Genders and Sexualities in the Social Sciences

Series Editors: Victoria Robinson, University of Sheffield, UK and Diane Richardson, University of Newcastle, UK

Editorial Board: Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney, Australia, Kathy Davis, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, Stevi Jackson, University of York, UK, Michael Kimmel, State University of New York, Stony Brook, USA, Kimiko Kimoto, Hitotsubashi University, Japan, Jasbir Puar, Rutgers University, USA, Steven Seidman, State University of New York, Albany, USA, Carol Smart, University of Manchester, UK, Liz Stanley, University of Edinburgh, UK, Gill Valentine, University of Leeds, UK, Jeffrey Weeks, South Bank University, UK, Kath Woodward, The Open University, UK

Titles include:

Jyothsna Belliappa
GENDER, CLASS AND REFLEXIVE MODERNITY IN INDIA

Edmund Coleman-Fountain
UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE IDENTITY THROUGH LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH

Niall Hanlon
MASCULINITIES, CARE AND EQUALITY
Identity and Nurture in Men’s Lives

Brian Heaphy, Carol Smart and Anna Einarsdottir (editors)
SAME SEX MARRIAGES
New Generations, New Relationships

Sally Hines and Yvette Taylor (editors)
SEXUALITIES
Past Reflections, Future Directions

Meredith Nash
MAKING ‘POSTMODERN’ MOTHERS
Pregnant Embodiment, Baby Bumps and Body Image

Meredith Nash
REFRAMING REPRODUCTION
Conceiving Gendered Experiences

Lucy Nicholas
QUEER POST-GENDER ETHICS
The Shape of Selves to Come

Barbara Pini and Bob Pease (editors)
MEN, MASCULINITIES AND METHODOLOGIES

Victoria Robinson and Jenny Hockey
MASCULINITIES IN TRANSITION

Yvette Taylor and Michelle Addison (editors)
QUEER PRESENCES AND ABSENCES
Queer Post-Gender Ethics
The Shape of Selves to Come

Lucy Nicholas
Faculty of Health, Arts and Design, Swinburne University, Australia
To the memory of my father, Brian George Nicholas, 1946–2013
This page intentionally left blank
## Contents

*Acknowledgements*  
1 \  
*Introduction*  
Queer theory 5  
Sex/gender/sexuality/difference 8  
Approach 11  
The argument and structure: deconstructing sexual difference, reconstructing ethical selves 13  
1 \  
**The Resilience of Bigenderism** 17  
The omnirelevance of sex/gender identity 17  
The ‘disembodied’ nature of sex/gender 21  
The binary limits of trans identity politics 25  
2 \  
**Diagnosing and Transcending Sexual Difference** 30  
‘Explanatory–diagnostic analysis’ 30  
The limits of the sex/gender divide 31  
The alternative ‘diagnosis’: the sex/gender/desire continuum 34  
The nature of sex: beyond sexual dimorphism and beyond the cultural vs. the material 38  
Reconstruction: the malleability of matter 40  
The intersubjectivity of sexual difference: cultural genitals 43  
Refining the problem and the aim: doing and un-doing difference 49  
Opposition(s) and hierarchy(s): the symbolic violence of gender 51  
‘Anticipatory-utopian critique’: transcending sexual difference 56  
Conclusion: the task ahead 58  
3 \  
**Gender Justice** 60  
Limits to liberal justice and freedom 62  
The veil of ignorance 63  
Liberalism as androcentric androgyny 66  
Liberal feminism 67  
Ethics of benevolence and partiality 72  
Conclusion 83
4 Philosophical Arguments for Post-Gender Ontological Ethics

The ontological: the ambiguous existence of others
The conditions of agency: situated capacity
The ethical: transcendence through self creation
Sexual difference as oppression and immanence
Freedom as collective doing
Reciprocity as enabling alternative
Implications for post-gender politics: evaluating freedoms and maximising agency
Conclusion

5 Queer Futures and Queer Ethics: Sketching Inexhaustibly Reciprocal Androgyny

The violence of closure
The closure of androgyny
‘Queer’ and the reification of identity
Who is the other? The limits to recognition and the closure of sameness
Being reciprocal
Universalised particularism
(Global) queer ethic: ‘sex for pleasure’
Queering utopia, queering androgyny
Conclusion

6 The Politics of Implementing Post-Gender Ethics: Beyond Idealism/Realism

The inescapability of power and norms
Negation of negation: justifying strategic violence
Strategic essentialism and preventing closure
Beyond means/ends in gender and sexuality politics
Foreclosing foreclosure: doubled vision
Conclusion

7 The Fully Armed Self: Cultivating Post-Gender Subjects

Multi-layered sites for post-gender ethics
Fully armed: the ideal subject for androgynous reciprocity
Why pedagogy?
Queer pedagogy
Teaching androgyny
Gender-neutral childrearing
## Contents

8 Ethical Post-Gender Sexual Relationships and Communities 177

- Doing reciprocity together: enabling relations for post-gender ethics 178
- The relational ideal: enabling, truly dialogical communication 180
- Reciprocal relations in practice 185
- Anarchist and queer approaches to intimate relationships 188
- Enabling, post-gender cultural resources:
  - ‘transcending immanence in concert with others’ 191
- Deregulating dimorphism: intersex rights 192
- Post-gender prefiguration and gender-neutral language 197
- Ethical sex: community responses to sexual assault 199

Conclusion: Utopian Realism 204

Notes 208

Bibliography 210

Index 228
Acknowledgements

This book owes acknowledgements to a great many inspirational and supportive people. Firstly it owes a legacy to those gender theorists, feminists and queers whose ideas have been such an inspiration. In this way, like any work (as with any person), my ideas have been a collaborative project.

Professor Liz Stanley has been the best academic mentor that I could wish for, whose prolific ideas have been an inspiration. Likewise, Dr Kate Orton-Johnson’s support and persistence deserves my thanks. To my illustrious and insightful proof readers, my eternal gratitude: Dr Deb Dempsey, Dr Glenda Ballantyne, Dr Chris Agius and James Slater.

I would like to acknowledge the patience, support and unconditional love of my family: Danny, Bec, Mum and Mike and I thank them for sticking by me in all that we have all been through in the last few years. Kylie Lewis, Carmen Seaby, Lauren Kenny, Roz Ward and EJ Scott remain a consistent inspiration and changed my life and way of thinking about gender, and the rest, for the better.


I would also like to acknowledge the support of The International Network for Sexual Ethics and Politics, the University of Edinburgh, sociology at the University of Portsmouth, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Dr Victoria Robinson, the comments of the anonymous reviewer and the team at Palgrave Macmillan.