

## Representing Transgender in the 1970s Australian Media

**ABSTRACT:** In 1970s Australia, magazines and newspapers regularly featured stories about transgender women. The articles were often exploitative and depicted transgender people as freaks, with headlines designed to shock and mock. Digging deeper, there is another side to transgender people in the Australian media. Notwithstanding the exploitative nature of the coverage, the media was still a site of transgender visibility in an era where there otherwise was none. Oral histories with transgender Australians often mention the importance of a particular television show, article or magazine because they saw others “like them,” and they realised that they were not alone. Some transgender people even kept those articles for years because of the connections they felt to an otherwise uncertain identity. There also were features in the press that were empathetic to transgender Australians, whether that be on the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), in magazines such as *Cleo* or in broadsheet newspapers. This article analyses the complex role that media played representing and relating to transgender Australians in the 1970s. Drawing on a mix of newspaper, magazine and television sources, as well as oral histories, the article opens new lines of inquiry about histories of transgender visibility, public discourse and understanding the self.

In March 1977, three trans women and one’s wife from Melbourne’s Seahorse Club appeared on the Channel 0 morning program *Vi’s Pad*.<sup>1</sup> Seahorse was founded in Sydney in 1971 as Australia’s first known transgender organisation (identifying in the 1970s-80s as ‘transvestites’), and the Melbourne group formed in October 1975. The Seahorse participants approached this interview cautiously, noting in the group’s monthly newsletter: “On the script we have veto rights, so the interview will be devoid of blatant misrepresentation. We

anticipate that the publicity will be useful to the club, but we would be naïve to anticipate more than a superficial presentation.”<sup>2</sup> One of the participants, June, described the entire production crew and host Vi Greenhalf as being considerate and respectful (especially the make-up staff). June recognised that their performance would reflect on all transgender Australians: “it takes a long time to build up good public relations and any mass media exposure must be handled cautiously as it would be very easy to undo all the previous efforts in this area.”<sup>3</sup>

The host Vi Greenhalf subsequently received at least two letters that she forwarded to Seahorse. One was from a cisgender woman who wrote: “I accidentally saw your programme yesterday 22/3/77 in which you interviewed transvestites + one transsexual + instead of complaining, I want to congratulate you for being sensitive, compassionate + understanding. With all the social problems today one must learn about them in order to understand.” A second letter was from a transgender woman; only a portion of the letter remains, as the rest was torn. The fragment says: “It gave me a...hope in life...I myself hope...change my sex one day...to become a woman...At the moment I haven’t told anyone or my parents. I still pass myself off as a male, my age is 20, I have given this a lot of thought and plucked up enough courage to write to you.”<sup>4</sup> These two letters succinctly summarise the dual effects of transgender people’s participation in the media: they could positively influence cisgender people’s attitudes, and they gave a sense of connection to transgender audiences.

In 1970s Australia, tabloid newspapers regularly featured stories about transgender women, and television programs and magazines occasionally ran features. Tabloid articles were usually exploitative, sometimes sexualised, and always with headlines designed to shock. Yet, such media was still a site of transgender visibility in an era where there otherwise was none. Transgender Elders often mention the importance of a particular television show, article or magazine from their childhood because they saw others ‘like them’

and they realised that they were not alone. Some transgender people even kept those articles for years because of the connections they felt to an otherwise uncertain identity. Other media ran features that were sympathetic to transgender Australians, whether that be on television, in magazines such as *Cleo* or in broadsheet newspapers. Indeed, transgender people themselves often used the media to challenge social stigmas and to reach out to other transgender people.

This article analyses the complex role that media played representing and relating to transgender Australians in the 1970s. It uses Kelly Rawson and Cristan Williams' concise, broad definition of transgender as referring to people "whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth."<sup>5</sup> It draws on a mix of newspaper, magazine and television sources from the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA), the Melbourne eScholarship Learning Centre and transgender people's personal archives (a key point to be addressed later), as well as oral histories. The article first examines the scholarship around transgender people in the media and two key theoretical concepts: the paradox of visibility and identity events. It then analyses examples of transgender people from 1970s Australian newspaper, magazine and television media, weaving the historical artefacts with transgender Australians' memories. By bringing together these analytical lenses, primary sources and oral histories, the article opens new lines of inquiry about the interwoven, sometimes contradictory, yet highly influential relationships between transgender visibility, the media and transgender people's understandings of their gender identities.

Before proceeding, a short note on terminology is warranted. Language around gender identity and gender diversity is constantly evolving. Susan Stryker's umbrella definition of transgender is helpful at explaining the diverse expressions of being transgender:

[Transgender] refer[s] to people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender. Some people

move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender through which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly described or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to challenge the conventional expectations bound up with the gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place, rather than any particular destination or mode of transition.<sup>6</sup>

Stryker also presents an excellent overview of many terms historically and contemporaneously associated with transgender people.<sup>7</sup> In this article, unless quoting from sources, I use the preferred terminology as outlined in the ‘GLAAD Media Reference Guide – Transgender’.<sup>8</sup>

As Judith Butler and Marjorie Gerber argue, how societies construct, perform and read gender and gender identity is culturally and historically constitutive.<sup>9</sup> The term transgender has existed since at least 1965, but it did not come to popular usage – especially in Australia – until the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> In 1970s Australia, the two most prominent terms which would today come under the transgender umbrella were ‘transvestite’ and ‘transsexual’. Transvestites, at the time, referred to heterosexual men who adopted women’s dress and personas part-time but did not seek medical interventions to transition and live full-time as women. Transsexuals were those whose gender identity did not align with their sex assigned at birth and who went through a medical transition, ending with gender affirmation surgery. The psychiatry profession especially defined and regulated the boundaries between transvestites and transsexuals, and many transgender people accepted and internalised this distinction (e.g. Seahorse explicitly identified as a transvestite group). Still, it was not uncommon for a self-identified ‘transvestite’ to go through a process of (re)identifying and,

later in life, transitioning and identifying as a transsexual. In other words, while the discourses of the 1970s set rigid boundaries, people's lived experiences were far more fluid – hence why new, broader concepts around (trans)gender later came to challenge the transvestite/transsexual binary. For young people in 1970s Australia, the identity events came through exposure to media covering both transsexuals and transvestites because both challenged dominant, embodied understandings of gender and gender identity. As such, this article draws on 1970s media which reported on 'transvestites' and/or 'transsexuals'.

### **Searching for Transgender History**

The 1970s were a period of social change in Australia. Michelle Arrow argues that a defining feature of the decade was how the personal became political, with both the women's liberation and gay and lesbian rights movements challenging popular ideas about sex, gender and sexuality.<sup>11</sup> Through consciousness-raising, organising, and claiming public spaces, gays and lesbians challenged both the stigmas and – especially for lesbians – the silences which surrounded homosexuality.<sup>12</sup> Numerous historians such as Graham Willett and Robert Reynolds have examined how gay and lesbian activist organisations fought for law reform and anti-discrimination protections. Liberal groups like CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution) focused more on inclusion of gays and lesbians in the mainstream, whereas the more radical Gay Liberation groups sought revolutionary changes to societal attitudes around gender, sexuality, the family and religion.<sup>13</sup> The activism culminated in 1978 in Australia's 'Stonewall' moment: the first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. On 24 June police blocked a parade of several hundred revellers and, amidst the brutality that ensued, arrested fifty-three demonstrators. This became a seminal turning point that galvanised the entire gay and lesbian community in their push for law reform, anti-discrimination protections and societal acceptance.<sup>14</sup> The 1970s also witnessed the emergence of gay commercial scenes in

most capital cities, with Darlinghurst and Kings Cross in Sydney being the country's largest 'gay ghetto'.<sup>15</sup>

Transgender women were part of these communities, but transgender activism did not take off until the founding of the small Victorian Transsexual Coalition in Melbourne in 1979, and Roberta Perkins transformed the Sydney-based Australian Transsexual Association support group into an activist organisation in 1982. Both the women's liberation movement and gay and lesbian rights organisations generally avoided discussion of transgender rights. In fact, Dennis Altman, whose 1971 work *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* heavily influenced gay liberationists, expressed discomfort over 'transvestites' for their "mimicry of the ultrafeminine at a time when more women are moving beyond the feminine stereotype."<sup>16</sup> Altman's attitude echoed many radical feminists, although these critiques were relatively muted in 1970s Australia (They gained traction after the publication of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* in 1979<sup>17</sup>). To date the only texts about transgender people in 1970s Australia is Roberta Perkins' 1983 ethnographic study of transgender women working as strippers, showgirls and sex workers in Kings Cross and Barry Kay's collection of photographs of trans women published in 1976.<sup>18</sup>

This article derives from a larger project on Australia's transgender history since the early twentieth century. The project methodology mixes archival research with oral history interviews to explore the changing legal, medical, social, media and lived experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Australia. I am a cisgender male conducting this project, and I am conscious of the importance of centring transgender voices to ensure that the research reflects the experiences and desires of transgender communities.<sup>19</sup> To this end, I have an advisory group with transgender representatives from each state and territory. To date I have conducted fifty-seven oral history interviews with transgender Australians ranging from age twenty to eighty-seven. The majority of interview participants have been

activists or community leaders, but several have lived quiet lives away from activism. I have recruited interview participants through word-of-mouth, announcements on transgender Facebook pages and through referrals from members of the advisory group. Interviews are semi-structured and take the life narrative approach; while I do have some questions as prompts (e.g. around when/how they began questioning their gender identity, involvement in community groups), the interviews are generally free-flowing. Interview participants may request a pseudonym or be identifiable; those who request a pseudonym are in quotation marks.

This article grew out of an unexpected theme repeated across several oral history interviews and reinforced by some participants' personal archives. Almost all interview participants who were children or adolescents in the 1970s and 1980s recalled a particular magazine or newspaper article, television program or radio broadcast which was central to their realisation that there were others 'like them'. As I noticed this pattern, I started asking interviewees if they had memories of transgender issues in the media, and almost always the answer was yes. There clearly was an important historical topic here worthy of further exploration.

I also had the privilege to access three personal archives which included extensive clippings of media from the 1970s. Personal archives are important records of people's day-to-day business, personal lives, and relationships, so they provide insights into the emotions and the private thoughts of an individual and their relationship to the public sphere.<sup>20</sup> Historian Ruth Ford has also found scrapbooks to be a valuable sources for historians of sexuality and gender. Ford argues that in eras of little lesbian visibility, scrapbooks were one way that women with same-sex desire explored popular representations of gender and women's sexuality. Through observing other women who transgressed gender norms, same-sex attracted women could construct their identities around "a sense of belonging to a group

of people with something in common – even if that group was unnamed.”<sup>21</sup> As this article reveals, transgender children and young people similarly found identity and a sense of connection when they encountered transgender stories in the media. The paradox of visibility was that even media which was demeaning to transgender people could serve as identity events which assured transgender young people that they were not alone.

### **Transgender People and the Media**

It has long been understood that the media plays a key role to legitimise the existence and demands of marginalised social groups. News narratives, and most importantly the framing of such stories, can spark emotional responses in their audiences and therefore influence attitudes, behaviour and intentions towards stigmatised groups, including transgender people.<sup>22</sup> Much of the existing research on transgender people in the media has focused on coverage of high-profile individuals: either celebrities (e.g. Caitlyn Jenner, Renee Richards, Carlotta) or victims of hate crimes (e.g. Brandon Teena). Joanna McIntyre argues that audiences tend to interpret transgender celebrities as ‘safe’ representatives of all transgender people’s experiences, and in that sense their coverage has more potential than fiction to shape public attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Numerous scholars note that the most common framing device when reporting on transgender hate crimes is ‘deception’ or ‘masquerading’ – the so-called ‘transgender panic defence’, where the perpetrators committed a crime only when the trans person’s ‘deception’ was revealed. Other framing devices include: an essentialist, embodied reading of genitalia determining a person’s gender; conflating transgender with homosexuality; problematic language including failing to use affirmed names or pronouns; and, in cases of transgender women of colour especially, describing them as socially isolated and hypersexual.<sup>24</sup>



More recent research has used databases such as Factiva and Lexis-Nexus to chart macro-analyses of transgender media coverage. These studies have concluded that the more common ways that reporters frame transgender news are: emphasis on internal torment or struggle; discussion about ‘before’ and ‘after’ transitioning; minimising the legal and societal challenges confronting transgender people; and eye-grabbing headlines.<sup>25</sup> Often the coverage is individualised on one transgender person’s struggle or triumph. Such stories may discuss discrimination, abuse or legal or medical problems, but the reports tend to personalise those challenges, rather than confront larger societal norms, structures and policing of gender.<sup>26</sup> While transgender people are now more assertive in their messaging and even have their own unfiltered platforms through the internet and social media,<sup>27</sup> still the scholarly literature emphasises the power that journalists wield to shape public discourse about transgender issues.

Stories about gender crossing are not a recent phenomenon, as they have long generated both popular interest and media sensationalism. Alison Oram’s exploration of gender crossing in the British press in the early twentieth century found that such stories were a minor newspaper genre in themselves, with common themes around sensational discoveries, relationships with family and workmates and a restoration of their ‘real’ gender.<sup>28</sup> Lucy Chesser’s research into Australian newspapers’ coverage of ‘cross-dressing’ from the 1870s-1920s similarly shows how media has always reflected contemporaneous anxieties about sex, gender and the body, and how public discourse denigrated those who crossed rigid gender norms. Chesser is careful not to define her subjects anachronistically as transgender. Even so, her work shows that the press has always had an interest in reporting about people who challenge gender norms.<sup>29</sup>

It was in 1952, when the American and then global media first reported Christine Jorgensen’s ‘sex change’, that we see the emergence of modern discourse about

transsexual/transgender people. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz traced the media coverage of Christine Jorgensen which, unlike so many other reports of gender crossing, was quite respectful. In fact, it was *because* Jorgensen seemed so unique, a product of modern technology that could transform a man into a woman, that the press initially received her so favourably.<sup>30</sup> She also was, as David Harley Serlin and Emily Skidmore note, the perfect embodiment of white female beauty in the 1950s. Jorgensen was an active agent in this construction: she positioned herself as a normal, middle-class, heterosexual woman, consciously distancing herself from other 'deviant' groups like homosexuals.<sup>31</sup> The favourable coverage of Jorgensen contrasted sharply with mainstream press coverage of other transgender women during the 1950s-60s, particularly trans women of colour. As Skidmore explains, Jorgensen was a model of whiteness, domesticity and respectability; trans women of colour were sexually promiscuous or just homosexuals taking their desires to an unnatural extreme.<sup>32</sup>

Dave King's analysis of British newspapers from 1950-83 is the most comprehensive analysis of how Western media historically constructed transgender issues in the post-Second World War era. First and foremost, it was the press that coined the expression 'sex change'. Through the sensational language of the 'sex change', the press "introduced its readership to (amongst others) the sex change cop, the sex change bride, the sex change sailor, the sex change prisoner, the sex change burglar, the sex change vicar, sex change surgeons, sex change conferences, sex change tennis."<sup>33</sup> This era was also foundational for some of the media tropes that persisted into the 1990s and early 2000s. For instance, just as 'deception' was prominent in 1990s coverage of hate crimes, King notes that in the 1950s-60s the common terms to describe transgender people's gender affirmations were pose, impersonate, disguise, hoax and, most frequently, masquerade. Reports often linked transgender people to

other sexual deviants such homosexuals, sex workers or with words like ‘kinky’ and ‘bizarre’.<sup>34</sup>

By the 1970s, publicity around high-profile transgender women like April Ashley, Jan Morris and the Corbett family law case changed the dynamics of how the British press reported transgender issues.<sup>35</sup> These cases and the emergence of transgender organisations meant that the media now could draw on ‘experts’, both doctors and transgender people. King groups the newspaper stories into four thematic foci: person-focused (e.g. life story of a transgender person), event-focused (e.g. happenings involving transgender people), phenomenon reports (e.g. stories specifically actually about what it means to be transgender) and issue reports (e.g. discussing particular controversies like the right to dress at work).<sup>36</sup> While King implicitly acknowledges that transgender people often contributed to these reports, his analysis downplays their role in shaping the media’s framing of transgender identities.

Another prominent site of transgender visibility since the 1970s has been the daytime talk show. While stereotypically viewed for its exploitative demarcation of transgender people (amongst others) as deviant ‘other’, there is actually more complexity to the ways transgender participants shaped and have been shaped by talk shows. In the period from the 1970s to the 1980s when *The Phil Donohue Show* set the tone for talk shows, there was more freedom for guests to speak about issues that mattered to them. Transgender activists even recall the early years of *The Phil Donohue Show* being a site to educate the public about issues affecting transgender people. Joshua Gamson describes this phenomenon as a ‘paradox of visibility’ underpinning the relationship between the media and transgender audiences: “democratization through exploitation, truths wrapped in lies, normalization through freak show. There is in fact no choice here between manipulative spectacle and democratic forum,

only the puzzle of a situation in which one cannot exist without the other, and the challenge of seeing clearly what this means for a society at war with its own sexual diversity.”<sup>37</sup>

While it is easy to see how the media framed transgender people as generally negative, sexualised and freakish, equally as important is how such media affected audiences, especially transgender readers and viewers. As Jamie Capuzza explains, “In addition to influencing perceptions and beliefs of social elites, the media’s role in constructing and regulating sex/gender identities influences how marginalized groups see *themselves* in terms of both identity and agency.”<sup>38</sup> Especially pre-internet, the only available information on transgender people either came from the media or from medical literature. Joanne Meyerowitz’s research shows that transgender people have a long history of finding new language and imagining possibilities when they saw media coverage of transgender pioneers. For instance, publicity surrounding Lili Elbe and others’ gender affirmation surgeries in the 1930s attracted the attention of Americans (and others), who wrote letters to the journal *Sexology* inquiring about the possibility for themselves. Twenty years later, Christine Jorgensen received a ‘briefcase full’ of letters from people similarly wishing to undergo gender affirmation surgery. Within a year of Jorgensen’s story breaking in the press, Dr Christian Hamburger received letters from 465 people requesting gender affirmation surgery.<sup>39</sup>

Jorgensen’s gender affirmation surgery was huge news in Australia as well, and she even toured Australia in 1959.<sup>40</sup> Some transgender Australians remember hearing about Christine Jorgensen when they were children and the story triggering a sense of connection. For instance, Gina Miller recalls that her mother had a copy of a book about Christine Jorgensen on her nightstand for about five years.<sup>41</sup> Anna Langley vividly remembers when the movie *The Christine Jorgensen Story* aired on Australian television sometime circa 1976, when she was about sixteen years old:

So it was playing in the sitting room. And I'd sort of [pause] twigged what it was talking about. Nobody else was paying any attention to it, so I kind of tried to linger in the sitting room long enough to pick some of it up without wanting to appear too interested, [pause] which I suppose for a lot of people, a lot of queer people must have had experiences like that, I imagine [laughs], trying to walk that fine line.<sup>42</sup>

In 2002 Peter Ringo published the first study which examined the relationship between the media and transgender people's identity formation. Ringo found that diverse media including autobiographies, novels, television programs, the internet, films and even drag performances all played roles in interview participants' identification as trans men. Ringo outlined four types of 'identity events', or ways that the media affected transgender people's understandings of their gender identity: pre-awakening, awakening, identification and maturation. Ringo concluded that "media's role can be understood as having encouraged its users' 'qualities of transness' to manifest and strengthen, to become organized under the purview of identity and to mature through the processes of physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual transition."<sup>43</sup> More recent studies affirmed Ringo's findings and show that transgender people often actively turn to the media to comprehend their bodies, feelings and relationships.<sup>44</sup>

The above studies examined the experiences of transgender people who came out in the 1990s-2010s, when there was more transgender visibility, more diverse media and, most importantly, the internet. In the 1970s transgender visibility came mostly from radio, newspapers, magazines and television, with the occasional book (e.g. *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography*; Jan Morris' 1974 memoir *Conundrum*) or film (e.g. *The Christine Jorgensen Story*). Australian newspaper, magazine, radio and television reports from the 1970s ranged from sympathetic through to sensational and sexualised. On the one hand such

press could reinforce negative stereotypes and denigrating attitudes towards transgender people. Yet, as the examples below show, the media functioned as a site of visibility which gave transgender young people a sense of connection and a language to articulate their internal struggles. Transgender people were conscious participants in this exchange, and some of the more savvy individuals and organised groups used media to shape an image of transgender respectability.

### **Newspapers**

It was tabloid newspapers such as *Truth*, *The Sun* and *The Herald* which, in the 1970s, had the most news stories about transgender people. As Dave King observes in relation to the British press during the same era, to be newsworthy a transgender person or subject matter needed to have a hook that was new or different. The tropes in Australian transgender stories mirror King's findings about the British press. First, many involved celebrities – the best example being the numerous articles in 1976-77 which reported on American transgender tennis player Renee Richards.<sup>45</sup> The second trope was controversy or conflict. An exemplar of this was “Why can't a man behave like a girl?” (c. 1979), which described the case of transgender woman Robyne Hobson, forced to dress and work as a male at the NSW Electricity Commission.<sup>46</sup> The third trope was on stories with links to Criminality. Prime example were the articles “Man or Woman? Sex-Count Youth Free” and “‘Woman’ Man Set Free on Sex Charges” (1977), which documented the trial and acquittal of a trans woman for sex work in St Kilda, Melbourne.<sup>47</sup> The fourth theme was about trans women expressing (or mimicking) female glamour. The article “David is now Danielle” (1976) used the before and after trope and emphasised showgirl Danielle's femininity as “an attractive full-figured blonde.” The story also sexualised Danielle with a topless photo accentuating her buxom breasts.<sup>48</sup> The fifth trope continued the notion of transgender as novelty. For instance, the

story “Amazing Sex Change: Boy’s Mum Now His Dad” (1976) narrated the difficult life of a trans man from England’s midlands. The image of transgender as male criminal dressed as a woman was the sixth common theme. The article “Killer Lived as Woman” (1975) reflects this trope, as it described the conviction of a transgender housekeeper for murdering her boss when he made sexual advances.<sup>49</sup> The seventh and final dominant portrayal was about transgender people being hypersexual and potentially deviant. The article “Man they dress as female” (1977) described how one man convinced another to dress in women’s clothes and be his “wife”. Then the man started injecting them with hormones and shared them with others for sexual gratification, including filming the acts.<sup>50</sup>

Just these stories’ subject matter and headlines reflect the ways that tabloid newspapers framed transgender people as curiosities, particularly because they confounded embodied ideas about gender, sex and sexuality. Yet, reading against the grain, many of these articles incorporate transgender voices who aimed to normalise transgender people. For instance, in “David is now Danielle,” the interviewer tried to assert wrong body discourse, asking “Some who’ve experienced the male-to-female change have described feeling before the operation that they were a woman imprisoned in a man’s body. Was it that way with you?” Danielle replied: “No. I think I’m different from most who’ve made the change. I never had in mind becoming a girlie sort of suburban housewife, happily married and talking over the back fence about who’s having a baby and who’s not.” Danielle also explained how the law did not recognise her affirmed gender, with both her driver’s licence and passport having male sex markers, and she could not marry her boyfriend.<sup>51</sup>

The 1978 *Truth* headline “Aussie’s Bizarre Life in Country Town: Sex swap sports girl tells all” framed its subject, Leigh Varis, as an abnormal curiosity. Yet, the article is quite sympathetic to Leigh, most likely because she constructed herself as a respectable woman accepted within a remote Western Australian community. The article notes Leigh had a

“confused and often painful past,” but now, “Like an ordinary woman, what she wants more than anything else now is a guy who will love her and a couple of adopted kids.” Leigh frames herself around ideas of white, middle-class respectability; before she transitioned she was involved with homosexuals, drag queens and strippers in Perth. Now that she has undergone gender affirmation surgery, she just wants to start a family.<sup>52</sup> This article therefore creates a binary between the ‘good’ transgender women – those who embrace respectable femininity – versus those with deviant lifestyles. It is a similar strategy to Christine Jorgensen,<sup>53</sup> and while the strategy potentially ostracised transgender people who lived outside the bounds of respectability, it opened a space for the reader to accept certain transgender women. Interestingly, Leigh Varis would later in life cross the bounds of respectability: she became a sex worker, ran a Kalgoorlie brothel, was the first person in the world to offer tours of a working brothel, and in 1999 was the first transgender woman elected to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder City Council.<sup>54</sup> Leigh’s life journey suggests that just as tabloids could perpetuate false stereotypes about transgender deviance, so too could transgender people disseminate distorted but favourable narratives through the media. Leigh passed away in early 2020 before she could be interviewed for this project.

The 1971 case of Jacqueline Duvell Ward highlights how transgender people could sometimes reshape negative media. The first newspaper article about Jacqueline was headlined “Man oh man, what a woman!” and the hook was Jacqueline pleading guilty for performing sex work in Brisbane. The article dwelled less on the crime and instead focused on Jacqueline’s transgender identity and gender affirmation surgery in Egypt.<sup>55</sup> A follow-up article in the *Daily Mirror* with the sensational headline “Sex-change girl on streets” featured an interview with Jacqueline, where she explained her gender affirmation in her own words: “In my mind I had been a female for several years, and a few days before my 18th birthday, I went into hospital for the operation to make me physically a woman. It was a most painful



experience, but well worth it in terms of peace of mind. I feel secure as a woman now. Before the operation I was only half and half.” Jacqueline explained that she took up sex work as a “natural progression” after men began taking her out and showered her with gifts, but she really desired marriage. Her quote that finished the article was: “I can’t have kids, but then thousands of other women can’t either – and they get married.”<sup>56</sup> Jacqueline was thus framing herself around white, middle-class values to assert her embodiment of real womanhood.

In an even longer article titled “Jackie was a tough boy!”, she reframed her life story around struggle. She had a tough childhood, leaving New Zealand at thirteen (rather than sixteen as presented in the other article) because of a strained relationship with her stepfather. She then had a falling out with her aunt, and “With no other way to earn a living she turned to prostitution and the police picked her up on a charge of offensive behavior for soliciting men.” Jackie later tried to work respectably as a waitress in Melbourne, but “they found out I was a boy and sacked me,” leaving her no choice but to return to sex work. By constructing herself as someone who turned to sex work out of desperation, Jacqueline aimed to elicit sympathy rather than moral condemnation from the reader. Jacqueline then explained the difficult transition journey and the physical and mental toll the gender affirmation surgery took on her health. Jacqueline closed by again emphasising her embodied womanhood: “I feel and function like a woman. I get satisfaction from sexual relationships...I have been with many men – and not one has guessed I was not born a girl.”<sup>57</sup>

Jacqueline appeared in a Sydney newspaper again in 1975 – this time under the name Jacqueline Hannon and with the headline “Sex swop beats law!” This article related to Jacqueline beating an old charge of prostitution because she had been charged as a man, before her gender affirmation surgery. The article said Jacqueline was still doing sex work, noting “A stream of male callers at her two-storey terraced house this week.” Jacqueline did

not show up for her interview with the journalist. The *Sunday Mirror* thus returned to the quotes from the earlier article to explain that she turned to sex work after being showered with gifts.<sup>58</sup> The focus of the article on Jacqueline's ongoing sex work illuminates the limitations of transgender people's influence over mediated publications. Namely, the journalist still wielded the power to frame the story, and in this context he continued to frame transgender women like Jacqueline as sexual deviants.

Transgender Elders remember *Truth* and similar tabloids from their childhoods, and they remember the sensational headlines and contents. But they also recollect that beyond the headlines, tabloids provided them with a sense of connection, awareness and hope. Kirsti Miller remembers looking "as a young person [for] anything I could find about transgender people in the library, and the old *Truths* is about the only place you get, and it was always sexual stuff."<sup>59</sup> Even sensational tabloid headlines could spark an interest for transgender people. Ricki Coughlan recalls:

I saw in a newspaper and it was an article that said, "The boy who grew up to be a girl," and it was this kid who'd been a hairdresser and had transitioned in the role of an apprentice hairdresser and I just thought...I remember just thinking, "Wow, that's the most amazing wonderful thing because here's a person that's roughly my age who's found a way to do this somehow."<sup>60</sup>

Transgender people were often thus attracted to, rather than repelled by, the sensational headlines because they had the potential to trigger what Ringo called identity events.

Broadsheet newspapers tended to be less exploitative and certainly less sexualised than the tabloids. The headlines could still be sensational when covering a particular incident or policy reform, such as: "Transexual [sic] fined \$50 for loitering" (1978), "Wife tells of man's sex change plan" (1976) or "Changes in Sex: We Lead West in 'Trapped People'" (1979).<sup>61</sup> The contents of the articles tended to focus more on the issue rather than the

transgender person. They made more use of ‘experts’, often doctors and psychologists, or quoted from politicians and judges. The broadsheets also occasionally ran long feature articles specifically giving voice and respect transgender people about the issues that affected them.

For example, the 1977 article “World of the Transvestite” used Sydney’s Seahorse Society to explore the phenomenon of men who enjoyed dressing as females. The interview participants emphasised their challenging lives, with Seahorse secretary Trina Taylor explaining: “Transvestites find themselves in a very lonely situation – it is not looked upon as the sort of subject which can be easily brought up and discussed with parents, family or friends.” The article especially focused on a trope common in other non-tabloid reports: trying to explain the cause of being transgender. The story pointed to psychiatric research, but more importantly drew on the interview participants’ own explanations for when and why they began dressing. A key point that permeated the article was an attempt at normalising transgender (or in this case, dressing): these were ‘ordinary’, masculine men who had a harmless urge to dress as women.<sup>62</sup>

Articles that focused on transsexuals (to use the language of the time) tended to reinforce wrong body discourse, but also highlighted the social marginalisation facing them. A 1976 interview with a twenty-five year old trans woman known only as ‘a model’ described a white, middle-class upbringing in Sydney but always feeling like an outsider, being bullied at school and when she worked in retail. She then befriended some gay men who introduced her to the Les Girls transgender showgirls scene in Sydney. This was when ‘a model’ developed an awareness of her gender identity and she came “to the conclusion that I was a woman in the wrong body and I was going to do something about it.”<sup>63</sup> A 1978 *Newcastle Morning Herald* article exploring the lives of ‘transsexual’ women who worked in Bubbles Le Gaye’s all-male revue described family rejection, workplace discrimination and

domestic violence. The article was a sympathetic portrayal of the challenges endured by transitioning transgender women, and the author emphasised embodied expressions of their femininity: “Their skin is smooth, their bodies lithe, they have breasts most women would envy, their fingernails are long, and one can see their bodies rounding with the progress of treatment.”<sup>64</sup>

Whether broadsheet or tabloid, respectful, exploitative or something in between, transgender people clung to the newspaper articles because they could identify something of themselves in the reports. Joanne Meyerowitz uncovered readers across the United States who saved press clippings about Christine Jorgensen, testifying to her impact on transgender readers. One such example was Louise Lawrence, whose Jorgensen scrapbook is now in the Kinsey Institute Archives.<sup>65</sup> Australian transgender people similarly saved newspaper and magazine articles. Indeed, the majority of articles referenced in this article came from three personal archives: transgender activist Julie Peters’ extensive filing cabinets in Melbourne; a collection of clippings donated to ALGA by G.R.; and a series of forty notebooks with pasted clippings about transgender, drag and other gender non-conformity, housed until recently at the Queensland AIDS Council (and transferred to ALGA in November 2019). For Julie Peters, G.R., the Queensland AIDS Council donor and other transgender folk, newspaper clippings about gender diversity were a way to find language and meaning where there was otherwise silence about gender diversity. Their experiences align with Ruth Ford’s observation about the role scrapbooks played for older lesbians: transgender people “affirmed a sense of self through available representations.”<sup>66</sup>

## **Magazines**

The second site of media transgender visibility was magazines. As early as the 1960s *Pix* magazine was publishing respectful, first-hand transgender accounts.<sup>67</sup> Dianne Harris

remembers seeing articles in *Pix* and *Australasian Post* circa 1969 about trans men birthing babies and other outrageous stories. Notwithstanding the sensational content, the articles in *Pix* resonated as a form of pre-awareness: “They were all writing outrageous stories...and because I’m trans that fascinated me, you know. Because I thought there’s a connection here somewhere...So that sort of didn’t trigger that I was transgender or anything, but just so I’m not the only one that’s different in the world.”<sup>68</sup> In the 1970s new magazines born out of the sexual revolution sometimes published transgender stories. *Forum*, a magazine which drew on ‘experts’ to explore topics around sex and sexuality, published at least three articles and one letter to the editor about ‘transvestites’ and ‘transsexuals’.<sup>69</sup> More popular magazines that covered transgender issues fit into two categories: women’s interest and tabloid current affairs. This trend would continue into the 1980s, when magazine articles on transgender people became more common. In the 1980s, though, tabloids like *People* and *Australasian Post* often sexualised transgender women, with pictures of them in skimpy swimwear or topless.

The magazine pioneer of respectful transgender coverage was *Cleo*. Founded in 1972, women’s magazine *Cleo* mixed fashion and consumerism with articles that addressed liberal feminist causes such as family violence, sexual assault, abortion, contraception and workplace discrimination. Megan Le Masurier considers *Cleo* an example of popular feminism because it incorporated feminist content and ideas and disseminated it to the general public. *Cleo* was especially popular with younger women; one 1974 survey suggested that thirty percent of women and girls aged thirteen to twenty-four read *Cleo*.<sup>70</sup>

Between 1975 and 1977, *Cleo* produced five articles about transgender people. The first, titled “The men who dress as women,” followed members of Sydney’s Seahorse Club to explore the lives of heterosexual ‘transvestites’. The article deployed descriptive language about the trans women’s clothing and make-up; while this reinforced normative ideas about

gender and femininity, it aligned with Seahorse members' very aim of being seen as women. The article also discussed the members' backgrounds, when and why they began dressing, and the effects this had on their families. There was a strong emphasis on pointing out that Seahorse members came from diverse professional, respectable backgrounds. Secretary Trina stated: "Among our members we have a Catholic priest and a Methodist minister, quite a number of doctors, but more engineers than anything else."<sup>71</sup> The article never challenged gender structures, partly because Seahorse at that time identified as heterosexual male 'transvestites', having both male and female personas. Seahorse members certainly blurred gender norms, but they did not challenge binaries and were framed as gender tourists rather than gender crossers.

The *Cleo* article ended with the post office box for Seahorse, and it definitely reached transgender readers and boosted membership applications. Kristine Baker wrote in the Seahorse magazine *Feminique*: "One night I was watching a commercial television station when an advertisement came on for a woman's magazine. It had something in it about men who wear women's clothes. The first morning that *Cleo* hit the streets, I bought one. The next day a letter was in the post to the secretary of Seahorse, Sydney."<sup>72</sup> "Bronwyn" explicitly remembers *Cleo* for giving her awareness and a language to articulate her internal struggle. Bronwyn's mother had a subscription, and she recalls:

But one day a new edition turned up, and the word transsexualism was on the cover. And my mind was ready to receive some word that could attach itself to what was already going on in mind, and the moment I saw that word, that was it. I just knew straight away, before even opening the magazine, I thought, my God, that's got to be something about me. And I was eleven or twelve at the time.<sup>73</sup>

Bronwyn's experience aligns with Joanne Meyerowitz's observations about the effects of transgender people in the American press:

The popular tales of sex change attracted certain readers who recognized themselves in and refashioned themselves through the stories they read...For some, the various stories might have provided a language – about hermaphroditism, pseudohermaphroditism, spontaneous metamorphosis, hormonal imbalance, or transvestite leanings – that could be used to explain an otherwise inexplicable drive for change of sex. They did not yet have the label *transsexual*, but in the press they found exemplars, however pathologized and sensationalized, who seemed to embody what they knew they wanted for themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Almost all of the discourse around transgender focused on trans women, but their stories also affected young trans men. Peter Hyndal recalls a conversation with a friend when he was in only first or second grade (c. 1979/80). The girl had seen one of her mother's magazines and it talked about transgender issues. As Peter recalls:

She'd read in a magazine, one of her mum's magazines, that it was possible for men to become women, and that stands out as this thing. And I remember it was more than just a comment, there was some conversation, I can't remember what it was, but I thought that was amazing; I never knew it was possible before, and there [I] was wondering about how that happened at that, given my understanding of things as a seven year old or whatever I was at that point, but also if it's possible to go from being a man to a woman, then it must be possible to go from being a woman to a man. So there was some awareness of a potential possibility that I think was probably quite unusual for people.<sup>75</sup>

An article in a women's magazine also gave Wez Saunders a pre-awareness about gender possibilities. He was about fourteen (c. 1968), and his mother passed him an article titled "The day I bought my daughter his first blue singlet." Wez recalls: "And there was this boy standing there, or man, he would have been in his thirties and he had no t-shirt on, and had two band-aids over where his nipples would be, and he'd had chest surgery. It was a long time ago. I never spoke to her about that either, but I read it and gobbled it up, and she didn't come to me and talk to me about it."<sup>76</sup> It would be decades before either Peter or Wez transitioned, but these childhood exposures to magazines represented pre-awareness identity events that exposed them to the possibility.

### **Radio and Television**

As early as 1985, transgender woman Sharon – a guest on the Australian Transsexual Association's monthly program on the *Gaywaves* community radio show – described hearing the term transsexual on the radio when she was about twelve years old: "I think the announcer on the radio where I heard it termed it as sex change surgery. And I sort of realised that all of a sudden I wasn't the only person in the world who felt as I did and that actually I fell into a group of people that was termed transsexual."<sup>77</sup> Ricki Coughlan also recalls a radio report from c.1970:

I remember my mother was doing the ironing and I'm in the kitchen and it was about a person... well we didn't have the name but there was a word, transsexual. And I thought wow, this person's life is like my life. And I thought there is a name for this. So I realised that oh this is a big thing, that not everyone thinks like I do and that this is a rare thing. So yeah upon hearing the word transsexual I realised that this tells us a, or it tells me a whole lot, that I'm not the only one.<sup>78</sup>



Due to accessibility of sources, this article does not engage with specific radio programs, but these examples suggest that 1970s radio programs similarly were a site of identity events for transgender young people.

Television was a medium where transgender people proved effective at framing their own narratives. The ABC in particular took an interest in transgender issues. The highly rated current affairs program *This Day Tonight* ran a story in 1973 titled “I wouldn’t part with her for quids” which narrated Kim’s life story and emphasised the normality of her social life and relationship with a man.<sup>79</sup> Media scholars often cite *This Day Tonight* as setting the gold standard for investigative journalism which tackled controversial political and cultural issues.<sup>80</sup> *This Day Tonight* also featured the Seahorse Club in 1977; another 1977 segment about a ‘transvestite’ named Peter and his wife; a three part series on ‘transsexuals’ in 1976 that used firsthand examples and wrong body discourse to frame transgender lives.<sup>81</sup> While some reports introduced doctors as experts, still all of the stories centred transgender voices to articulate their internal struggles and aspirations for lives as ‘normal’, respectable women.

Probably the most prominent ABC feature was a 1974 episode of popular weekly news program *Four Corners* titled “Transsexuals: Those that have made the choice.” The show begins with the transgender celebrity Carlotta and the famous cabaret revue Les Girls. Carlotta was the most famous transgender Australian in the 1970s, even starring in a six-episode story arc on the popular night-time soap opera *Number 96* – a program famous for its ground-breaking sexual themes and for featuring Australian television’s first openly gay character.<sup>82</sup> The *Four Corners* episode intersperses images of Carlotta and Les Girls performing with Carlotta narrating her ‘before’ transition life and long feelings of gender dysphoria. The episode pathologises around gender affirmation surgery, the narrator describing it as “the ultimate adventure for a human being.” The episode then shifts to surgeon Dr Ron Barr explaining the medical procedures and the psychology behind

‘transsexualism’. Late in the piece the episode shifts to excerpts from the 1973 *This Day Tonight* interview with Kim and her partner. They discuss legal problems, as neither Commonwealth nor state laws recognised Kim’s affirmed gender or their marriage. On the one hand, the episode’s dual lenses of Carlotta and surgery limit viewers’ understandings about transgender people. By using Carlotta as the centrepiece, the episode relegates transgender people to the realm of showgirls. The imagery has Carlotta dressed quite femininely in a fur coat and high heels, shopping for clothes, while the voiceover juxtaposes her image with the psychiatric questions meant to distinguish ‘true transsexuals’ from others.<sup>83</sup> The implication that only those whose gender expression is indistinguishable from cisgender women are respectable transgender people.

Carlotta was no passive object, though. As Joanna McIntyre explains, “Carlotta has appeared onscreen in a range of forums since 1970, forums which, whilst occasionally representing transsexualism as unfathomable or a ‘freak show’, also allow a space for Carlotta’s (trans)gendering to be understood as empowering and humanising.”<sup>84</sup> In an earlier 1970 feature on *This Day Tonight*, Carlotta explained that she was not homosexual, was a successful businesswoman, had never been in trouble with the police and even avoided women’s dressing rooms because she did not want to cause offence or draw attention to herself. Her conscious effort to construct herself as a respectable woman included expressing disappointment that she could never bear children<sup>85</sup> – a point to which she returned in other interviews – while concurrently noting that many cisgender women also have fertility problems. She similarly shaped her 1974 *Four Corners* interview to present an image of respectability. For instance, when asked if she would like to marry one day, the interviewer then added: “You do have plenty of boyfriends, don’t you?” Rather than play into the stereotype of transgender promiscuity, Carlotta retorted: “I wouldn’t say plenty of boyfriends. I really don’t get enough time for it. I go out with guys. Relationships I’ve had. If the right

man came along I think I would settle down. He'd have to be terribly understanding, though, that's the part about it." When the interviewer subsequently asked about legal problems, Carlotta mentioned that her passport noted that she was previously a 'mister' and this caused some confusion and uncomfortable stares from airport officials.<sup>86</sup>

Transgender Elders remember Carlotta, Les Girls and even that specific episode of *Four Corners* as identity events that generated a sense of connection or possibility. Kirsti Miller did not necessarily want to be a showgirl, but still Carlotta's public image was powerful: "Carlotta was a trans woman. But I knew that hopefully one day I can do that. Because I knew they were boys because they had deep voices, but they looked like girls. I would've been happy to be like that then. So that gave me a little bit of hope. That's when I tried to start reading more and more about this stuff, but there's very little written."<sup>87</sup> Julia Doulman, herself the subject of a 2003 documentary entitled *Becoming Julia*, recalls:

I think me, as a ten-year-old, seeing that story on *Four Corners* may well have saved my life, simply because I knew I was not alone. I was alone in the sense that I couldn't talk to anybody, but knowing that I was not the only one, and then if ever there was a snippet of news in the paper or something about transgender, I'd be across it. But that very rarely happened.<sup>88</sup>

C. Jacob Hale writes about the importance of forging self-identities around connections to others: "We form and maintain our identities by making continually reiterated identifications as members of some category U(s). This is accomplished both positively and negatively by repeated identifications *with* some (not necessarily all) members of U, and by reiterated identifications as not-members with some other category T(hem)."<sup>89</sup> Seeing transgender people like Carlotta in the media showed not only a category of U(s), but also the possibility of a future in one's affirmed gender.

While Carlotta was the most prolific 1970s image of transgender people in Australia, she was not the only one. In 1974 Seahorse representatives received an invitation to appear on the popular Channel 0-10 daytime variety program *The Mike Walsh Show*. Trina Taylor and two other Seahorse members agreed to participate in a fifteen-minute segment. They negotiated the questions in advance with the producer, and Trina described Mike Walsh, the technicians and make-up artists as being very respectful. She wrote about the segment:

We tried to avoid making the subject a case of sensationalism, and hopefully showed an audience that it's not so unusual to wish to be feminine some of the time. On all shows such as this the time is very limited, so it is difficult to present a reasoned argument. However we got the main points across. That we don't consider it a sexual deviation, that the sexual aspect of it plays a very small part in it.<sup>90</sup>

Seahorse representatives continued to participate in media, such as this article's opening example from *Vi's Pad* in 1977. Trina Taylor explained in 1975:

it seems that the media...radio, television and publications no longer find us the "lepers" they used too [sic]. Transvestism is almost becoming respectable, consequently over the latter months we have achieved quite a deal of public exposure...yes forget the wisecracks we were fully clothed all the time. I sincerely believe that this is the best way of being accepted and it won't be that far in the future before transvestism will be considered "relatively" normal.<sup>91</sup>

The Seahorse leadership saw the importance of participating in the media to shape an image of transgender respectability, or else the media would merely reinforce stereotypes and denigrating myths. For instance, the Seahorse secretary wrote a letter of complaint to the primetime show *A Current Affair* for misrepresenting 'transvestism'; in response, *A Current*

*Affair* invited Seahorse representatives to do a ten-minute segment. As Trina Taylor explained in the Seahorse magazine *Feminique*: “we gave it some very careful consideration and finally decided that there was more to gain than lose, at their suggestion it became a group talk conducted in the home of their Sydney reporter.”<sup>92</sup>

The ABC and commercial networks’ coverage of transgender women would follow similar tropes in the 1980s which continued to resonate with transgender young people. Mianne Bagger recalls seeing an episode of *60 Minutes* sometime in the early 1980s with an introduction along the lines of “We meet this woman who was born a boy.” She comments: “I just thought, ‘That’s it, I’m going to be watching that,’ and trying to make sure that nobody saw me being so intent on watching it.”<sup>93</sup> Both Victorian transgender activist Sally Goldner and Chameleons Society of Western Australia member Karron remember a 1985 documentary titled *Tommy Doesn’t Exist Anymore*,<sup>94</sup> while Max Zebra-Thyone recalls a segment on *The Midday Show* in 1988 about Sydney transgender refuge Tiresias House which featured a trans man.<sup>95</sup> “Bronwyn” remembers seeing Les Girls perform on an episode of the Channel 9 late night variety program the *Don Lane Show* sometime around 1979/80. Watching the show with her father, Bronwyn was besotted, and her father clearly noticed her reaction: “Dad just, in his very own, understated, old-fashioned way said, ‘See, it’s alright; you can do this, you can do that,’ I think he said. ‘It’s okay; it’s something you can do if you want to.’”<sup>96</sup> While it would be years before Bronwyn properly came out to her family and transitioned, that moment was always important because she knew that her father would be okay with her transgender identity.

## **Conclusion**

This article presented a mere fraction of Australian media depictions of transgender people during the 1970s. Broadly speaking, the media framed transgender people around similar

tropes as in the United States and United Kingdom, pathologising around the idea of ‘sex-change’ and looking for sensational headlines to attract audiences. Transgender people were often active participants in this media and could, to varying degrees, shape the narrative to challenge myths and misunderstandings about transgender people. Seahorse Club secretary Trina Taylor recognised in 1974 the power of media to shape attitudes: “If it [media segment on transvestism] is treated unsympathetically it could be disastrous. This one wasn't luckily and hopefully it has done a little more to present to the general public the problem that transvestites face in the present social climate.”<sup>97</sup> Transgender participation in the media also gave language and connection to transgender young people who were struggling with their gender identities in isolation and silence.

Recent scholarship on the media and transgender people emphasises the importance of framing and telling stories that affirm transgender people’s identities. Negative media can have dire consequences for transgender people, particularly young people and those early in the transition journey.<sup>98</sup> Given the present-day increased transgender visibility and the extensive data about the vulnerability of trans and gender diverse people to messaging, it is of course important for contemporary media to report respectfully and ethically on transgender issues. Yet, readings of historical media and oral histories suggest that transgender people have historically been savvy at using and reading media. The paradox of visibility meant that even negative coverage could give language, awareness or a sense of connectedness to transgender people unable to articulate their internal struggles. Moreover, as Seahorse and Carlotta recognised, the only way to influence media coverage was to participate and show that transgender women were indeed respectable. Of course, as Surya Monro notes, constructing a respectable transgender community inherently means constructing an unrespectable transgender community, thus marginalising those transgender people who do not fit the new bounds of normativity.<sup>99</sup> Tensions between visibility versus ‘passing’; those

who wanted surgery versus those who did not; and respectability versus queer would become battlegrounds over which transgender people fought when a new wave of transgender activism swept across Australia in the 1990s.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Susan Lardner, "The First 25 Years, 1975-2000," *Seahorse Times*, July 2000, courtesy Julie Peters.
- <sup>2</sup> Seahorse Club of Australia – Victoria Branch, March 1977 newsletter, courtesy Julie Peters.
- <sup>3</sup> June, "TV on TV," *Seahorse Magazine*, no. 4, no date but early 1977: 5, courtesy Julie Peters.
- <sup>4</sup> The first letter is signed Elizabeth Smith, 23 March 1977; the second letter has no date or name. Both letters courtesy of Julie Peters.
- <sup>5</sup> Kelly Jacob Rawson and Cristan Williams, "Transgender\*: The Rhetorical Landscape of a Term," *Present Tense* 3, no. 2 (2014): 1. For a more detailed definition, see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 1.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-40.
- <sup>8</sup> 'GLAAD Media Reference Guide – Transgender', <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>, accessed 16 September 2020.
- <sup>9</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2007); Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
- <sup>10</sup> Rawson and Williams, "Transgender\*: The Rhetorical Landscape of a Term," 3.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political, and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2019); "'These Are Just a Few Examples of Our Daily Oppressions': Speaking and Listening to Homosexuality in Australia's Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974-1977," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 2 (2018): 234-63.
- <sup>12</sup> Rebecca Jennings, *Unnamed Desires: A Sydney Lesbian History* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2015).
- <sup>13</sup> Graham Willett, *Living out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Re-Making the Australian Homosexual* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
- <sup>14</sup> Graham Carbery, *A History of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras* (Parkville, VIC: Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives Inc., 1995).
- <sup>15</sup> Garry Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney: A History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016), 178-218.
- <sup>16</sup> Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2012 [1971]), 41.
- <sup>17</sup> Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994 [1979]).
- <sup>18</sup> Roberta Perkins, *The 'Drag Queen' Scene: Transsexuals in Kings Cross* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983); Barry Kay, *The Other Women* (London: Mathews Miller Dunbar Ltd, 1976).
- <sup>19</sup> See M. Paz Galupo, "Researching While Cisgender: Identity Considerations for Transgender Research," *International Journal of Transgenderism* 18, no. 3 (2017): 241-42.
- <sup>20</sup> Catherine Hobbs, "Personal Archives: The Character of Personal Archives," *Archivaria*, no. 52 (2001): 127-28; Richard Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling: Readings, Reflections and Ruminations* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, LLC, 2008), 150; Tom Hyry and Rachel Onuf, "The Personality of Electronic Records: The Impact of New Information Technology on Personal Papers," *Archival Issues* 22, no. 1 (1997): 38.
- <sup>21</sup> Ruth Ford, "Speculating on Scrapbooks, Sex and Desire: Issues in Lesbian History," *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 106 (1996): 120.
- <sup>22</sup> Mary Beth Oliver et al., "The Effect of Narrative News Format on Empathy for Stigmatized Groups," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (2017): 215; Bernadette Barker-Plummer, "Fixing Gwen," *Feminist Media Studies* 13, no. 4 (2013): 719; Catherine Squires and Daniel Brouwer, "In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 3 (2002): 305; Jamie C. Capuzza, "What's in a Name? Transgender Identity, Metareporting, and the Misgendering of Chelsea Manning," in *Transgender Communication Studies: Histories, Trends, and Trajectories*, ed. Leland G. Spencer and Jamie C. Capuzza (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 104;

---

Thomas J Billard, "Writing in the Margins: Mainstream News Media Representations of Transgenderism," *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016): 4194-95; Jamie Colette Capuzza, "Who Defines Gender Diversity? Sourcing Routines and Representation in Mainstream U.S. News Stories About Transgenderism," *International Journal of Transgenderism* 15, no. 3-4 (2014): 121.

<sup>23</sup> Joanna McIntyre, "He Did It Her Way on TV: Representing an Australian Transsexual Celebrity Onscreen," *Gay & Lesbian Issues & Psychology Review* 7, no. 1 (2011): 21; 30. See also "Transgender Idol: Queer Subjectivities and Australian Reality TV," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 97.

<sup>24</sup> Gordene MacKenzie and Mary Marcel, "Media Coverage of the Murder of U.S. Transwomen of Color," in *Local Violence, Global Media: Feminist Analyses of Gendered Representations*, ed. Lisa M. Cuklanz and Sujata Moorti (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 80-83; Capuzza, "What's in a Name? Transgender Identity, Metareporting, and the Misgendering of Chelsea Manning," 103; Squires and Brouwer, "In/Discernible Bodies: The Politics of Passing in Dominant and Marginal Media," 296; John M. Sloop, "Disciplining the Transgendered: Brandon Teena, Public Representation, and Normativity," *Western Journal of Communication* 64, no. 2 (2000): 169-73; Laurel Westbrook and Kristen Schilt, "Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System," *Gender & Society* 28, no. 1 (2014): 44; Mathilda Åkerlund, "Representations of Trans People in Swedish Newspapers," *Journalism Studies* 20, no. 9 (2019): 1319-20.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Lewins, *Transsexualism in Society: A Sociology of Male-to-Female Transsexuals* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, 1995), 19; Dave King, *The Transvestite and the Transsexual: Public Categories and Private Identities* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1993), 121.

<sup>26</sup> Capuzza, "Who Defines Gender Diversity? Sourcing Routines and Representation in Mainstream U.S. News Stories About Transgenderism," 123.

<sup>27</sup> Kate O'Riordan, "Transgender Activism and the Net: Global Activism or Casualty of Globalisation," in *Global Activism, Global Media*, ed. Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw, and Neil Stammers (London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005), 179-93.

<sup>28</sup> Alison Oram, *Her Husband Was a Woman! Women's Gender-Crossing in Modern British Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Lucy Chesser, *Parting with My Sex: Cross-Dressing, Inversion and Sexuality in Australian Cultural Life* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008); "Transgender-Approximate, Lesbian-Like, and Genderqueer: Writing About Edward De Lacy Evans," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 13, no. 4 (2009): 373-94. See also Noah Riseman, "Searching for Trans Possibilities in Australia, 1910-39," *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 1-15. and in the American context, Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz, "Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930-1955," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 173.

<sup>31</sup> David Harley Serlin, "Christine Jorgensen and the Cold War Closet," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 140-41; Emily Skidmore, "Constructing the 'Good Transsexual': Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 275-77.

<sup>32</sup> "Constructing the 'Good Transsexual': Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press," 286-91.

<sup>33</sup> King, *The Transvestite and the Transsexual: Public Categories and Private Identities*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>35</sup> Ashley and Morris both published autobiographies that garnered further attention. See Duncan Fallowell and April Ashley, *April Ashley's Odyssey* (London: J. Cape, 1982); Jan Morris, *Conundrum* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974).

<sup>36</sup> King, *The Transvestite and the Transsexual: Public Categories and Private Identities*, 104-09; 23-24.

<sup>37</sup> Joshua Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 19.

<sup>38</sup> Capuzza, "Who Defines Gender Diversity? Sourcing Routines and Representation in Mainstream U.S. News Stories About Transgenderism," 116. Emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> Meyerowitz, "Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930-1955," 166; 75.

<sup>40</sup> "Christene [sic] Jorgensen, sex change pioneer, will revive her nightclub act in Australia," *People*, unknown date (c. 1977), available from Queensland AIDS Council transgender archive (hereafter QuAC archive), notebook 3. Jorgensen had cancelled a 1954 visit to Australia over a wage dispute. See "Visit by man who was a woman," *Truth* (Sydney), 7 November 1954; "Models differ on Ex-G.I.," *Truth* (Melbourne), 20 November 1954; "Models boycott Christine's Fashion Show," *Mirror* (Perth), 20 November 1954; "Visit by Christine



Jorgensen 'Off',” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 24 November 1954: 6. First three articles available from Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (hereafter ALGA), papers of G.R., 1953-1987, box 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> Gina Miller, interview with Noah Riseman, 1 October 2019, Perth.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Langley, interview with Noah Riseman, 17 March 2019, Cambridge, UK.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Ringo, "Media Roles in Female-to-Male Transsexual and Transgender Identity Development," *International Journal of Transgenderism* 6, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>44</sup> See Kami A. Kosenko, Bradley J. Bond, and Ryan J. Hurley, "An Exploration into the Uses and Gratifications of Media for Transgender Individuals," *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 7, no. 3 (2018): 279; Suriati Ghazali and Azilah Mohamad Nor, "Media Roles in Male-to-Female Transsexual Identity Formation among University Students in Malaysia," in *2012 International Conference on Humanity, History and Society*, ed. Ming Zhang, International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research (Singapore: IACSIT Press, 2012), 184-90.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, "Ban on Renee," *Sunday Sun* (Brisbane), 28 November 1976; "This woman tennis star is a father," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 3 September 1976, available from Melbourne eScholarship Research Centre, RMIT Social Policy Archive: Social Health Press Clippings Collection, A0000208; "Sex change ace takes a trophy," *The Herald* (Melbourne), 7 August 1976; "Miss X or Mr Y?" *The Herald* (Melbourne), 12 August 1976: 40.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Watson, "Why can't a man behave like a girl?" unknown newspaper, c. February 1979, available from QuAC archive, notebook 4.

<sup>47</sup> "Man or Woman? Sex-Count Youth Set Free," *Truth* (Melbourne), 17 September 1977, available from Melbourne eScholarship Research Centre, A0000208; "'Woman' Man Set Free on Sex Charges," unknown newspaper (September 1977), available from QuAC archive, notebook 3.

<sup>48</sup> "David is Now Danielle," *Truth* (Melbourne), 28 August 1976: 27, also available in QuAC archive, notebook 3.

<sup>49</sup> "Killer Lived as Woman," *Truth* (Melbourne), 31 May 1975.

<sup>50</sup> "Man They Dress as a Female," *Truth* (Melbourne), 6 August 1977.

<sup>51</sup> "David is Now Danielle," *Truth* (Melbourne), 28 August 1976: 27.

<sup>52</sup> "Aussie's Bizarre Life In Country Town: Sex swap sports girl tells all," *Truth* (Melbourne), c. 1978: 1-2, QuAC archive, notebook 3.

<sup>53</sup> Serlin, "Christine Jorgensen and the Cold War Closet," 140-41; Skidmore, "Constructing the 'Good Transsexual': Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press," 275-77.

<sup>54</sup> Emma Wynne, "Iconic Kalgoorlie brothel madam calls it a day," *ABC Goldfields*, 2 February 2011, available from <https://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/02/02/3128346.htm>; *More than a Woman*, directed and co-produced by Sanchia Robinson, produced by Melanie Byres, Doubletake Productions, 2000, 26 mins, VHS.

<sup>55</sup> "Man oh man, what a woman!" *Sunday Sun* (Brisbane), c. 1971, available from QuAC archive, notebook 1.

<sup>56</sup> "Sex-change girl on streets," *Daily Mirror*, c. 1971, available from QuAC archive, notebook 2.

<sup>57</sup> "Jackie was a tough boy!" unknown newspaper, c. 1971: 5; 21, available from notebook 2.

<sup>58</sup> John Phillips, "Sex swop beats law!" *Sunday Mirror*, c. 1975: 1; 4, available from QuAC archive, notebook 2.

<sup>59</sup> Kirsti Miller, interview with Noah Riseman, 27 April 2019, Sydney.

<sup>60</sup> Ricki Coughlan, interview with Noah Riseman, 26 April 2019, Sydney.

<sup>61</sup> "Transsexual [sic] fined \$50 for loitering," *The Age* (Melbourne), 9 March 1978; "Wife tells of man's sex change plan," *The Age*, 14 April 1976; Jeff Wells, "Changes in Sex: We Lead West in 'Trapped People'," *The Age*, 2 June 1979.

<sup>62</sup> Barbara Hooks, "World of the Transvestite," *The Age*, 4 August 1977: 20.

<sup>63</sup> Sally Wilkins, "Boy who became model girl," *The Age Review*, 22 May 1976.

<sup>64</sup> Mercia Delprat, "A look into the lives of men who choose to be women," *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 2 February 1978.

<sup>65</sup> Meyerowitz, "Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930-1955," 175.

<sup>66</sup> Ford, "Speculating on Scrapbooks, Sex and Desire: Issues in Lesbian History," 118.

<sup>67</sup> See 'I was a man', parts 1, 2, and 3, *Pix*, 12 May 1962: 9-11; 19 May 1962: 2-5; 26 May 1962: 12-13; Julie Desmond, "'Marriage...my final proof of womanhood'," *Pix*, 23 March 1963: 10-13

<sup>68</sup> Dianne Harris, interview with Noah Riseman, 9 September 2019, Tamworth, NSW.

<sup>69</sup> Faye Ainscow, "Just what kind of a girl does he think he is?" *Forum* 1, no. 10 (1973): 24-29; "A Night Out with the Boys," *Forum* 2, no. 8 (1974): 16-21; Mr B. C., "Sex change," *Forum* 5, no. 6 (June 1977): 73-74; Helen Townsend, "Transsexual [sic] – A Life of Living a Lie," *Forum* 6, no. 8 (July 1978): 26-32. On *Forum's* influence, see Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political, and the Making of Modern Australia*, 66-67.

- <sup>70</sup> Megan Le Masurier, "My Other, My Self: *Cleo* Magazine and Feminism in 1970s Australia," *Australian Feminist Studies* 22, no. 53 (2007): 191-211. See also Michelle Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia since 1945* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 135-36; Megan Le Masurier, "Reading the Flesh: Popular Feminism, the Second Wave and *Cleo's* Male Centrefold," *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 215-18.
- <sup>71</sup> Patricia Johnson, "The men who dress as women," *Cleo* (October 1975): 131.
- <sup>72</sup> Kristine Baker, "Stepping Out," *Feminique*, no. 11 (1976): p. 41. See also Julie Peters, interview with Noah Riseman, 23 February 2018.
- <sup>73</sup> "Bronwyn," interview with Noah Riseman, 6 April 2018, Melbourne.
- <sup>74</sup> Meyerowitz, "Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930-1955," 178.
- <sup>75</sup> Peter Hyndal, interview with Noah Riseman, 15 February 2019, Canberra.
- <sup>76</sup> Wez Saunders, interview with Noah Riseman, 11 September 2018, Newcastle.
- <sup>77</sup> Australian Transsexual Association program on *Gaywaves*, 2 May 1985, ALGA.
- <sup>78</sup> Ricki Coughlan, interview with Noah Riseman, 26 April 2019, Sydney.
- <sup>79</sup> "I wouldn't part with her for quids..." directed and produced by Daryl Warren, *This Day Tonight*, series 73 (6 July 1973), National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA) C475, 1865573.
- <sup>80</sup> Graeme Turner, "'Popularising Politics': *This Day Tonight* and Australian Television Current Affairs," *Media International Australia*, no. 106 (2003): 137-50.
- <sup>81</sup> "Sea Horse Club," *This Day Tonight*, series 77, episode 142 (23 August 1977), NAA C475, 1860895; "Transvestites," *This Day Tonight* (6 April 1977), NAA C475, 1492886; "Transsexuals pt 1," *This Day Tonight*, series 76 (18 March 1976), NAA C475, 1843391; "Transsexuals pt 2," *This Day Tonight* (19 March 1976), 1843395; "Transsexuals pt 3," *This Day Tonight* (29 March 1976), NAA C475, 1843412.
- <sup>82</sup> For more on Carlotta see Prue MacSween, *Carlotta: I'm Not That Kind of Girl* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2003); Carlotta with James Cockington, *He Did It Her Way: Carlotta, Legend of Les Girls* (Sydney: Ironbark by Pan Macmillan Publishers Australia, 1994); McIntyre, "He Did It Her Way on TV: Representing an Australian Transsexual Celebrity Onscreen," 19-32.
- <sup>83</sup> "Transsexuals: Those that have made the choice," *Four Corners* (1974).
- <sup>84</sup> McIntyre, "He Did It Her Way on TV: Representing an Australian Transsexual Celebrity Onscreen," 20.
- <sup>85</sup> June Heffernan, "Carlotta," *This Day Tonight*, series 70 (1 April 1970), NAA C475, 1828517.
- <sup>86</sup> "Transsexuals: Those that have made the choice," *Four Corners* (1974).
- <sup>87</sup> Kirsti Miller, interview with Noah Riseman, 27 April 2019, Sydney.
- <sup>88</sup> Julia Doulman, interview with Noah Riseman, 26 April 2018, Central Coast, NSW.
- <sup>89</sup> C. Jacob Hale, "Consuming the Living, Dis(Re)Membering the Dead in the Butch/FTM Borderlands," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 330.
- <sup>90</sup> Trina Taylor, "TV is both Transvestism and Television," *Feminique*, no. 5 (1974): 26.
- <sup>91</sup> Trina Taylor, "Seahorse and the Media," *Feminique*, no. 9 (1975): 16.
- <sup>92</sup> Trina Taylor, "Seahorse and the Media," *Feminique*, no. 9 (1975): 16.
- <sup>93</sup> Mianne Bagger, interview with Noah Riseman, 21 May 2019, Melbourne.
- <sup>94</sup> *Tommy Doesn't Exist Anymore*, directed by Ian Munro, produced by Aviva Ziegler, Sydney: Transmedia Productions for the National Nine Network, 1985.
- <sup>95</sup> "Arthur or Martha," *The Midday Show*, 1988, courtesy Gina Miller; Max Zebra-Thyone, interview with Noah Riseman, 26 August 2019, Newcastle.
- <sup>96</sup> "Bronwyn," interview with Noah Riseman, 6 April 2018, Melbourne.
- <sup>97</sup> Trina Taylor, "TV is both Transvestism and Television," *Feminique*, no. 5 (1974): 26.
- <sup>98</sup> Capuzza, "What's in a Name? Transgender Identity, Metareporting, and the Misgendering of Chelsea Manning," 101.
- <sup>99</sup> Surya Monro, *Gender Politics: Citizenship, Activism and Sexual Diversity* (London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2015), 164-65.