

Ideally, degendering should not just be an indictment to leave gender behind, but should offer the chance for any body to express any configuration of gender, from its traditional binary expression through its mixture to its opposite. It is difficult to see how degendering as Lorber proposes it evades a unisex social order yet even this is an ideal. While Lorber seems to be persuaded by Butler's notion that gender is a negotiation between a subject and the Law she neglects the implications of this idea. Gender binaries have not remained because we fail to see the benefits of degendering, but because we are socially ostracised, economically disenfranchised, physically and emotionally beaten, sexually assaulted and killed when we try to "break the bowls." I too look forward to a world where women and men are compensated for their work without regard to gender, but it seems that degendering should first and foremost address the issue of gender violence. Without this analysis, I am skeptical of the volume's worth for classroom use and, given my belief in Lorber's vision, that is really too bad.

#### Endnote

I. Since my dissertation was passed in May 2005, written entirely in gender neutral pronouns, I have advocated the adoption of the pronouns "sie," "hir," "hirs," and "hirsself," presently the most widely used format. Briefly stated, the most important reasons for this modification in language use are that pronominal gender duality supports the notion that the two-sex system is natural, that gendered pronouns enforce sex disclosure even in situations such as hiring where sex is not supposed to matter, and that this linguistic imposition of sex duality helps to make sex/gender policing a social norm.

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Undoing Gender. Judith Butler. New York & London: Routledge, 2004; 267 pages; ISBN 0-415-96923-9; \$31.05US (paper).

Contemplative, incisive, and highly readable, this compilation of Judith Butler's recent essays engages with a wide range of themes important to feminist inquiry. Gathered from previous presentation in scholarly journals, edited volumes, and at

conferences, this collection of eleven revised essays presents Butler's most current meditations on gender, sex, and sexuality, and engages with the "New Gender Politics" sprung from the productive ruptures in feminist and queer theory invoked by trans studies and the intersex movement.

Drawing on psychoanalysis and fresh readings of Foucault, Butler reconsiders the incest taboo, the (heterosexual) structure of kinship, the confession, social recognition, survival and vulnerability, and technologies of sex and gender. Underlying all of these essays is a profound questioning of what it means to "be human" and how expressions of sex, sexuality, and gender can make for impossible (or indeed "unlivable") lives under dominant relations of power. Equally, these compiled writings reflect on the ways in which normative categories of "the human" come "undone" under the rupturing effects of embodied lives that through living challenge regulatory regimes. Speaking especially, and even intimately, to those of us "who are living in certain ways beside ourselves, whether [...] in sexual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage" (20), Butler raises the urgent question of what "community" - and especially communities of resistance - might look like given complexities and differences that seem, at times, to thwart the possibility of "acting in concert." While many of these writings will be of particular interest to trans and non-trans embodied theorists grappling with the difficulties of "doing justice" to the complex intersections of "race," class, sex, gender, sexuality, power, social regulation and recognition in their studies, these essays will also appeal more generally to feminists who take a critical and/or philosophical position with respect to discourses of human rights.

It is perhaps the two essays "The End of Sexual Difference?" and "The Question of Social Transformation" that most closely reflect on the still productive question of what "sexual difference" and/or "gender" has to do with feminist politics, feminist theory, and for anything approaching a collective feminist position. If "gender" and "sexual difference" do not provide a stable foundation for feminist thought and critique, what does? In the latter of the two essays Butler includes a sensitive reconsideration of her early *Gender Trouble*, a book

written prior to her securing a stable position in the academy.

For readers meeting Butler for the first time, this is an excellent volume with which to become acquainted with the startling, and always thoughtful, range of her engagements with gender, sex, sexuality, and politics. For those already familiar with her work, this volume might be found to be pared down and clarifying, certainly characteristically nuanced and provocative, and marked by a slight shift in tone. The essays collected here are at times tender, and carry a sense of urgency - thoughtfulness and wisdom that seem to come at us with a great speed, and with a request for a response. The writing is at once reflective and illuminating - Butler at her very best.

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