Sex in Transition: Remaking Gender and Race in South Africa


Sex in Transition explores the lives of those who undermine the man/woman binary, exposing the gendered contradictions of apartheid and the transition to democracy in South Africa. In this context, gender liminality—a way to describe spaces between common conceptions of "man" and "woman"—is expressed by South Africans who identify as transgender, transsexual, transvestite, intersex, lesbian, gay, and/or eschew these categories altogether. This book is the first academic exploration of challenges to the man/woman binary on the African continent and brings together gender, queer, and postcolonial studies to question the stability of sex. It examines issues including why transsexuals’ sex transitions were encouraged under apartheid and illegal during the political transition to democracy and how butch lesbians and drag queens in urban townships reshape race and gender. Sex in Transition challenges the dominance of theoretical frameworks based in the global North, drawing on fifteen years of research in South Africa to define the parameters of a new transnational transgender and sexuality studies.

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