

Affective Traces

Reception of Judith Butler's *Gender
Trouble* in Finland in the 1990s

IN A RECENT article on queer feminist criticism and the reparative “turn,” Robyn Wiegman (2014) discusses the hermeneutics of suspicion and our reading strategies on the basis of Eve Sedgwick’s critique of paranoid reading and her call for reparative reading instead. According to Sedgwick (2003), Judith Butler’s highly influential book, *Gender Trouble* is prototypical of a paranoid text. In Sedgwick’s (2003, 130) opinion, the reason is that Butler’s book emits an “unresting vigilance” in tracking essentialist and naturalising assumptions of prevailing gender theories, and Butler’s text sees complicity in these assumptions everywhere indicating as its task to expose this collaboration. According to Sedgwick (2003, 139) then, Butler’s book builds upon such assumptions that by revealing hidden meanings we are on our way of solving the problems at hand; that when we make something visible, we detoxicate its power; and that the audience for the unveilings (or symptomatic readings) requires the critic to expose what they cannot possibly know on their own (see also Wiegman 2014, 10–1).

My argument in this article, which deals with the early, “pre-canonical” Finnish reception of Butler’s book in the 1990s, is that the almost immediate, positive reception of Butler’s book was due to those interpretative traits that have been labelled as symptomatic. *Gender Trouble* played an important role, represented an attractive reading not only be-

cause of its insightful deconstructive analysis and critique, but also because of the sharpness and inventiveness of its arguments. These formed well-articulated responses to the growing (Western) masses of Women's and Gender Studies students, longing for conclusive answers to thorny and daunting feminist questions (the sex/gender-division, essentialism, sustainability of conservative gendered identities and behaviours, etc.) in developing and strengthening feminist identity knowledge and politics. The backdrop of my article is the affective urge to look at the book's appeal, and therefore, if I follow Sedgwick and label the book as a great example of symptomatic reading, the fruitfulness of this kind of reading, leading eventually to the book's canonical status within Women's and Gender Studies.

Academic feminism embraces the conviction that discussions and debates among multiple and different theoretical standpoints is positive and affirmative and includes welcoming gestures toward different views and contradictory perspectives and aspects. However, perhaps mainly because of our desire for disciplinary institutionalisation, for academic inclusion and legitimacy, we still teach texts that are beforehand proclaimed as extraordinary meaningful and important and therefore as the "must" of core curriculum in Feminist and Gender Studies. *Gender Trouble* is doubtlessly such a text, a text that first and foremost attempts within feminist theory to make gender meaningful, a historical theoretical effort to resolve the dilemma of sexual difference. My aim here is to look at the book's initial appeal to Finnish feminists by paying attention to its reception in the Finnish Gender Studies journal *Naistutkimus* – *Kvinnoforskning* of the 1990s. My ambition is not to conduct a conventional reception study, a "sociological" conceptual and methodological examination of how *Gender Trouble* was received. In this article my reflections are both sporadic, that is, limited only to the main Gender Studies journal, and eclectic, that is, I have not systematically gathered material on the topic, but just covered how some main thoughts and themes in *Gender Trouble* were articulated in the Finnish context of the 1990s. The text consists of essayistic reflections on the topic: I have given the text the title "affective traces" in order to indicate that the reception

of Butler's book was already in this initial stage saturated with affects, not to talk about later in its canonical state of the 2000s. Today affectivity is also associated with its labelling as exemplary of a symptomatic reading.

Hermeneutics of Suspicion

The positive response and appeal to symptomatic reading should be seen in a historical context: to historicise Butler's book means here to put it in connection to dominant reading and interpretative practices of the 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s there was a wide acceptance of psychoanalysis and Marxism as metalanguages, which – besides enabling exchanges between disciplines – understood meaning to be hidden, repressed and in need of exposure and disclosure by the interpreter. The practice of symptomatic reading encompasses an interpretative method according to which the most interesting aspect of a text is what it represses, though it also locates cracks, absences and leaps in the text. Interpretation should then in Fredric Jameson's (1981, 60) words seek "a latent meaning behind a manifest one." In contrast to symptomatic reading and as a critique of it, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus (2009) launch the concept of surface reading, according to which attention is paid to the evident and apprehensible in the text. "A surface is what insists on being looked at rather than what we must train ourselves to see *through*," they write and distinguish between several different types of surface reading (Best and Marcus 2009, 9–13). They consider Sedgwick's reparative reading as a certain kind of surface reading embracing the surface as an affective and ethical stance (Best and Marcus 2009, 10–1).

In looking at the overall positive reception of Butler's *Gender Trouble* my guiding question is then why symptomatic reading, the hermeneutics of suspicion, formed such a captivating interpretative mode? Is it the "drama of exposure" as Sedgwick (2003, 8) expresses it in connection to the paranoid position? Or is it the potential promise of revealing "truths" about material circumstances and social phenomena, the providing of knowledge recipes about complex and intangible questions? I take into account these suggestive and perhaps indispensable questions and

see them as important dimensions in an evaluation of the huge success of Butler's book. Therefore, my main emphasis is on epistemology, the character of knowing and knowledge. This is precisely what has been of main concern among critics of the hermeneutics of suspicion or the paranoid reading position. Before I look at the reception of Butler's book in Finland, I will map some of the main tendencies in the discussion of Sedgwick's differentiation between paranoid and reparative reading positions.

Reading "Beside" and the Notion of Criticality as Alternatives to Paranoia

In *Touching Feeling* (2003) Sedgwick proposes to explore the critical possibilities of thinking with the notion of "beside" which is preferable because of its non-hierarchical character. In her review of Sedgwick's book Melissa Gregg (2004) underlines this notion as distinct from the paranoid position as not being interested in origins and futures, but offering a qualitative vocabulary of terms that can describe relations of proximity and tension. With "beside" Sedgwick (2003, 8) moves away from "beneath" and "behind," categories that she thinks that too easily turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of origin and telos. According to Emily Apter and Elaine Freedgood (2009, 145) this term hardly takes Sedgwick fully beyond the symptom, but offers to open view a gerundive catalogue of gestures and affects in infinite time. In their opinion, she imagined with this notion a reparative reading which allows the interpreter to move between the paranoid position of a hermeneutics of suspicion and the "fleetingly achieved depressive position, in which it is possible to discover a range of affect, to respond to local contingencies, and allow for ruptures of hope" (Apter and Freedgood 2009, 145). This formulation underlines that Sedgwick understood the two positions as interrelated and not as dualistic either/or perspectives.

Sedgwick (2003, 147) defines paranoid temporality as that "in which yesterday can't be allowed to have differed from today and tomorrow must be even more so," and she thinks that the stifled temporality of negative expectation prevents reparative affects such as love and hope.

Sasha Roseneil's (2011) interpretation of Sedgwick's statements is that work in a paranoid register has little ability to be properly historical, or to engage in prediction. Furthermore, Roseneil (2011, 128) underlines that paranoid reading is also distinctly Oedipal in its structure – invoking the repetitiveness of generational transmission and regularity. Roseneil answers her own question of how we might enact criticality rather than paranoia in doing feminist research by emphasising that we should give analytical time and space to counter-normative practices, at the same time as we cast an old-fashioned critical lens on normativities and dominant practices and discourses.

In these grim times, ...we need more than ever to produce feminist social research which operates in a register of criticality, with an ear to the past, and an eye to the future, and attention to the multiplicity of ways of inhabiting the present. (Roseneil 2011, 129–30)

What comes to the understanding of criticality, Roseneil leans on Irit Rogoff's (2003) interesting schema of transition in knowledge production from criticism to critique and to criticality. Criticism represents for her the striving to find fault, while critique means examining assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic (see also Felski 2012). Criticality then is building on critique but operating from an uncertain ground and aiming nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis, other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions and allocating blames. The project of critique has in Rogoff's (2003) opinion served as an extraordinary examination of assumptions and naturalised values and thought structures that have inherited truth claims of knowledge. Critique has allowed us to unveil and re-examine the convincing logics and operations of such truth claims. But, it has also sustained a certain external knowingness, a certain "ability to look in from the outside and unravel and examine and expose that which had seemingly lain hidden within the folds of structured knowledge" (Rogoff 2003). This sentence might be seen as a quite accurate description of Butler's text. On the other hand, the

next quotation about the character of criticality, seems like a good description of reparative reading in Sedgwick's spirit. Rogoff (2003) writes that criticality is taking shape through an emphasis on the present, "of understanding culture as a series of effects rather than causes, of the possibilities of actualising some of its potential rather than revealing its faults." Criticality thus collapses binarities and replaces them with a complex multi-inhabitation, and is therefore connected with risk. In criticality then we are both fully armed with the knowledges of critique, able to analyse and unveil while at the same time sharing and living out the very conditions which we are able to see through (Rogoff 2003). Rogoff (2003) ends the account of the relations between the three notions with Hanna Arendt's conclusion that we are "fellow sufferers" of the very conditions we are critically examining.

Historicising and Contextualising Butler's *Gender Trouble*

With hindsight it is easy to note that Butler's book has had a groundbreaking role in "sculpting the scholarly terrain of gender" to use Frederick Roden's (2001, 26) expression. The problematic that Butler discusses in the book has been crucial for the whole field of Women's/Gender/Feminist Studies – a scholarly area that in the 1990s was in a phase and tumult of formation worldwide – and its definition of the basic concepts of gender and identity. Butler's book – which for many current students of Gender Studies represents a "classic text" – had great timing: it was published at a time when precisely the concepts mentioned were surrounded by heated and lively discussions and where new theoretical ideas were in the making. *Gender Trouble* filled this need quite accurately; today it is easy to summarise those main thoughts in *Gender Trouble* that has invoked lively and long-running debates. Above all, they concern the questions of identity or more precisely the undermining of the coherent "we"-subject of feminism; the critical genealogy of naturalisation of biological sex; the questioning of the primacy of heterosexual desire, the critique of the sex/gender-division, and the thought of gender as citational and performative repetition (see Werner 2007, 255).

Besides historicising and contextualising the emergence of *Gender Trouble* midst the feminist discussions of the early 1990s, it is important to also historicise Butler's thinking itself. She leans on theoretical eclecticism – usually a red rag to conventional academic thinking – which makes her a challenging read. Though Butler's thinking is commonly presented as a further development and refinement of constructivist theory, it is impossible to underestimate the importance of psychoanalysis in her work. In *Gender Trouble* all of the following are dealt with: French feminism together with Lacanian psychoanalysis and Freudian melancholia, Althusserian interpellation theory, Kristeva's theory of abjection, Foucaultian genealogy, Nietzsche and Hegel's understandings of the subject, Austrian performativity, and Derrida's thinking on deconstruction (cf. Salih 2004, 4–9).

Furthermore, as I already implied, *Gender Trouble* also appears at a time when there had been big changes in the field of philosophy in the 1980s. When earlier Marxist theory had been the strong challenger of established academic philosophical schools, in the 1980s as such occurs the contemporary French thinking known as “post-philosophy.” Butler clearly belongs to those radical philosophers who had read and been inspired by French thinking, as she explicitly states in the preface to the new edition of *Gender Trouble* in 1999 (viii–x), the roots of *Gender Trouble* being in the “French theory” – an American construct. Therefore, it is easy to agree with Roden (2001, 32) that “[h]ence history, both in theory and practice, surrounds Butler.” This “surrounding” consists of different feminist genealogies, and in order to situate *Gender Trouble* in a historical context of the 1990s, it is important to look at feminist theories and politics as separate but intersecting temporal threads or plots in any narrative. Here we could remind us of Michel Foucault's “effective history” as interruption of the pretended historical continuity where knowledge is not for understanding, but for cutting, as he puts it. Thus, *Gender Trouble* should get its evaluative place within reciprocally linked timelines and time plateaus, emphasising less short-cut-like causal explanations and paying more attention to events and effects.

Translation and Style of Writing

The translation of Butler's *Gender Trouble* to Finnish was published in 2006, sixteen years after its appearance (and a year earlier than in Sweden), at a time, which was, as the (few) Finnish reviewers have noted, a quite different situation compared to the beginning of the 1990s. Laura Werner (2007, 252) points out that by then the striving to get gender into trouble in Finland when in New York the book was already looked through nostalgic eye glasses, meant that the book was "so 90s" (see also Lehtinen 2007, 123–5).

All of the reviewers pay attention to Butler's writing style and language use in *Gender Trouble*. Asta Piironen (2007) writes in her review that she understands Butler as having to guard herself against opposition with an "armour strong academic wall, which is not easily breakable by small stones." She thinks that Butler "deliberately messes around with language," and her "squatting squirming with long sentences and stiffened by academic word plane is like rune writing hammered in stone. It requires time, concentration and unflagging interest" (Piironen 2007). However, Roden (2001) notices that her style of writing has made her queer within queer culture, because her work has the danger of placing her in opposition to a popular politics. "She becomes vulnerable to misinterpretation and misuse," he remarks (Roden 2001, 28).

It is of course curious that in spite of her writing style being considered opaque and exhausting, the book has spoken to both academic communities as well as political activists more broadly. As Sara Salih (2003, 46–7) has insightfully discussed in her article on the matter, there is an "ethics of difficulty" in Butler's style of writing: by producing a sense of alienation and discomfort in the reader, s/he is implicitly invited to relinquish her normative assumptions regarding both style and being in order to challenge, suspend, and, ultimately expand the norms.

In order to get some sort of at least partial picture of what Finnish researchers paid attention to in the 1990s in Butler's *Gender Trouble*, I examined the national Finnish Gender Studies journal *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* during the period of 1992–2000. The result of my inves-

tigation can loosely be clustered around the following keywords: identity, sex/gender-division, gender performativity, subversion and heterosexual matrix. I included four Finnish PhD theses from the 1990s, which referred to Butler's thinking. As Sara Edenheim (2008, 149) in her interesting and inspiring article has noticed about the reception in Sweden, also in Finland there are in the 1990s very few applied works with Butler as starting point or main reference. However, in the 2000s there is an actual and tangible boom in gender research/feminist works applying Butlerian thinking of gender performativity as their basic methodological framework. In what follows I will connect my reading of the texts mentioned and their thematic threads, on the one hand, with discussions of the character of the dominant Finnish (Nordic) feminist epistemology and its limits (concentrating on the notions of sex/gender-distinction and performativity), and, on the other hand, with debates of the queer theoretical impact on Finnish Gender Studies (focussing here on the categories of identity, subversion and heteronormativity). These discussions and debates show the engagement with time-specific, tendentially symptomatic and also paranoid reading strategies aiming above all to reveal biologist and oppressive viewpoints and those "accomplices" upholding them.

Overriding Psychoanalytical Discussions

In Finland Butler is foremost introduced and referred to in discussions of the sex/gender-dichotomy and gender performativity. *Gender Trouble* turned out to be a source of inspiration for the critique of essentialist standpoints and the book became an important tool for feminists in the struggle against biological determinism, biologist interpretations of sexual differences. Besides some very few exceptions, characteristic for those referring in the 1990s to Butler seems to be that they do not deal with Butler's psychoanalytical discussions: obviously Butler's engagement in debates with sexual difference theoreticians, for example Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, is ignored by the Finnish reception of *Gender Trouble*. This is of course not surprising when taking into account the strong historical background of Marxism and empiricism in social

and humanist research. The same situation can be noticed regarding the other Nordic countries: as Edenheim (2008, 152) has observed, the interpretative priority lay in the hands of a Gender Studies that was more unexperienced in philosophy and psychoanalysis than in sociological theory in the form of social constructivism and gender roles.

One of the few in Finland, who from a Lacanian psychoanalytical standpoint criticised Butler's theory of gender performativity, and also her way of using psychoanalytic terminology, was Livia Hekanaho (2009). Her critique – though provided almost a decade later – is (to my knowledge) quite unique in the Finnish setting, where Butler's thinking was so warmly welcomed. Hekanaho leans heavily on such Lacanian thinkers as Joan Copjec and Tim Dean in her critique of Butler's omission of the Lacanian notion of sexual difference.

Also Sara Heinämaa's (1999) criticism of Butler's thinking forms an exception within the receptive mainstream: from a phenomenological viewpoint she has in her PhD thesis included a critical discussion of Butler's usage and development of the category of gender. Her critique focuses especially on Butler's interpretation of Simone de Beauvoir's theory of becoming woman, which she finds adhering to a Cartesian contradiction of mind and body. The main task of Heinämaa's thesis is to show the meaning and importance of a phenomenological understanding of sexual difference and in the wake of this she criticises how Butler, emphasising the problematic of the sex/gender-division, reads de Beauvoir as outdated. Thus, Heinämaa (1996, 12–3, 127, 134) states Butler's de Beauvoir-critique as misleading because she moves the sex/gender-division onto de Beauvoir and therefore loses the phenomenological point of view in de Beauvoir's thinking. In her critical approach to Butler Heinämaa, together with Martina Reuter (1994, 13), has noticed how postmodern Foucaultian "women theoreticians" (such as Butler and Haraway) have argued that the differences between women are so huge and diverse, that the notion of woman and generalisations built upon it are useless. Obviously, Heinämaa and Reuter following a sexual difference theory also defend the possibilities of a difference-overcoming generalisation of the identity category woman.

The above mentioned few critical discussions are pushed aside by the positive and praising reviews. Most of these pay attention to the notion of performativity and underline the importance of Butler's understanding of gender as performative doing. Some references deal with the terminological division between sex and gender defending Butlerian (Foucaultian) constructivism. This is done in the first of its kind feminist/women's/gender studies textbook in Finnish, *Avainsanat: 10 askelta feministiseen tutkimukseen* [Keywords: 10 Steps to Feminist Research] (Koivunen and Liljeström 1996), where Butler's *Gender Trouble* is an important source in many of its chapters, but especially in my own chapter titled, "The Gender System" (Liljeström 1996, 111–38). In my PhD thesis I engaged, besides in a thorough and manifold presentation and discussion about the notion of gender and its feminist understandings and debates, in a critique of well-known Nordic feminist scholars, advocating the translation of the notion of *kön* [sex] to *genus* [gender] (Liljeström 1995, 29–36).

In her article on the European song contests, Mari Pajala (2000) considers these competitions as some sort of textbook example of the performative production of gendered heterosexual order. She leans on Butler's understanding of gender as compulsory repetition and control, as normative ideal. Conscientiously she explains the difference between performance and performativity, where the latter refers to the process of norm citation and which cannot be reduced to single performances: norms precede and restrict the repeater and repetition is not dependent on the subject's will or choices (Pajala 2000, 26–7).

The notion of performativity is central also in Marja Kaskisaari's (1997) article on the first parliament debates in Finland of the law regarding same-sex domestic partnership in 1996. She emphasises that the notion of performativity brings together the subject and the discourse by "borrowing" discursive power to subjects when they perform or rather empathise with their place in the discourse. She underlines also that performativity here does not refer solely to the subject or its activity, but to the process of repetition where both subjects and activities become visible (Kaskisaari 1997, 239). In her dissertation, Kaskisaari (2000) bases her theoretical apparatus on Butler's notion of performativity naming her method "perfor-

mative reading,” which she then applies to analysis of autobiographies.

As separate from Pajala and Kaskisaari’s works – where the notion of performativity is seen as positive and affirmative in connection to a specific research question or task, and where its usability is thus tested – Tuija Pulkkinen (1996a, 180–9, 197–8) underlines the importance of the understanding of gender as performative by putting it in contrast to Teresa de Lauretis’s thinking, which she labels as a valorising of being over performing. Here then a difference in dealing with the categories of sex/gender and performativity can be noticed between those who within the realm of a philosophical discourse discuss and define the notions and those who do not see as their primary task to defend the notions as such, but instead put them in relation to a certain research material.

“Performativity” Simplified and Miss-Used

In the feminist eagerness to at last put an end to the sex/gender-division and emphasise gender as a social construct, a canonical reading of *Gender Trouble* emerged linked to a quite simplified version of Butler’s thinking. This concerns especially the concept of performativity, which too often was mixed with performance and subversion, and proofs the certain unambiguousness of paranoid thinking with its tendency to search for clear-cut causes and explanatory structures. However, this simplifying is not yet visible in the studied early reception of *Gender Trouble*. Here performativity is linked to understandings of how norms are repeated and constituted and not to theatrical performances interpreted as subversive. Later, from the early 2000s onward, with the constructivist boom in Gender Studies, Butler’s thoughts are often applied by both feminist and queer scholars on a quite superficial level.

Drag and the understanding of the difference between gender performance and gender performativity has caused maybe the biggest controversies in applying Butler’s work since the publication of *Gender Trouble*. According to Butler (1993, 28) herself, performativity is to be read not as self-presentation, but “as the unanticipated resignifiability of highly invested terms,” as she expresses it in “Critically queer” a couple of years after the publication of *Gender Trouble*. Hence, here we again have a

simplified logical thread in reading *Gender Trouble*: what concerns gender performance (not performativity) drag becomes the example and this marks her (later) as a queer icon for certain political activism.

Within the institutionalised Gender Studies the amount of essays and other writings concerning gender performances, drag shows and the subversive character of gay and other subcultures nothing less than exploded. Along the canonisation of constructivism and the theory of gender performativity, the institutionalisation of Gender Studies with its joint agenda and curriculum narrowed the space for inner scholarly critique and debate. With the ignorance of other theoretical perspectives, above all psychoanalytical thinking and discourse, and sidestepping thoughts on body and desire, Butler's *Gender Trouble* became a necessary reference especially regarding its critique of the sex/gender-dichotomy. According to Edenheim (2008) the early radical feminist introduction of Butler by such writers as Margareta Lindholm and myself was an attempt to show an alternative way to use the Swedish notion of *kön* [sex] in linkage with Butler's category of gender. "This is quickly out-manoeuvred by the term genus, which thereby becomes connected to a liberal research field with an implicit distancing to the Marxist radical feminist field," she writes (Edenheim 2008, 162). This was the case also in Finland in spite of the fact that the term gender in Finnish, *sukupuoli*, with its explicit reference to a binary linked to kin, did not necessarily imply a distinction between sex and gender.

Identity and Heteronormativity in View ...

In dealing with questions linked to the unstable and fragmented but dynamic character of gender identity as performative and its historically and culturally constructed disposition, *Gender Trouble* is a quite frequently used reference in the journal examined. In her article on the place of the lesbian in theory, Marja Kaskisaari (1992) refers to Butler's view on the paradoxicality of identity as impossible to be re-established to some origin: such an origin does not exist, because it has been developed according to the needs of the dominant discourse. Kaskisaari (1992, 11) discusses Butler's idea of the copy of the copy underlining

that the so-called origin is a reality resembling copy, which we have learned to consider as real or actual. Interestingly, she also focuses in her discussion of identities on how Butler uses the notion of phantasy as the means of adapting gender identities, how our inner gender reality is a fabricated creation. There is no authentic gender, true forms of it or copies, there is only phantasies of different possibilities, Kaskisaari (1992, 8) writes.

Susanna Paasonen (1998) refers to *Gender Trouble* in her article on marriage industry, emphasising Butler's idea of the unstable character of gender identity as a performative achievement, the presumed coherence of which is formed by stylistic repetition. According to Paasonen, the surface of the body functions as an identity billboard to which visible gendered signifiers, such as clothing, poses and decoration are attached. Hence, the constant signification of the body produces gender, which is a phantasy discursively maintained and tied to compulsory heterosexuality (Paasonen 1998, 5). Also Johanna Oksala (1999) refers repeatedly to Butler's *Gender Trouble* when discussing the postmodern and fragmented character of identities. According to her, gender identity is constituted as a normative ideal, the task of which is to position individuals in two oppositional and exclusionary categories, and it is built on stylistic bodily acts without any gendered subject as the reason and organiser of them (Oksala 1999, 9). In her article about motherhood and changing figures of gender – a critical review of Nancy Chodorow's thinking – Jaana Vuori (1995) discusses what she calls Butler's way of dismantling psychoanalytic theories about the making of gender identities. In Vuori's opinion, Butler maintains the idea of gendered subjectivity as the history of identification from psychoanalytic theory, but Vuori also thinks that Butler reminds us that this history is always a re-organisation, coding and interpretation of individual life incidents. Gender coherence is formed and maintained by linking together anatomic/biological, social gender and sexual desire; it is a fiction that functions as a tool for power and control (Vuori 1995, 34–5).

In the 1990s there are also a couple of remarks of the coerciveness of heteronormativity. In her *lectio precursoria*, Pulkkinen (1996b) takes up Butler's notion of the heterosexual matrix, which according to her helps

to distinguish the productive power of the gender system: the identity categories men and women are products of that power. According to Pulkkinen (1996b, 67), Butler examines how gendering belongs to the power practices of subject formation. In an early article of mine about the necessity to take into consideration practices of institutionalised heterosexuality in examining gender systems, I refer quite extensively to Butler's then very recently published book (Liljeström 1990). This article has later been interpreted as a valuable introduction of Butler in the Swedish context (Edenheim 2008, 148).

As noticed, academic feminism in Finland took during the 1990s Butler's symptomatic reading to its heart and made her to its own "house God." This happened somewhat before the emergence of queer research in the Finnish context. Later, in the 2000s, as Roden (2001, 28) has observed, *Gender Trouble* was allied more with queer popular liberation than with feminism *per se*, the reason of which he sees in part in the critique of the heteronormativity inherent in feminist theory.

... and Subversive Repetition as Way Out

Simultaneously with the initial excitement over *Gender Trouble*, its questioning of the sex/gender-division and the introduction of the performative gender, some authors paid special attention to the thorny problem of thinking change and subversion in repetitive practices such as gender construction. Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola (1993) discuss Butler's ideas of subversive repetition expressed in *Gender Trouble* in order to think how to change repetitive practices, underlining that it is not a question of choice, because the "I" is always inside the repetitive practices and meanings. Thus, there is no outside agent or reality to the intelligibility of discursive practices. They emphasise that the question is not about repetition or not, but of how to repeat in order to change and undermine those gendered norms which themselves make the repetition possible. According to them it is possible by radical bodily surface politics to describe anew the internal psychic processes. We can produce gender figures disciplinarily afresh with the help of phantasy, prohibition and exclusion (Jokinen and Veijola 1993, 15–6).

Pointing to the important but ambiguous question of subversion, I discussed in an article about feminist and queer definitions of gender and its links to power and sexuality, Butler's statement of the discursive certainty of gender; I ponder over how we are to understand change or exits from the given gridirons of gendered intelligibility (Liljeström 1998). This problematic of the "way out" from an oppressive, heteronormative gender order has, in reviews and evaluations of *Gender Trouble*, caused a lot of controversial discussions about the role of agency in a system of gendered and sexual subjugation and in a historical context of radical critique of identity politics.

Gender Trouble and Queer Theory

Butler's critique of identity politics, of the unified and universal feminist subject opened also for an intensified discussion of identity questions in queer theory and research. The role of *Gender Trouble* can here indirectly be seen as quite remarkable. Hekanaho (2009) saw the book as an opening for an increase in queer research, and the translators of *Gender Trouble* to Finnish, Tuija Pulkkinen and Leena-Maija Rossi (2006, 8), write in their introduction, that "*Gender Trouble* became immediately after its publication an extremely important book precisely for the new queer-movement." They underline that the book has been essential in queer research, which was separated to its own field also within the academic Women's Studies. However, they also correctly noticed that queer as a word does not yet appear in this book, though *Gender Trouble*, according to them, "clearly [has] been written as a statement to the inner discussion of the feminist second wave" (Pulkkinen and Rossi 2006, 8).

Pulkkinen and Rossi (2006) continue with maybe an accurate but quite contextually confusing statement of the discussion of feminist notions of gender. They write:

At the time of the publication of *Gender Trouble* the academic feminist discussion had already for a while ended in a fruitless dispute between, on the one hand, the both admired and criticised "theoretical" sexual difference feminism, and, on the other hand, the both respected and

belittled “practical” equality feminism. Butler’s work changed this constellation totally, because it does not represent either of these.
(Pulkkinen and Rossi 2006, 9)

Yet, after having noticed the inner dispute as fruitless, they surprisingly state that *Gender Trouble* appeared in the midst of a lively feminist discussion, which they characterise “as a kind of heyday of academic feminist theory” (Pulkkinen and Rossi 2006, 9). Seemingly (and actually without saying it) they here point to queer theory and *Gender Trouble* as the inspirer for a new buzz of academic feminism from the “stiffened” standstill between feminist theory of sexual difference and equality feminism. In retrospective, this positioning seem to have been an effective way of strengthening the place of Butler and her *Gender Trouble* – along with queer theory – to an ideal revitaliser and idol within academic feminism.

Benefits of Paranoid Reading: The Success of *Gender Trouble*

How then can the positive effects of paranoid reading be understood? Rita Felski (2009) notes interestingly that we adhere to paranoid texts since we need not to be suspicious of the text, because the text is already doing all the work of suspicion for us. According to her, we prize its wariness of closure, its disarming of thought, its giddy dislocations of causality and coherence (Felski 2009). Suspicious reading creates its own pleasures: a sense of competence in creative methods of interpretation, appreciation of the elegance of certain explanatory patterns, the intellectual satisfaction of sharpened understanding (Felski 2009). In this way paranoid reading can be highly energising and motivating. This is especially the case in connection to identity knowledges with their belief in the authority imbedded in particular subject positions among those who pursued various forms of identity politics, like feminists and queer activists. In identity knowledges critique has been practiced as ideological criticism, which determined both the objects of study and the critical approaches by which to interpret them. Critique had also gigantic political aspirations, which indicate intellectual and political benefits

of paranoid reading (see Wiegman 2013, 207). On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that negativity and aggression at the heart of psychic life are necessary for thinking in general, as Heather Love (2010, 238) has pointed out. This emphasis identifies the paranoid and reparative positions as inseparable in opposition to those who have interpreted Sedgwick's thoughts about paranoid and reparative reading as mutually exclusive, especially when put into contact with thoughts and definitions of affects (see, for example, the special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2007). Thus, Love, among many others (see e.g., Koivunen 2010, and the discussion between Wiegman (2014), Stacey (2014), Hemmings (2014), and Lewis (2014) in *Feminist Theory*) emphasises the interconnectedness between paranoid and reparative reading and in Love's (2010, 239) words, "practicing reparative reading means leaving the door open to paranoid reading." The positions are inseparable and they are bound together by the glue of shared affect: as paranoia is a mode of anxiety – about what might happen – also reparation is grounded in anxiety.

Also Wiegman (2014, 15) refuses to put paranoid and reparative readings in contradiction to each other underlining the importance of interpretation and close reading as academic practice. For her it is the affective register of temporality that holds paranoid and reparative reading together. Also Jackie Stacey (2014) is critical toward the mode of mobilising reparative reading, that is, not in relation to interpretation, but as a denial of ambivalence. Therefore, she asks what is the character of repair and what kind of damage does a request for reparative reading indicate, and how do we imagine that reading can have an effect on repair (Stacey 2014, 42). As for Clare Hemmings (2014), who continues Stacey's line of reasoning, the important question is to whom or what is reparation made, especially when taking into consideration the current (European) academic context. Because of the features of this context with its many-sided strengthening of the corporative university capitalism and its consequences of decimation and cutbacks, Hemmings (2014, 29) calls the reparative turn a "spectacular avoidance tactic."

Sedgwick (2003, 138–9) is of course right in her evaluation of Butler's book as paranoid as far as we put special emphasis on the text's useful-

ness as a source of knowledge in the form of exposure. Sedgwick looks at Butler's choices of words, such as "reveal," "denaturalise," "enact," and "expose." Sedgwick (2003, 144) also points to the existing paranoid consensus, its monopolistic program and character as constantly misrecognising, disarticulating, a disavowal of other ways of knowing, of reparative motives, less oriented around suspicion, "that actually are being practiced, often by the same theorists and as part of the same project." Reparative motives are inadmissible in paranoid theory, she further writes, because they are both about pleasure and they strive to make things better i.e. they are ameliorative (Sedgwick 2003, 144). Butler's book gave us something profound in the "right" historical moment of many intersecting phenomena, like identity politics and knowledges, the strengthening of feminist movements and epistemologies, something that elevates precisely this book above other theoretical work of the time, published both before and after. In opposition to Sedgwick's statement about the character of *Gender Trouble* as the ultimate paranoid text, one could then instead underline its symptomatic reading, its importance as exposure of the regulatory production of naturalised gender as continually significant and appropriate in the contemporary context of ongoing sexual, racial, class and gendered oppression.

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SAMMANFATTNING

Artikeln handlar om 1990-talets "förkanoniska" finska reception av Judith Butlers bok *Gender Trouble*. Mitt övergripande argument är att det så gott som omedelbara, positiva mottagandet av Butlers bok i hög grad berodde på de tolkningssätt som benämnts som symptomatiska. Enligt Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, som anser Butlers bok vara prototypen för en paranoid text, grundar sig symptomatiska tolkningar på antaganden om att vi måste blottlägga dolda betydelser för att lösa föreliggande problem och att när vi synliggör något neutraliserar vi dess makt. Jag diskuterar Butlerbokens inledande dragningskraft på finländska feminister under 1990-talet genom att studera dess reception i den enda periodiskt utkommande finländska kvinno-/genusvetenskapliga tidskriften. Det är inte fråga om en receptionsstudie i vedertagen bemärkelse av mottagandet av *Gender Trouble*, utan mina iakttagelser är både sporadiska, det vill säga de är begränsade till nämnda tidskrift, och eklektiska, då jag inte har samlat material om temat systematiskt. I stället presenteras hur vissa huvudtankar och -teman i *Gender Trouble* artikulerades i den finländska 1990-talskontexten. I artikeln belyses debatter om "miss-tänksamhetens hermeneutik" och om paranoidea/reparativa läsningar. Rubriken "Affektiva spår" understryker att mottagandet av Butlers bok redan i inledningsskedet var genomsyrat av affekter, för att inte tala om under dess senare, kanoniska period på 2000-talet. I dag associeras affektiviteten även med dess ställning som typexempel på symptomatisk läsning.

Keywords: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, *Journal of Women's Studies* (Finland), reception, hermeneutics of suspicion, paranoid and reparative reading, affectivity