister" as a research case. Borrowing Judith Butler's "Gender Acting Theory", on the one hand, it analyzes in depth from the two dimensions of drama and ceremony. "Maomao Sister" uses the performance of the subject's identity, the parody of individual costumes, and ritualized inquiries, etc, Shows its breakthroughs and disciplines in the construction of social gender. On the other hand, through the phenomenon of "male reversal" gender inversion in the media, it further dialectically reflect on its social significance. The integrity of gender cross-talk performance requires the presence of performers and long-term audience recognition, and the hidden capital and commercial operation crisis cannot be ignored.

### Keywords

Gender Performance; Drama; Ritual; Gender Reversal.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of the mobile Internet and self-media, a large number of counter-influencers have appeared on the social platforms of major variety show collections. Among them, male-dominated cross-string performances have become more active, such as "Ka Fei" (played by Song Xiaobao), "Han Meijuan" (Han Peiquan), "Zhu Bishi" (played by Luo Zhixiang) and other series of gender-reversed roles are deeply loved by the audience. "Duoyu and Maomao Sister" on the Tik Tok platform has entered the general public's attention since 2018. So far, it has about 32.887 million fans and 470 million likes. Yu Zhaohe, a funny blogger who pretends to be a woman and plays two roles, freely switch between "Duoyu" and "Maomao". His performance not only did not arouse the audience's disgust, but reflected the gender reversal under the traditional dual gender norm. The trend of popularity and naturalization. The interesting test it brings is: Can gender really be performed? What impact does the gender shaping and maintenance of the rebels have on the construction of social gender? What social significance and problems does the performance of gender inversion in the perspective of contemporary media reflect?

## 2. Research on Gender Performance and Gender Reversal

### 2.1. Theoretical Perspective of Gender Performance

"Gender performance" was put forward by the famous contemporary American queer theorist Judith Butler in the book "Gender Trouble". It is a very important and representative proposition in the field of gender research. In 1993, Butler criticized the voluntarism of gender in her book "The Importance of the Body", aiming to explore the initiative of the body in the

formation of gender identity, with particular attention to the relationship between the materiality of the body and the performance of gender. She believes that the so-called inner essence of gender is only a product in the process of construction. In other words, gender is not a pre-existing essence. The repetition of male or female behavior is subject to discourse rules and practices, which is the continuous discourse norm. Stylize the body by gender, and gradually gain the temporary stability of gender. Just as Beauvoir said in the book "Second Sex": "A person is not born to be a woman, but actually becomes a woman."

The acceptance and understanding of this theory in my country is relatively late, and most of them are discussing the interpretation of theoretical connotation, essence, or ethical issues, and the theory is mostly combined with literary and artistic works to explore the role structure and meaning in the works. Looking at the domestic research results on gender performance theory, it is found that the research results are not rich, and mostly stay on the analysis of theoretical concepts, and the research on the application level is insufficient, especially the explanatory power of social phenomena is more difficult to show in the research. . This article starts from the phenomenon of gender reversal in Tik Tok , and makes an in-depth interpretation of it based on the two perspectives of drama and ritual in gender performances.

## **2.2. Research on Gender Reversal**

Gender reversal can be traced back to the "Dan Kun Sheng" in the traditional Chinese opera art. It refers to a cross-dressing performance in which an actor crosses the physical gender boundary. The author searched China HowNet for the term "gender cross-strings", and the results mainly focused on traditional dramas, literature, film and television dramas, works, variety shows and other gender cross-strings phenomenon, as well as reflections on gender cross-strings phenomenon. Following the popularity of Leslie Cheung, Brigitte Lin, and Ye Tong in the 1980s and 1990s, the role played by Hong Kong and Taiwan film and television dramas, by the turn of the century, gender-reverse drama began to be "post-modern". "Everyone has both male and female temperaments, and the awakening of intersex temperament brings aesthetic diversity. "With the development of media technology, new technology empowers the "performers". In the new environment of gender cross-talk performance, various cross-talk images have sprung up, and it has become meaningful to study the construction mechanism and social value behind it. The proposition.

## **3. The Gender Construction of "Duoyu and Maomao Sister" in the Tik Tok**

### **3.1. The Construction of Gender under the Influence of the Drama Dimension**

The drama dimension represents the performance phenomenon of gender performance practice. In "Gender Trouble", Butler tries to argue that gender is a behavior, a process, not a being. Under the discourse manipulation of the hegemonic language world, gender has always existed relatively stably. The dramatic dimension of gender ethics theory mainly includes two aspects: subject identity and individual disguise.

#### **3.1.1. The Performance of the Subject's Identity**

Butler will have pointed out that gender does not simply point to an entity being, but instead focuses on integrations that have a specific relationship between culture and history. The identity of the subject in society is not established, nor is there an inevitable connection between it and gender, but is presented due to the characteristics of performance. That is to say, in the context of real life, a person can become a woman with masculine characteristics, or a man with feminine characteristics.

For the selection and construction of the subject, the biggest feature of the blogger Yu Zhaohe is to imitate the image with his body. In the video, it subdivides female subjects by analogy, including flight attendants, students, young women, middle-aged aunts, urban women, rural

women, etc., which capture, imitate, and perform specific "female figures" for vivid entertainment. The bloggers under the personal setting of "Maomao Sister" often blink their eyes and squeeze their mouths when speaking, and they have a sharp tone and extremely fast speech. They have abundant body movements, such as covering their mouths, turning their eyes, covering their chests, and touching. Hair, sobbing, wiping tears, shyness and other actions show a series of feminine characteristics. For example, in a post on "The difference between my cousin and I eating meals" posted on November 2, 2018, Yu Zhaohe used exaggerated gestures, movements, and eye expressions to imitate "Maomao Sister"'s eating phase, which made it feminine. The morphological interpretation is in place. In addition, on the basis of its own biological sex, it has a degree of control over the male subject of "redundancy", and even the male and female protagonists can be freely switched with the "story" in the interpretation of the same video. The separation of a single individual between male and female subjects itself shows that social gender is constructive. In the construction of gender, Yu Zhaohe not only visualizes the body, but also emphasizes the feminization of the "heart". She is good at interpreting the state transitions of a class of female subjects in a certain situation or at different time stages. For example, in the video "Doesn't you look like you who chased a drama recently", the girl played by "Maomao Sister" speaks herself in front of the TV. Language, emotions follow the ups and downs of the plot. And in other videos, the "Maomao Sister" who quarreled with her boyfriend, the "Maomao Sister" who was compared in front of the little sisters, etc. performed exaggerated and realistic details. Obviously, the reason for the popularity of such videos is not the personality of "Maomao Sister", but the unified capture of socially constructed female identity performances by bloggers and concentrated presentations through short videos. Yu Zhaohe is often able to stand from the perspective of women and reveal the female psychology, to assimilate the female identity of "body" and "heart", thus arousing the love and resonance of the audience.

### 3.1.2. Parody of Individual Costumes

In the book "Gender Trouble", there are also remarks on the discussion of "dressing". In Butler's view, "dressing" is to dress oneself with clothing that is different from the individual's physical gender style, and its purpose is to distinguish between active and passive individuals. Attributes. Blogger Yu Zhaohe's individual dress is undoubtedly an extension of his performing body. In many videos, he always retains the exaggerated orange wig and feminine makeup, and he often dresses up with feminine props such as skirts, strapless outfits, and bags. For example, in the video on "How to Become the Queen of the Night Club", she used a measuring tape to draw a three-centimeter thick eyeliner, and wears "dog eye" bulb earrings to portray the image of the nightclub queen. After a series of individual dressing behaviors, the dressing of a female gender is parodied, and the vividness of the appearance allows the femininity of the performance to be better displayed in front of the audience.

## 3.2. Gender Construction under the Influence of the Ritual Dimension

The ritual dimension represents the reality of time and space of a gender cultural concept and belief. "Exercise can never be understood as a single or deliberate action, but should be viewed as a repetition and quotation of what is declared to be generated by discourse."

That is to say, in the process of women being "feminized", the generation from "he" to "she" is not achieved by a single inquiry, but the effect of repeated "feminization" to strengthen and consolidate. Regarding "inquiry", Butler further demonstrated the concept of French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser: when a baby was born, when the doctor told us it was a "male" or "female", This seemingly simple statement already has the function of inquiring. If this is a baby girl, then there will be beautiful rubber bands, cute dolls, beautiful skirts, bright lipsticks and other things to accompany her on her growth path. Parents will also demand and

love her in accordance with the standards of girls. In this way, the emergence of a female body is obviously a process of being "feminized" by various symbols.

Through the role construction of "Duoyu and Maomao Sister", it can be found that there is an "inquiry" of gender in itself. In a small theater with a vertical screen of just 59 seconds, the opening remarks of "Maomao Sister" often begin with sentences such as "The girl is...", "Your girlfriend...", "Your little sister..." While initiating a dialogue with each "you" in front of the screen, the audience is actually "inquired" in advance, and the following performance is based on the audience's preset foundation. When Yu Zhaohe portrays a series of images in the plot, such as "woman who breaks up", "woman who sings," "woman who shoppers", etc., the sense of public identity gained also shows that social groups are stereotyped about "women" impression. This impression has been around for a long time, so that the audience can have the so-called gender resonance in watching. Therefore, based on time accumulation, gender undergoes a ritualized evolution, which is what Barrett calls the historicity of gender.

## **4. Reflections on the Performance of Gender Inversion from the Media Perspective**

### **4.1. Increasing Tolerance of Androgyny Integration**

It can be seen from the performance of the performers who are performing gender-crossing performances, which actually challenge the boundaries of the traditional duality of gender. In the past, people strictly followed social norms and shaped their gender performances according to the roles of men and women. In the current society, the society as a whole has become more tolerant of the so-called "gender cross-border", and adopts an attitude of acceptance, recognition and even appreciation of male feminine or female masculine performers. In addition, performances provide the imagination of gender transcendence that is difficult to achieve in real space, express people's desire for transcendence, and are a means of struggling to stretch human desires and happy channels, and can even obtain an aesthetic experience and achieve a super-real carnival. The image of "Maomao Sister" not only satisfies the audience's cross-domain desire for gender boundaries, but also breaks through the rigid dogma of traditional dual gender role norms, providing a concrete sustenance for the ideological emancipation of men and women.

### **4.2. Utilization of Capital and Commercial Power**

One thing that is undeniable is that the performance of "Male Reverse" utilizes the audience's curiosity and desire for consumption, and the comedic effect shown in the ugly appraisal, to further harvest capital through technical weighting. "In a consumer society, the body is the last commodity. The body replaces the soul in the consumer era, making the body present a fundamental trend of capitalization. "Through Yu Zhaohe's video, we can find that it is backed by a professional team. After "Duoyu and Maomao Sister" became popular, Wuyou Media spotted its development prospects and signed it. The Internet company is a company. A brokerage company with the core means of cultivating internet celebrities. In related interviews, Yu Zhaohe also revealed that he earns one million a month, and that he uses professional and modular operation methods to attract the attention of the audience and cannot get rid of the important goal of profitability. As Pierre Burdi once said, "In the era of consumption, business logic has eroded and penetrated various cultural production sites. "As an audience, you can also find that even in the Tik Tok platform, there are always the same female images as cultural consumer goods every day, and the modularized production will eventually lead to the homogenization of cultural products related to women, so that continuously enhance the audience's identity for gender identity.

### 4.3. Evidence under the Time and Space Ceremony

Through the phenomenon of "gender reversal" in the example of "Duoyu and Maomao Sister", the analysis found that social gender can be constructed, and this construction also includes the solidification and blurring of gender boundaries. On the surface, the reverse acting of male anchors like "Maomao Sister" seems to be subverting established gender norms and blurring the boundaries between men and women, but their interpretation itself implies gender awareness shaped by traditional social and cultural concepts. Rather than saying that Yu Zhaohe is shaping the image of "Maomao Sister", it is better to repeat the rhetoric about women left over from history, which is a rough personification and symbolization of women's emotional roles. On the one hand, it corroborates the performance of gender in the theory of gender performance. On the other hand, it further proves that performances under time and space rituals have a deep-rooted influence on the construction of social gender.

The reverse image of "Maomao Sister" actually requires not only the performance of the performer's gender reverse image, but also the audience's prior recognition of the image and the society's review of the performance. In social media, the mutual construction and mutual influence between the two are particularly obvious, which also makes the gender cross-talk performance come to an end again and again.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

This research uses the theory of gender performance to explore how Yu Zhaohe's gender cross-talk image is constructed from the performance of the subject's identity and the parody of individual costumes through the analysis of the case of "Duoyu and Maomao Sister" gender cross-string performance. In addition, from the perspective of ritual, it is found that the essence of gender cross-string performance is still inseparable from the traditional gender dualism. That is to say: Sex is a historical and cultural variable, and sex can be shaped. It is the expectations, requirements and restrictions of society that lead to a fixed gender role model of physical sex. In addition, we should look at the phenomenon of gender inversion in the media perspective dialectically. On the one hand, it reflects the more open positive migration of social views to a certain extent, but on the other hand, we should not ignore the operational use of social capital. It is bound to bring all kinds of ills under the business model.

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