

Reviewers' comments on David Bleich, *The Materiality of Language: Gender, Politics, and the University*, Indiana University Press, May 2013

From Deborah Brandt, Professor of English, University of Wisconsin, Madison:

"Shows how language politics and gender politics go together and how suppression of language is related to suppression of people. . . . The Materiality of Language is a critique (historical and intellectual) of male-dominated modes of language use, their roots in the founding and administering of the university, their effects on what can and can't be studied, and their spill over into popular culture. . . . The argument is by accretion, by finding patterns. That is, Bleich provides analytic resources that are portable. This critique roams broadly over science, social science, [and the] humanities, and both the critique and the alternative are powerfully rendered."

"The separation of language from human beings infects university study at all levels and is exacerbated by the specialization of disciplines that also tends to break up language and its domains in distorting and unproductive ways. . . . Bleich especially suggests that feminist scholarship and attention to traditionally female domains (including mothers loving their children into language) provide ripe sources for materialist awareness and the book persistently brings our attention to these cases."

". . . [Bleich] writes lucidly and accessibly and . . . models a way of reading other people's work generously and carefully."

"anyone who is suffering from the burden of abstract language will find relief . . . in reading this book."

"The book provides an alternate theory and set of terms that can challenge prevailing paradigms."

From Mary Louise Pratt, Silver Professor and Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures, New York University:

"A potentially foundational text in an emergent field [of] language studies, whose work is to break up the monopoly Linguistics and Philosophy have had on the study of language. . . . [An] alternative history of western linguistic thought . . . [featuring] thinkers who developed "material" or socially-driven philosophies of language. . . . One of the book's distinctive features is the use of gender as a key normative analytical lens throughout. It would be difficult to exaggerate how rare

this is among language thinkers, and how productive it is for the arguments here."

"The book draws on an exceptionally vast body and range of research—[I] wonder how on earth he did it."

"The insight that the affective operation of language is elided in nearly all approaches to [language] acquisition is brilliant, and astounding. . . . The analysis of subject creation as an affective process of recognizing and sharing the same affective state, and language as the means for materializing affective states . . . is fascinating and persuasive."

"Thinking through gender makes the arguments here possible."

From Dale Bauer, Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies, University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana:

"A powerful, first-rate book on a crucial topic."

"a great interpretation of the sacralization and ascendancy of Latin as a language of power supporting what . . . Bleich calls 'an elite group of men.'"

". . . a brilliant codebook to academic language and its coercions."

From Tom Fox, Professor of English, California State University at Chico:

"Powerful, engaging, beautifully written, a slam-dunk of an argument for the materiality of language. As erudite as it is, it's also accessible and even funny."

From Deborah H. Holdstein, Dean, Arts and Sciences, Columbia College Chicago:

"In provocative and compelling fashion, David Bleich writes of matters fundamentally important to composition and rhetoric. Bleich eloquently links crucial issues of language with their implications for our students and the ways we choose to teach them. Throughout this lucid and important work, Bleich encourages us to return to the importance of language and its centrality to authority and access."