

Magi Gibson

Poet

“People were coming into discussions saying ‘How dare you debate trans lives?’ But it was actually women’s rights that I was interested in.”



The cancellation

Magi Gibson has endured several years of harassment, abuse and other poor treatment due to her belief that sex is real and occasionally matters, which was informed by decades of work with women’s groups.

She has experienced activists trying to shut down events she was organising and had her books hidden at an event at which she was speaking. The extremely high likelihood of transactivist outcry made her feel compelled to stand down from a new appointment to the board of one literary organisation rather than spark more attacks. A former student made an unwarranted complaint of transphobia about Gibson and her husband that led to their investigation by the Federation of Writers Scotland. There was no evidence to support the complaint. Gibson was reliably informed about a poetry event in Edinburgh at which a trans-identifying poet dedicated a poem to “Scotland’s biggest transphobe”, which was a nasty parody of her own work. The event organiser did nothing. Gibson has been accused of murder by someone working for a transactivist charity while she was walking down the street.

“At least one person phoned in ahead of [a Scottish Poetry Library] event to say my presence would make people unsafe. I have severe osteoporosis and risk fracture if I get jostled. I have done nothing to deserve or justify that kind of treatment.”

The effect

Gibson has experienced serious physical and mental health effects as a result of her treatment, one of the most hurtful aspects of which was ostracisation. This was despite saying repeatedly that she wanted trans people to be protected and, like everyone else, to have full human rights. The tedium of being investigated also took its toll. “It was very much ‘The process is the punishment’,” said Gibson. “It was the fault of the climate, particularly in Scotland. If someone made an accusation of transphobia, everyone had to jump.”

“Gender-critical writers in Scotland have been cancelled in all sorts of ghost ways for years. We have had our careers derailed. We’ve been made worse than persona non grata. We have been made whipping boys for having perfectly reasonable and legal views that we have a right to hold.”