

Negotiating Visibility: Female Audience Interpretations and Performance Strategies in Douyin Cross-Dressing Parody — Taking Goose Mum as a Case Study

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Abstract

Short-video platforms have become important arenas for public expression, while their commercial logics, social norms, and governance structures shape how gender minorities become visible. Taking the Douyin cross-dressing parody creator Goose Mum as a case study, this paper examines how the creator constructs visibility and how female viewers interpret the performance. It combines digital ethnography, feminist critical discourse analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with ten female viewers. The findings show that Goose Mum's online visibility relies on a composite strategy rather than a singular expression of identity. Exaggerated bodily presentation, explicit language, and boundary-crossing behaviour attract attention, while narratives of vulnerability and emotional expression invite empathy and make the performance socially legible. Female viewers mainly follow two overlapping interpretive pathways. A critical reading focuses on misogyny, performative artificiality, authenticity, and commercial motives; an affective reading produces limited sympathy through recognition of marginalised circumstances and the desire to be seen. These responses often coexist rather than forming stable positions of support or rejection. The paper therefore argues that cross-dressing parody on Douyin should be understood neither as a purely liberating practice nor as a one-way effect of discipline. Instead, it is a negotiated process continually produced and re-signified through the interaction of platform mechanisms, social structure, creator strategies, and audience interpretation.

Keywords: Digital Ethnography; Digital Masquerade; Gender Legibility; Platform Governance; Spectacle