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A TOUR OF GENDER CRITICAL LITERATURE
REVIEW OF *TRANSGENDER BODY POLITICS* BY
HEATHER BRUNSKELL-EVANS (SPINIFEX, 2020)

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KEYWORDS

transgender, gender critical, bodies, treatment, gender identity development, Tavistock clinic, de-transition, psychology, psychotherapy

Transgender Body Politics is a welcome addition to the gender critical literature. It is a small (around 7' x 5' x 1/3') pocket book, which succinctly gives the reader an easy to understand and very easy to read condensed whistle-stop tour of current gender critical thinking in relation to the hot topic of the moment; transgender, one which is a topic which is guaranteed to spark debate and emotions.

In the first chapter the author asks the question "What is a woman?" which is the all important question which almost none of the people whom I see presenting with gender dysphoria are able to articulate, despite having a firm conviction that they are definitely are or are not a woman. The idea of women, their bodies, sexuality, and biology are examined. We then are led to the murky confusion that is queer theory and the author provides a concise summary of what this is (something which Judith Butler was never able to do herself) and how it relates to current gender ideology. In girls' bodies, the transgenering of children, an area the author has famously written on extensively previously, she focuses here on the controversial GIDS (Gender Identity Development) Clinic at The Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology, which recently came under much legal scrutiny with regard to the treatment of the children it cared for. The author references the major whistle blowers from the Tavistock who exposed the practices there in addition to the recent television coverage of the clinic in various BBC programmes. Importantly the case of Kiera Bell and de-transitioners are included in the book. De-transitioners rarely appear in books related to transgender and this is often an important omission to other books.

In chapter three the male body and its politics are addressed along with the legal manifestations of biological men identifying as transwomen being allowed into female only spaces, including female only prisons and the inevitable concerns this raises. Towards the end of the book the author talks about the wider political picture, including the transgender industry and impact.

Overall, I thought that this was an excellent book. What I liked was the accessibility in terms of language and size, which would make this a very easy to digest summary of the current pertinent issues in relation to transgender from a gender critical

perspective, which importantly challenges the gender ideology, as proposed by social justice theory and affirmation theory, which does not allow any critique of self-identification for gender. Whilst those who are able to critique gender ideology may be slurred as being TERFS (trans exclusionary radical feminists) or transphobic, they would be well advised to read this book, so as to add a differing dimension to the one they hold with conviction. It would be difficult to have a problem with much of what Brunskell-Evans writes in her book and it would be a useful addition to the bookshelves of anyone working in psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, or social work, and those who are involved in policy making in local and national government, so as to be better informed on transgender and gender from an informed and thoughtful perspective.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Az Hakeem, MBBS, MSc, FRCPsych, is a consultant psychiatrist, medical psychotherapist and group analyst, and an honorary clinical associate professor at the University of London (UCL) Medical School, UK. Dr. Az Hakeem offers assessments and treatment as a psychiatrist or psychotherapist for a number of conditions, including gender dysphoria. He is the author of *Trans: Exploring Gender Identity and Dysphoria* (2018).

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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