



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Doing-It-Themselves: Community, Care and the Transfer of Gender-Affirming Knowledge in British Trans Publications, c.1980-1999.

Fritzsche, Elena

Citation

Fritzsche, E. (2025). *Doing-It-Themselves: Community, Care and the Transfer of Gender-Affirming Knowledge in British Trans Publications, c.1980-1999.*

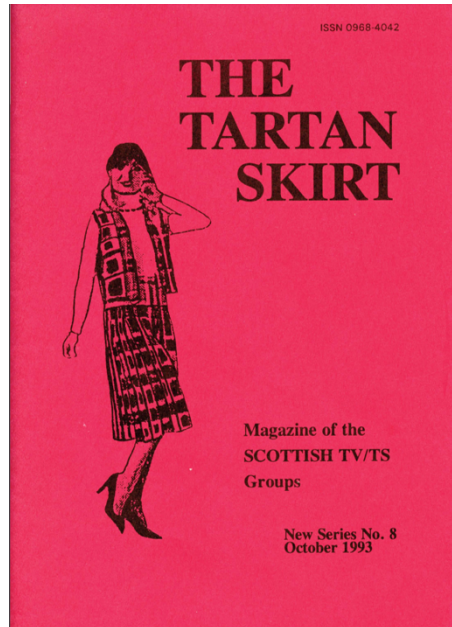
Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master Thesis, 2023](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4258057>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Doing-It-Themselves: Community, Care and the Transfer of Gender-Affirming Knowledge in British Trans Publications, c.1980-1999.



From left to right: *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996), Bishopsgate Institute, London, *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 8 (October 1993), Digital Transgender Archive, *Rose's Repartee* 1 (September 1989), Bishopsgate Institute, London.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
MA History: Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence

Elena Fritzsche / s4338189
Leiden University
Supervised by Andrew Shield
June 2025
17,790 words

Preface and Acknowledgements

This thesis began as a research essay during my bachelor's at the University of Edinburgh. I'd ended up in a year-long course on the history of sexology after missing out on my dream class on Weimar Berlin, and it became one of the highlights of my academic life. Queer and trans micro histories that creatively pieced together individual lives and experiences through a myriad of sources brought me back to what I loved about history in the first place; the importance of telling a good story. The writing of Jules Gill-Peterson and her account of DIY revealed a whole new world and reminded me of something else about history; its importance in telling stories that were otherwise forgotten.

This then became a research project on the Scottish TV/TS group and its newsletter *The Tartan Skirt* for an exhibition at Lavender Menace Queer Book Archive in Edinburgh, where I volunteered during the final year of my bachelor's. Working on an exhibition mostly remotely whilst I was based in Leiden was a challenge but working with Keava McMillan and others was a privilege. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity, as well as for the space that Lavender Menace has given me to grow as both an academic and an individual. Queer community archives are so important, and in many ways this thesis is a testament to them.

Writing a thesis on British trans history whilst based in the Netherlands was perhaps not my finest idea, but I was lucky to be supervised by Andrew Shield, whose guidance, enthusiasm and feedback was invaluable. Thank you! Thank you as well to my family, especially to my mum for her constant encouragement. Thank you to Mary for her endless patience and support throughout this entire process. Finally, thank you to my friends who have listened to me talk about this in Leiden, London and Edinburgh and particularly to María who helped me format the final ideas, a year after proof-reading the same research essay that started it all.

This thesis is dedicated to the trans people who wrote, contributed to and read these magazines. The resilience, humour and community that emerged from these pages help the times now seem less dark.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	3
Introduction.....	4
A Note on Terminology and Inclusion.....	8
In the Literature.....	11
The Publications.....	15
Chapter 1: Magazines as Community.....	19
Platforming Physical Spaces.....	19
Personal Advertisements.....	25
Surveys as Trans (national) Community.....	28
Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 2: Magazines as DIY- Hormones and Healthcare.....	33
Hormones as Utopia.....	35
Hormones as Risk.....	36
Trans Healthcare in the face of AIDS.....	42
Conclusion.....	43
Chapter 3: Magazines as DIY- Feminine Presentation	45
Bra Fillers and Breast Forms.....	46
Hair Removal and Perfume.....	49
Specialist Services.....	52
Conclusion.....	56
Conclusion and Reflections.....	58
Bibliography.....	63
Primary Sources.....	63
Secondary Literature.....	65

List of Figures

Figure 1. An overview of magazines discussed.

Figure 2. Advertisement for Party at Rose's House, *Rose's Repartee* 25 (October 1996): 12.

Figure 3. 'Where Else to Go' in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 48.

Figure 4. Reference to Rose's in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 50.

Figure 5. List of TS-friendly Rape Crisis Centres in *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 43.

Figure 6. 'Questionnaire on TVs' in *The Tartan Skirt* 2, no. 4 (January 1986): 1.

Figure 7. AEGIS Poster in *Rose's Repartee* 13 (October 1992): 67.

Figure 8. AEGIS Poster in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 44.

Figure 9. Advertisement for 'Bra Fillers' in *Rose's Repartee* 9 (October 1991): 3.

Figure 10. Advertisement for Electrolysis in *The Tartan Skirt* 5, no. 1 (January 1989): 36.

Figure 11. Advertisement for 'Specialist Services' in *Rose's Repartee* 18 (June 1994): 2.

Figure 12. Advertisement for 'Total Image Consultant' in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 13 (January 1995): 51.

Unless from the Digital Transgender Archive, all images are my own.

Introduction

In the second ever edition of Scottish-based magazine *The Tartan Skirt* in October 1984, Ruby Todd narrated her trip from Edinburgh to London in a section titled ‘Ruby in the Big City: Or A Scottish TV’s Weekend in London.’¹ The editor of the newsletter for the Scottish Transvestite/Transsexual (TV/TS) group discussed a work trip that allowed her to visit Yvonne Sinclair, the Social Co-ordinator of the TV/TS group in London, and also contributor to this branch’s publication, *The Glad Rag*. Ruby detailed meeting other members of the TV/TS group, their interest in what was happening in Scotland and her experience walking around London ‘dressed.’ Most notably, she described talking with Yvonne about her years of experience running the group, stating that she ‘could bring back to Scotland ideas to help in the development of our six-month-old Scottish TV/TS group.’² Ruby’s narration of this conversation offers an example of how these groups and their magazines created a platform for distributing community centred advice, physically sharing her experience down south with the readers of *The Tartan Skirt*. Ruby Todd not only revealed to her audience that there were many more people like them, but also highlighted how the editors of these magazines transferred knowledge between each other to further create virtual and physical spaces for their readers. This points towards the ways that print media was utilised to produce trans networks of information and community across the country.

Magazines and newsletters have emerged throughout the twentieth century as a site to share advice, to help connect individuals, and to create a space for identification and shared experience in and around these physical documents. The context of medical gatekeeping, systemic erosions of care and lacking societal support all contribute to the importance of these magazines and the voices that they represent. This thesis amplifies trans voices through a bottom-up methodology centred around communities, thus moving away from top-down, institutional medical histories of trans experience. It explores narratives and community formations created within trans magazines *The Tartan Skirt*, *Rose’s Repartee* and *Radical Deviance* in the 1980s and the 1990s across the United Kingdom (UK). This thesis will argue that trans newsletters and magazines helped form community within and around these publications, creating information networks which transferred gender-affirming knowledge

¹ Ruby Todd, *The Tartan Skirt* 1, no. 2 (October 1984): 1, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

across the country. Chapter 1 will explore how these magazines contributed to community formations through platforming physical spaces, creating virtual written spaces within the cultural product, and spaces around the cultural product through additional networks such as surveys. Chapter 2 will focus on representations of DIY hormones and healthcare, noting how print media engaged with narratives of DIY, largely discouraging DIY hormonal intervention, whilst still distributing information on DIY healthcare. Chapter 3 will broaden the scope of DIY to explore the way that gender-affirming advice and goods were shared. It will focus on outward feminine presentation including make-up and hair removal to argue that these publications were central in transferring gender-affirming knowledge as part of wider community ‘webs of care.’

The role of alternative media in creating and mobilising communities was articulated by Lukasz Szulc in his recent book *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines* (2018). Szulc discussed the crucial role of gay and lesbian press in the emergence of Western homosexual activism at the end of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century.³ He noted that for social movements and groups which exist outside of mainstream publication ‘the medium becomes the space.’⁴ Szulc highlighted the importance of mobilisation through media by discussing the emergence of Polish gay and lesbian magazines in the 1980s, which ‘did not only play the role of a key communication channel’ but also ‘created an actual space within and around’ the product.⁵ The idea of mobilisation was emphasised by his discussion of the importance of magazines in forming the first organised homosexual groups in Poland, as well as noting how community organising was furthered through ‘cross-border flows of cultural products.’⁶ He argued that through physically sharing knowledge across borders, a transnational construction of homosexual identity emerged within Eastern Europe.⁷

Whilst this thesis will focus on ‘flows of cultural products’ within the United Kingdom rather than across borders, it will apply Szulc’s discussion of the importance of print media in creating

³ Lukasz Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 125.

⁴ Chris Atton, “Introduction: Problems and Positions in Alternative and Community Media,” in *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*, ed. Chris Atton (London: Routledge, 2015), 6; quoted in Lukasz Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 148.

⁵ Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 148.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 216.

and mobilising social groups to the creation of a national transgender community. Print medias are items passed around and consumed in communal ways, which whilst not necessarily traceable, offer a clear example of how knowledge itself can be shared physically. The second decade of the time period analysed in this thesis is the 1990s, which was a high point of magazine culture, and the last decade where magazines were a necessity for community formation, advice and representation.⁸ Andrew Shield connected pre-digital publications with media today, noting that engagement with print media existed as pre-internet ‘social media’ through the sharing of physical publications with like-minded individuals of other cultural backgrounds, or through interaction with other readers via the magazine.⁹ Eliza Steinbock positioned 1995 as the turning point towards digital activism within the transgender community, noting chat forums and websites which emerged.¹⁰ These magazines therefore exist at a unique intersection between print media and the development of digital forums in transferring knowledge and organising community. They exist as a written and visual representation of community organising prior to the gradual universalisation of the internet which began in the early 2000s.

In considering the advice transferred in these magazines and newsletters, this thesis will use the framework of historian Jules Gill-Peterson in exploring narratives regarding transitioning and gender presentation. In her article ‘Doctors Who?’ Jules Gill-Peterson discussed the transgender history of Do-It-Yourself (DIY), highlighting the way that trans women – often poor, unhoused and women of colour – have frequently had to become the self-appointed doctors of their communities.¹¹ ‘Do-It-Yourself’ hormone replacement therapy (DIY HRT) is an established term within the trans community as short-hand for access to hormones through ‘non-medical pathways or self-altering one’s prescribed dosage.’¹² Gill-Peterson argued that the American history of medical transition to another gender has mostly unfolded outside the confines of the medical establishment due to varying levels of inaccessibility to gender-

⁸ Marco Neves, Sofia Silva and Carolina Bozzi, “Interactions to Be: The Case of Speculative Interactive Print Media,” in *Developments in Design Research and Practice II*, ed. Emilia Duarte and Annalisa Di Roma (Cham: Springer, 2023), 417.

⁹ Andrew DJ Shield, “Queer Migration and Digital Media,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 3.

¹⁰ Eliza Steinbock, “The Early 1990s and Its Afterlives: Transgender Nation Sociality in Digital Activism,” *Social Media and Society* 5, no. 4 (2019): 1-2.

¹¹ Jules Gill-Peterson, “Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition,” *The Baffler* 65 (October 2022): 1 <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/doctors-who-gill-peterson>.

¹² Heather Welty, ““Creating Ourselves:” A Qualitative Analysis of DIY HRT Practices in Nonbinary Adults,” *Social Science & Medicine* 373 (2025): 1.

affirming care. Through exploring the self-medication of transgender people, Gill-Peterson turned the perception of transition as an individual experience within medical institutions on its head, instead ‘recalibrating around the fact that most trans people don’t go to the doctor’s office to begin transition.’¹³ She argued that specific US-based trans magazines and newsletters in the 1970s such as *Transvestia* and *Turnabout* condemned the use of ‘street hormones,’ platforming white middle-class judgement which criticised trans women for self-administering hormones accessed outside of the medical establishment.¹⁴ The emergence of DIY occurred as a response to an American medical structure which prioritised white and middle-class access to healthcare.¹⁵ The development of DIY and modern-day trans ‘webs of care’ in response to contemporary medical neglect is further articulated by Hil Malatino: ‘When a refusal of care is the best you can hope for, what do you do? Increasingly, we’ve turned to each other.’¹⁶ Malatino defined ‘webs of care’ broadly, considering the many ways that trans people care for one another on a day-to-day basis.¹⁷ This concept will be utilised to evaluate how trans communities created networks of care across the UK, separate to the formal medical sphere.

This thesis will recontextualise Gill-Peterson’s thesis into the 1980s and 1990s within the UK to examine whether there were similar narratives of DIY within these magazines, and if they offer any evidence of a similar culture of DIY. It will broaden Gill-Peterson’s conception of DIY transitioning. Taking DIY as a more extensive category to describe how one materially transitions outside of the formal medical sphere, this thesis will explore advice on hormonal intervention and outward feminine presentation. Another element of DIY transitioning discussed by Gill-Peterson was physical surgeries. Whilst physical surgeries such as orchiectomies (a relatively uncomplicated medical procedure involving the removal of testes) occurred outside of medical institutions in varying instances over the last century, the questionable legality meant that DIY surgeries were rarely referenced in publications.¹⁸

¹³ Jules Gill-Peterson, “Gender Underground: A Trans History of Do-It-Yourself,” Radcliffe Fellow’s Presentation, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, October 25, 2023, <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/event/2023-jules-gill-peterson-fellow-presentation-virtual>

¹⁴ Gill-Peterson, “Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition,” 6.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hil Malatino, *Trans Care* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 65.

¹⁷ Ibid., 43-44. The webs of care discussed here included formal mutual aid, mutual care networks and what Malatino described as a ‘t4t [trans4trans] praxis of love.’

¹⁸ For more on DIY physical surgeries see Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw in Gill-Peterson, “Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition,” and Eilís Ní Fhlannagáin in Io Dodds, “ ‘Never Ask Permission’: How Two Trans Women Ran a Legendary Underground Surgical Clinic in a Rural Tractor Barn,” *The Independent*, July 3, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/trans-history-underground-surgical-clinic-b2114777.html>.

Therefore, this will not be a focus of this thesis. The concept of DIY and ‘gender-affirming’ care will be interpreted more broadly, including not only medical support but also advice on presentation and advertisements for goods which could help an individual present in line with their gender identity.

The qualitative analysis of ‘gender-affirming’ advice will include a focus on advice columns similar to other magazines in the 1980s and 1990s - where the reader wrote in with a question to the editor or other supportive figure akin to an ‘agony aunt’ - regarding hormonal intervention and ways of presenting more feminine.¹⁹ Advice for gender presentation ranged from adverts for safe spaces to get make-up in local respective areas of these publications, to articles by the editor about effective hair removal, voice training and accessing hormones within and outside of the medical sphere. In considering the emergence of interpersonal relationships across the country, personal contact advertisements within these magazines will offer an additional scope in examining the way that individuals sought out wider communications with others. Whilst focusing on community formations and the transferring of advice within the UK, the United States and trans magazines within the US will be referenced as evidence of wider transnational community networks, and to provide context for the development of these groups at a national level.

A Note on Terminology and Inclusion

Gender-affirming knowledge refers to ‘gender affirmation’ as ‘an interpersonal, interactive process whereby a person receives social recognition and support for their gender identity and expression,’ and knowledge refers to information shared to help people align with their gender identity.²⁰ In analysing the communication of gender-affirming knowledge, it is important to note that the magazines examined in this thesis do not represent the experience of the trans community as a whole. This thesis largely focuses on those presenting as female or transitioning from male to female.²¹ Those who had access to a subscription of a magazine

¹⁹ For example, see; Tracey Loughran, “Sex, Relationships and ‘Everyday Psychology’ on British Magazine Problem Pages, c.1960-1990,” *Medical Humanities* 49, no.2 (2023): 203-213.

²⁰ Jae M. Sevelius, “Gender Affirmation: A Framework for Conceptualising Risk Behaviour among Transgender Women of Color,” *Sex Roles* 68 no.11-12 (2013): 676.

²¹ For UK-based publications regarding female to male (FTM) transition see *Boy’s Own/ Boy’s Own Newsletter*, a newsletter of the FTM Network (London) which ran from 1991- 2014 and was established by Stephen Whittle. For prominent international publications see *FTM Newsletter*, a 1980s publication based in the Bay Area, United States and *Boys Will Be Boys* based in Sydney, Australia in the early 1990s.

already had somewhat of a disposable income and were more likely to have the money and status to access gender-affirming care. These magazines were published and established by white and mostly middle-class trans women. Whilst it is difficult to trace all their backgrounds, the first editor of *The Tartan Skirt*, Ruby Todd, was a director of a charity and a local councillor in Edinburgh.²² A later editor, Anne Forrester, was a professional scientist.²³ Prior to establishing her club Rose's, the editor of *Rose's Repartee*, Martine Rose, had her own travel business organising trips to North America.²⁴ Considering the disposable income necessary to establish a travel business, the status of being a local politician and the required university-background to be a professional scientist, socio-economic factors such as occupation, income and education suggest that the majority of these editors were middle-class. It is therefore important to consider the background and perspective of the advice that these magazines were platforming.²⁵

It should also be noted that the term transgender was not as popular when these magazines emerged. The terms cross-dresser, transvestite and transsexual all existed under the same umbrella of what was described by *The Tartan Skirt* as the 'gender community'.²⁶ Cross-dressing referred to those who wished to dress in clothes typical of another gender.²⁷ The term transvestite predated transsexuality and often referred to people who wished to live as another gender but did not want to medically transition.²⁸ Transsexual described someone who wished to medically transition into another gender, often considered an early iteration of the modern term transgender.²⁹ The term transgender became popularised during the 1990s, but the sources used in this thesis refer to themselves and varying members of their community as transvestites (TV), transsexuals (TS) and cross-dressers (CDs). Whilst intersex people are sometimes included under the broader trans umbrella, intersex experiences will not be examined here.³⁰

²² Simon Taylor, "Obituary: Ruby Todd and Russell Fox," *Gay Scotland* 32 (March-April 1987): 5. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

²³ JoAnn Roberts, "Who's Who and Resource Guide to the International Transgender Community," (Creative Design Services, King of Prussia, PA, 1994), 10. MS Transgender San Francisco Collection Box 2, Folder 3. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Historical Society. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

²⁴ "About me: Martine Rose," Martine Rose, accessed 14 April, 2025, <https://www.roses-repartee.uk/index.php/general/about-martine>.

²⁵ Whilst I could not find any information on the background of the editor or contributors to *Radical Deviance*, the Gender & Sexuality Alliance's work as a 'pluralist advocacy group' and emphasis on radical politics suggests they approached their publication from a somewhat different perspective.

²⁶ *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 10 (April 1994):1, Digital Transgender Archive; this was the first time the magazine was subtitled 'The Magazine for the Scottish Gender Community.'

²⁷ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2008), 17-18.

²⁸ Gill-Peterson, "Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition," 6.

²⁹ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 19.

³⁰ Ibid., 8-9; Intersex is a term that describes a person who has both male and female sex characteristics.

At times, this thesis will adopt the terminology of the texts of the time, but otherwise will utilise the modern term transgender, or trans, to describe someone whose gender identity moves away from that associated with the gender they were assigned at birth.³¹

From a historiographical perspective, the term ‘trans’ has become a flexible analytic which can allow historians to consider gender diversity and gender crossing in contexts where an individual would not necessarily have identified themselves as transgender and that also acknowledges that ideas about gender are historically specific and change over time.³² Trans does not exclusively refer to those who wished to medically transition, and it is important to note that medical transition has never been, and still is not, a necessity to being trans.³³ Some individuals referenced in this thesis may not have wanted to transition, either medically or socially through presenting as women in their everyday life.³⁴ For some, ‘getting dressed’ and presenting as a gender different to that assigned at birth was something that only occurred occasionally in safe spaces and events associated with *Rose’s* or *The Tartan Skirt*. This thesis does not aim to remove the nuances of the different identities and experiences referenced within these magazines. However, following recent historiographical approaches to trans as a flexible category to examine gender diversity as well as for clarity of analysis, it will focus on all of these different groups as examples of trans community.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 1.

³² Chris Mowat, Joanna de Groot and Maroula Perisanidi, “Historicising Trans Pasts: An Introduction,” *Gender & History* 36, no.1 (2024): 3 and Samuel Rutherford, “Approaches to Queer and Trans Histories,” University of Glasgow (2024): 8. The use of ‘trans’ as a universal label is not without dispute, for example see; Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager, “After Trans Studies,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no.1 (2019): 103-116 and Marta V. Vicente, “Transgender: A Useful Category? Or, How the Historical Study of “Transsexual” and “Transvestite” Can Help Us Rethink “Transgender” as a Category,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no.4 (2021): 426-442.

³³ M. W. Bychowski et al., “Trans*historicities”: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018): 661; this roundtable discussed the potential possibilities and difficulties in seeking and finding transness within historical contexts.

³⁴ Social transition describes the various social changes one makes in relation to other people in order to interact with others in the world in one’s affirmed gender role and gender expression; for more see Katherine Rachlin, “Medical Transition without Social Transition: Expanding Options for Privately Gendered Bodies,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no.2 (2018): 229-230.

³⁵ I was reminded of the nuance of these different groups in conversation with someone at Lavender Menace Queer Book Archive who worked at Gay and Lesbian bookshop West & Wilde in Edinburgh in the early 90s and stocked *The Tartan Skirt*. Her impression was that the majority of customers purchasing the magazine identified as cross-dressers who largely began cross-dressing as a hobby (in some cases after retirement), and that it was often related to a sexual fetish, though this may also be related to wider stereotypes of the time.

In the Literature

This section will focus on trans histories which have emerged over the past twenty-five years. Earlier twentieth century literature involved the works of sexual science pioneers, such as Magnus Hirschfeld's *Die Transvestiten* (1910) and Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), both of whom were largely responsible for developing trans healthcare in Germany (and wider Europe) and the US respectively.³⁶ Other specialisms relevant to this thesis are broader British media histories, including 1980s and 1990s British press histories and their relation to hostile environments encapsulated by Section 28.³⁷ It is also important to note seminal queer theory such as Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993), which emerged within the early 1990s shift to queer studies, following the transition away from the gay and lesbian studies of the 1970s and 1980s.³⁸ Trans autobiographies, for example Jay Prosser's *Second Skins* (1998), provide further examples of engagement with representations of trans bodies in queer theory, as part of the emergence of trans studies at the end of the century.³⁹ Whilst all of this literature is relevant, in order to develop the under researched field of trans British history, this section will focus on trans histories and experience, including their particular relation to the medical sphere. This provides a background to the landscape which contributed to the emergence of DIY, and the development of trans community networks.

A considerable amount of trans history has emerged in the United States, often focused on the medicalisation of transsexuality and offering another dimension to the wider field of the history of medicine.⁴⁰ Articles on trans history are generally published within the field of trans studies in journals such as *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, launched in 2014 by Susan Stryker, or in medical history journals such as *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*.⁴¹ Since its arrival at the turn of the century, trans scholarship has 'noted the importance of performing normative gender

³⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten* (Berlin: Alfred, 1910) and Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: The Julian Press, 1966). Whilst Hirschfeld's theories developed for twenty years after this was published, including at his Berlin-based sexology clinic which ran from 1919 to 1933, much of Hirschfeld's written work was lost when the institute was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933; for more on the history of sexology see Eli Coleman and Jessie V. Ford, "A Brief History of Sexology and Lessons Learned," *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 21, no.10 (2024): 835-838.

³⁷ Section 28 prohibited the 'promotion of homosexuality' in British schools from 1988-2003. For more on British media and Section 28 see; Joe Moran, "Childhood Sexuality and Education: The Case of Section 28," *Sexualities* 4, no.1 (2001): 73-89.

³⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³⁹ Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (La Vergne: Columbia Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Susan Stryker also argued that the term 'trans' is in itself a term specifically rooted in a history based mostly in the US in the 20th century; Stryker, *Transgender History*, ix.

⁴¹ Susan Stryker, "Introduction: Trans* Studies Now," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no.3 (2020): 302.

and “proving” that one was “really” a transsexual in the history of medical transition.’⁴² Joanne Meyerowitz’s *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2002) offered one of the first histories of transsexuality. She explored the social history of those who wished to change their sex, the medical community’s understanding of transsexuality including the emergence of surgery and the subsequent social movement around a ‘new’ transsexual identity.⁴³ Trans historian Susan Stryker’s *Transgender History* (2008) developed this social history, beginning her narrative in the mid nineteenth century and focusing on the post-Second World War period. Stryker focused on social movements, connecting the role of activism with the beginning of a trans history, laying the groundwork for the importance of community movements in trans identity formations and the transferring of knowledge.⁴⁴

Recent scholars have noted how medical definitions of transsexuality were designed to restrict access, exploring the role of university-based gender clinics which emerged from the 1960s and were key in the institutionalisation of care. Jules Gill-Peterson’s *Histories of the Transgender Child* (2018) reconstructed the medicalisation and racialisation of children’s bodies, offering a historical opposition to the myth that trans children today are a new phenomenon. She discussed the central role that transgender children played in the medicalisation of trans people from the early 1900s based on ideas of trans and intersex children’s presumed biological ‘plasticity.’⁴⁵ Beans Velocci explored how Harry Benjamin – the ‘father of transsexuality’ – shaped modern access to gender-affirming care in his gender clinics in the 1950s and 1960s based on concerns of regret and legal culpability.⁴⁶ Marta Vicente also discussed the work of Benjamin, noting the importance of patient-physician relationships, where trans people not only relied on their doctors for surgical intervention based on proving they were ‘trans’ enough, but also for the medical validation required for wider social acceptance.⁴⁷ Aaron Wiegand further positioned the gender clinic as a gate-keeping space for transition, noting how doctor/patient dynamics ‘forced trans individuals to

⁴² Sandy Stone, Joanne Meyerowitz and Jules Gill-Peterson; cited in Beans Velocci, “Standards of Care: Uncertainty and Risk in Harry Benjamin’s Transsexual Classifications,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2021): 463.

⁴³ Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 46; further discussed in Mowat, de Groot and Perisanidi, “Historicising Trans Pasts: An Introduction,” 5-6.

⁴⁵ Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

⁴⁶ Beans Velocci, “Standards of Care: Uncertainty and Risk in Harry Benjamin’s Transsexual Classifications,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2021): 462.

⁴⁷ Marta V. Vicente, “The Medicalization of the Transsexual: Patient-Physician Narratives in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 76, no.4 (2021): 397.

manipulate their narratives, withhold information and tell doctors exactly what they wanted to hear in order to receive care.’⁴⁸ This concept guides my emphasis on DIY and community ‘webs of care’ from below.

Sociologist Stef M. Shuster’s *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* (2021) combined historical analysis with ethnography to move away from the focus on trans individuals in histories of trans medicine.⁴⁹ They instead focused exclusively on healthcare providers and how uncertainty is managed within clinical practice, analysing the role of evidence based diagnostic criteria. In her review, Jules Gill-Peterson largely dismissed the historical value of this work, stating ‘the historical component of this book contributes little new to the historiography,’ instead noting its value for social scientists interested in the ethnography of the clinic.⁵⁰ Moving away from clinical practice, this thesis offers a challenge to top-down medical approaches to trans history, instead focusing on the experience of individuals themselves. By being rooted in magazines and newsletters, it will provide a new bottom-up perspective on the history of trans experience in the UK, analysing trans groups and people as they represent themselves, rather than how they were viewed by the medical establishment or wider society.⁵¹

One of the only works focusing on the history of British medicalisation of transsexuality is a chapter by Stuart Lorimer published within edited volume *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*. This chapter discussed the history of the Charring Cross Gender Identity Clinic in London established in 1966.⁵² *Trans Britain* was published by activist Christine Burns and includes twenty-five chapters from different contributors discussing personal accounts of landmark events over the last fifty years. It is an insightful book containing various types of

⁴⁸ Aaron Wiegand, “Barred from Transition: The Gatekeeping of Gender-Affirming Care during the Gender Clinic Era,” *Intersect* 15, no. 1 (2021): 2; for more on access based on saying what the doctor wanted to hear see Lou Sullivan’s experience analysed in Wiegand, “Barred from Transition,” 2-6 and the words of the trans activist and author himself; Lou Sullivan, *We both laughed in pleasure: The selected diaries of Lou Sullivan*, ed. Ellis Martin and Zach Ozma (La Vergne: Nightboat Books, 2019), 211-217.

⁴⁹ Stef M. Shuster, *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).

⁵⁰ Jules Gill-Peterson, Review of *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* by Stef M. Shuster, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 96, no.1 (2022): 144.

⁵¹ ‘Bottom-up history’ or ‘history from below’ emerged as a type of social history in the late 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on the lives of every-day people and marginalised groups; Jesse Lemisch, “The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up” in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1968), 3-45 and E.P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, revised ed. (London: Pelican Books, 1968).

⁵² Stuart Lorimer, “1966 and All That: The History of Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic,” in *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*, ed. Christine Burns (London: Unbound, 2018), 51-67.

evidence, exploring a range of lived experiences from a current practitioner at a gender clinic to the parent of a trans child who helped found the charity Mermaids, as well as first-hand historical accounts of trans activism and events. Geared towards a more popular audience, it is one of the only books providing an insight into transgender British history. *The Hidden Case of Ewan Forbes* by Zoë Playdon explored the 1968 Scottish legal case of an aristocratic Scottish trans man, Sir Ewan Forbes-Sembill.⁵³ Playdon narrated his legal battle for inheritance and offered an insight into trans history by revealing a historical trans figure and his relationship with medical institutions and the law. This book is particularly notable as it was rooted in an often-neglected geographical area within wider British queer history.

In examining the broader development of British queer history, Scottish historian Jeffrey Meek has noted wider historiographical failures to consider Scottish and other regional histories when discussing a wider British trajectory of LGBTQ+ rights over the course of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ Though his research largely focuses on the experience of gay men - and his declaration is related to the thirteen-year difference in English and Scottish law decriminalising sex between consenting males – much of British queer history is implicitly focused on England, and often specifically on London.⁵⁵ Whilst there is not a considerable amount of literature on British trans history, this thesis aims to analyse transgender community networks across the UK, focusing specifically on the case study of Scottish based publication *The Tartan Skirt*, a magazine which has of yet had no scholarly research. Equally, by focusing on *Rose's Repartee* and *Radical Deviance* which were based in Sheffield and Middlesbrough respectively and both in Northern England, this thesis adds another dimension to a wider queer British history often focused on cities in the south such as London and Brighton. This is further situated within a wider trend towards regional histories, for example recently published *Queer Beyond London*.⁵⁶

The field of British trans history has expanded slowly, with an increase in publications in recent years. In 2013, journalist Neil McKenna published semi-fictional biographical account *Fanny and Stella: The Young Men Who Shocked Victorian England*, about two individuals arrested

⁵³ Zoë Playdon, *The Hidden Case of Ewan Forbes* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

⁵⁴ Jeffrey Meek, *Queer Trade, Sex and Society: Male Prostitution and the War on Homosexuality in Interwar Scotland* (London: Routledge, 2023), 1.

⁵⁵ See for example, Matt Houltbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ This book examined four different English cities, Brighton, Leeds, Plymouth and Manchester; Matt Cook and Alison Oram, *Queer Beyond London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

for wearing women's clothing and tried for male homosexuality in Victorian England.⁵⁷ This historical account was re-evaluated in 2018 by historian Simon Joyce, who re-examined the trials and the narratives of who he (convincingly) perceived as two trans women.⁵⁸ Sam Caslin recently published work on trans feminism and trans participation in the women's liberation movement in Britain between 1970 and 1980.⁵⁹ Adrian Kane-Galbraith offered an analysis of trans men's engagement with the British welfare state and ideas of citizenship between 1954 and 1970.⁶⁰ Dr Evelyn Whorrall-Campbell, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Edinburgh, is currently researching *Radical Deviance* from a Film and Screen Studies perspective, focusing on its importance in trans political thought and aesthetic practice. This thesis will contribute to the developing literature of trans experience, moving away from a focus on relations to institutions and instead focusing on community formations through considering print media as a key tool for community and self-representation in the 1980s and 1990s. By reapplying Gill-Peterson's concept of DIY transition to the UK, it will offer an additional perspective to how trans people engaged in their own forms of healthcare and how this was represented in magazines and newsletters.

The Publications

The Tartan Skirt was a quarterly Scottish based publication which ran from 1984 to 1999. As mentioned in magazine *Gay Scotland* in 1985, it began as a newsletter for the Scottish TV/TS group and was named *The Tartan Skirt* after London's TV/TS newsletter *The Glad Rag*.⁶¹ It later became a magazine, presenting recipes, book reviews, personal stories and articles discussing issues faced by the 'gender community' or those who identified as cross-dressers, transsexuals and transgender. Topics ranged from appearance including 'passing' as a woman to information on support groups, healthcare and legislation, all alongside information about

⁵⁷ Neil McKenna, *Fanny and Stella: The Young Men Who Shocked Victorian England* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013).

⁵⁸ Simon Joyce, "Two Women Walk into a Theatre Bathroom: The Fanny and Stella Trials as Trans Narrative," *Victorian Review* 44, no. 1 (2018): 83-98.

⁵⁹ Sam Caslin, "Trans Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, c.1970-1980," *Gender & History*, (2024): 1-16.

⁶⁰ Adrian Kane-Galbraith, "Male Breadwinners of "Doubtful Sex": Trans Men and the Welfare State, 1954-1970," in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Britain: A History for the Present*, ed. Matt Houlbrook, Katie Jones, and Ben Mechen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), 49-66.

⁶¹ Ruby Todd, "The Scottish Transvestite/Transsexual Group," *Gay Scotland* 18 (January 1985): 12, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender; it is also worth noting that the TV/TS group was funded by Scotland's Equality Network and the first explicitly trans group in Europe to receive government funding; Ren Clark, Glasgow Women's Library, email correspondence, April 23, 2024.

regular meetings of the Scottish TV/TS group. They were presented as A5 pamphlets printed on various types of coloured paper. Early editions had only a few pages and editions in the last two years of publication had up to forty pages and shifted to an A4 sized glossy format similar to other magazines of the period. *The Glad Rag* emerged in a similar way, initially as an in-house newsletter for the London TV/TS group, beginning as ‘3 sheets of A4 paper photocopied and stapled together.’⁶² It ran from 1982 to 1992, and also contained cartoons, readers stories, letters as well as forthcoming events and news associated with the group, remaining in its A5 booklet format. The section ‘Yvonne’s Bits’ was particularly notable as a space for platforming advice on gender presentation.⁶³ Whilst an important source for the wider context of these networks, to decentre London from this thesis, *The Glad Rag* and its co-ordinators will be referenced for context, rather than for analysis.

Rose’s Repartee was based in Sheffield and ran from 1989 to 2016, established by Martine Rose as the magazine of the Sheffield-based club which she organised. According to the first edition, her club Rose’s was founded ‘to provide help and comprehensive facilities for those who love to dress in feminine clothes’ and the magazine was published ‘to help to keep those more distant feel that they are not left out.’⁶⁴ Though initially existing as a UK-focused magazine, it became internationally renowned and more internationally inclusive, distributed in the US and rebranded as *International TV Repartee* from July 1991.⁶⁵ It began as an A5 publication on coloured paper - similar to *The Tartan Skirt* and *The Glad Rag* - but shifted to an A4 format with glossy covers and a more professional appearance following its shift to an American audience. *Radical Deviance*, subtitled *A Journal of Transgendered Politics*, was based in Middlesbrough and ran from 1996 to the end of 1999. A4 in size and with dense text rather than images, it was produced by the Gender & Sexuality Alliance (G&SA), ‘a pluralist advocacy group that includes transsexuals, lesbians, gay men, feminists, socialists [and] lots of people who define themselves in different ways.’⁶⁶ It offered a new transsexual and transgendered politics which emerged as a resource ‘modelling ourselves on a law centre

⁶² “The Glad Rag,” Yvonne Sinclair, accessed 6 May, 2025, <https://yvonesinclair.co.uk/pages/The%20Glad%20Rag.html>; *The Glad Rag* was originally called ‘The Greater London Area Drag,’ which eventually evolved into its shorter name; Interview with Yvonne Sinclair in *The Tartan Skirt* 7, no. 5 (Winter 1999): 36, Glasgow Women’s Library.

⁶³ For more information on the history of *The Glad Rag* see; “The Glad Rag,” Yvonne Sinclair, accessed 6 May, 2025, <https://yvonesinclair.co.uk/pages/The%20Glad%20Rag.html>.

⁶⁴ *Rose’s Repartee* 1 (September 1989): 3, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

⁶⁵ To avoid confusion, this thesis will refer to this magazine exclusively as *Rose’s* or *Rose’s Repartee*.

⁶⁶ *Radical Deviance* 1, no.1 (March 1996): 44, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

[which] trained local people up to answer people's problems on the phone and by letter.'⁶⁷ *Radical Deviance* took a different shape to the other magazines in this thesis, focusing on transsexual and transgendered theory in the context of wider political movements, offering legal advice and existing as a more radical journal.

In focusing on a bottom-up approach to trans history, this research involved two trips, one to Edinburgh to the National Library of Scotland and one to London to the Bishopsgate Institute to access these physical magazines in their respective archives. Whilst I was not able to look cover to cover through every magazine due to time constraints, I believe my focus on specific years across the period of publication offered a broad overview more than sufficient for this analysis. I was able to access either the first or second edition of every magazine discussed in this thesis, which I believe set the tone for the rest of each publication. For *The Tartan Skirt* I focused on the first six years of editions (from 1984 to 1990) when visiting the National Library of Scotland and accessed digitised issues from 1992-1995 on the Digital Transgender Archive, and two editions from 1999, courtesy of Glasgow Women's Library.

For *Rose's Repartee*, I focused on the first twenty-five issues, from 1989 to 1997, with a particular emphasis on the first seven issues where it remained a specifically UK-centric publication, prior to rebranding as *International TV Repartee* from its eighth issue. *Radical Deviance* is housed in several archives across the country, and I was only able to access one issue – and coincidentally the first - at the Bishopsgate Institute. As a short-lived publication, running for just under four years, this still offers a significant perspective of its work. *The Glad Rag* was accessed in its full print run at Bishopsgate. For all magazines, where there were notable events, for example the National Conference of TV/TS groups, I explored editions around this period. Like any grassroots publication, there are human errors within some of the issues. Where some are missing dates of publication, I have made an informed estimation in my footnotes based on the wider printing pattern.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Title	Editor(s)	Dates Active	Based in	Available at
<i>The Glad Rag</i>	Andrea Belsey (1982-1983) Christine-Jane Wilson (1983-1992) Dr Jacqueline Shaw (1992) ⁶⁸	1982 - 1992	London	Full run at Bishopsgate Institute, London.
<i>The Tartan Skirt</i>	Ruby Todd (1984 - 1986) Audrey Stewart (1987- 1990) Anne Forrester (1992 – 1995) Julia Gordon (1998 - 1999) ⁶⁹	1984 - 1999	Edinburgh	Full run at National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. Online at Digital Transgender Archive (from 1992-1995).
<i>Rose's Repartee</i> (later <i>International TV Repartee</i>)	Martine Rose (editorship taken over by Bella Jay in the early 2000s) ⁷⁰	1989 - 2016	Sheffield	Full run at Bishopsgate Institute, London.
<i>Radical Deviance</i>	Sarah Gasquoine ⁷¹	1996 - 1999	Middlesbrough	Bishopsgate Institute, London (Vol 1., Issue 1). Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow (Vol. 2, Issue 3). Others at National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Figure 1: An overview of magazines discussed.

⁶⁸ This and further information on the collapse of the London TV/TS group in 1993 is included in *Rose's Repartee* 16 (November 1993): 16, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

⁶⁹ The large gaps in these dates are when *The Tartan Skirt* went out of print, for various reasons ranging from cost to lack of leadership. The final relaunch of *The Tartan Skirt* was announced in magazine *Gay Scotland* in December 1998; "Transgender Mag Makes Comeback," *Gay Scotland* 134, December 1998: 4, LGBT Magazine Archive.

⁷⁰ "Repartee Magazine," Martine Rose, accessed 7 April, 2025, <https://www.roses-repartee.uk/index.php/trans/repartee-magazine>.

⁷¹ Sarah Gasquoine was listed as the sub-editor in the March 1996 issue accessed but was specified as part of the wider Gender & Sexuality Alliance team who contributed to the publication, including Caroline Bavin, Kate More, Diane Morgan, Stephen Whittle, Averil Newsam, Jim McManus, John Lawson, Phaedra Kelly, Graeme Rothwell, Bob Duffy, Peter Polish and Kate Bailee; *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 1, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

Chapter 1: Magazines as Community

Taking Lukasz Szulc's discussion of the importance of alternative media in mobilising homosexual communities in Eastern Europe, this chapter will explore both the physical and virtual spaces created and platformed '[with]in and around the cultural product.'⁷² Noting how the self-organising of homosexual groups in 1980s Poland were 'closely intertwined' with the publishing of magazines, this chapter will explore how magazines too went hand-in-hand with trans community organising in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK.⁷³ This will involve an analysis of physical spaces referenced in the publications, including those associated with the magazines themselves through their organised social nights, information about safe spaces, and the repeated advertisements of the various TV/TS groups which were held across the country. Considering the role of the written space within the cultural product, it will explore how personal contact advertisements furthered the idea of the magazine as the space, contributing to creating a community in and around the product. Finally, this section will discuss the way that trans(national) community formed 'around' these magazines, examining the impact of surveys and questionnaires distributed to their subscribers, and what this engagement reveals about the importance of magazines for the British trans community in the 1980s and 1990s.

Platforming Physical Spaces

On the topic of trans wellbeing, sociologist Alison Rooke noted how the specific creation of alternative spaces were crucial in helping to facilitate feelings of ease and belonging.⁷⁴ *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's Repartee* were both directly connected to a physical location, creating a literal, alternative space allowing for in-person community formation. *The Tartan Skirt* was the newsletter for the Scottish TV/TS group, which met regularly in Edinburgh in both individuals' homes and public establishments, hosting discos, quizzes and other social events. The Scottish TV/TS group met on the last Saturday of every month, initially at the home of one of the coordinators.⁷⁵ They also hosted social events at public establishments, including regularly meeting at The Laughing Duck, a gay bar based on Howe Street in Edinburgh,

⁷² Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 148.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷⁴ Alison Rooke, "Trans Youth, Science and Art: Creating (Trans) Gendered Space," *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 5 (2010): 665-666.

⁷⁵ Ruby Todd, "The Scottish Transvestite/Transsexual Group," *Gay Scotland* 18 (January 1985): 12, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

throughout the 1980s until its closure in 1994.⁷⁶ All of these events were advertised within *The Tartan Skirt*, which originally existed as the mouthpiece of the TV/TS group but gradually became its own entity. *Rose's Repartee* transpired in a slightly different way. *Rose's* or *Rose's House* was a club in Sheffield established and built in an old house by Martine Rose, with a large refurbished attic where monthly social evenings and parties took place. The magazine emerged in part to advertise their events as well as to include those who could not attend into the wider Rose's community, and to provide a different type of magazine in the wider realm of TV/TS publications. Parties were advertised within her magazine, hosting 'about six or seven parties each season,' all of which had a different theme and dress code.⁷⁷

Creating entirely their own space 'to provide help and comprehensive facilities for those who love to dress in feminine clothes,' Rose's took on a different aesthetic to those who attended the Scottish TV/TS group's discos and quizzes.⁷⁸ Actively hosting nights which embraced fetish wear and forms of expression generally frowned upon by other members of the community, Martine Rose declared her aim to 'make *Repartee* a little different from the magazines of most other groups that cater for TVs.'⁷⁹ Noting her goal to 'adopt a down-to-earth, open minded approach,' Martine outlined the importance of neglecting the 'pearl wearing' aesthetic often held by other TV/TS groups across the country, including the Beaumont Society which she remained a (albeit critical) member of.⁸⁰ Actively creating a community space for and by those who 'love to dress in feminine clothes,' *Rose's Repartee* became a natural extension of Rose's member's club, and was used by Martine to promote her events. It helped her to further create a written community in line with the physical one which she had already formed around her socials and club nights, as well as expanding the literal community through advertising her events. Though slightly different to *The Tartan Skirt*, which emerged as a newsletter for an organised group, both highlight how print media was used to

⁷⁶ "Changes All Round for City Venues Old and New," *Gay Scotland* 95 (August 1995): 2, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

⁷⁷ "Rose's House," Martine Rose, accessed 7 April, 2025, <https://www.roses-repartee.uk/index.php/trans/roses-house>.

⁷⁸ *Rose's Repartee* 1 (September 1989): 1, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: The Beaumont Society was established in 1966, and also had its own newsletter titled the *Beaumont Bulletin* from 1968. Originally set up for 'heterosexual transvestites,' part of their controversy included their official policy against homosexuality which did not change until the 1990s. The society remains running today as the longest-standing trans support group in the UK; Christine Burns, "Is There Anyone Else Like Me?," in *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*, ed. Christine Burns (London: Unbound, 2018), 29-31.

share the physical spaces that these communities inhabited and to encourage further attendance and engagement within, and outside of, their own in-person communities.



Figure 2: Advertisement for Party at Rose's House, *Rose's Repartee* 25 (October 1996): 12.

Physical spaces were further platformed through the information shared about other TV/TS groups across the country. The last few pages of both *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's Repartee* included a list of different groups, their locations, when they met and who organised these events. The final information that the reader would consume within these publications, lists offered their audience the chance for community if they were travelling, if they relocated, or simply if they had friends in other regions. Equally, by visually presenting a list of other trans community groups, this clearly highlighted the number of meetings across the country, at a time where travel and communication was less accessible and print media remained for some the only source of access to these organisations. For many, lists like these were the only evidence of the size of the trans community at this time, and in itself could have provided a sense of national community around the cultural product. The first time this information was included in *The Tartan Skirt* was in January 1987, and the length of these lists increased gradually over the course of the publication.⁸¹ Through seeing that there were enough TV/TS groups across the country to fill three pages of *The Tartan Skirt* in 1993, for example, an individual could recognise that they were part of something bigger.

⁸¹ *The Tartan Skirt* 3, no. 1 (January 1987): 10-11, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

WHERE ELSE TO GO

The following is a listing of UK gender Groups, with contact telephone numbers. If you are expecting to attend a Group for the first time it would be wise to contact the organisers first. (NB. Organisers: please let the Editor of The Tartan Skirt know of any changes to these details).

ABERDEEN. Grampian Gender Group ("3G"). Open to members of other Groups. Third Saturday of each month (except December), 1 pm for 2 pm. £ 2.00. Changing facilities or arrive dressed. Wives & partners welcome. Details: Anne Forrester, Tullochvenus House, Lumphannan, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, AB31 4RN. 03398 83695.

BASILDON (Essex). Trans-Essex. PO Box 3, Basildon, Essex, England SS14 1PT. Open meetings 2nd Fri each month. Details: 0268 583761 (7-11 pm).

BELFAST. Belfast Butterfly Club, PO Box 210, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT1 1BG. Open meetings, 3rd Tues each month, 1pm for 2 pm. Details: 0232 322023.

BIRMINGHAM. Midland Connexion. 1st Tues each month from 10.30 pm. Details: 021 559 3181.

BIRMINGHAM. Central TS Support Group. Last Sunday each month 2.30 pm. Details: 021 559 3181.

BLACKHEATH (W. Midlands). St Michael's TV/TS Group. Open meetings Tues/Wed 7-10 pm, Thurs 5-10.30 pm, Sat 11am-5pm. Details: 021 559 3181.

BLACKPOOL. Open meetings Fri evening. Accommodation available. Details: Margaret Fergusson, 0253 595271.

Figure 3: 'Where Else to Go' in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 48.

The title 'Where Else to Go,' literally illustrated the purpose and content of this segment of the magazine. The alphabetically organised list included in *The Tartan Skirt* in Issue 6 in 1993 offered the locations of various 'gender groups' across the country.⁸² The inclusion of specific details including contacts to call, locations and exact timings would have further alleviated any anxiety about attending these events. By offering certain information such as 'changing facilities,' or 'accommodation available' an individual knew exactly what to expect, as well as

⁸² *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 48, Digital Transgender Archive.

necessary information about how to prepare. With the knowledge that there were changing facilities and accommodation, one had the choice to get dressed onsite, and avoid the various risks that came with presenting as a trans woman in public.⁸³ These specific details disclose the focus on both individual safety and the safety of physical locations platformed within these magazines. The list itself further exists as evidence of communication between the organisers of these different groups. ‘NB to organisers to please let the editor... know of any changes’ demonstrates the communication between different leaders, and the active role of print media in providing up-to-date information about community groups and organising.⁸⁴ On the third page of the 1993 edition pictured below, there was also a reference to Rose’s club as a location, offering an example of engagement between these two magazines. Overall, the inclusion of other TV/TS groups at the end of each publication highlights how print media was utilised to not only encourage engagement with their own associated group, but to share information about groups around the country. The written platforming of this information created a virtual space which had the potential to further both virtual and physical community in and around these magazines.

**SHEFFIELD. Rose’s. PO Box 339, Sheffield, England, S1 3SX.
Membership club. Details: 0742 342870.**

Figure 4: Reference to Rose’s in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 50.

In the broader narratives of physical locations communicated within alternative print media, *Radical Deviance*’s written discussions of safe spaces was significant. Taking the form of a radical legal journal offering advice to the trans community, it was not connected to an explicit community space like *Rose’s* or *The Tartan Skirt*. Whilst they too included various TV/TS support groups and helplines at the back of their magazine, they were particularly vocal in reporting safe spaces following the violence or harassment that trans people were more likely to face.⁸⁵ They reviewed trans-inclusive Rape Crisis Centres (referred to throughout the article as RCC’s), sharing information of where one could or could not go to access support following

⁸³ For an overview on the disproportionate violence faced by trans women see Jules Gill-Peterson, *A Short History of Trans Misogyny* (New York: Verso, 2024), 22-33.

⁸⁴ *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 48, Digital Transgender Archive.

⁸⁵ Gill-Peterson, *A Short History of Trans Misogyny*, 22.

sexual or domestic assaults. This was framed within the specific context that ‘TS’s have overwhelmingly the highest rate of prostitution of any community in the UK,’ and therefore were more exposed to sexual violence.⁸⁶ In an article titled ‘No Room at the Inn’ published in March 1996, Diane Morgan discussed the G&SA’s role in recommending RCC’s and included the initial results of a survey of the various RCC’s across the country which were ‘TS inclusive.’ Noting that they talked to sixty-eight centres ‘and a number of others who did not operate a face-to-face policy,’ their methods included members of their team (specifically trans women) briefly interviewing caseworkers at work. They asked workers their policy about accepting various categories of people, including both ‘male-to-female and female-to-male TSs’ and specifying between their policy on ‘pre- and post-ops.’⁸⁷

The article discussed the different locations which explicitly refused services to ‘TS women,’ those that explicitly refused services to ‘TS men’ and noted that the vast majority – fifty-one of those they spoke to - did not have any policy in place and/or used their own discretion to determine if they would help an individual. Perhaps the most important part of this article is the interviewer’s interpretation of the policy of ‘discretion,’ based on their own sense as a trans interviewer of whether a centre would help a trans person. ‘Brighton is the only women-only RCC that takes all TSs’ offered an explicit safe physical location which they could recommend without doubt to their audience. Stating that ‘some RCCs (11) accept both non-TS men and non-TS women, but 4 of these are uncomfortable with us, and it may be that this is because they don’t want what is seen as masculine behaviour in a women-only space’ demonstrates the importance of community conducted surveys in gaining a first-hand perspective from trans people regarding whether or not a space would actually help them.⁸⁸ This example captured the nuance of policy versus practice in locations which were meant to serve and support those who had suffered abuse. At the back of *Radical Deviance*, there was a directory and address list of twelve Rape Crisis Centres which they recommended following their research, further specifying those that do not cater to trans men.⁸⁹ This list, as well as the survey itself, highlights the role of print media in transferring information regarding safe spaces, particularly essential for a community more vulnerable to sexual violence.

⁸⁶ *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 3, Bishopsgate Institute, London. For an overview on trans sex work in the UK see Mary Laing et al., “Trans Sex Workers in the UK: Security, Services and Safety,” in *Policing the Sex Industry*, ed. Teela Sanders and Mary Laing (London: Routledge, 2017), 39-53.

⁸⁷ *Radical Deviance* 1, no.1 (March 1996): 3, Bishopsgate Institute, London

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 43. In this article, non-TS refers to someone who is pre-operation.

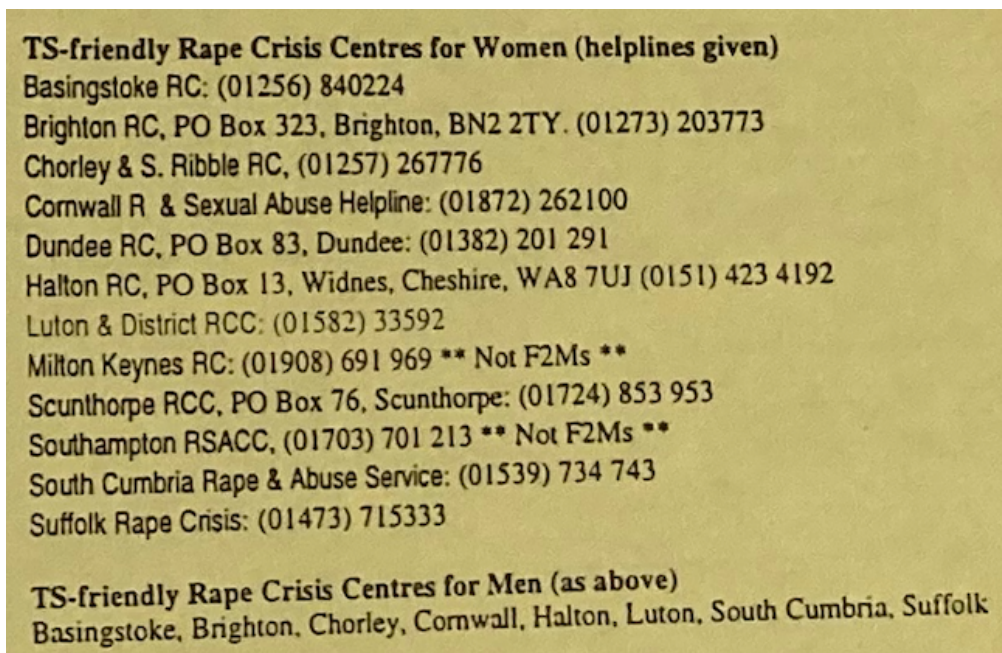


Figure 5: List of TS-friendly Rape Crisis Centres in *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 43.

Personal Advertisements

The magazines themselves emerged as written spaces for trans communities in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Personal advertisements, writing to the editor, responses to previous reader write-ins and contributions from various readers all helped to create a written and virtual community space within these magazines. Andrew Shield discussed the importance of gay/lesbian contact advertisements as early forms of ‘social media,’ noting how readers made ‘new social connections *via* the media’ [his emphasis], which were actively facilitated by the organisers of these publications.⁹⁰ Both *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose’s Repartee* included personal advertisements in their publications. *The Tartan Skirt* first began including a Pen-Pal’s section in October 1989. They were explicit in noting that ‘under no circumstances will sexual contact adverts be accepted for publication,’ and provided specific guidance on ‘How to Make Use of The Service’ and ‘How to Reply to An Advert.’⁹¹ The service was open to members of the Scottish TV/TS group, and to other readers of the magazine for a small entry fee, with the advert including a brief description of the individual, usually under fifty words.

⁹⁰ Andrew DJ Shield, *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 179.

⁹¹ *The Tartan Skirt* 5, no. 6 (October/November 1989): 33, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The pen-pal segment remained an inconsistent and occasional small section of their publication for the duration of its print.

Whilst *The Tartan Skirt*'s contact advertisement's remained a smaller and less significant section of their newsletters, *Rose's Repartee* had different categories for their personal adverts, presumably because it was a larger publication, with more of an audience to engage with these personal ads. The brief written advertisements covered a range of different topics and were categorised within the magazine. This included individuals looking for friendship (this section included those looking for a sexual relationship), people advertising their qualifications for employment, those looking for shared accommodation, those looking for a pen pal to write to who lived elsewhere in the UK, and a 'for sale/wanted' section. The friendship section of these adverts was occasionally accompanied by a photograph of the writer. An advert published in Issue 13 in October 1992 demonstrated the way that these advertisements helped individuals to connect, particularly important for those who were newly out:

'Cindy <735> OTV, 23, would like experienced TV/TS to help/teach me as I'm very new to the scene. I live near Aberdeen but would travel to meet new friends who could help. I would also love to be photographed/videoed fully made up. Photo appreciated and returned. ALA. Box 5011',⁹²

The dynamic of a young 'OTV' asking for an 'experienced TV/TS to help/teach me' offers an example of how print media was utilised and engaged with by its readers for support and to meet new people who shared their experience. Platformed by the editor of the magazines who curated and printed this information, here one sees an individual seeking direct support from someone 'experienced,' separate to the advice transferred within these publications. Explicit in its plea for any type of help, particularly disclosed by the statement 'I live near Aberdeen but would travel to meet new friends who could help' this advert is notable in providing an example of the role of print media in creating individual support networks. The willingness to travel further demonstrates how these adverts could allow for exchanges and relationships across the country, which would likely not have emerged without this platform. Individuals engaged with print media to ask for support and advice, creating connections which could foster further community networks in and around the cultural product. Not all advertisements,

⁹² *Rose's Repartee* 13 (October 1992): 44, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

however, were centred around advice or support, with some more explicit in what they were looking for, focused on meeting and/or corresponding with people who shared their specific interests or sexual fantasies. For example:

‘Patricia <724>, OTV, 50, would like to meet or correspond with persons interested in medical fantasies. Leicester. Box 5023.’⁹³

Other adverts focused on more practical issues such as accommodation, where the possibility of living with another trans woman furthered the likelihood of both safety and shared experience. On a simpler scale, this also offers an example of how print media was engaged with by the trans community to solve practical issues shared by the majority of the population, for example needing a flatmate:

‘RTV, 28, discreet, offers flat share in London SE5 (Victoria 10 mins by BR). Comfortable, well-furnished flat, reasonable rent, privacy guaranteed. ALA. Box 5031’⁹⁴

The reference to discretion and ‘privacy guaranteed’ in such a short advert are both important to note, highlighting the focus on physical safety for these individuals. Ultimately though, the various ways that contact advertisements were used by the readers demonstrates how these written spaces were utilised for a number of different types of connections, all platformed within *Rose’s Repartee*, and by Martine Rose as the editor. Personal advertisements offer an example of reader engagement with print media, and how this was utilised to further communication, and therefore community, through a written column. Whether this was someone younger looking for advice or help from an older, or ‘experienced’ trans woman, for someone who wished to share a sexual fantasy, or for someone searching for a person to literally share a home with, all of these written examples show the virtual space that print media provided to help connect individuals. These adverts opened new spaces of communication for those looking for friendship, sex, employment or accommodation, enabling connections across the country and helping to further a trans community in and around the cultural product.

⁹³ *Rose’s Repartee* 13 (October 1992): 45, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Surveys as Trans(national) Community

Another notable way that community was documented and formed around these cultural products was through surveys and questionnaires. Both *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's Repartee* included questionnaires in their publications, using their membership and subscription to gain a further insight into their readership, and therefore into the wider national trans community. This included categories such as age, sexuality, religion and preferred dress. Whilst these were put forward and sent out by the editors, their audience's willingness to participate in these forms of documentation reveals a level of trust and engagement with their community separate to, or perhaps alongside, engagement with a physical document. Writing to the editor or including a personal advert is an important way of engaging with print media but submitting your personal information to a questionnaire sent by the magazine suggests a commitment to wanting to contribute to a wider idea of your community. For many who - prior to these magazines - did not know there were others who felt like them or shared their experiences, this is particularly significant. Physically presenting information to their audience about the characteristics of their community provided not only a literal number of people who identified as trans based on participation with the survey but advanced a level of identification and therefore a sense of national, and perhaps transnational community.

In Volume 1, Issue 11 of *The Tartan Skirt*, Ruby Todd discussed meeting Virginia Prince, a famous activist in the American trans movement, and creator and editor of US-based magazine *Transvestia*.⁹⁵ Meeting her in London in July 1985 at a TV/TS social, again hosted by Yvonne Sinclair, Ruby narrated her discussion with Virginia to her audience. 'Virginia tells me she is organising a new study of Transvestites. In 1972 she made a postal enquiry of 1300 who subscribed to the magazine "Transvestia" and she received 504 replies...' already illustrates the role of print media in collecting community information. Her following statement that 'this survey has often been quoted in books on Transvestism' demonstrates the impact of print media in creating information and furthering the visibility of their communities. Ruby went on to discuss Virginia's next plan to conduct an international survey, where she asked Ruby to conduct the Scottish enquiry.⁹⁶ This included a standard questionnaire which was to be 'photocopied and sent to all group members in Scotland,' and subsequently sent back to

⁹⁵ Ruby Todd, *The Tartan Skirt* 1, no. 11 (July 1985): 2, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Virginia in Los Angeles, California. Noting that the results should be ‘of great interest,’ Ruby stated that this survey would help provide an ‘up to date picture of Transvestism, not only in Scotland, but throughout the world.’⁹⁷

The results of this questionnaire were discussed six months later, in Volume 2, Issue 4 published in January 1986. This survey asked the age, sexuality and religion of all the participants. Ruby Todd noted that of the forty questionnaires sent out, twenty-eight were returned.⁹⁸ Some notable information that this survey revealed included that 40% of the participants were aged 30-40, that the same percentage of people identified as bisexual as those who identified as heterosexual (35%), and that a considerable amount (57%) identified as Christian (either Anglican, Protestant or Catholic). Though this was not a particularly large sample size and does not reveal a substantial amount about the demographic of trans women in Scotland at the time, Ruby herself highlighted the value of this sort of information. ‘I think it is the first time this information has been obtained... It shows the ‘face’ of Transvestism in Scotland’ demonstrates the importance of magazines like *The Tartan Skirt* in actively finding out various characteristics of a group often neglected by wider establishments.⁹⁹ Through platforming a survey like this within their magazine, *The Tartan Skirt* was able to gather information about their own community, by their own community, actively collecting data that was not being researched by anyone else at that time. Whilst an individual’s sexuality, age or religion may seem less important in the scheme of the wider societal barriers that these women were facing, this provides an example of further creating a community around a cultural product. This was achieved through utilising a newsletter to further understand the demographics within one’s community, even if that community was a small one.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ruby Todd, *The Tartan Skirt* 2, no. 4 (January 1986): 1, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON TVs

I have started to put together the figures from the 28 returned questionnaires out of 40 sent out. The first results are as follows. On the question of our attitude the results are Heterosexual 10 (35 percent), Homosexual Nil, Bisexual 10 (35 percent), Asexual 2 (7 percent) and Not Sure 6 (21 percent)

Age: 20-30 6 (20 percent), 30-40 12 (40 percent), 40-50 2 (8 percent), 50-60 4 (16 percent), 60-70 4 (16 percent)

Religion: Catholic 2 (7 percent) Protestant 8 (28 percent) Atheist 4 (14 percent) Anglican 6 (22 percent) None 8 (28 percent). This is interesting information and I think the first time this information has been obtained. It shows the 'face' of Transvestism in Scotland.

Figure 6: 'Questionnaire on TVs' in *The Tartan Skirt* 2, no. 4 (January 1986): 1.

The transnational nature of this exchange is notable. Whilst the two organisers of these respective magazines met in person in London, the exchange of the survey findings took place across borders, with written results sent via post. These surveys had already been sent out across Scotland, utilising a mailing list of those who were members of the Scottish TV/TS group and therefore purchased *The Tartan Skirt*.¹⁰⁰ The results were, presumably, then sent back to the United States. The cross-border flow of these surveys highlights how magazines were utilised to create and connect not only national communities, but transnational ones.¹⁰¹ Influential American trans figures, in this case Virginia Prince, saw the value of magazines in curating an international picture - though it seems a valid assumption that this focused on the Anglo-speaking and/or Western world - of what it was to be trans at that time. Although there was no further reference to Virginia's international project or if it succeeded in gaining an 'up-to-date picture,' this still illustrates how print media was utilised by editors, as well as their subscribers and audience who engaged with their products, to create and learn more about their community. This took place within and around the cultural products that they were producing and occurred on both a national and transnational level. Taking Szulc's emphasis on transnational networks of gay and lesbian press in creating a common sense of homosexual identity and furthering homosexual organising, it is a valid assumption that exchanges like these helped to shape trans identities and community organising in a similar way.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ This also provides a sense of how many people were subscribed to *The Tartan Skirt* by 1986; around forty.

¹⁰¹ Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 125.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Rose's Repartee conducted a similar survey in 1993, also focused specifically on 'transvestite sexuality.' They too claimed to be conducting one of the first surveys of this kind. 'These results were compiled from over 600 questionnaires completed by our members and represent the individuals own perception of their own sexuality,' followed an article unpacking discussions of the role of sexuality in the 'gender identity of transvestites.'¹⁰³ The only notable difference of this survey (other than the considerable increase in participants) from the previous one discussed was *Rose's Repartee* inclusion of a section on preferences in dressing. This incorporated categories such as 'bondage, domination, sadism and masochism,' though they noted that the great majority (almost 80%) had a preference for 'fairly normal female clothes.'¹⁰⁴ The questionnaire also included the more generic category of age, publishing similar results to *The Tartan Skirt*, where the majority of members were aged 31- 40 (32%), perhaps highlighting which trans people engaged most with these types of alternative print media. Whilst the various locations that this survey was sent was not discussed, based on *Rose's* at that stage existing as an international publication, it is fair to assume that this questionnaire was conducted internationally, likely focused mainly on the US based on their previous shift to an American audience. This again demonstrates the way that community was formed around these magazines through an active engagement with and by their audience, particularly notable here through the role of surveys and questionnaires about key traits of their community.

Conclusion

Overall, these magazines all emerged as important sources of information for the trans community, helping to further community formations both in and around the cultural product. Through platforming physical spaces for in-person community formation ranging from their own events to other TV/TS groups across the country, as well as offering advice on the physical spaces which could or could not be accessed following sexual violence, these magazines highlight the importance of print media in sharing community-oriented information regarding the literal spaces that one could go. The written space furthered this, with personal contact advertisements submitted by their readers exemplifying the way that magazines acted as a key

¹⁰³ *Rose's Repartee* 16 (November 1993): 21, Bishopsgate Institute, London; this again offers an insight into the readership of *Rose's Repartee*; at least 600 subscribers by 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

communication channel for those looking for support, sex, accommodation or friendship. Questionnaires and surveys provide a further example of community formation around the publication, utilising a subscription list to gain an insight into their community. The engagement by their readers and subsequent survey results revealed to the reader the number of people who shared their characteristics or experiences, furthering the possibility of a transgender national identification. The transnational nature of the survey conducted in *The Tartan Skirt* further highlights the possibility of trans(national) identity formations, actively furthered through print media. Through the promotion of physical spaces to meet, the creation of a written space for their readers to engage with, and the option of engagement around the written product, *Rose's Repartee*, *The Tartan Skirt* and *Radical Deviance* all demonstrate how magazines helped to create and further community networks both 'in and around' the cultural product.

Chapter 2: Magazines as DIY - Hormones and Healthcare

DIY hormonal intervention took varying forms in America: from taking the livestock hormone diethylstilbesterol throughout the 1960s, to injections of oestrogen and other female hormones that emerged from the 1960s, to the birth control pill which became increasingly accessible in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁵ In her article ‘Doctors Who?’ Jules Gill-Peterson noted the various experimentations and formulations of hormones which occurred in different times and contexts.¹⁰⁶ Gill-Peterson argued that trans magazines geared at North American audiences which platformed white middle-class voices were largely critical of the (mostly) Black and brown women who took part in their own networks of DIY hormones. The magazines examined within this thesis were also ran by white trans women, some of whom were university educated and/or middle-class, so it is a valid assumption that they platformed a similar voice than those discussed and criticised by Gill-Peterson. Whilst the shape of the National Health Service meant that transition was in theory more accessible than in the US, discussions of DIY hormones and healthcare still existed within magazines in the UK as similar issues of ‘proving’ ones transness and waiting lists restricted access. The following section will analyse the narratives of and extent to which DIY hormonal intervention and healthcare were discussed within *The Tartan Skirt*, *Rose’s Repartee* and *Radical Deviance*, exploring representations of hormones as utopia, hormones as risk, and trans specific advice on DIY healthcare.

In the UK, the first National Health Service (NHS) Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) was set up in 1966 at Charing Cross Hospital, London under the leadership of psychiatrist Dr John Randell. According to Adrienne Nash’s personal account, Dr Randell was the only clinician in the UK providing surgery in 1981 when she underwent medical transition, after being on a waiting list for four years. The conditions of both Dr Randell and the NHS included working and living as a woman for two years prior to surgery as well as being unmarried. Nash stated that she was repeatedly reminded by Dr Randell that he could ‘continue or refuse treatment’ at any time, echoing ideas of American gender clinics as spaces which gatekept transition.¹⁰⁷ Stuart

¹⁰⁵ Non-prescribed hormone use still occurs globally today as transition remains inaccessible; for example, see Nooshin Khobzi Rotondi et al., “Nonprescribed Hormone Use and Self-Performed Surgeries: “Do-It-Yourself” Transitions in Transgender Communities in Ontario, Canada,” *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no.10 (2013): 1830-1836. For more on the history of oestrogen see Grace Kohn, Katherine Rodriguez and Alexander Pastuszak, “The History of Estrogen Therapy,” *Sexual Medicine Reviews* 7, no.3 (2019): 416-421.

¹⁰⁶ Gill-Peterson, “Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition,” 6-7.

¹⁰⁷ Adrienne Nash, “The Doctor Won’t See You Now,” in *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*, ed. Christine Burns (London: Unbound, 2018), 47-48; Aaron Wiegand, “Barred from Transition,” 2.

Lorimer, a practitioner at the GIC from 2002 to 2020, noted that understandings of transsexuality in Britain were largely shaped by American scholarship throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, where access was shaped by ‘proving’ one was transsexual.¹⁰⁸ There was no standardised care for ‘gender identity’ in the UK until 2002, with ‘no agreed terminology, diagnostic criteria, care pathways, clinical standards or regulatory frameworks.’¹⁰⁹ This meant treatment was based on the preference of individual psychiatrists, who were repeatedly shaped by American diagnostics and gender clinic approaches.¹¹⁰

The Charing Cross GIC remained the main gender clinic in the UK throughout the 1980s, though smaller clinics in Leeds, Croydon, Manchester and Scotland ‘came and went,’ often ran on a part-time basis by psychiatrists.¹¹¹ Under John Major’s premiership in the UK in the 1990s, division of the NHS into regions further impacted access, as it became more expensive for commissioners to treat gender-nonconforming patients outside of their own region. Whilst in theory there was access to gender-affirming treatment within the framework of national healthcare, many commissioners set up gate-keeping arrangements and the Charing Cross GIC became reluctant to fund prescriptions outside its region.¹¹² This meant that general practitioner prescribing for gender-affirming hormones became the norm, although many GPs refused, dismissing it as a ‘specialist area’ of medicine.¹¹³ Whilst access in the UK continued to be shaped by the need to ‘prove’ gender identity based on a similar framework to American gender clinics, it became increasingly difficult to enter the room necessary to ‘prove’ oneself, offering a potential landscape for the emergence of DIY.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Lorimer, “1966 and All That: The History of Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic,” 54; this page also discusses the First International Symposium on Gender Identity which took place in London in July 1969 and brought together key figures from across the Atlantic including Harry Benjamin, John Randell and Richard Green. This highlighted how the US shaped British approaches, in part demonstrated by the Symposium’s aim to establish formal ‘gender clinics’ in the UK.

¹⁰⁹ Zoë Playdon, “Gender Identity Clinics: Genesis and Unoriginal Sin,” *Trans Actual*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.transactual.org.uk/blog/gender-identity-clinics-genesis>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Lorimer, “1966 and All That: The History of Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic,” 55.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ If one could not access gender-affirming care in the UK, or did not want to wait, there was also the possibility of travelling for private surgery abroad to countries such as Denmark, though this was not easily accessible; Nash, “The Doctor Won’t See You Now,” 47.

Hormones as Utopia

In the fifth edition of *Rose's Repartee*, a fantasy story by Sally Anne Jones titled 'Next Time-Read the Label' narrated the fictional experience of a man named John who accidentally overdoses on a new experimental hormone therapy drug.¹¹⁵ In this story, hormones were accessed through an advert in a medical journal which needed (preferably) female volunteers to test a new drug - the character notes that 'they were out of work and the pay was quite good' and so assumes a female name and takes the specimen pills.¹¹⁶ They wake up following 'strange and enthralling images... in my dreams' where they were 'the same person but now with long, soft tresses of hair.'¹¹⁷ Rereading the instructions on the packet, they note with shock the risk of exaggerated and possible permanent side effects if the prescribed dosage was exceeded, and then realise that following a misprint on the tin, they have taken twelve times the safe, prescribed amount of hormones. The rest of the story narrates their day-to-day experience in the following weeks, where they gradually become more 'feminine.' They find themselves 'making mental notes on combinations of colours and hairstyles' and looking at women 'not in the old, familiar lustful way' but in admiration of their various makeup, perfumes and hair styles.¹¹⁸ Physical changes begin too, noting how their beard growth became slower and thinner, they experience an increased feminine sensitivity to sentimental television shows, as well as a literal sensitivity to soft fabrics.

The story continues in the following issue, with physical changes and the softening of facial features gradually creating what the author Sally Anne Jones describes as an androgynous 'she-male' form. The story culminates in the protagonist developing 'two full, soft firm blushing breasts' more or less overnight following an alleged chemical reaction with semen which sped up the hormonal process after the character engaged in sexual activity with a man in a public toilet. At the end she plans to undergo a 'simple 2-hour operation' to 'open up [my] already developing vagina' to finalise the physical transition which had taken place.¹¹⁹ Whilst there is a notable disclaimer by the writer that 'this is a fantasy story and there is no such wonder drug that would produce such dramatic changes to the body,' the story and the later responses

¹¹⁵ It is unclear how this fictional character identifies at the start of the story, but they are presumably not a cisgender male if they were willing to experiment with a hormone therapy treatment aimed at women.

¹¹⁶ *Rose's Repartee* 5 (October 1990): 24, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁹ *Rose's Repartee* 6 (January 1991): 44, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

addressed by Martine Rose in the following edition offers an interesting insight into wider narratives of DIY.¹²⁰ The inclusion of a story where someone transitions both socially and physically in a matter of weeks - from losing their facial hair to developing breasts and only needing a 'simple' operation for her 'long journey [to womanhood] to be over' - after accidentally administering their own dosage of an experimental hormonal drug, is a striking narrative to include, even if it is described as fantasy.

Martine Rose, the editor of *Rose's Repartee*, offered her own perspective of surgical transition and transsexuality in the subsequent publication. The previous story was referenced in this article, and it was presented as an opportunity to respond to the reaction which the story received and to discuss her own opinion. In an article titled 'Do You Really Want to Change Sex? A very personal view on transsexualism,' Martine noted that she received many letters and phone calls 'from very distressed men asking how they can become women and where they can get hormones.'¹²¹ The positioning of *Rose's* as a space to ask for advice on hormones as well as where to access them - presumably outside of the medical establishment - is already a noteworthy part of this feature, illustrating how magazines were used to transfer community-oriented advice by discussing hormone access. Separate to Martine's beliefs regarding the difference between transsexuality and transvestism, the fact that people wrote to her about 'what exactly they should be' demonstrates that the editor of this magazine was not only seen as a figurehead within the community, but that a key part of this role included offering advice on transition.¹²² It highlights that these magazines existed as a space to platform information, including specifically whether or not physical and permanent change was a necessary step for an individual.

Hormones as Risk

For the majority of this feature, Martine discouraged 'sex-change surgery,' though was explicit in noting that the article was 'not aimed at transsexuals on the road to becoming what they want, but those knowing little about transsexualism who desperately wish they could change their sex.'¹²³ Her general discouragement of surgical transition was presented as her own

¹²⁰ *Rose's Repartee* 6 (January 1991): 43, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹²¹ *Rose's Repartee* 7 (April 1991): 32, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

personal opinion and seemed to be aimed at those who viewed surgery as some sort of immediate solution to feelings of gender dysphoria. In the breakdown of this five-page article, there were various subsections including definitions distinguishing between a transvestite and a transsexual, discussing what a ‘sex change operation’ includes, access to hormones, how much it all costs, and a section titled ‘Is it All Worth It?’ She was notably critical of those who wish to undertake physical surgery – as someone who identified as a transvestite – stating ‘I am quite convinced the majority of men who say they want to be women could ultimately be happier if they could only learn to be content with being a TV.’¹²⁴ Whilst this criticism perhaps represented the nuanced split between the transvestite and transsexual community at that time, her account seemed to be less about surgery, and more about those who thought they wanted it, without – at least from her perspective – knowing enough about it. Despite her personal perspective and a generally condemnatory tone, Martine still offered advice on the process towards the operation within the British healthcare system (including seeing a psychiatrist and living full time as a woman for two years), how the operation works, where to access support and the potential impact that surgery has on an individual’s life and relationships.¹²⁵

In her discussion of the medical processes, Martine was explicit in her condemnation of DIY hormonal intervention, asserting in bold ‘HORMONES SHOULD NEVER BE TAKEN WITHOUT MEDICAL SUPERVISION’ [her emphasis]. This was followed by her stating that there is ‘danger of blood clotting, and even deaths have been known.’¹²⁶ Whilst she did not expand on these deaths, and evidence of this is not discussed by Gill-Peterson or particularly present in contemporary debates of hormone therapy, it offers a clear warning to her readers that DIY hormonal intervention is incredibly high risk, and something she actively advised against. In her section on the difficulties of living as a transsexual woman, she also noted challenges in finding a job post-op, noting ‘some transsexuals may turn to prostitution and/or selling over-prescribed hormones on the black market.’¹²⁷ As this was prior to the rebrand to *International TV Repartee* and distribution within the US from the following issue, it is a valid assumption that she was referring to some sort of black market within the UK, as at this stage

¹²⁴ Ibid., 37,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 34-36.; it is also worth noting that despite her personal narrative of ‘sorting through feelings of transsexuality’ and ‘making peace with being a transvestite’ in this article, according to her personal website, Martine Rose underwent physical surgery in her seventies and now identifies as a transgender woman; “About me: Martine Rose,” Martine Rose, accessed 14 April, 2025, <https://www.roses-repartee.uk/index.php/general/about-martine>.

¹²⁶ *Rose’s Repartee* 7 (April 1991): 35, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Rose's Repartee remained a UK-focused publication. Whilst oral histories and medical journals could potentially corroborate exactly what or where this black market was (and there is also the chance that Martine was narrating possibilities based on American narratives of DIY networks), this statement implies that DIY may have existed as a larger phenomenon than was represented within print media.

Narratives around hormones were furthered within a Q&A advice section in Issue 10, where a reader wrote to the editor to ask if breast and nipple development creams were effective, noting that she had experienced 'slight enlargement' but wanted to know if Martine had 'info/opinion on their effects.'¹²⁸ The positioning of 'info/opinion' as an interchangeable category is notable. Here one can see how readers viewed editors and these magazines as sources of advice, perhaps with the implication that readers viewed their opinions as information which they deemed medically helpful. Martine's response that these creams are 'unlikely to contain oestrogen, and even if they did, externally applied hormones would be quite ineffective' presents her as somewhat dismissive of this attempt at DIY breast augmentation.¹²⁹ However, her disclosure of advice regarding the effectiveness of externally applied hormones still positions her as some sort of doctor of her community, offering advice to her audience. Whilst there is no way of knowing if this advice was requested instead of information from the medical establishment, or if it was in addition to support from doctors, the magazine as a space for transferring advice highlights how print media was used to offer information on transitioning, specifically in regard to hormones.

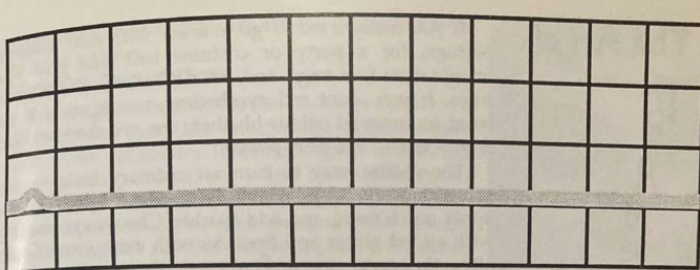
Whilst this was one of very few references to externally applied hormones, the representation of DIY hormonal injections as a risky endeavour was furthered in a later issue of *Rose's Repartee*. Although there is little research into the history of DIY transition in the UK, the inclusion of a poster actively discouraging the use of hormones outside of the medical establishment suggests that there was at least some level of culture of DIY. In Issue 13 in October 1992, a poster from the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS) discouraged DIY hormonal intervention, publishing information which guided that, 'you should only take hormones prescribed by a physician, and only in the amount prescribed.'¹³⁰ The image of someone's heart rate flatlining 'on too many hormones' dramatically declares

¹²⁸ *Rose's Repartee* 10 (January 1992): 53, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ AEGIS Poster in *Rose's Repartee* 13 (October 1992): 67, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

that by self-administering hormones, you risk death. Stating explicitly that ‘you should never buy hormones on the street or take hormones meant for another person,’ offers a clear condemnation of DIY procedures which had emerged in the US. The focus on the positive effects of hormones, which can ‘change your life,’ are framed explicitly within the context of a medical establishment where hormones should be administered under both ‘the supervision of a physician’ and with ‘approval by a licensed medical health professional.’¹³¹ The magazine platforms information that presents the medical establishment - and here this includes both physical and mental health professionals - as a necessary part of transition, discouraging DIY hormonal intervention through dramatic imagery and language which implies that self-administration is incredibly dangerous.



This is your Heart on too many hormones.

Hormones can change your life – for good, or for bad. If taken under the supervision of a physician, they will, over the course of years, cause significant changes in the way you look and feel.

If taken recklessly, they can be harmful, or even fatal.

With hormones, more does not necessarily equal better. Taking excessive dosages of hormones will not feminize or masculinize you any faster than the proper dose, but will greatly increase health risks. To minimize your health risks, follow these simple guidelines:

- You should never buy hormones on the street, or take hormones meant for another person.
- Experimenting with hormones is illegal and can be dangerous. Black market preparations may be contaminated and may not be hormones at all. Even with the proper substances, the type of medication, dosage, and route of administration are critical, and can be regulated properly only by a physician.
- Incorrect dosage can cause a variety of debilitating and even fatal conditions.
- You should take hormones only when prescribed by a physician, and only in the amount prescribed. Your physician should periodically monitor your blood chemistry, and if he or she does not, you should ask for blood levels to be taken.
- You should not take hormones without approval by a licensed mental health professional.
- Never withhold any portion of your medical history or any adverse reactions from your physician.

Abusing your body by over-using hormones will not get you to your goal any faster – but it might get you to the morgue!

Remember: Too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.

Medical Advisory Bulletin

Issued as a public service by:

AEGIS
American
Educational
Gender
Information
Service

AEGIS,
P.O. Box 33724
Decatur,
GA 30033-0724, USA

For more information we recommend:
HORMONES
by Sheila Kirk M.D.
for \$9.50 from: IFGE,
P.O. Box 367, Way-
land, MA 01778, USA

REPARTEE 13 67

Figure 7: AEGIS Poster in *Rose's Repartee* 13 (October 1992): 67.

¹³¹ Ibid.

AEGIS was a non-profit organisation established in September 1990 in response to the lack of credible and reliable information about and for transgender and transsexual individuals. It created a forum for ‘mental health and medical professionals to work together with transgendered and transsexual people’ to disseminate medical advice towards a community neglected by the medical establishment.¹³² Based in Decatur, Georgia in the United States, AEGIS provided a variety of services including providing free information, maintaining an ‘extensive bibliography of materials related to crossdressing and transsexualism’ and later published journal *Chrysalis: The Journal of Transgressive Identities* and medical-oriented newsletter *AEGIS News*.¹³³ Whilst AEGIS platformed those with medical expertise, it focused on working with trans people, offering advice to those who were already conducting their own forms of healthcare, acknowledged as part of the trans experience. These posters, however, were not sharing advice on how to continue elements of DIY healthcare and self-administration safely, but largely discouraged it, instead endorsing a framework of transition reliant exclusively on the medical establishment.

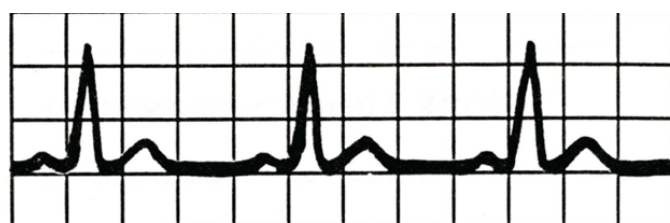
The inclusion of an American advertisement in *Rose’s Repartee* is not particularly surprising, as an internationally focused magazine which distributed across America from July 1991. There is, therefore, the possibility that this advert was targeted more at their American audience rather than their British one, suggesting that DIY remained a largely American phenomenon. However, another iteration of this same advertisement was also present in *The Tartan Skirt* six months later at the end of New Series, Issue 6 in April 1993. This advertisement includes similar language and information as the poster shared in *Rose’s Repartee*. The main and only difference is that this image communicates a more visual urgency highlighting the risks of taking ‘too many hormones’ through a stark contrast of the normal, functioning heartrate of ‘your heart on hormones’ versus the flatline of one ‘on too many.’¹³⁴ This image conveys less text in their advice about how specifically one should engage with the medical establishment. This poster, and by extension this magazine, shares an image which offers an immediate shock

¹³² AEGIS advertisement in *Chrysalis: The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities* 2, no. 2 (1995): 2, Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ AEGIS Poster in *The Tartan Skirt* New Series, Issue 6 (April 1993): 44, Digital Transgender Archive.

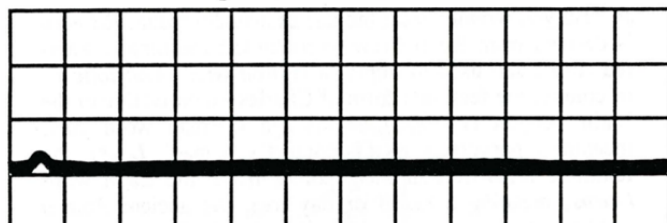
factor to their audience, rather than providing more information, again suggesting that by self-administering hormones, you risk death.¹³⁵



This is your Heart.



This is your Heart on hormones.



This is your Heart on too many hormones.

Hormones can change your life—for good, or for bad.

If taken under the supervision of a physician, they will, over the course of years, cause significant changes in the way you look and feel.

If taken recklessly, they can be harmful, or even fatal.

With hormones, more does not necessarily equal better. Taking excessive dosages of hormones will not feminize or masculinize you any faster than the proper dose, but will greatly increase health risks. To minimize your health risks, follow these simple guidelines.

- You should never buy hormones on the street, or take hormones meant for another person.

- You should take hormones only when prescribed by a physician, and only in the amount prescribed. Your physician should periodically monitor your blood chemistry, and if he or she does not, you should ask for blood levels to be taken.

- You should not take hormones without approval by a licensed mental health professional.

- Never withhold any portion of your medical history or any adverse reactions from your physician.

Abusing your body by overusing hormones will not get you from Point A to Point B any faster—but it just might get you to the morgue.

Remember: Too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.

A public service of

AEGIS
American
Educational
Gender
Information
Service

Write us at
AEGIS
P.O. Box 33729
Berkeley, CA 94703-0729

Figure 8: AEGIS Poster in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 44.

Both *Rose's Repartee* and *The Tartan Skirt* promoting an American trans organisation and its advertisement discouraging DIY hormonal intervention demonstrates how grassroots knowledge regarding the risks of hormones was shared both across the Atlantic and within the UK through print media. Whilst these advertisements featuring in both magazines, specifically

¹³⁵ Ibid.

within *The Tartan Skirt* as a UK-centric publication, suggests there were at least some concerns around DIY hormonal intervention within a British context, the lack of other information around hormones suggests that this concern was not significant. There are only two of these AEGIS advertisements in these magazines (or at least in the publications that this thesis focused on), suggesting that there were not significant concerns about DIY hormonal interventions, or, at a minimum, that it was not something affecting those who accessed and read these magazines. Despite Martine Rose's declaration that she had 'men calling all the time' asking where to access hormones, there were also not a sizeable number of discussions within advice columns or articles in either *Rose's Repartee* or *The Tartan Skirt*, particularly in comparison to other gender-affirming advice such as on makeup or clothing. This does not mean that self-administration of hormones did not take place, but merely that it was not a central concern of the editors and readers of these magazines. Equally, as these prints became more commercially viable over the course of their publications, perhaps promoting information which could have been deemed illegal would have impacted what they choose to publish. Either way, there was a lack of considerable discussion regarding DIY hormonal intervention despite a notable fantasy story of overnight transition. When these narratives did take place, self-administration was largely discouraged, particularly by the inclusion of AEGIS posters.

Trans Healthcare in the face of AIDS

In the broader scope of DIY healthcare, reconsidering Hil Malatino's contemporary discussion of the trans community 'webs of care' which emerge in response to institutional neglect, *Radical Deviance* shared important medical advice on sexual health.¹³⁶ Medical advice transferred within print media provides a larger image of how magazines helped inform day-to-day DIY healthcare through offering information which was not accessible within mainstream media or as a leaflet in a doctor's surgery. In the first edition published in March 1996, *Radical Deviance* included a section entitled 'Love on the Dole - Transsexuals and HIV,' which circulated information from the UK's first AIDS leaflet for transsexual street workers, published in May 1995.¹³⁷ Whilst the AIDS crisis is not a focus of this thesis, the information included here on safe sex is significant in its specific advice on vaginal hygiene for post-op trans women and trans men who used a penile prosthesis. As a more radical journal targeted at

¹³⁶ Malatino, *Trans Care*, 65.

¹³⁷ *Radical Deviance* 1, no. 1 (March 1996): 24-25, Bishopsgate Institute, London. 'On the dole' is informal British slang referring to being registered as unemployed and receiving benefits from the government.

a ‘transgendered politics,’ this magazine is notably more inclusive in its discussions of transness.

‘If you can pee through it, you can transmit a virus through it. Treat it like any other penis – keep it clean and wear a condom’ offers a simple but informative approach to safe sex for trans men. ‘Although some colonic ops do lubricate, M-to-Fs should always use a water-based lubricating jelly such as [list of products] ... lube also reduces the likelihood of vaginal cuts and tears [and therefore the risk of contracting the virus]’ gives specific advice on how a trans woman can best protect herself from injury during sex, as well as from contracting HIV. ‘Post-operatively... adequate dilation [is] essential, as is vaginal hygiene using an anti-fungicidal agent once a week’ provides specific advice on post-op vaginal care that would not always be guaranteed within the framework of surgeries and appointments.¹³⁸ All of the above examples emphasise how print media imparted medical advice that would not have been available within the mainstream. Whilst *Radical Deviance* took a different shape as more of a journal than the other magazines considered in this thesis, and there is no advice section where the reader can write in, here one again sees print media disclosing information not accessible within the wider medical establishment. This offers an example of how medical information was shared to allow trans individuals to create their own DIY healthcare separate to, or perhaps in collaboration with, a medical establishment that was not designed for them.

Conclusion

To conclude, narratives of DIY hormonal intervention and healthcare did exist within these magazines, though perhaps not as significantly as initially expected. DIY hormonal intervention was largely discouraged. Though this is consistent with Gill-Peterson’s thesis of DIY as a class-based phenomenon - often criticised by white, middle-class trans women with access to the medical establishment – these magazines communicated risks and did engage with discussions regarding external hormonal usage, rather than dismissing DIY entirely. Martine Rose was generally critical of those who wished to physically transition, whilst maintaining that hormones accessed outside of the medical establishment were dangerous, though she perhaps divulged an implication to a wider British network of black-market hormones that have not been referenced in any other publications explored in this thesis.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Narratives critiquing DIY were furthered by two iterations of the same dramatic AEGIS poster published six months apart in both *Rose's Repartee* and *The Tartan Skirt*, which suggested that by self-administering hormones, you risked death.

Ultimately though, there was not a considerable discourse around hormones – negative or positive - within advice columns or articles in either *Rose's Repartee* or *The Tartan Skirt*, particularly in comparison to other gender-affirming advice such as makeup or clothing. This suggests that DIY hormonal intervention was not a central concern of these magazines, though articles discussing whether or not transition through surgery was the right step, and advice in Q&A sections considering if breast enhancement creams were effective, still suggest that the editors of these magazines were seen in some ways as ‘doctors of their community,’ moderately similar to Jules Gill-Peterson’s thesis of American trans women offering community-based medical advice and support.¹³⁹ DIY healthcare was explicitly platformed within *Radical Deviance*, offering specific advice to trans people in regard to safe sex, including post-op vaginal care to avoid injury for trans women and advice on penis prosthetics for trans men. This highlighted the way that print media communicated medical advice and information which was not available or accessible within other platforms, helping individuals to engage with their own methods of healthcare as part of wider trans ‘webs of care’ which, though in different ways, all of these magazines contributed to. This chapter focused on DIY as a literal category regarding self-administered healthcare and hormones. The following chapter will broaden the concept of DIY to examine the other ways that these magazines helped to transfer gender-affirming advice regarding feminine presentation.

¹³⁹ Gill-Peterson, “Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition,” 1.

Chapter 3: Magazines as DIY- Feminine Presentation

Taking DIY more broadly to consider the methods used to present as the gender one identifies with, the following section will explore representations of feminine presentation throughout *Rose's Repartee* and *The Tartan Skirt*. In their seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1988), Judith Butler argued that gender exists only to the extent that it is performed, positioning gender as 'manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body.'¹⁴⁰ Presentation and gendered performance was therefore important in affirming one's gender identity, particularly crucial for those unable to access gender-affirming care. For some, advice on gender presentation and performance would support them in their transition within the formal medical sphere. For those who did not have access to gender-affirming care, guidance on both 'sustained set of acts' and the 'stylisation of the body' would have been essential information in presenting and 'passing' as a woman in public and, outside of the realm of medical transition, may have been the only way to present in line with their gender identity.¹⁴¹ For others, this advice would have been utilised in getting 'dressed' for social evenings at Rose's, rather than for transitioning medically or for presenting as a woman in their day-to-day life. This advice would have been met by different people and their identities in different ways but can be considered gender-affirming in how it supported people in *presenting* as a gender different to that assigned at birth, rather than exclusively as a part of transition. It can be perceived as DIY in the way it helped support individuals in feminine presentation, transferring gender-affirming advice and goods separate to the formal medical sphere.

Information about feminine presentation took the form of editor's advice, articles from various contributors and advertisements for gender-affirming services and goods. This included guidance on make-up application, perfume, clothes sizing and how to create a 'curvier' shape, as well as offering specialist services on femininity. Both publications repeatedly framed these recommendations as necessary to visually 'pass' as a woman in public and in some instances to align with cisgender women's behaviour.¹⁴² 'Passing' could also support someone's identity,

¹⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), xv; whilst this remained the main thesis, Butler's theories on gender performance were developed and related to queer and trans theory within later works including Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv; 'Passing' refers to when an individual is perceived as the gender they identify with, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth; for an overview of contentions regarding the term 'passing' see Eric Plemons, *The Look of a Woman: Facial Feminization Surgery and the Aims of Trans Medicine* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2017), 14-15.

¹⁴² Cisgender describes a person whose gender identity corresponds with the same sex assigned to them at birth.

as being perceived as a woman by others could offer social validation integral to some experiences of gender affirmation.¹⁴³ Notably, some of the advice moved away from how an individual would look, instead emphasising how these tips would help the reader to ‘feel feminine,’ positioning this information as integral for supporting a sense of self which aligned with one’s gender identity. This section will consider advice and advertisements of bra fillers and breast forms, advice and advertisements for hair removal, and information regarding local and national spaces for hair and makeup consultations included within ‘specialist services’ for trans women.

Bra Fillers and Breast Forms

Examples of gender-affirming DIY took a variety of forms, including through the many ways one could physically create the illusion of curves. This ranged from padded underwear or tights to bra fillers or breast forms that one could attach to their chest. This advice was platformed by the editors, readers writing in to recount their experience and various advertisements for these gender-affirming goods. In Issue 21 of *Rose’s Repartee* in June 1995, a reader named Helen wrote in within the ‘Rose Tips’ section to offer a ‘practical tip for those wishing to carve foam rubber.’ She noted that an electric carving knife ‘does a wonderful job’ in cutting foam rubber and was much more effective than scissors in creating hip pads and other curves to put inside form-fitting clothing, offering an example of how print media emerged as a space to transfer advice on presentation.¹⁴⁴ Whilst this example highlighted audience engagement with *Rose’s* through a reader writing in with their individual experience, gender-affirming advice and DIY was furthered through a repeat feature within *Rose’s* titled ‘The Art of Changing to Another Form’ by the editor Martine Rose. Issue 15 focused on ‘obtaining the appearance of breasts,’ offering an account on the different range of products and prostheses provided by specialist TV/TS suppliers as well as advice on how to make your own breast forms.¹⁴⁵

Noting that ‘most transvestites probably started by stuffing their bras with socks, handkerchiefs, or cotton wool,’ Martine Rose offered her review of the various methods to construct the ‘right shape without lumps.’¹⁴⁶ She dismissed foam latex padding, bra cup forms

¹⁴³ Will Beischel, Stéphanie Gauvin and Sara van Anders, ““A Little Shiny Gender Breakthrough”: Community Understandings of Gender Euphoria,” *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, no.3 (2022): 283.

¹⁴⁴ *Rose’s Repartee* 21 (June 1995): 43, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹⁴⁵ *Rose’s Repartee* 15 (July 1993): 38, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

and inflatable bras on the grounds that they were too light and looked unrealistic, and further disregarded other techniques such as filling bags made from old stockings with granular materials such as bird seed. Martine discussed the wide range of prostheses, stating that ‘breast forms available range considerably in realism and price.’ She noted that the more expensive forms were made of silicon rubber and were originally designed for cisgender women who had had mastectomies, that they were ‘shaped to fill out the side of the chest towards the armpits’ and cost up to £300.¹⁴⁷ Following her review of these options, Martine discussed the techniques to create a cleavage, either using the products she scrutinised or utilising other methods, recounting practical advice from ‘simply pushing the flesh of [the] chest together’ to amplifying cleavage through makeup, using the contrast of highlighter and shadow to enhance the effect.¹⁴⁸ Advice on what to buy and do in order to ‘obtain the appearance of breasts’ as well as the various techniques used to amplify these products highlights how the editor of *Rose’s Repartee* disclosed and transferred information regarding feminine presentation based on her own experience.

Advertisements for bra fillers and other gender-affirming goods were present throughout *Rose’s Repartee*. Noting that lining balloons with wallpaper paste created a convincing bra filler, Martine promoted the DIY filler kits designed and sold by herself, which she described as ‘paste filled balloons but the balloons... are much heavier weight and larger than normal party balloons... which feel very realistic if someone should brush against them.’¹⁴⁹ These kits were advertised throughout her publications, distributed from Rose’s club and it’s PO Box based in Sheffield. These advertisements gradually became more professional as the publication progressed. The slogan for ‘Martine Rose’s Famous Boobs’ described them as ‘special heavy-duty balloons with a paste filler to give just the right weight, feel and bounce.’¹⁵⁰ Sold as a pair, one could purchase their own DIY Kit to make the bra fillers themselves, or could purchase them readymade, which were available in the sizes S, M or L. The cost ranging between £4 or £5 in 1991 is particularly notable in its affordability for those who did not have

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

access to more luxurious goods advertised within the publication, for example breast prostheses or breast forms.¹⁵¹

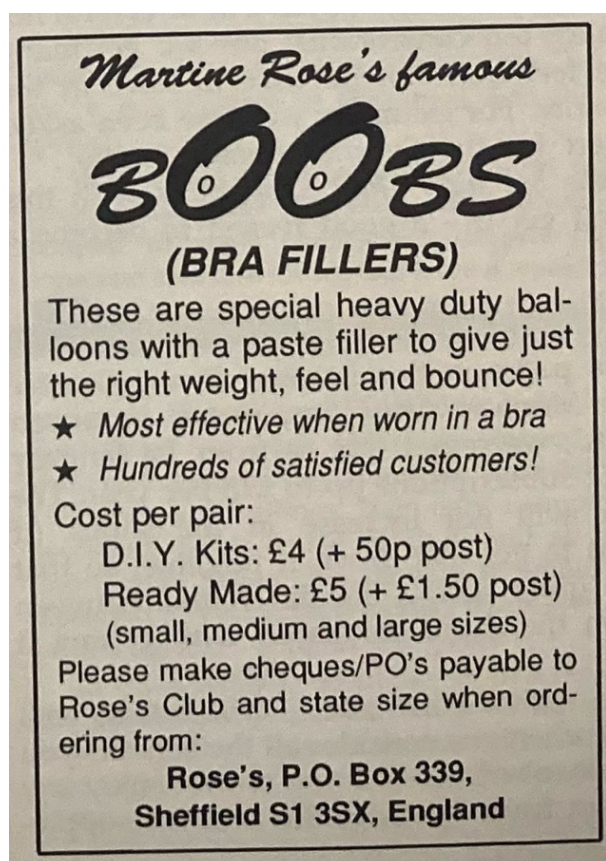


Figure 9: Advertisement for 'Bra Fillers' in *Rose's Repartee* 9 (October 1991): 3.

These advertisements continued throughout the course of the publication. By 1996, they had become more internationally focused, distributing across Europe, the US and the 'rest of the world.'¹⁵² Though the advertisements became gradually more professional, the information remained the same, with the main difference being a slight increase in price point and a clearer way of explaining their sizing, noting how S, M and L aligned with traditional UK bra cup sizing. The distribution across Europe and the 'rest of the world' not only revealed the international audience that *Rose's* pivoted towards in its print run but points to the popularity and demand for these goods. Whilst the non-permanent nature of bra fillers could have remained a helpful tool for someone cross-dressing, for those who could not access any sort of

¹⁵¹ There is a noteworthy advertisement for 'Victoria Regine's Silicon Breast Forms,' distributed from Wolverhampton in the West Midlands on the page before this article; *Rose's Repartee* 15 (July 1993): 37, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹⁵² *Rose's Repartee* 25 (October 1996): 4, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

gender-affirming care within a formal medical framework (or even for those waiting to access care), these could have offered an opportunity for some level of gender affirmation at an affordable cost.

Rose's also repeatedly advertised other products which explicitly used language which framed their products as gender-affirming, spelling out the importance of these goods in supporting one's identity. 'Victoria Regine's Silicon Breast Forms' were referenced multiple times, from a 'personal service supporting the TV/TS community,' selling their own breast forms and offering guides and appointments for choosing an appropriate prosthesis. The gender-affirming language of this repeat advertisement was clear, noting how the service offered an 'emotionally fulfilling experience' and breast forms could help an individual in 'achieving feminine fulfilment.'¹⁵³ Whilst 'Martine Rose's Famous Boobs' were not advertised with the same emphasis on emotional fulfilment, both products helped to physically create the appearance of breasts which would have aided an individual in both presenting and feeling feminine. Through platforming advice from both editors and readers, as well as bra fillers and breast forms which helped an individual to look, and ultimately feel, more feminine, *Rose's Repartee* highlighted how print media was utilised to transfer gender-affirming advice and practical items which supported individuals in feminine presentation outside of the wider medical sphere.

Hair Removal and Perfume

Advice on makeup, hair removal and perfume were similar to other (cis) women-centred magazines of the time. The main difference with the magazines discussed in this thesis was their focus on how to most effectively present in line with cisgender female beauty standards and 'pass' as a woman in public, as well as their use of gender-affirming language which stressed how a product would make an individual feel. A focus on hair removal was notable in both *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's Repartee*, through advice from the editor and advertisements for electrolysis, sugaring and other forms of hair removal. This was positioned in relation to cisgender women, and the importance of aligning with their behaviour and gender presentation. One of the first editions of *Rose's* included a four-page article on body hair removal and techniques.¹⁵⁴ Similar information was shared in Issue 11 in 1994 of *The Tartan Skirt*, where

¹⁵³ *Rose's Repartee* 9 (October 1991): 41-42, Bishopsgate Institute, London

¹⁵⁴ *Rose's Repartee* 4 (June 1990): 29-32, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

editor Anne Forrester discussed the varying methods of removing body hair in a five-page article titled 'Fuzz-Free Legs.' Stating that 'throughout recorded history women have never been considered desirable if their bodies and legs were hairy,' the discussion of hair removal was framed in relation to cisgender women and aligning with their gender performance, explicitly connected to their desirability. Body hair was framed as necessary to remove, or hide, to 'pass convincingly.'¹⁵⁵ Advice around its removal was therefore essential to help one be perceived as a woman.

In this article, Forrester discussed the pros and cons of different methods of hair removal, ranging from shaving, depilatory cream, waxing, sugaring and electrolysis. There was a section for those who could not remove leg hair 'for family and/or social reasons,' where Forrester listed other options, including wearing patterned black hosiery to hide 'the conflicting pattern of leg hair underneath.' This advice was stressed as specific to a party or dress-up occasion, stating that 'most genetic women do not usually dress up in this manner in their daily lives,' noting that this could otherwise draw unnecessary attention and lead to being 'read' as 'a man in a dress.'¹⁵⁶ The idea of how 'most genetic women' dress, and the importance of conforming within their standards of respectability (i.e. not wearing a certain type of tights during the day), is also important in considering what type of gendered performance these women were engaging with. The focus on hair removal, as well as how this related to cis women's experience, transferred advice which helped trans women 'pass' and present themselves in line with societal expectations of their gender.

The platforming within print media of safe spaces to access gender-affirming treatments emphasises the role of magazines in developing community 'webs of care' through sharing beauty services which supported individuals in feminine presentation. Both magazines included local and national advertisements for hair removal treatments, particularly for electrolysis which became increasingly popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Anne Forrester, *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 11 (July 1994): 12, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Electrolysis is a procedure where thin wires are used to pass electrical currents through follicles to remove hair permanently. For a contemporary medical discussion of how electrolysis is considered affordable gender-affirming care see; Dustin H. Marks et al, "Excess Hair, Hair Removal Methods, and Barriers to Care in Gender Minority Patients," *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology* 19, no.6 (2020): 1494-1498.

Electrolysis advertisements were present within *The Tartan Skirt* as early as 1989.¹⁵⁸ Figure 10 included below advertised a service in Maryport, Cumbria in North West England, which was close to the Scottish border and provides one example of how these magazines promoted different treatment spaces across the UK, which in turn could have contributed to wider community networks. Whilst hair removal was important to present as a woman, electrolysis was also occasionally referenced in *The Tartan Skirt* as a necessary step within the process of formal medical transition. In a section on helpful resources, the writer noted that ‘one of the main problems facing transsexuals is getting at information... where you can go for safe... competent electrolysis...which surgeons to reach out to...’ positioning electrolysis as a stage within medically transitioning. The framing of a main issue being ‘getting at information’ exemplifies the importance of print media in sharing knowledge, and particularly safe spaces for hair removal.¹⁵⁹ Advertisements for electrolysis, therefore, are an important example of platforming treatments which existed as gender-affirming care for those presenting as female, either within the process of formal medical transition or outside of the medical establishment. These advertisements highlight how information on treatments to help one present in line with their gender identity was shared by print media.

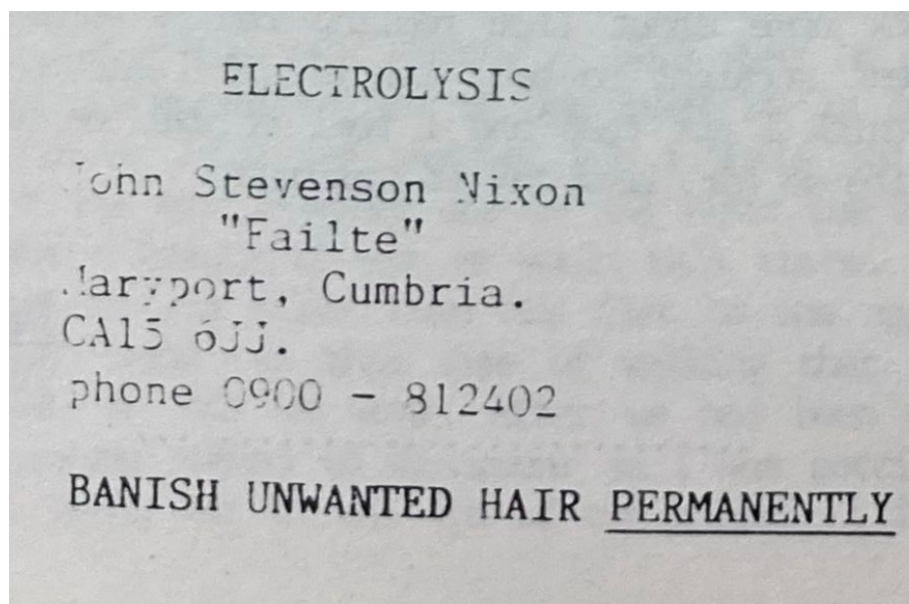


Figure 10: Advertisement for Electrolysis in *The Tartan Skirt* 5, no. 1 (January 1989): 36.

¹⁵⁸ Advertisement for Electrolysis in *The Tartan Skirt* 5, no. 1 (January 1989): 36, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹⁵⁹ *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 6 (April 1993): 46, Digital Transgender Archive.

Whilst information and advertisements for hair removal services provided practical advice to help readers to physically present as female, narratives and varying language positioned this advice as gender-affirming throughout both magazines. When discussing choosing a perfume in *The Tartan Skirt* - something that does not change someone's outward appearance – Anne Forrester highlighted that choosing the right perfume can ‘give an aura of absolute femininity’ and can be a ‘nice finishing touch that makes you feel so utterly feminine.’¹⁶⁰ Gendered language was echoed within *Rose's Repartee*, in another article on ‘The Art of Transformation.’ This piece discussed the various concentrations of scents, where to apply perfume to maintain its scent and described wearing perfume as ‘the epitome of femininity which adds the final touch of indulgence.’¹⁶¹ The focus on how a product makes an individual *feel* emphasised the use of perfume as gender-affirming, offering advice for using goods which could actively support someone in their gender identity. Columns by the editors helped offer advice on how to most effectively *look* feminine in public, for example through the removal of body hair, but also offered information on how to make an individual *feel* feminine through using goods which do not change one's appearance, such as perfume. A focus on performing gender in line with cis women and their presentation, as well as language that asserted this advice as gender-affirming all demonstrate the role of magazines in offering support in feminine presentation, outside of formal spheres of care.

Specialist Services

Advertisements for specialist services for trans women were also a notable way that magazines shared information regarding gender presentation and spaces for gender-affirming advice, offering resources and social support which existed as wider gender-affirming care.¹⁶² *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's* both repeatedly published advertisements for various spaces which offered advice on colour coordination, fashion, makeup, hair, ‘deportment’ and other skills deemed necessary to present and ‘pass’ as a woman in public. Safe spaces to receive gender-affirming advice regarding feminine presentation would have provided a level of psychological care for a marginalised group often victimised in more mainstream gendered public spaces

¹⁶⁰ Anne Forrester, *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 12 (October 1994): 13, 16, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹⁶¹ *Rose's Repartee* 19 (November 1994): 30, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹⁶² For more on the role of beauty spaces in gender affirmation and social support see; Hannah McCann, ““Helps me feel more like myself:” Navigating Bodies, Emotions and Identity in Australian Queer Salons,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 31, no.9 (2022): 1274-1292.

such as shopping centres or beauty stores.¹⁶³ The platforming of these spaces also contributed to the creation of trans community around the cultural product. By offering hair and beauty advice and support for gender presentation in a safe space, these advertisements demonstrate the way that print media was utilised to circulate information on locations which offered in-person gender-affirming advice.

In an advertisement included multiple times throughout *Rose's Repartee*, 'tuition in all aspects of femininity' was provided by a figure named Roz.¹⁶⁴ This experience was described as 'specialist services for TV/TS,' with a personal number at the bottom of the image for further enquiries. Through offering dressing facilities and accommodation from 'overnight to weekly,' 'in lovely secluded surroundings at reasonable rates,' this advertisement seemed to promote some sort of gender-affirming retreat. The description of 'lovely secluded surroundings' presented an image of a physical and psychological safe space to learn more about feminine presentation, and to learn the practical skills to be able to present in line with one's gender in day-to-day life.¹⁶⁵ Whilst an emphasis on 'colour coordination, fashion [and] make up' seem more obvious focuses for gender-affirming advice, the reference to 'deportment' is particularly striking. Returning to Butler's theory of gender performance, tuition on 'deportment' suggests some sort of teaching of gendered etiquette, poise and how to carry oneself, connecting to how gender exists as a 'sustained set of acts.'¹⁶⁶ Advice on how to engage in 'ladylike behaviour' was a key part of guidance on gender presentation, revealing how these spaces and services provided essential support on gender performance surrounding 'aspects of femininity.'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Ida Linander et al., "(Un)safe Spaces, Affective Labour and Perceived Health Among People with Trans Experience in Sweden," *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 21, no. 8 (2019): 914-916.

¹⁶⁴ *Rose's Repartee* 18 (June 1994): 2, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

¹⁶⁷ For a specific article on deportment and 'how to be a lady' see; *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, Issue 6 (April 1993): 17-18, Digital Transgender Archive.



Figure 11: Advertisement for ‘Specialist Services’ in *Rose’s Repartee* 18 (June 1994): 2.

Support in gender presentation was furthered in *The Tartan Skirt*, through repeated advertisements to hair and make-up consultations across the UK for those identifying as ‘TV/TS.’ This included a considerable number in Scotland, as a Scottish-based publication (see Figure 12 below). These adverts highlight how local or national beauty services were promoted to help one present as the gender they identified with. They offered similar information to the advertisements in *Rose’s*, offering a ‘total image consultant’ and a ‘full range of services and advice.’¹⁶⁸ The below advertisement was for *Colour Works* in Abbeyhill, Edinburgh, a hair salon for the general public which offered specific services which catered to the trans community.¹⁶⁹ This involved advice on hair and wig styling, makeup advice and lessons, and colour analysis for clothing and styling. The note of ‘privacy guaranteed’ reveals a focus on providing physical safe spaces for gender-affirming consultations. The emphasis on privacy again demonstrates the role of print media in creating the possibility of physical community in and around the cultural product, sharing locations which people could attend safely. Most

¹⁶⁸ Advertisement in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 13 (January 1995): 51, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

notably, however, it illustrates how hair and beauty services were shared as spaces for gender-affirming care, essential in supporting those who wished for their presentation to further align

COLOUR WORKS

Contact: G.Morrissey, 27 Maryfield, Abbeyhill, Edinburgh EH7 5AR
Tel: 031-661 5174

TOTAL IMAGE CONSULTANT

A full range of services and advice for TV/TS including:-

- Makeup Sales, Advice and Lessons
- Colour Analysis for Clothing. Create your best look with colour and style
- Hair and Wig Styling
- Personal Consultations or Group Workshops
- Privacy Guaranteed

with their gender identity.

Figure 12: Advertisement for ‘Total Image Consultant’ in *The Tartan Skirt*, New Series, no. 13 (January 1995): 51.

It is difficult to gauge if the people running these ‘specialist services’ were trans women themselves, cisgender allies within the beauty world, or just individuals or businesses who saw a gap in the market. Whilst these specific adverts do not contain any illustrations, as the majority of advertisements included images of white women, whiteness was the implicit norm throughout these publications. It therefore seems unlikely that these services would have accommodated different hair textures or skin tones. The reality of the number of women who could afford these services is outside of the scope of this thesis, though presumably access to a specialist service on gender presentation was not a given experience for the majority of trans women in the UK, especially given the barriers to work and social opportunities following any level of social or medical transition. Furthermore, these magazines do not include any reviews of these specific services, and oral histories would be required to analyse the extent to which these experiences were actually gender-affirming. It is a valid assumption, however, that a trans magazine would not advertise these spaces if individuals did not have good experiences with them. Despite questions of class and income-based accessibility, these advertisements still offer an example of how information regarding gender presentation was platformed within

print media. Safe spaces would have offered a level of psychological care and support through advice on skills such as makeup and hair, existing as a part of wider community ‘webs of care.’ Whilst these platforms did not produce an alternative to gender-affirming care within a medical setting, practical advice regarding feminine presentation could have provided essential support for those who wished to present and ‘pass’ as a woman in public. ‘Specialist services’ could help to support feelings of gender affirmation, creating spaces for gender-affirming care through distributing gender-affirming advice and social support. These spaces were frequently communicated by *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose’s Repartee*, highlighting how print media transferred information regarding feminine presentation.

Conclusion

Both *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose’s Repartee* published information regarding gender presentation, framing this advice both in regard to cisgender women’s behaviour and increasing the chances of ‘passing’ in public, as well as positioning language as gender-affirming based on helping their reader to look and feel feminine. Advice from the editor included guidance on how to create curves through bra fillers and breast forms, most notable within Martine Rose’s own Bra Fillers advertised throughout the print run. By platforming her own personal review on these products, including advice on how to create and enhance cleavage, the editor of *Rose’s Repartee* shared essential information and products which would have helped one present in line with their gender. In *The Tartan Skirt*, Anne Forrester’s review of hair removal techniques furthered the role of editor’s advice, and stressed the importance of hair removal in presenting and ‘passing’ as a woman in public. Consistent adverts to gender-affirming treatments such as electrolysis, framed as a necessary step in feminine presentation and in some cases in formal medical transition, were also prominent examples of how spaces disclosed within print media helped to develop community ‘webs of care.’ ‘Specialist services’ advertised in both magazines pushed the importance of physical spaces, where gender-affirming care was provided through advice on makeup, hair and clothing. This supported individuals in presenting and ‘passing’ as women and provided a psychological safety separate to experiences in public beauty stores. Whilst these spaces would have had varying income-based accessibility, editor’s advice, advertisements for gendered products such as bra fillers and specialist services for trans women all highlight print media’s importance in communicating gender-affirming information on how to present and feel more feminine. These are all evidence of wider community ‘webs of care,’

highlighting the many ways that trans people cared for one another through the regular distribution of gender-affirming advice and safe spaces via print media.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Malatino, *Trans Care*, 43-44.

Conclusions and Reflections

To conclude, this thesis has argued that magazines were an integral space and vehicle for the transfer of gender-affirming knowledge, as well as creating significant community networks in and around the cultural product throughout the 1980s and 1990s in the UK. Taking Lukasz Szulc's discussion on the importance of alternative media in mobilising homosexual communities in Eastern Europe, these magazines also helped to mobilise and form trans community networks both 'in and around' the cultural product.¹⁷¹ Through the platforming of physical spaces to meet, the creation of a written space for their readers to engage with, and the option of engagement around the written product, *Rose's Repartee*, *The Tartan Skirt* and *Radical Deviance* helped contribute to both physical and virtual community networks. Physical community was furthered through advertising social events in association with the magazines, offering information on safe spaces for victims of violence, and reporting other TV/TS groups across the country, all sharing the literal spaces that people could go. Written community networks were created through personal contact advertisements, where magazines acted as a key communication channel for those looking for support, sex, accommodation or friendship. Questionnaires and surveys provided another example of community formation, utilising a subscription list to gain an insight into demographics of their community, pointing to the wider trans (national) networks created around these publications. These were all platformed by editors and engaged with by their audience to create physical, written and virtual communities 'in and around' the cultural product.

In considering DIY hormones, narratives of DIY hormonal intervention and healthcare did exist within these magazines, though perhaps not as significantly as initially expected. Narratives of hormonal intervention were present through fictional stories of overnight transition following an account of experimental hormonal intervention which positioned DIY as some form of utopia. DIY hormones were largely discouraged through both editor's advice and the communication of risks, most notably through repeat AEGIS posters which offered a dramatic depiction which warned that by self-administering hormones, you risk death. Whilst DIY was largely discouraged, narratives from fictional stories and editor's advice imply that it was not entirely dismissed, suggesting that Gill-Peterson's thesis of white middle-class judgement within American trans publications does not entirely apply within a British context,

¹⁷¹ Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 148.

though this may also be due to a lack of significant discourse around DIY hormones. Advice regarding hormones - and the process of accessing the formal medical sphere - still positioned the editor of *Rose's Repartee* as some sort of 'doctor of her community,' similar in some ways to Jules Gill-Peterson's thesis of community-based advice and support outside of the formal medical sphere. This was furthered by the different forms of DIY trans healthcare advocated for within *Radical Deviance*, focusing specifically sexual health and on pre- and post-op care. This offered an example of how these magazines helped to share health-related advice and contributed to wider community 'webs of care' separate to the medical establishment.

The third chapter highlighted how magazines offered advice on feminine presentation, related to cisgender women's behaviour and the importance of gender performance in feelings of affirmation. This included information and advertisements on hair removal, products which helped to create curves, and advertising spaces which offered 'specialist services' on femininity for trans women. Editor's advice included how to 'obtain the appearance of breasts' through various techniques and products, most notably by Martine Rose's own Bra Fillers advertised throughout the print run. By sharing her own reviews, the editor of *Rose's Repartee* distributed essential information which would have helped one present in line with their gender, particularly crucial for those without access to gender-affirming care. Consistent advertisements to hair removal treatments such as electrolysis, framed as a necessary step in feminine presentation and in some cases in medical transition, demonstrated how spaces platformed within print media helped develop community 'webs of care.' Language throughout both *Rose's* and *The Tartan Skirt* emphasised the role of advice and products in affirming a sense of self – particularly notable in discussions of perfume - focusing on how products could help one *feel*, rather than exclusively *look*, more feminine. Specialist services on femininity provided gender-affirming care through psychological and physical safe spaces to receive gender-affirming advice regarding hair and makeup, but also on the 'deportment' necessary to behave and 'pass' as a woman. This highlighted the importance of these publications in offering advice on gendered performance and feminine presentation.

This thesis has moved away from top-down medical histories of transition, instead focusing on print media as an example of how (mostly) trans women represented themselves, their experiences, and their wider community. Whilst this has explored narratives of DIY through analysing magazines, these publications represent largely white, middle-class voices who are only one part of a larger group. The extent to which these magazines platform the same white

middle-class judgement critiqued by Gill-Peterson is difficult to gauge. Chapter 2 revealed that there was not the same dismissal of DIY hormonal intervention, though it was still discouraged. Chapter 3 provides the clearest indication into wider class dynamics in *The Tartan Skirt* and *Rose's Repartee*, particularly in considering what sort of femininity was promoted in these publications. Discussions of gendered presentation and guidance on 'deportment' through specialist services could implicate some class bias from the editors through their emphasis on 'ladylike' behaviour, and possibly the importance of social respectability in representations of transness.¹⁷² Alternatively, this could also represent aspirations towards a middle-class femininity that these women otherwise would not have had access to. A deeper class-rooted analysis of these texts would be required to provide additional insight into this. The extent to which this femininity was racialised should also be examined, though based on the majority of advertisements including images of white women and a lack of advice on different hair texture and/or skin tones, whiteness was the norm throughout these magazines, and perhaps, therefore, whiteness remained the implicit understanding of femininity.

As noted by Gill-Peterson, the majority of trans women taking part in American networks of DIY hormones were lower-income women of colour, and the magazines discussed in this thesis are overwhelmingly white.¹⁷³ Those who had access to subscriptions of magazines or had the disposable income to travel to various events were more likely to have the tools to access gender-affirming care. This thesis does not aim to dismiss other voices; it simply does not have access to them. More research must be conducted on British histories of DIY hormonal intervention through other sources such as oral histories, with a focus on marginalised Black and Brown queer communities who were, based on Gill-Peterson's assertion, more likely to be conducting their own forms of DIY. Equally, whilst trans men were referenced briefly when discussing DIY healthcare in *Radical Deviance*, this thesis, and much of trans history in general, focuses on trans women. More needs to be researched on trans masculine experiences and their specific histories of DIY. From a contemporary perspective, research on histories of

¹⁷² An emphasis on social respectability became an increasing issue within the wider gay liberation movement in the 1970s and continued throughout the broader LGBTQ+ movement over the rest of the century. One notable criticism of the emerging white, middle-class respectability came from Latina transgender woman Sylvia Rivera in her speech at the 1973 Liberation Day Rally; Ruth Osorio, "Embodying Truth: Sylvia Rivera's Delivery of Parrhesia at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally," *Rhetoric Review* 36, no. 2 (2017): 151-163.

¹⁷³ Whilst there were some contributions from women of colour within *Rose's Repartee*, particularly in the contact advertisement sections which often included photographs, the majority of contributions were from an international audience rather than from the UK. One example of a British contribution includes a photo feature article from a reader named Asami who described herself as 'a Japanese TV living in the UK;' *Rose's Repartee* 25 (October 1996): 16, Bishopsgate Institute, London.

DIY is essential considering the current crisis of trans healthcare within the National Health Service (NHS), and the wider erosion of rights of transgender people in the UK.¹⁷⁴

Despite the various groups who require more research and representation, this thesis has utilised alternative print media to recentre trans voices and experiences in a history often focused on medical institutions. It has explored the ways that trans people represented and advocated for themselves and their communities throughout these publications, creating networks and sharing gender-affirming advice across the country. It should also be noted that the trans women contributing to these magazines identified in a variety of ways. Within the editor's section of *Rose's Repartee* in the early 1990s, Martine Rose discussed her romantic relationship with her co-editor – a 'real girl' named only as Cathy – and states on her website that she only dates women. Trans histories are so much more than histories of transition; they are histories of individuals and communities with a broad range of experiences and identities, just like their cisgender counterparts.

Moving away from British queer histories centred around London, *Rose's Repartee*, *The Tartan Skirt* and *Radical Deviance* all demonstrate how print media from Sheffield, Edinburgh and Middlesbrough contributed to the development of trans community networks across the entire country. They all offer a testament to the resilience and humour which were central to these community 'webs of care,' and the many ways that trans people supported one another on a day-to-day basis. These emerged through the platforming of physical spaces and community groups to connect across the UK, as well as the virtual spaces created on the page, where one could ask the editor for advice on hormones or makeup, communicate with others through contact advertisements and engage with advertisements or locations which provided gender-affirming products, treatments or support. Whether advertising physical spaces to meet, sharing fantasy stories of overnight transition or advising their readers on the best way to 'obtain the appearance of breasts,' these magazines highlight the integral role that trans print

¹⁷⁴ In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of a woman was based on biological sex, effectively ruling that trans women were not legally defined as women; "UK: Court Ruling Threatens Trans People," *Human Rights Watch*, May 9, 2025 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/09/uk-court-ruling-threatens-trans-people>. In 2024, the wait for the first appointment at an NHS gender identity clinic was on average five years or more; Maria Zaccaro and Jonathan Fagg, "Life on an NHS Transgender Waiting List," *BBC News*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-68588724>. For more on recent difficulties in accessing gender-affirming care in the UK see; Talen Wright et al., "Accessing and Utilising Gender-affirming Healthcare in England and Wales: Trans and Non-Binary People's Accounts of Navigating Gender Identity Clinics," *BMC Health Services Research* 21, no. 609 (2021): 1-11.

media played in creating physical and virtual community spaces and transferring gender-affirming advice in 1980s and 1990s Britain.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Magazines

The Tartan Skirt

Volume 1, Issue 2. October 1984. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Issue 11. July 1985. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Volume 2, Issue 4. January 1986. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Volume 3, Issue 1. January 1987. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Volume 5, Issue 1. January 1989. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Issue 6. October/November 1989. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

New Series, Issue 6. April 1993. Digital Transgender Archive.

Issue 8. October 1993. Digital Transgender Archive.

Issue 10. April 1994. Digital Transgender Archive.

Issue 11. July 1994. Digital Transgender Archive.

Issue 12. October 1994. Digital Transgender Archive.

Issue 13. January 1995. Digital Transgender Archive.

<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>

Volume 7, Issue 5. Winter 1999. Glasgow Women's Library.

Rose's Repartee. Bishopsgate Institute, London.

Issue 1, September 1989.

Issue 4, June 1990.

Issue 5, October 1990.

Issue 6, January 1991.

Issue 7, April 1991.

Issue 9, October 1991.

Issue 10, January 1992.

Issue 13, October 1992.

Issue 15, July 1993.

Issue 16, November 1993.

Issue 18, June 1994.

Issue 19, November 1994.

Issue 21, June 1995.

Issue 25, October 1996.

Radical Deviance. Bishopsgate Institute, London.
Volume 1, Issue 1. March 1996.

Articles and other written publications

AEGIS in *Chrysalis: The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities* 2, no. 2 (1995). Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

Boys Own / Boys Own Newsletter, 1991-2014. London, United Kingdom. Hall-Carpenter Archives, London.

Boys Will Be Boys, 1992-1994. Sydney, Australia. Digital Transgender Archive.

“Changes All Round for City Venues Old and New.” *Gay Scotland* 95, August 1995. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

FTM Newsletter, 1987-2008. Bay Area, United States. Digital Transgender Archive.

Taylor, Simon. “Obituary: Ruby Todd and Russell Fox.” *Gay Scotland* 32, March-April 1987. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

The Glad Rag, 1982-1992. London, United Kingdom. Bishopsgate Institute, London.

Todd, Ruby. “The Scottish Transvestite/Transsexual Group.” *Gay Scotland* 18, January 1985. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

“Transgender Mag Makes Comeback.” *Gay Scotland* 134, December 1998. LGBT Magazine Archive.

Roberts, JoAnn. “Who’s Who and Resource Guide to the International Transgender Community.” Creative Design Services, King of Prussia, PA, 1994. MS Transgender San Francisco Collection Box 2, Folder 3. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Historical Society. Gale Archives of Sexuality and Gender.

Websites

“About me: Martine Rose.” Martine Rose. Accessed 14 April, 2025. <https://www.roses-repartee.uk/index.php/general/about-martine>.

Dodds, Io. “‘Never Ask Permission’: How Two Trans Women Ran a Legendary Underground Surgical Clinic in a Rural Tractor Barn.” *The Independent*, July 3, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/trans-history-underground-surgical-clinic-b2114777.html>.

“The Glad Rag.” Yvonne Sinclair. Accessed 6 May, 2025. <https://yvonnesinclair.co.uk/pages/The%20Glad%20Rag.html>.

Memoir

Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. La Vergne: Columbia Press, 1998.

Sullivan, Lou. *We both laughed in pleasure: The selected diaries of Lou Sullivan*, edited by Ellis Martin and Zach Ozma. La Vergne: Nightboat Books, 2019.

Secondary Literature

Atton, Chris. "Introduction: Problems and Positions in Alternative and Community Media." In *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*, edited by Chris Atton, 1-18. London: Routledge, 2015.

Beischel, Will, Stéphanie Gauvin, and Sara van Anders. "'A Little Shiny Gender Breakthrough': Community Understandings of Gender Euphoria." *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, no.3 (2022): 274-294.

Benjamin, Harry. *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: The Julian Press, 1966.

Burns, Christine. "Is There Anyone Else Like Me?." In *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*, edited by Christine Burns, 23-38. London: Unbound, 2018.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. 10th anniversary ed. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Bychowski M. W., Howard Chiang, Jack Halberstam, Jacob Lau, Kathleen P. Long, Marcia Ochoa and C. Riley Snorton. "'Trans*historicalities': A Roundtable Discussion." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018): 658–85.

Caslin, Sam. "Trans Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, c.1970-1980." *Gender & History* (2024): 1-16.

Chu, Andrea Long and Emmett Harsin Drager. "After Trans Studies." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6, no.1 (2019): 103-116.

Coleman, Eli, and Jessie V. Ford. "A Brief History of Sexology and Lessons Learned." *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 21, no.10 (2024): 835-838.

Cook, Matt and Alison Oram. *Queer Beyond London*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. *Histories of the Transgender Child*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. Review of *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender*, by Stef M. Shuster. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 96, no.1 (2022): 143-144.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. "Doctors Who? Radical Lessons from the History of DIY Transition." *The Baffler* no.65 (October 2022): 1-14. <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/doctors-who-gill-peterson>.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. "Gender Underground: A Trans History of Do-It-Yourself." Radcliffe Fellow's Presentation, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, October 25, 2023, <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/event/2023-jules-gill-peterson-fellow-presentation-virtual>.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. *A Short History of Trans Misogyny*. New York: Verso, 2024.

Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Die Transvetiten*. Berlin: Alfred, 1910.

Houlbrook, Matt. *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Joyce, Simon. "Two Women Walk into a Theatre Bathroom: The Fanny and Stella Trials as Trans Narrative." *Victorian Review* 44, no. 1 (2018): 83-98.

Kane-Galbraith, Adrian. "Male Breadwinners of "Doubtful Sex": Trans Men and the Welfare State, 1954-1970." In *Men and Masculinities in Modern Britain: A History for the Present*, edited by Matt Houlbrook, Katie Jones, and Ben Mechen, 49-66. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024.

Kohn, Grace, Katherine Rodriguez, and Alexander Pastuszek. "The History of Estrogen Therapy." *Sexual Medicine Reviews* 7, no.3 (2019): 416-421.

Laing, Mary, Del Campbell, Matthew Jones, and Angelika Strohmayr. "Trans Sex Workers in the UK: Security, Services and Safety." In *Policing the Sex Industry*, edited by Teela Sanders and Mary Laing, 39-53. London: Routledge, 2017.

Lemisch, Jesse. "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up." In *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, edited by Barton J. Bernstein, 3-45. New York: Pantheon, 1968.

Linander, Ida, Isabel Goicolea, Erika Alm, Anne Hammarström, and Lisa Harryson. "(Un)safe Spaces, Affective Labour and Perceived Health Among People with Trans Experience in Sweden." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 21, no. 8 (2019): 914-28.

Lorimer, Stuart. "1966 and All That: The History of Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic." In *Trans Britain*, edited by Christine Burns, 51- 67. London: Unbound, 2018.

Loughran, Tracey. "Sex, Relationships and 'Everyday Psychology' on British Magazine Problem Pages, c.1960-1990." *Medical Humanities* 49, no.2 (2023): 203-213.

Malatino, Hil. *Trans Care*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

Marks, Dustin H., Dina Hagigeorges, Athena J. Manatis-Lornell, Erica Dommasch and Maryanne M. Senna. "Excess Hair, Hair Removal Methods, and Barriers to Care in Gender Minority Patients." *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology* 19, no.6 (2020): 1494-1498.

McCann, Hannah. "'Helps me feel more like myself:' Navigating Bodies, Emotions and Identity in Australian Queer Salons." *Gender, Place & Culture* 31, no.9 (2022): 1274-1292.

McKenna, Neil. *Fanny and Stella: The Young Men Who Shocked Victorian England*. London: Faber and Faber, 2013.

Meek, Jeffrey. *Queer Trade, Sex and Society: Male Prostitution and the War on Homosexuality in Interwar Scotland*. London: Routledge, 2023.

Meyerowitz, Joanne. *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Moran, Joe. "Childhood Sexuality and Education: The Case of Section 28." *Sexualities* 4, no.1 (2001): 73-89.

Mowat, Chris, Joanna de Groot, and Maroula Perisanidi. "Historicising Trans Pasts: An Introduction." *Gender & History* 36, no.1 (2024): 3-13.

Nash, Adrienne. "The Doctor Won't See You Now." In *Trans Britain: Our Long Journey from the Shadows*, edited by Christine Burns, 39-50. London: Unbound, 2018.

Neves, Marco, Sofia Silva, and Carolina Bozzi. "Interactions to Be: The Case of Speculative Interactive Print Media." In *Developments in Design Research and Practice II*, edited by Emilia Duarte and Annalisa Di Roma, 416-430. Cham: Springer, 2023.

Osorio, Ruth. "Embodying Truth: Sylvia Rivera's Delivery of Parrhesia at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally." *Rhetoric Review* 36, no. 2 (2017): 151-163.
Playdon, Zoë. *The Hidden Case of Ewan Forbes*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

Playdon, Zoë. "Gender Identity Clinics: Genesis and Unoriginal Sin." *Trans Actual*. March 16, 2022. <https://www.transactual.org.uk/blog/gender-identity-clinics-genesis>.

Plemons, Eric. *The Look of a Woman: Facial Feminization Surgery and the Aims of Trans Medicine*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2017.

Rachlin, Katherine. "Medical Transition without Social Transition: Expanding Options for Privately Gendered Bodies." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2018): 228-244.

Rooke, Alison. "Trans Youth, Science and Art: Creating (Trans) Gendered Space." *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 5 (2010): 655-672.

Rotondi Nooshin Khobzi, Greta Bauer, Kyle Scanlon, Matthias Kaay, Robb Travers, and Anna Travers. "Nonprescribed Hormone Use and Self-Performed Surgeries: "Do-It-Yourself" Transitions in Transgender Communities in Ontario, Canada." *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no.10 (2013): 1830-1836.

Rutherford, Samuel. "Approaches to Queer and Trans Histories." University of Glasgow (2024): 1-16.

Sevelius, Jae M. "Gender Affirmation: A Framework for Conceptualising Risk Behaviour among Transgender Women of Color." *Sex Roles* 68 no.11-12 (2013): 675-689.

Shield, Andrew DJ. *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution: Perceptions and Participation in Northwest Europe*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Shield, Andrew DJ. "Queer Migration and Digital Media." In *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021: 1-16.

Shuster, Stef M. *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender*. New York: New York University Press, 2021.

Steinbock, Eliza. "The Early 1990s and Its Afterlives: Transgender Nation Sociality in Digital Activism." *Social Media and Society* 5, no. 4 (2019): 1-12.

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2008.

Stryker, Susan. "Introduction: Trans* Studies Now." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (2020): 299-305.

Szulc, Lukasz. *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland: Cross-Border Flows in Gay and Lesbian Magazines*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Revised ed. London: Pelican Books, 1968.

"UK: Court Ruling Threatens Trans People." *Human Rights Watch*, May 9, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/09/uk-court-ruling-threatens-trans-people>.

Velocci, Beans. "Standards of Care: Uncertainty and Risk in Harry Benjamin's Transsexual Classifications." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2021): 462 - 480.

Vicente, Marta V. "The Medicalization of the Transsexual: Patient-Physician Narratives in the First Half of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 76, no.4 (2021): 392-416.

Vicente, Marta V. "Transgender: A Useful Category? Or, How the Historical Study of "Transsexual" and "Transvestite" Can Help Us Rethink "Transgender" as a Category." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (2021): 426-442.

Welty, Heather. "'Creating Ourselves:' A Qualitative Analysis of DIY HRT Practices in Nonbinary Adults." *Social Science & Medicine* 373 (2025): 1-8.

Wiegand, Aaron. "Barred from Transition: The Gatekeeping of Gender-Affirming Care during the Gender Clinic Era." *Intersect* 15, no. 1 (2021): 1-11.

Wright, Talen, Emily Jay Nicholls, Alison J Rodger, Fiona M Burns, Peter Weatherburn, Roger Peabody, Leanne McCabe, Aedan Wolton, Mitzy Gafos and T Charles Witzel. "Accessing and Utilising Gender-affirming Healthcare in England and Wales: Trans and Non-Binary People's Accounts of Navigating Gender Identity Clinics." *BMC Health Services Research* 21, no. 609 (2021): 1-11.

Zaccaro, Maria, and Jonathan Fagg. "Life on an NHS Transgender Waiting List." *BBC News*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-68588724>.