

BOOK REVIEW

Transpeople: Repudiation, Trauma, Healing. Christopher A. Shelley. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008; xvi+250 pages; ISBN 978-0-8020-9539-8;\$29.95 (paper).

This book provides a comprehensive and innovative account of the issues faced by transsexual and transgender people in their everyday lives. Author Christopher Shelley bases this account in qualitative research interviews with transpeople in British Columbia and his theoretical grounding in psychology, gender theory and women's studies. In particular, Shelley explores the commonly-used concept of transphobia and teases out its connections to larger social and intrapersonal processes that he refers to as repudiation. Although truly phobic (fear-based) reactions are part of the personal accounts Shelley presents, the idea of repudiation opens up ways to understand the complex mix of fear, fascination, disgust and desire that transpeople evoke and experience. This wider concept is discussed in terms of specific areas of social, political and historical repudiation that are part of transpeople's encounters with health care, education, employment, law enforcement, public washrooms, personal and social relationships, and from groups across the political and social spectrum, including gays/lesbians, social conservatives, neo-liberals and feminists.

Transpeople is of particular value for women's studies because it skillfully and respectfully addresses different, sometimes contentious, points of view while suggesting ways for researchers and activists to move forward in relevant and meaningful ways. For example, Dorothy Smith's approach to feminist research situates individuals within a matrix of external influences and constraints. Individual everyday and everynight experience is the starting point for this exploration. A dilemma arises for many feminist activists and researchers when we try to conceptualize a space for individual and community resistance within this net of ruling relations. Shelley provides a compelling framework of theory, research practice and potential for action that opens a space for resistance and change in the intersections between exterior forces and interior processes. His respectful and insightful re-presentation of the accounts of transpeople participating in his research study does justice to the complexity, difficulty and transformative power of these points of intersection - for transpeople, certainly, but just as critically for their allies and repudiators (individually and institutionally).

The material provided in this book is wide-ranging and often complex, but remains accessible to a wide academic audience. Shelley's writing is readable and relatively free of jargon, with concise explanations and examples provided for concepts from both

mainstream and radical feminist, psychological and political theory. Material from his interviews with transpeople creates a significant and personal engagement with the reader that balances and enriches our theoretical understanding of trans subjectivities. The book could have been improved by a clearer outline of its structure in the introductory chapter and some more detailed recommendations for action in support of transpeople and allies in the conclusion. On the whole, however, this is a valuable contribution to trans studies in Canada and more generally. Scholars, teachers and researchers in gender, queer and women's studies will find a refreshing perspective on important issues and challenges within and between their fields. Students and general readers with an interest in transgender issues will appreciate the book as an excellent overview of key material that is illuminated by intensely personal accounts of trans lives.

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