

Ethel Writes

PUBLISHING WOMEN

17 August 2026

Alisha Fernandez Miranda
Vice Chair, Edinburgh International Book Festival
121 George Street
Edinburgh, Scotland
EH2 4YN
By email

Dear Ms Fernandez Miranda,

Thank-you for your email of 15 July. At least we got a reply this year.

So that it becomes part of your formal record, we attach the reflections published today by For Women Scotland about yesterday's event. These show how their presence on your stage would have enriched the discussion. The Board chose to deprive the audience of that.

Our letters this year and last were sent directly in response to public comments by your Director. You have made it clear that she is doing this with the support of the current Board. What a shame.

Nothing remains but to publish these exchanges, and perhaps look forward to a time when the Festival's management is no longer an annual source of gratuitous disparagement for women it has, sadly, had too little courage or curiosity to platform.

Yours,

Susan Dalgety and Lucy Hunter Blackburn



Source: personal collection

For Women Scotland (@forwomenscot) 17.8.2026

Source: <https://x.com/ForWomenScot/status/2089313736112615574?s=20>

Some thoughts regarding the Edinburgh International Book Festival event

We didn't ask questions because we couldn't really think of anything we didn't know & @CatrionaStewart wisely said no statements. Instead, we will set our thoughts out here.

Keio Yoshida said that transmen were not considered in the ruling, this isn't true. The judges ruled that if a certificated sex reading was used, this would exclude transmen who, nevertheless, could fall pregnant.

More broadly, we agree that transmen are often relegated - probably because of their sex!

178. The repeated references in these sections, to a woman who has become pregnant or who is breast-feeding only make sense if sex has its biological meaning. These plain, unambiguous words can only be interpreted coherently as references to biological sex, biological females and biological males. Put another way, if the acquisition of a certificate pursuant to section 9(1) of the GRA 2004 applies to these words, so that biological women living as trans men (with a GRC in the male gender) are male, they would nonetheless be excluded from protection when pregnant notwithstanding a continued capacity to become pregnant, and duty-bearers would not be able to claim relevant exemptions in relation to their treatment. The protections include the following:

(a) Section 13(6)(a) (in the context of direct discrimination) provides that "If the protected characteristic is sex" "less favourable treatment of a woman includes less favourable treatment of her because she is breast-feeding". This provision obviously applies to biological women only. As a matter of ordinary language, it

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necessarily excludes all biological men as a homogenous group or class (whether or not they have a GRC).

(b) Section 17(2) makes provision for circumstances where A "discriminates against a woman if A treats her unfavourably because of a pregnancy of hers". Again, all biological women but only biological women are protected; all biological men are excluded from protection as a matter of ordinary language (whether or not they have a GRC).

(c) Section 17(3) gives protection only to a "woman" "because she has given birth". Biological women only are protected (whether or not they have a GRC). Biological men are excluded.

(d) Section 17(4) gives protection only to a "woman" "because she is breast-feeding". Biological women only are protected. Biological men are excluded (whether or not they have a GRC).

(e) Section 18 gives protections only to a "woman" "because of illness suffered by her ... as a result of the pregnancy"; "because she is on [various forms of maternity leave]" or "because she is exercising or seeking to exercise, or has exercised or sought to exercise, the right to [various forms of maternity leave]"; section 18(2)(a)-(b), (3), (4). Biological women only are protected. All biological men are excluded (whether or not they have a GRC).

Lady Hale made a very unfortunate comment about DSDs (which she called "intersex"). Her understanding on this topic is very out of date. We would urge her to employ more sensitivity and, certainly, not to lump people with medical conditions into the identity box.

A great deal was made of the lack of discussion of Human Rights law in the ruling. Both Karon and Lady Hale felt that it would probably have made no difference but Lady Hale & Keio Yoshida would have liked to see the reasoning set out.

It is a shame, therefore, that there was no mention of FWS3 in which the Scottish Gov largely relied on a Convention Rights argument to justify placing male trans prisoners in the

female estate. These arguments were comprehensively rejected by the court.
scotcourts.gov.uk/media/pnbpzgex...

Yoshida also lamented the lack of interventions from trans orgs. As Yoshida knows, anyone can apply to intervene at the SC. The fault is not with the court but with the orgs who failed to take the opportunity.

In fact, EN/STA did intervene earlier in our cases. Nothing prevented them doing so again. We believe trans orgs chose not to get involved because they would have been in the tricky position of arguing that those with a GRC should be treated differently to those without.

These groups have pushed the unlawful idea that access is based on self-id not certification.

The individuals who unsuccessfully applied to intervene have GRCs. Perhaps their supporters are unaware that they believe they should be granted heightened "rights".

Neither of these people has ever published their arguments.

Lady Hale was very emphatic that heterosexual men are not lesbians & felt the self-id campaign had been too driven by testosterone. She still thought, however, that there should be accommodations for the long-transitioned "true trans".

But her old-school transsexuals are very much a minority & there is no way to legislate for accommodation based on passing, hormones, surgery etc.

Two male audience members asked questions & they both were fully in favour of pushing men into women's spaces.

One said they should be in women's prison & we shouldn't be trying to prevent assaults that might never happen. Thankfully, Karon gave him both barrels!

We are glad that there was some recognition of the case & that Karon was able to deal with many myths, but we are still deeply upset that, apparently, Jenny Niven thinks that we (who know the case intimately) are far too dangerous to platform.

At some point, we hope the egregious omission of books by, amongst others, @DalgetySusan @LucyHunterB @msjlindsay @joannaccherry and the unequal platforming of trans activists is recognised. Truth matters & @edbookfest should ensure fair representation.