

# Making Gender Reels

By Laura Stamm



As a fantasy structure, film acts as a privileged medium to conceive of formations, including identity formations, which are otherwise unthinkable under dominant ideology. Film may be a series of images composed for human entertainment, but as Susan Hayward states, "film is not just film, it is also the nexus of text relations which function as fantasy structures enunciating unconscious desire" (Hayward 109). That is, film possesses the potential to show sublimated and repressed desires, such as the spectator's desire for alternative gender performances. Works like *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2001) and *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998) illuminate identities that celebrate the fluidity of gender performance and a refusal to be contained by social norms. While all of these films show the normalizing forces of regimes such as the family, a national imaginary, and hate crime violence, performance serves as way to imagine identity formations that dominant culture renders abject. Performances within these films visualize an "outside" to the reality that rigidly defines intelligible bodies—particularly, the trans body. Whereas the surgicalized body is connected to structural norms, music represents a place for the freeing up of gender and, in this manner, functions as a transforming lexicon. By labeling the filmic language of these texts a transforming lexicon, I mean to say that the use of music and performance in these two films forms a vocabulary of social transformation. *Hedwig* and *Velvet Goldmine* communicate visualize for their spectator embodiments of gender identities that dominant discourses do not make render invisible.

The transsexual body is often equated with a surgicalized body, meaning that the trans body is only a thinkable body in its post-operative form. Moreover, the trans body becomes defined by surgery and this association according to Nikki Sullivan, "on the upside, . . . makes visible significantly different forms of non-normative embodiment that require quite different responses, but on the downside, it tends to forge what in time comes to be an almost inextricable link between transsexualism and surgery" (Sullivan 104). This rigid definition of transsexuality as a post-operative, "corrected" body is limiting because it promotes a body strictly defined as male or female, thus reinforcing binaristic conceptions of gender in which one must adhere to one of two overdetermined genders. The medical discourse surrounding transsexuality functions to limit the range of gender intelligibility available for the transsexual body and identifies it as either transmale or transfemale, or more accurately male or female. Post-operative identities as male or female actually function to erase the "trans" part of this identity such that the trans individual becomes a "normal" man or woman. This type of normality that erases the "transness" forms part of a larger grid heteronormativity in which compulsory heterosexuality dictates many operative decisions. Emily Skidmore in her analysis of the "good transsexual" describes one transwoman whose "decision to get sex reassignment surgery out of her allegiance to heteronormativity" (Skidmore 281). Under these structures, in order to be seen as a "normal" person worthy of love and affection, the trans body must be a post-operative body.

This idea of "normal" relies on the notion that there is a "not-normal" or "wrong" body. The medical community has encouraged the notion of gender reassignment surgery as corrective, implying that one must belong solely to the category of male or female to function in society. Sullivan states, "those desiring surgery or hormone therapy must meet various requirements, and basically prove that they are in the 'wrong body', and that surgical intervention will 'rectify' this 'problem'" (Sullivan 104). This notion of gender ambiguity as a "problem" establishes binaristic gender as the norm and all other gender expressions as a violation of it. In "The Empire Strikes Back," Sandy Stone describes medical discourses governed by cultural norms that act as "the force of an imperative—a natural state toward which all things tend—to deny the potentialities of mixture, acts to preserve 'pure' gender identity" (226). This preservation of a pure or true gender serves to close down the possibilities for gender play—possibilities that create a multiplicity of thinkable gender identities. Gender reassignment surgery, therefore, functions as a means of perpetuating the gender norms that close down the possibilities for ambiguity opened up by more fluid trans identities.

In "The Question of Social Transformation," Judith Butler describes the way in which normality operates as exclusionary and violent, stating "norms are what govern 'intelligible' life, 'real' men, and 'real' women. And that when we defy these norms, it is unclear whether we are still living, or ought to be, whether our lives are valuable, or can be made to be, whether our genders are real, or can ever be regarded as such" ("The Question" 206). Social norms then produce discourses and ideologies that police gender performance. Medical discourse is far from free of these discourses and as such, medical language and operations function to police the trans body; consequently, "for the most part, the medical establishment (and the values and beliefs that inform its practice) is intolerant of, and works to annihilate or 'rectify' ambiguity of any kind. In this sense, sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy could be said to play a normalizing, corrective role" (Sullivan 107). Ambiguous gender must be corrected so that the trans person convincingly performs a thinkable gender. In order to be seen as a human, one must be intelligible as either an adherence to social norms or a violation of social norms. The danger of social norms is seen as a violation of gender norms risks severe consequences that pose a threat to survival and the ability to lead a livable life. Intelligibility, here, directly corresponds to visibility: bodies that are unintelligible become invisible. Without visible alternative bodies and embodiments, it is nearly impossible to conceive of new identities. However, film provides a way to imagine what different gender formations could look like, and I will now turn to the two films *Hedwig* and *the Angry Inch* and *Velvet Goldmine* to demonstrate how these films perform this work. More specifically, I will look at how music and performance function as privileged spaces for the materialization of subversive embodiments.

In looking at use of performances in the two films, I want to note how these musical spectacles both do and do not explain gender

performance, which I will address from a position informed by Judith Butler's writing. To describe Butlerian gender performance, it is first useful to mention that gender performance and drag (or in the case of these films, literal onstage performance) are not synonymous terms; drag may act as a hyperbolized de-naturalization of gender performance but holds little relevance for everyday acts. Instead, gender performance includes acts that are citational of heteronormative gender ideals of "masculinity" and "femininity". Reiterations of these simulacral (copy without an origin) acts constitute gender performativity—the narrative of performances that allow a subject to perceive a "true" or "essential" gender identity. Butler describes the compulsion to "perform": "If a regime of sexuality mandates a compulsory performance of sex, then it may be only through that performance that the binary system of gender and the binary system of sex come to have intelligibility at all" ("Imitation and Gender" 318). In other words, binaristic gender identities are not "natural" but discursively constructed by (heteronormative) regimes of sexuality. The musical performances in the two films I will discuss do not act as a literal model of gender acquisition, but instead, they both de-naturalize heteronormative gender identities and make visible previously unseen gender performances. The fantasy space of musical performance creates a space for the spectator to view subjectivities and embodiments that reality renders unthinkable.

The temporal similarities of the two films, both in their time of production and the historical time periods they represent, reflect the hope presented in the two films for not only socially accepted but celebrated gender fluidity. Both films were produced in the late 90s-early 2000s—*Velvet Goldmine* in 1998 and *Hedwig* in 2001—around the time that transgender studies emerged as a legitimate academic field growing in popularity. The new writings under the umbrella of transgender studies expressed the desire for new theoretical positions, along with heterogeneity of embodiments. In the landmark 1998 Transgender Issue of the journal *GLQ*, "Susan Stryker writes that 'as a field, transgender studies promises to offer important new insights into such fundamental questions as how bodies mean or what constitutes human personhood'" (qtd. in Valentine 146). This vision of a sort of queer utopia in which multiplicity and alterity replace normality echoes the visions of a sexual revolution in the 1970s. Both films show the 70s with a sense of pastness, but a past full of hope and possibility that is foreclosed some ten or so years later. *Hedwig* sets *Hedwig's* childhood in the early 70s, showing the decade as reflective of the dreams of *Hedwig's* youthful mind. *Velvet Goldmine* is set mostly in the early 70s, but the film presents this era through the lens of recovering the true story of the disappearance of Brian Slade ten years after the fact. Both films reference a specific aspect of the early 70s—the glam rock phenomenon popularized by stars like David Bowie. Glam rock embodied all of the 70s faith in a sexual revolution as it became the sphere of sexual openness and queer gender presentations. The male pop idols that perpetuated this style of music and dress dared to don extravagant costuming, including full make-up, glitter sequins, long hair, and even dresses. This fluidity of gender identity that

characterized glam rock serves as a historical predecessor to the optimism surrounding the emergence of transgender studies in the late 90s-early 2000s.

Yet, I do not solely attribute the subversiveness of glam rock to costume; I argue that the music itself played a very significant role in the political work glam rock performed. By featuring musical performances as the axis on which the film turns, Hedwig and Velvet Goldmine emphasize the importance of music. Music functions differently than spoken language. As Adorno explains, "music is similar to language in that it is a temporal succession of articulated sounds that are more than just sound. They say something, often something humane" (401). Music does not depend on a fixed meaning like language often does; instead, music permits and plays off a slippage of meaning. This slippage or multiplicity of meaning mirrors the subversive and multiple gender identities performed in glam rock and cited in the two films. Accordingly, in both Hedwig and Velvet Goldmine, music and spectacular performance present a means for creating newly visible gender performances.

In Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Hedwig (John Cameron Mitchell) is a transgender lead-performer of a rock band whose story is told through a series of tour performances. Born in East Berlin as a boy named Hansel, Hedwig undergoes a sex change operation during his mid-twenties when he falls in love with an American member of the army (Luther) stationed in Germany. Hedwig agrees to the surgery so that the pair can marry and flee to the United States together, but unfortunately, the operation does not go as planned and Hedwig is left with an "angry inch." As Hedwig's life is told through flashback, her band continues on a musical tour that coincides with the tour of her former lover, Tommy Gnosis (Michael Pitt)—a boy who she once loved but abandoned her, taking both her heart and her songs.

In the film, the juxtaposition of music and the surgicalized body illuminates the difference between the fantasy space of performance and the limits of intelligibility enforced on the body. Hedwig's surgicalized body has been limited to the understanding afforded by the medical discourses of transsexuality; one can either be a "corrected" man or woman, or risk falling out of the category of human. In this manner, Hedwig's surgicalized body in the film functions as a stand in for the rigid structural norms. Hedwig's post-operative body, including her "angry inch," reflects the limits of intelligibility: Hedwig is not understandable as either a man or woman. The pain and scars of the surgery stand in as an allegory for the violence done by regulatory discourses. For "when gender norms operate as violations, they function as an interpellation that one refuses only by agreeing to pay the consequences: losing one's job, home, the prospects for desire, or for life" (Butler, "The Question" 214). Hedwig's "angry inch" operates as a figuration of these consequences of norm violation as her surgicalized body falls out of the sphere of visibility. Nevertheless, the colloquial classification of Hedwig's botched surgery as an "angry inch" subverts medical language as well. In doing so,

this naming seems to mock corrective sex reassignment surgery that aims at perfection, parodying claims like "not an inch left" for male-to-female patients' successful surgeries.

## HEDWIG

The structural norms that define the body are also figured in the figurations and symbols of nationalism throughout the film for both America and Germany (Berlin). For example, the film opens with the patriotic song "America, the Beautiful" and the first scene features Hedwig decked out in patriotic regalia. As Hedwig takes the stage in the opening performance, she dons a denim rhinestoned costume complimented by a cape-like addition emblazoned with the words "Yankee Go Home with Me." These Americana signifiers are contrasted with reminders of Hedwig's German origins as she sings the song "Tear Me Down" that describes her former life in Berlin and ability to endure everything that has been thrown her way. The title of the song alludes to the Berlin Wall and Hedwig is compared to the wall repeatedly. Notably, Hedwig was born the same year (1961) that Germany constructed the Berlin Wall. The wall with its division of East and West Berlin comes to stand in for Hedwig's uneasy position on the borderlines of man and woman. After the show, Hedwig and the band retreat to the Americana Motel, reinforcing the scenes explicit references to national identity.

Throughout the film, Hedwig aspires to an American fantasy, and it is partially the pursuit of this very fantasy that leads to Hedwig's surgery. In order to marry Luther and come to America, Hedwig is subjected to a botched surgery; this marriage, though, quickly falls apart after Luther brings Hedwig to the States. Hedwig's surgery reflects the narrative of the "good transsexual" woman—the "white transwomen...able to articulate transsexuality as an acceptable subject position through an embodiment of the norms of white womanhood, most notably domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality" (Skidmore 271). Yet after these dreams of domesticity fail to materialize, Hedwig withdraws from an unaccepting society as a sad and lonely outcast. Luther, in fact, runs off with a young boy and abandons Hedwig in a trailer in Junction City, Kansas. In the scene of this abandonment, immediately after he leaves, Hedwig turns to the news on the television to see footage of the Berlin Wall being torn down. The wall acts a visual reminder of the sacrifices Hedwig made in pursuit of the American fantasy. This moment of hopelessness, though, transitions to a performance of the song "Wig in a Box" and the trailer becomes a stage; one side opens up and lights surround the perimeter of

the mobile home-cum-performance space. The band takes over the trailer in what becomes an over-the-top show with Hedwig appearing in a costume made of blond wigs at the song's close. Thus, the American fantasy that Hedwig envisions as a new better life forms nothing more than a collection of norms whose violence become figured in Hedwig's botched surgery. The only way for Hedwig to find happiness and acceptance is through creating and performing music.

The contrast of Hedwig's heartbreak and the lively performance demonstrate that while the American fantasy does enact a certain violence, music as a fantasy space opens up the possibility of gender ambiguity and freeing up of desires. According to Butler, "fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise. Fantasy is what establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points, it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home" ("The Question" 217). Music functions as a way access to this fantasy. The film visually depicts this entryway in the dreamlike sequences during Hedwig's (then Hansel's) childhood when he retreats to the kitchen oven as an escape from a harsh reality. The oven is in rich *mise-en-scène* as it is filled with a radio and colorful photos of music icons, such as David Bowie and acts as an unconventional space for fantasy. When Hansel, needs to retreat from the his screaming parents or life's other unpleasantries, he crawls into his only private space in the house and dreamily slips into the music of David Bowie, Lou Reed, and Iggy Pop played on an American music station. The radio, along with images of music icons, proves the oven to not only be a sphere of music, but also a sphere for Hansel to take comfort in the dream world that glam rock provides.

Throughout the film, Hedwig embodies an unconventional gender performance as (s)he is never specified as either a man or a transwoman. Yet, Hedwig is often strongly coded as either masculine or feminine. During the majority of the film, and particularly in musical performances, Hedwig's make-up, costuming, and wigs signify an excess of femininity similar to that of a the glam rock stars of the 70s. The abundance of glitter, color, and exposed skin reflect the performative nature of gender and the fantasy involved in Hedwig's music. When on stage, Hedwig performs a multiplicity of identities—all subversive by virtue of their sheer excess; here while performing, the limits of normality imposed on the surgicalized body do not contain or restrict Hedwig's gender identity. This freedom within the space of Hedwig's music appears at the end of the film as Hedwig's gender presentation rapidly transforms with the performance of "Midnight Radio." In the final scenes of the film, we see Hedwig coded as a man as (s)he is stripped of feminine clothing, wig, and excessive make-up. In fact, Hedwig appears to be the visual double of former lover Tommy Gnosis, sharing his attributes including his shirtless chest, short hair, and

silver cross on his forehead. This visual doubling suggests that performance opens up the freeing of gender acquisition, even allowing for the melancholic incorporation of a former lover to be literalized on the body.

This final scene proves Hedwig's music as a fantasy space not only for Hedwig alone, but also for those around her—including the spectator, as the scene's attention to the crowd pulls the spectator in as part of Hedwig's audience. Her partner, Krzysztof (Rob Campbell), exemplifies this influence of Hedwig's performance as he feels free to act out a feminine gender performance at the end of the film, even donning a platinum blond wig and pink sequin dress as he crowd surfs across the audience. This scene reinforces Hedwig's music as a transforming lexicon and a space for the freeing up of gender play. Krzysztof's transformation shows the "transing" power of Hedwig's music for all around her including the audience of the performances and the film's spectator. Hedwig's music embodies the space where "the body is that which can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norms, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation" (Butler, "The Question" 217). Musical performance envisions corporeal possibilities unconstrained by social norms and in this regard, Hedwig's music acts as a rupture in the film that makes room for queering its spectator.

Todd Haynes's *Velvet Goldmine* actively performs a similar queering of its spectator. The film tells the story of journalist Arthur Stuart (Christian Bale) as he works on a story about glam rock legend Brian Slade (Jonathan Rhys Meyers). Arthur, a former Slade fan or, more accurately, fanatic, is assigned the task of finding out the "truth" about the enigmatic star as ten years earlier, Slade constructed his own onstage assassination and subsequently retreated from the public eye. Arthur's investigation shapes a telling of the rise and fall of the 1970s glam rock counterculture filtered through the lens of stars Brian Slade and Curt Wild (Ewan McGregor), major influencer and eventual cohort of Slade. Yet, the film also "parallels Slade's ascent to stardom with Arthur's memories of 'all the things' of his lost youth at odds with normative culture, especially his now repressed fandom and queer sexuality" (Bennett 28). For the film tells the tale of a glam rock icon while paying attention to the followers his music inspired and transformed.

*Velvet Goldmine*

In discussing *Velvet Goldmine* in this context of "transing" musical performance, I want to be explicit about it is important to acknowledge the fact that it does not portray characters that are explicitly trans, much less identified as transgender. Instead, the film depicts men who rebelliously break with heteronormative gender presentations, wearing extravagant costumes, full faces of make-up, long hair, and articles of clothing like dresses that are considered exclusively designed for women. These gender identities would in contemporary language likely be referred to as genderqueer, though many transgender studies scholars began to write about the political efficacy of those who blur gender lines around the time of the film's production. For instance, "texts like Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* (1996)...makes a case for everyone who transgresses gender norms ('from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman,' as its subtitle states) as *transgender Warriors*" (Valentine 148). In what morphs into a not-so-thinly-veiled David Bowie biopic, the world of glitter, oil, heavy makeup, and erotic performance becomes the sphere for gender subversion.

The film begins with plain white text on a black screen with the words: "Although what you are about to see is a work of fiction, it should nevertheless be played at maximum volume." From the outset, *Velvet Goldmine* demands its spectator's total engagement and participation in the film to come. With the film's attention to identity construction and transformation, along with the viewer's suturing into Arthur's gaze, it opens up the possibility for the spectator to fully engage with the queering or "transing" experience of the text. While the characters in the film always seem to search for "others like me," the spectator becomes a part of this world of "others".

The first scenes of the film establish the theme of a succession of "others like me," forming a significant intertext, as the first character shown is a very young Oscar Wilde. This allusion to Wilde, the nineteenth-century poet and playwright who infamously imprisoned for acts of sodomy, links the story of Brian Slade to a history of queer artistic creators. Wilde's involvement in aestheticism produces another important link to the glam rock movement that would follow some hundred years later. The film's brief inclusion of Wilde as a child features him in a grade school classroom exposed to the normalizing regimes that police gender and sexuality. This single scene reveals a brief but poignant moment of his

childhood. This moment takes the form of a school setting in which the students in Oscar's classroom stand up one-by-one and announce what they want to be when they grow up. Each boy announces an average, respectable career like farmer or truck driver; Oscar, on the other hand, states "I want to be a pop idol." With this declaration, the film flashes 100 years into the future and cuts to a boy in a school scenario similar to that of Wilde.

However, in this case, the implicit violence of normalizing regimes becomes literalized as young male students physically harass one of their classmates outside of the school. As the bullied boy falls to the ground, he enters a dream sequence of a magical other world, which then quickly cuts to the boy standing in front of the mirror and applying lipstick in the dead of the night. From here, the scene cuts directly to this young boy, to be known as Jack Fairy, as a young adult dressed in feminine clothing and exhibiting a queer gender performance in his everyday life. This character, Jack Fairy, becomes the "original" glam rock star that others like Brian Slade imitate. The citational identity construction that all of the film's characters act out creates many slippages in the film in regard to who constructs whose identity, highlighting the simulacral nature of gender performance. Moreover, it seems as if this connection between the stories of two young boys 100 years apart indicates that Jack Fairy, Brian Slade, and Curt Wild fulfill Oscar Wilde's dream to become "a pop idol." The not-so-subtle similarity between the names Wild and Wilde solidifies this bond.

The slippage of identification and identity, this time involving the experience of fandom, takes place again in the film when Arthur sees Brian Slade on television and exclaims, "That's me!". In this scene, a teenage Arthur watches an interview with the rising glam rock star in his parents' living room. Slade appears on the television in a bright green leopard-print and a full face of make-up with multi-colored eye shadow; his over-the-top dress is matched by the dramatic delivery of his answers to each of the interviewers' questions, suggesting the interview to be a performance of sorts. Throughout the exchange of questions and answers, the scene shifts back and forth between Slade in the conference room and Slade on the television screen in Arthur's home. As Arthur watches intently, the camera cuts from a close-up of Arthur's eyes, to the television screen, and back to Arthur's eyes. This shot-reverse-shot construction here su-

tures the spectator into Arthur's gaze and thereby encourages a simultaneous identification with Brian Slade. Suddenly, Brian jumps up and points at the television and joyfully screams, "That's me, Dad! That's me!". As Brian wildly gesticulates, his parents star at him with mouths agape in disapproval. His parent's dissatisfaction does not seem to affect him, though, because "in Arthur's fantasy, the shame of fandom offers the pleasures of stardom, humiliating isolation holds out the promise of passionate connection, and frustrated desires move toward fulfillment" (Bennett 37). As the film sutures the spectator into Arthur's gaze, they are enmeshed in the same fantasy that anticipates fulfillment in the onstage sequences of Brian Slade to come in the course of his rise to fame.

When Slade's stardom truly begins to take shape, a spectacular party/circus/performance scene occurs to highlight the aestheticism of his identity as a singer and his role as an artist. The scene begins in what looks like a bourgeois party where everyone is dressed in extravagant costumes in shades of gold and white and covered in glitter and sequins. The adorned partygoers partially sing, partially speak (sing talk) lines about the responsibilities of a performer. The group forms a glamorous chorus who insist on the importance of "beauty" and "pose", as well as showing the type of counterculture Slade's stardom fosters. One of the chorus members even appears in drag in a platinum blonde wig, which functions as it does in Hedwig as a signifier of hyper-femininity. The mass of sensational bodies in the party scene transitions to a circus scene set in an opera house-like setting with Slade appropriately serving as the ringleader. The opera house location foregrounds this performance as high art and identifies Slade as the artist. The dramatic but also queer nature of the performance becomes fully realized as Curt and Brian kiss for the first time in the center of the stage. The kiss immediately cuts to cameras flashing and then concert footage of Brian and Curt performing on stage together.

The final scene of the film brings the sequences of performances and performers full circle as the film ends with Jack Fairy's performance of "20th Century Boy." The title of the song suggests that Jack Fairy is the prototype for what a modern "boy" should look like, and in this way, captures the optimism of the 1970s for broad social transformation. When Jack takes the stage, images of Curt Wild and Brian Slade's faces in brightly colored lights flash behind him and remind the audience of the mutually informing relationship

of the three performers. Jack takes the stage in the gender-transgressive style that defines the film's stars, wearing a black sequined floor-length dress with a daringly plunging neckline. This costume is augmented by glittery make-up and a cloak-like neckpiece of long black feathers. Part of the way through the song, the shots of Jack transition to a montage sequence of images of children and adults from all walks of life. With the "20th Century Boy" performance continuing to play as the background to these images, this montage conveys the ability of the glam rock movement to touch a vast range of populations. As the performance wraps up, the film ends with a close-up of a radio, accentuating music's power to reach the masses. In *Velvet Goldmine* music is the impetus for social transformation and through employing and embracing the shame of queer performativity, the film's glam rock stars show their audience "not how to do without shame, but rather how to do things with it" (Bennett 19). Their explorations and embodiments of abjected or shame-inducing gender performances within the sphere of music bring otherwise unthinkable identities to the foreground and visualize new possibilities of ways to be human.

In *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *Velvet Goldmine*, musical performance serves as the driving force for the film's visualization of gender identities that society typically renders invisible. For the case of *Hedwig*, the surgicalized body is figured in the film as a reminder of the limits of intelligibility imposed on a body as it incorporates the gender policing performed by medical discourses. In contrast, *Hedwig*'s music functions as the transforming lexicon as it frees up desire and the possibilities of gender play. The fantasy space of the performance with its queering of *Hedwig* and her audience, including the film's spectator, opens up possibilities for gender ambiguity and fluidity. *Velvet Goldmine* makes use of the glam rock aesthetic and performance style that *Hedwig* cites to visualize transgressive identities. This glam rock look, in reference to stars like David Bowie, carries with it the 1970s optimism for gender fluidity that becomes echoed in the late 1990s transgender movement. Both time periods suggest a type of utopic thinking and Stryker defines transgender accordingly: "both as personal identification and as a way of knowing about the world: 'transgender became associated with a 'queer' utopianism, the erasure of specificity, and a moralizing teleology that condemned certain practices of embodiment that it characterized as transsexual'" (qtd. in Valentine 147). In these films, music and onstage performance provide a space in which the social norms associat-

ed with the corrected transsexual body become violated and re-inscribed to create new visions of human intelligibility in line with transgender embodiments. In the fantasy sphere of performance, the queering of both the performer and audience, including the film's spectator, opens up the possibility for gender fluidity and, thus, social transformation.

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