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## **PERFORMATIVE CROSS-GENDERINGS AND DISCIPLINARY BORDER-CROSSINGS**

The interest in the "third gender" collides with the theoretical approach to gender as a performative construction, often blurring not only the borders between the two sex-gender poles, but also between disciplines called upon to theorize the sexual criss-crossings. The paper questions one of such border-crossings, the one between theatre and feminist theory, since "performance" and "performative" derive principally from the already hybrid field of Schechner's performance theory.

Keywords: performance theory, gender studies

The aim of my paper<sup>1</sup> is once again to touch upon the extremely sensitive transsexual, androgynous, hermaphroditic, or simply travestied body of *sex-gender identity*, its borders and its crossings, its politics and its aesthetics through ages, cultures and discourses. It is a presumptuous task, I am fully aware, and therefore my introduction should be understood as just another ironic reminder of how all-embracing our endeavor to grasp the meaning of certain phenomena tends to be at the end of this millennium. The carrier of the magic solution for all our currently privileged discussion problems is called "theory": a melting pot for any knowledge that can fill the gap between the object of our speculation, and the incurable inappropriateness of our conceptual tools. The same holds for sex-gender identity: after the long (white) male domination poured into various political and other unacknowledged discursive supremacies, after its women's liberation counterpart, generating new visions of history, new narratives and new knowledges with their new impasses, the most preferable stance now seems to be the "third gender" positioning, with its indomitable plurality "beyond sexual dimorphism" (cfr. Herdt 1996) dictated by the heterosexual matrix — responsible, as it seems, for all the oppressive dichotomies ruling the western mind. This is a "nomadic

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<sup>1</sup> This is an enlarged version of a paper held at the Austro-Croatian Semiotic meeting in Graz (26-27th November 1999), entitled *Borders-Signs-Transitions*.

subject" (Braidotti 1995), with no stable ontological grounding, for nomadic disciplines, picking up useful tips from bordering others with no methodological responsibilities, coupling medicine with literature, early modern European history with psychoanalysis, phenomenology with performance theory, philosophical generality with anthropological details. History obsessed by (b)orderings has been outwitted by the eternal return of the mythic one-and-whole perfection of the auto-generative androgyne, which is now additionally perfected by the newly gained insight into the paradoxical multiplicity of its internal "differences": its various historical, cultural, real and fictional "realisations", its contemporary hormonal, psychic, surgical, sartorial and other configurations and possibilities, which all lay claim to equal political "visibility" and correctness of (at least theoretical) treatment.

As Rita Felski has succinctly demonstrated (1996), this mythic abolishment of borders of sexual identification functions now both as an apocalyptic and as an utopian sign of the "end of desire" and the "end of history", or, more precisely, of the awareness of unknown historical discontinuities, stories untold or repressed, as well as of the current burgeoning of different and maybe cheerful, maybe gloomy future narrative projects and outcomes. I will try not to take either the catastrophic or the optimistic side when commenting upon this — both hilarious and boring — confusion of en-gendering signs and theories, although I admit I am puzzled when it comes to the appropriate paths of approach to both of these all-devouring phenomena. I will, however, set provisional borders to my enterprise (perhaps only to cross them more violently) and define the short-cut through which I will try to catch the tail of our monster: it is an out-moded discipline called the semiotics of theatre, and what I will try to do is to explore the old-fashioned *theatrum mundi* metaphor, as it is (ab)used in contemporary theory of gender-identity, particularly in theories of gender reversals, cross-genderings, transsexualisms or transvestisms, *as you like it*.

Of course, today the name of this metaphor has turned into the more absorbing "performativity", a notion embracing both the scene of the linguistic acts and that "loose cluster of theatrical practices, relations, and traditions known as performance" (Parker and Sedgwick 1995:1), discouraging one border more — the one between elitist aesthetic pleasure in fiction and eventual vulgar political engagement in "reality" at the other extreme point of the spectrum. I will try to reconsider the secret of this huge productiveness of performative imagery, so powerful that it pervaded the afore-mentioned hybrid discourses in a manner so striking that any performance theoretician or theatre semiotician would be tempted to re-invade the conquered field of gender-gnosis. Especially having in mind, to put it with Keir Elam, that "the ambitiousness of the imperial project" of general semiotics "at large was reflected in the microcosmic design of theatrical semiotics", given the "multi-media and transsemiotic nature" of theatre, representing, in Lotman's words, "an encyclopedia of semiotics"

(Elam 1997:141). No wonder then that signs of theatricality could be appropriated by any branch of the ambitious theoretical progeniture, gender studies first and foremost. Let us look more closely at the whys and hows as well as pros and cons of that appropriation.

Who started first is a difficult question, since theatre studies and social sciences — from Gurvitsch and Duvignaud via Goffman and Burke to Turner and Schechner — engaged in a mutual invasion several decades ago, creating a sort of performative epistemology of human socio-cultural existence (for a critical survey see Carlson 1996). It was only a question of time for the feminist theory of constructionist provenance to respond to that promising call, and that response came in the name of Judith Butler, who joined in a way the use of variously valorized theatrical imagery in the philosophical works of Debord, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Baudrillard, Cixous and Irigaray, for whom theatre became an explanatory tool for the new era of the lost referent, indeterminacy, spectacle and simulation, and started to function as "not merely the model of the world" but "in itself that world" (cfr. Fuchs 1996:146-149).

Like the mentioned postmodern thinkers, Butler is also trying to abolish dichotomies, bridge the gaps and cross the borders — between the bodily reality and its supposed mirrorings, between "natural" sex as a presumed origin and "cultural" gender as its presumed copy, between psychoanalysis and Foucauldian philosophy, anthropology and (French) phenomenology (cfr. Butler 1990a), even between potentially subversive individual gender acts and the heterosexual pressure of social discourses (Butler 1990b). As she criticised the urge of every theoretical narrative to ground itself in some unquestionable founding principle and thus to preclude in a way its own overthrow, she had to opt for a concept which in itself already dismissed any ontological groundedness and found it in performativity, a beautifully loose relict of theatre studies in the process of vanishing into a study of life itself, that is, of everyday face-to-face interaction, a project already started by E. Goffman. By discursively destroying the liminal-norm installed in performance theory by Victor Turner and sustained by Richard Schechner, she accomplished in a way the "end" towards which interdisciplinary approaches in performance studies (un)consciously strived: to "engage performance in both its embodied and its discursive senses": "she did it", Jon Mckenzie (1998:217) stated, and I would like here to demand at what cost. As Schechner himself summarized the situation, "the acceptance of the performative as a category of theory as well as a fact of behavior has made it increasingly difficult to sustain the distinction between appearances and facts, surfaces and depths, illusions and substances. Appearances are actualities. And so is what lies beneath appearances. Reality is constructed through and through, from its many surfaces or aspects down to its multiple depths" (Schechner 1998:362).

I would like to demonstrate that the concept of gender performance, which in Butler's later work adopted prevailing Austinian resonances of

primarily linguistic performativity, still, with its tricky elusiveness, retained all the fruitful, so to speak, outdated theatrical connotations — with bodies of social actors acting out preordained, en-gendered social scripts in front of a social audience (Butler 1990a:277). At the same time, Butler stripped it of its aesthetic and conventional affiliation with the traditional institutional theatrical frames and boundaries, refusing the "discussion of performativity that involves theater" on the ground that it "implies one who ontologically precedes and then fabricates gender effects" (as commented by Diamond 1997:46). This is a very problematic idea, since in order to be readable, theatrical gender, as any gender, must also rely upon pre-given cultural gender-codes, being an imaginative Schechnerian "restoration of behaviour", perhaps twisted, queered or catachrestic, but still a *repetition*. The skepticism towards the field from which Butler borrowed the implicit force of her term "performance" (switching later to "performativity") is parallel to Austin's dismissal of verbal performatives pronounced within theatrical frameworks as being "in a peculiar way hollow or void" because of their repeatability and already criticised by Jacques Derrida in his "Signature Event Context" as the denial of the constitutive reiterability of language, "a pervasive theatricality common to stage and world alike" (Parker and Sedgwick 1995:4). Since Butler — ironically, following Derrida in other respects, while sticking to Austin's anti-theatrical prejudice — insists on the citationality of mundane gender performatives, which produces the sedimentation of gender acts and creates the illusion of their naturalness, it is curious to see her repudiating the discussion of the area of theatrical gender-performativity, and *reestablishing* the traditional ontological differences (real actor — fictional gender-role) in a metaphor which she already used in order to *break* the ontological border between biological sex and cultural gender.

Namely, Butler insists that gender is neither naturally given nor willingly chosen, that is, neither really serious nor fictionally irrelevant, neither completely determined nor wholly innovative, but always something in-between, something still, despite her refusal of institutionalized notions of theatricality, very close to the mystery of the performer's interpretation, manoeuvring between his psychophysical presence and the absent phantom from the script to be performed. As a feature of a human body in social, that is, public action, the Butlerian duality of gender-inscription — managing and blending each time in a unique way the newly born "matter of the body" with the already pre-existent and instantly efficacious historical socio-cultural discourses of naming, speech, behaviour and dress as the body's "formative precondition" — could only be abolished, or better to say blurred and fragmented, in performative terms, in terms, that is, of the ontological and phenomenological scandal traditionally epitomized in another "nomadic subject" bearing multiple, sometimes even contradictory identities — the controversial figure of the actor who unpredictably reiterates the impersonations of the already written and often also the already performed

dramaturgic role. What McKenzie attributes as Butler's "most significant and singular contribution to the performance studies field" (McKenzie 1998:220), that is, the evidence that performance can be *both* marginal, transgressive, resistant *and* a dominant and punitive form of power, derives in my opinion from the very productiveness of the centuries-old *theatrum mundi* metaphor itself. That metaphor always included both sides of the coin — on the one hand, the rigidity of the repetitive "script", often associated with different modes of religious, socio-political and historical repression, that which Butler now broadly re-instates as "socio-cultural discourses", and, on the other hand, the potential inventiveness and unpredictability of human "actorial" improvisation within them (for a historical survey of the variations of philosophical dimensions of the play-within-the-play procedure, see Čale Feldman 1997:117-135).

The problems corroding Butler's theory arise when she tries to conceptualize political divisions between numerous improvisations and possible disruptions of the heterosexual script. I will try to show that there is a contradiction in her success to bring "the end of performance", for cross-genderings of various kinds inhabit in her work a newly created liminal space with all its utopian liberating capacity, which she previously undermined in performativity as such. In this respect, her theorisation of cross-gender performances is comparable to the pitfalls of various "play-within-the-play" theories (see Čale Feldman 1997:34-44), privileging examples of metatheatrical devices over the illusionistic theatre and not recognizing that without multiple forms of the latter there could never be the variabilities of the former.

Although for Butler any gendered being is, in principle at least, a chance for "transgression" and "displacement" of gender-norms — for the oppressive regulatory phantasm of the "proper" gender performance in her opinion can never be fully inhabited and is always approximated — the privileged everyday actor in her theory, the one who can clearly dramatize the abolishment of the aforementioned duality, broken into randomly crossing, sheer discursive signs, is of course not a heterosexual conformist, doomed to be blinded by the naturalistic discursive dramaturgy in which he obediently plays and which provides him with "visibility" and social acceptance, but the transvestite outcast who provokes the Debordian "détournement", the one who outrageously confuses the en-gendering signs — that is, the avantgardistic challenger of the illusion of gender-reality, namely, of the essentialist assumption that sexual identity is a structure, essence or fact, a harmonious, unified and reliable, because innate and "natural" whole.

The cross-gendered performance, this parodistic and dramatized fiction of incongruence between nature and culture, is in fact a gender as congruent and real as any other, it is "a copy of a copy, not a copy of an original", goes the most famous of Butler's claims, joining theatre semioticians who in the early 1980's suddenly discovered that naturalistic theater does not reproduce reality but just "the image of an image". They

unanimously voted for Brechtian Verfremdungseffekt and other metadramatic devices as the privileged forms of theatrical "sincerity", overt acknowledgement of the artificiality of every theatrical procedure and experience, naturalist included (see Ubersfeld 1982a and 1982b). The conceptual problem with both these theories seems to be the parasitic mode of sucking the blood from the very bodies and boundaries they try to delegitimize. Or, as Butler would put it:

This kind of citation will emerge as theatrical to the extent that it mimes and renders hyperbolic the discursive convention that it also reverses (Butler 1993:232).

But if we were to accept that any gender, transvestite included, is just a performative effect of equal quality of constructedness, the very spectacularity of transvestite subversion would be irretrievably "normalized", unified in a gendered whole and so simply unreadable as a reversal of gender-identification, as a transgressive and politically productive "symptom of cultural anxiety", as Marjorie Garber stated it to be (Garber 1992). How can the drag appearance result in a denaturalization of the adopted cross-gender representation if not through its bodily "basis" somehow contradicting its own gender-performance? And vice-versa: if there is not such a thing as a natural "basis" of which gender-performance is a continuous expression, why would not a "naturalized" gender performance, displaying one-gendered qualities (a "man" or a "woman"), be equally (un)able to draw attention to the constructedness of his/hers gender-identity? And how are we then, by the way, conceptually to distinguish between gender-performances and cross-dressings happening "off" and those happening "on" the stage, including those enacted within rites and rituals?

The answer simply requires the re-establishment of (always contestable, permeable and contingent) Turnerian *limes* or Goffmanian *frame*: any notion of performativity relies on an awareness of frame, or border, within the supposed non-performative field, in order to draw out of it the force of the performative challenge to the determinations of "nature" and "reality". Here it becomes evident that for her theory to be effective Butler would have to name the "reader" — or, to put it better, the "audience" of (cross-)gender performances. Like the previously named theatre theoreticians<sup>2</sup>, it seems that she implicitly accuses the "mundane audience" of being blind to the "naturalization" of gender-norms, which is at the same time the (beholder's) basis for the spectacularity of transvestism and a "law" to be defied, endlessly displaced, and, ultimately, abolished. The fictionalized (and suppressed) "naturalness" and "realness" in Butler's theory is the body of the everyday actor itself, which in her later work (Butler 1993) is proclaimed to be always a product of discourse, and upon

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<sup>2</sup> The first to use this connection between Butler and Brecht in a boldly affirmative way to my knowledge is Elin Diamond (1997:46).

whose eventual non-discursive, residual "materiality" it is forbidden to debate, in order to avoid the traps of essentialism. What is so deadening in Butler's discourse is an unacknowledged pleading not so much for the plurality of gender differences, or endlessly displaced gender-differentiations, but for a kind of ultimate, non-repressive, utopian **gender in-difference**, projected by her theory to enlighten the heterosexually enslaved non-theoreticians. Or is that gender in-difference in fact again a cross-dressed craving for the "natural", or better to say, still **normative** male identity? As Talia Schaffer shrewdly noted, Butler's critique of the heterosexual norm in theories she discusses concentrates upon their treatment of homosexuality but never engages "their specific treatment of maleness and femaleness" so that we do not know whether she accepts, for instance, Joan Riviere's argument "that womanliness is itself a masquerade that hides the woman's natural and desired male identity" (Shaffer 1995:61n). The drag on which Butler's theory so heavily relies in fact "shows female gender to be a performance but does not challenge male gender's naturalness at all" (ibid.:36)! Although Talia Schaffer's hypothesis relied primarily on the exaltation of drag performances exposed in *Gender Trouble*, Butler did not hesitate (implicitly) to confirm it in *Bodies That Matter*, where she states that for a woman to perform masculinity "is always, in effect, to perform a little less, given that femininity is often cast as the spectacular gender" (1993:235)! Where, then, lies the border between performing "more" and performing "less", being "more" or "less" spectacular?

Furthermore, although Butler opposes the notion of inner sexual truth which supposedly finds its adequate expression in the gender performance — which for her is nothing but a compulsory repetition of stylized acts imposed by social discourses whose power is brought into existence by the very players who follow these collective phantasms — she herself is not reluctant to engage in the psychoanalytic investigation of the **underlying scenario** of gender-performance, a melancholy which lies behind every one of them. She succeeds in her endeavor to reverse at any cost the usual process of decyphering the sexual semiotics by claiming that "the opacity of the unconscious sets limits to the exteriorization of the psyche", so that "what is exteriorized or performed can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier and from the domain of corporeal legibility" (1993:234). Following this, Butler can claim that overt gender identification is in fact nothing but the allegory performing the melancholic interiorization of the sexual object that is grieved because it cannot be possessed, so that "in this sense, the truest lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman, and the truest gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man" (ibid.:235). However, she adds that, although the transvestite performances in principle allegorize the heterosexual melancholia, one cannot claim that all the transvestites are homosexuals! The latter does not prevent her from concluding that "it may well be that what constitutes the sexually unperformable is performed

instead as gender identification" (ibid.:236), although this inference is in glaring dissonance with her repeated insistence that it is crucial to maintain "the non-causal and non-reductive connection between sexuality and gender" (ibid.:235)!<sup>3</sup>

The next voluntary confusion in this attribution of politically destabilizing potential to both the phenomenon of drag and her own, as she calls it, "critically queer" theory, is her recognition that cross-dressing is not always subversive, because it can also work as a reidealization and thus a strengthening of heterosexual norms. She does, however, shift the responsibility for it to the overpowering force of the heterosexual matrix — which somehow manages to "augment its hegemony through its denaturalization" (ibid.:231) — and not to the fact that she, Judith Butler, perhaps inconclusively and inconsistently theorizes the eventual transgressive potential of both performative cross-genderings<sup>4</sup> and disciplinary border-crossings between theory and theater, relegating all the "messy" and incomprehensible combinations to the unknowable "opacity of the unconscious". Psychoanalysis seems here to provide her with the needed mixture of hypothesised psychic interiority and the invasiveness of outward discursive pressure filling this interiority as a kind of genetic and hormonal *tabula rasa*.<sup>5</sup>

The ironic side of this theoretical fascination with the gender-conscious, border-crossing images and methodologies is of course the fact that, due to the socially stigmatized and therefore late appearance of women as actresses, transvestism indeed did mark the birth of both ancient and modern western theatre history, as it was the constant mark of eastern theatrical tradition. Theater critics and researchers, at least since Goethe, have experienced an equal fascination with the same issue, sometimes also, as in the case of the distinguished contemporary theater anthropologist Eugenio Barba, imbued by binaristic concepts of (unacknowledged!) Jungian provenance and orientalist outbursts about the complementarity of *animus* and *anima*, *manis* and *keras*, *lasya* and *tandava* physical "energies" potentially inhabiting both male and female (professional!) actors (Barba and Savarese 1996:56-59). They were also, like Jan Kott for instance, amazed by the stylized hyperbolic performance of a gender other

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<sup>3</sup> Thus goes Butler's Salomonian way of resolving the contradiction: "Refusing to draw lines of causal implication between these two domains is as important as keeping open an investigation of their complex interimplication" (1993:239).

<sup>4</sup> She is constantly vague when her own theorizing requires any distinctions: "and **there must be some way to understand** (which? L. Č. F.) what makes certain kinds of parodic repetition effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (1990b:139).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, I don't want to enter the minefield of biology, but then again, I am a performance theorist, not pretending to theorize mundane genders, as Butler does, in fact wilfully ignoring the already existent spectrum of sex-gender in-betweenness: for instance, examples of transsexuals undergoing surgery and receiving hormonal injections, as opposed to transvestites, who only consciously or unconsciously manipulate social discourses of gender-identity.



than the presumed sexed body performing the task. They, too, although from quite opposite, essentialist and aestheticist standpoints, sometimes found it "truer" than the performance of women's roles played out by women. For them, that was too naturalist a *lie*, not at the height of the seductive artificiality of the quintessence of womanhood provided by the male actors as female impersonators, performing, as it seems, the true nature of a woman through an overtly displayed cultural sign (cfr. Ferris 1993; see also Čale Feldman 1998).

The interest in this intriguing matter continued to flourish under the auspices of contemporary theory. It led the interpreters to leave the ground of philological or purely theatrographic enquiry and to establish historical correlations between biomedical and wider social assumptions on sex-gender identity and desire valid in the epoch that is researched, and the reception of both actual and fictional transvestisms on the stage, especially those reaching the peak of sexual combinatorics, with boys playing fictional girls dressed as men, and vice versa. What used to be theatre semiotics turned into theatre symptomatology, complains Keir Elam in his critique of Greenblatt's school of thought dealing with drama and theatrical productions in Elizabethan England. Elam claims that

this semeiotic reading of the drama tends to collapse the distinction between 'the two bodies', the represented body of the *dramatis persona* and 'the body natural' of the actor — especially the cross-dressed boy actor ... — since it is the stage body that is necessarily the material bearer of the symptom (Elam 1997:153).

I would join my critique of Butler to Elam's protestations that the double denial performed by these interpretations is, firstly, the concept of the body as a book — or, I would add, as Butler would put it, a *discourse* — which dismisses the irreducible materiality of the real actor's body; secondly, and inversely, the apparent insistence on the real body — medical and, for the Elizabethan theatre in particular, puritan discourses about sex and desire as supplements to fictional displays of it — which dismisses the semiotic power of inherited theatrical conventions, for instance, those imposing the motif of transvestite characters as a traditional, poetic and dramaturgic, not necessarily a socio-sexual pressure. The same in my opinion goes for Butler, whose recourse to the generalizing narratives of psychoanalysis and progressive politics dismisses the protean theatrical and aesthetic conventions of the often contradictory "reading" of cross-dressing in concrete contexts, and tends to forget that the terms "parody", "hyperbolic" and "allegorization" which she evokes derive from this suppressed field.

This parallelism in procedure didn't fail to be noticed by the interpreters and theoreticians of cultural and theatrical transvestisms, so that Butler soon found her place in almost all the most prominent studies on the subject, whether concerning the problematics of literature and theatre or the anthropologic enquiries about the cultural management of

"gender reversals" (see for example Meyer 1990; Garber 1992; Ferris 1993; Dolan 1993, Bettinger and Fink 1995; Orgel 1996; Apter 1996; Diamond 1996 and 1997; Ramet 1996; Herdt 1998; about this coincidence partly Carlson 1996:171-173, 180). Another paradox followed: performance studies thus engaged in a sort of transdisciplinary circularity, borrowing from their own vital conceptual sources, prefabricated in the sophisticated and politically engaged Butlerian phenomenologically and psychoanalytically cross-dressed theory. The result is not only, as Elam states, the revived anti-aesthetic puritan concept of theatrical performance as a site of subversive political and medical *pathology* rather than purgative *representation of it* — what Elam called "vital poetics of signification" mocking the "deadly culture of the symptom" — but also a certain number of analyses dealing with transvestisms "across history, literature, film, photography, popular and mass culture, from Shakespeare to Mark Twain, from Oscar Wilde to Peter Pan, from transsexual surgery and transvestite sororities to Madonna, Valentino and Elvis" as they appeared in the works by the already mentioned Marjorie Garber or Vern Bullough (1993). These studies, trying to explore "the nature and significance both of the fact of cross-dressing and of the historically recurrent fascination with it" (Garber 1992:3), are themselves symptoms of an impressive attempt to collect all the necessary data and to create a unique, albeit transdisciplinary phenomenology of the sexual criss-cross, on and off the stage.<sup>6</sup>

These endeavors to grasp the mystery of cross-gendering too often seem to follow Butler in the covert ambition — while avoiding gender-binarism — to kill the ambiguous logic of performativity itself, and reduce all this vast material to one reliable interpretative key. This key would hopefully end the wondering whether, from the theoretical standpoint, a certain imaginative procedure is culturally disruptive or strongly invested in cultural binarisms, politically suspect or politically progressive, always already contained or dangerously subversive, visible on bodily surface or hidden in the opacity of the unconscious, "falsely true" or "sincerely false" with respect to what controls the constitution of gender-identity.<sup>7</sup> On the opposed, aestheticist, anti-theoretical and explicitly essentialist side lies Camille Paglia's equally ambitious, though inverse wish to locate anthropological and aesthetic transformations of transvestite figures (Paglia 1991). She finds them to be neither revealing nor covering

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<sup>6</sup> Amy Robinson is right I think when suggesting the inherent contradiction arising from the very encyclopedic character of these texts, which, with its haunting of picturesque details and perspicacious explanations "functions almost as a counter-narrative to what is largely a story about the undecidability of categories of meaning and identity. The details establish a structure of proof, a claim to truth and decidability which runs counter to the claim of subversion" (Robinson 1994:197).

<sup>7</sup> Here is how Garber concludes one of her chapters: "This is the scandal of transvestism — that transvestism tells the truth about gender. Which is why — which is one reason why — ... we cannot look it in the face" (1992:250-251).

any kind of psychoanalytic, cultural or political "state of affairs", but being ***monstrously beautiful*** or ***beautifully monstrous***, for ever detached, along this other crucial border, from any socio-political purpose, and governing in an counter-historical and counter-cultural magical hierarchy of artistic style, lying explicitly beyond any rational (and theoretical) human striving for democratic equality.

Not accidentally, theatre insinuated itself as a metaphor at a moment when the discursive social theories of subjectivity, like Butler's theory of gender, are trying to embrace a difficult "neither/nor-both/and" political perspective on agency and subject, said to be moving in "bound randomness" between totality and non-totality, fixity and non-fixity, overdetermination of discursive practices and disparity of his or her transient subject positions. What remains largely unacknowledged, though, is the retrograde idea that this hard-won aporetic theoretical perspective which conceives of representation as of a similar field of "unstable oscillation whose vanishing point is either the literalization of the fiction through the breaking of every link between representative and represented or the disappearance of the separate identity of both through their absorption as moments of a single identity" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, as quoted in Day and Letts 1999), has indeed been a long-standing prerogative of the paradoxes of acting, theatrical and other performative representations within all their various as well as permeable boundary settings.

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*Nar. umjet.* 37/1, 2000, pp. 7-20, L. Čale Feldman, *Performative Cross-genderings and...*

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## IZVEDBENA INVERZIJA SPOLA I DISCIPLINARNO PREKORAČIVANJE GRANICA

### SAŽETAK

Članak se bavi odnedavna prominentnim, posebice feministički orijentiranim teorijskim zanimanjem za sve oblike spolne inverzije ili pak neodredljivosti spolnog identiteta, povezujući ga s recentnim nesigurnostima glede identiteta disciplina pozvanih da teoretiziraju to zamućivanje spolnih granica. Posebice se zadržava na važnom udjelu izvedbene teorije u tim raspravama, te pojmovnim preinakama uz pomoć kojih Schechnerova i Turnerova antropologija kazališta progresivno zauzima položaj svojevrsnog epistemološkog krovišta feminističke kulturalne teorije, utjelovljene u utjecajnoj koncepciji rodne performativnosti konstrukcionista teoretičarke Judith Butler. Članak nastoji ukazati na neke unutarnje kontradikcije te koncepcije, koja obnavlja ne samo stoljećima staru metaforu "teatra svijeta" nego i tradicionalnu kazališnoteorijsku fascinaciju ženskošću kao kulturalnim konstruktom. Osim toga, propituju se pokušaji da se na tragu teorije Judith Butler utvrdi jedinstvena politička namjena, psihoanalitički opisiva pozadina ili fenomenologija rodne inverzije, razaznatljiva neovisno o kontekstu i izvedbenim konvencijama koje njome ravnaju, osobito ako je riječ o naknadnom presađivanju performativne teorije roda na polje eksplicitno ritualnih i kazališnih rodnih inverzija.

Ključne riječi: teorija izvedbe, studiji roda