



Please Select Your Gender: From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratizing of Transgenderism

Patricia Gherovici

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"I have the worst birth defect a woman can have: I was born with a penis and a pair of testicles."

Thus we meet Hera, who shares her reason for starting psychoanalysis and whose statement embodies the debate over transgenderism, rigorously dissected in *Please Select Your Gender*. Is it a mental disorder, as some would claim, or a matter of sexual identity? An orientation or a life choice? Despite differing opinions, transgenderism has lost much of its stigma over the past decade or so – though perhaps none of its shock value. Nevertheless, the door is open for a reformulation of the hysterical question, "Am I a man or a woman?"

Utilizing rich clinical vignettes and elements of Lacanian theory, Patricia Gherovici demonstrates how the transgender discourse has both reoriented psychoanalytic practice and reframed debates about gender in American society at large. She traverses historical, theoretical, and clinical grounds to explore what has been termed the "democratizing of gender" – for what could be more democratic than the choice of one's own gender, now able to be changed on demand?

Arguing for the depathologization of transgenderism, *Please Select Your Gender* aims to revise current notions of human sexuality in general. In doing so, it challenges the theory and practice of psychoanalysis with questions typically addressed only indirectly, but which are themselves transforming how analysis is done, advancing new ideas for the clinic that can be extrapolated to social and intellectual contexts in an effort to engage the broader dialogues of gender and sexuality.

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Irma Patterson:

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