



What Gender Is, What Gender Does

Judith Roof

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What Gender Is, What Gender Does provides a forceful new paradigm for considering genders. With depth and insight, Judith Roof argues that genders are much more than binary. And they are constantly morphing: they are conscious and unconscious, simultaneously conventional and idiosyncratic. At any moment, more than one gender dynamic is at work in any individual.

Roof's interpretation of genders isn't content with either biological duality or endlessly open performativity, and what results is a nuanced and surprising representation of gender—an account that captures the complexities of lived experience as well as lived ideology. For Roof, genders are interacting sets of operations that link individual desires to multiple, shifting manifestations of sociocultural positioning and self-presentation. Thus, “to gender” is to signal, mask, suggest, mislead, and simplify the uncontrollable chaos of desires characteristic of subjects but roundly contained by society.

Drawing illustrative material from contemporary popular culture productions, including *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *Spider-Man*, *Shrek*, *Shallow Hal*, *Sex and the City*, *Bridesmaids*, Bond films, and “bromance” movies, *What Gender Is, What Gender Does* demonstrates how the persistent conflation of gender and sexual difference is, on the one hand, a simple taxonomic urge and, on the other, a cover that offers the security of identity in place of the frustrations and fears of the real asymmetries of personal power dynamics.

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