



Oral History Project Interview Transcription

Interviewer: Heather/Female

Interviewee: Ludo Foster/Trans masculine

Date of Interview: 12/12/2012

Track Information: Two tracks

Topics: Identity, living in Brighton, trans gender, spaces– differences and comfortable or disconfor in them, relationships, politics, discrimination, language

Start of interview (no times given)

Heather: Thank you for coming here Ludo and having the interview

Ludo: That's okay

Heather: My name is Heather December 12th 2012 and I'm interviewing , if you want to just say your name?

Ludo: umm, Yes my name is Ludo Foster

Heather: **How old your Ludo?**

Ludo: I'm 37 years, getting on a bit (laugh)

Heather: **How do you identity? Do you identity as queer?**

Ludo: umm Yes , I identity as gender queer, I suppose, mmm in my gender expression and on a trans–masculine spectrum

Heather: Okay great. **Where are you from originally?**

Ludo: I'm from south wales from a small valley town, in south wales

H: and **ummm how would you identity your class to be?**

L: ummm, working class, I suppose, I would say

H: we are just going to go through all these ticks of the boxes, **how would identity as your ethnicity?**

L: I usually just put mixed other, because it kind of leaves... because I think these forms, I don't know, leaves it ambiguous I guess, mixed other.

H: **Would you identity with any religion?**

L: I usually say spiritual, I know that's quite open but ummm I was brought up kind of church of England, very spiritually open with Buddhist sympathises.

H: Occupation?

L: I would say academic at the moment.

H: You are studying for your PhD?

L: Yes phd, gender studies

H: How long ago did you come to Brighton?

L: It was a while ago, trying think how long it has been, about three years ago, I suppose, how time has flown.

H: So you were 34 when you came?

L: 34, oh that's quite frightening (heather laughs), I love it actually before that I lived in Winchester, flow about the UK a bit but I've settled in Brighton, or in Hove should I say

H: Why did you come to Brighton?

L: I applied to come on this course and I got accepted , but umm the thought of Brighton appealed to me so getting accepted on this course, it's quite well respected and great for gender studies, was just really an excuse really to move down here and before I came down to look somewhere to live I had never been here, it was all new to me it was winter so not the best introduction you know (Heather laughs), couldn't go down to the beach, so that was my little introduction to the place and doing a part time PhD.

H: What does being 'queer in Brighton' what does that mean to you?

L: Its quite interesting I suppose, urrr people think of Brighton as the queer or gay capital in the UK this is what I would tell people, and people immediately think that anyway, so what does it mean, I'm not exactly sure, what it means, I suppose you would think to be part of a kind of community to be somewhere you can live ummmm sort of umm differently to other parts of the country you do notice a difference you know, seems to more of openness , you annoy the people, its probably I assume it's the same in London, but certainly not so much in small towns or small cities you don't see same couples holding hands or people you know ummm kind of obvious queerness so I guess there is a certain amount of freedom, a certain amount of tolerance, ummm it is not perfect but umm, it is quite a good place to live if you do identity in a queer way, there are things available and kind of more opportunities, you know so if you, certainly if you are in this bubble in the University of that kind of queer academia, it can mean many things, I think depending on who you are and how you are living, many people may come it's so well know and for it historically, its queer history, it's quite strange to describe the place to people of other countries who don't know of it, I'm not sure about you, did you know (Heather: yeah) of the reputation so to speak, I don't know if that is enough but that is what it means to me I guess a certain level of tolerance, but depending on who you are, you know it probably isn't ideal but it is close to it, good place to be

H: Thank you. If someone asked you about your identity or how you identify how would you explain that in one sentence? Or a couple sentences?

L: Umm, having kind of thought about, it's very fluid actually, but I say gender queer, trans-masculine is what I say now if people want to know, just a very fluid kind of

identity, I am aware of the the changeability, I am quite accepting of that, very open actually, and potentially this flow with it, I am that is how I identity, certainly is not a fixed identity but umm close to the transgender queer community

H: Great, some of the themes the... is interested in talking about is place and culture, so one of the questions is, what are the differences, what do you think the differences is between your sort of a day life and night life in Brighton?

L: Quite a big difference, I suppose, it is a very social place, I think Brighton in general it has changed actually over time, you discover places to go, I went to th-the Marlborough pub, I found that somewhere to be sort of friendly open kind of place, I am hoping to discover queer friendly places, you know not so segregated in a way and trans-friendly places and there aren't so many, in a way, even in a place like Brighton and maybe the country in general, yeah so what was the question, sorry can you go back to the question?

H: Yeah, yeah sure so what were the differences between your day life and night life?

L: Day life academia, a lot of study, kind of peaceful got into mediation things like that, so there is a focus to the daytime, and if I am thinking night time I am thinking social or a different kind of socialising I-I-I sort of associate that with music with film and a different kind of energy level just a more, quite a solidarity life, I think, an academic, the poor academic, but it is I quite like the contrast between the social and that more peaceful, reflective that would be the difference the different pace, I think then it depends as well, you could be living a very social life even as an academic, every day of the week but I try to have a little bit of balance to do as much as I can, just to keep me focused on my work on my work, that will be the difference for me and I live a little way out, even of the centre of Brighton you got the city centre but lots of small kind of communities but I live in hove which is a completely different pace actually, its slower, this of one the things I like about it actually, I kind of suits me in that I drive it's great for getting round and parking and I see Brighton as a sort of almost for me more of a summer place, somewhere I associate with going down to the beach, walking round a lot more, getting the bus and in the winter going there to go to pubs and um-um somewhere called the cowley club, which is umm a cool little venue that does seem to be exclusive of um, different identities um or it does like that closest things we have got in Brighton we have got to this kind of thing and it does just depend on what you want for the night life, you have got the big kind of clubs like revenge and all that kind of stuff there is definitely a different kind of pace between the day and the night

H: During your daytime and your work you are quite unique in that your work is wrapped up in your identity (Ludo: yes, yes)so inevitably you are out at work

L: Yes I think you have got the luxury, out in the sense people are aware of your gender and sort of sexual identity, I think you have that got that luxury is this kind of little academic world, people as well for instance one ummm one of the big things for me this year was that I changed my name by depoll, that was noted result of that was that it seemed to flag up to some people they started to ask about pronoun preferences in this little academic world not something you would everywhere, so I am aware of that difference between the slightly closeted comfort academic world to the reality to misgendered in daily life, that can be quite difficult so I am sort of learning to umm negotiate that, I suppose, the madams and Mrses and whatever and you all these things intersect so it is very relevant that you have mentioned race, class actually all these things

connect and if you identify as maybe more on masculine spectrum or as masculine there is also an age thing looking younger or are presented as younger, possibly quite considerably younger than you are so there is also that strange space to negotiate as well and those presumptions you know, which can be interesting.

H: So if you are someone who is perceived as a female, a masculine female, there is presumption about your age?

L: Or maybe you are dressed up in an ambiguous way people are not hearing your voice and presume you are teenage boy and that does happen, and occasionally, very occasionally, and umm are many different facets, and umm I'm not sure about the masculine woman sort of identity but umm I have not thought of myself of people seeing me in that kind of way like I guess they have actually and will do, I guess it really depends people tend to be quite polite or I have not really had a lot of, really sort of, you know negativity or blatant negativity but that would be my personal experience, I do not think that is true of everyone, certainly not, certainly for me this trans-masculine gender queer identity, I prefer to be seen as more male but I realise at the same time that things such as voice and height and size ummm these are kind of feminine markers, quite often not always, so there is that having to umm build up a certain kind of tolerance people making these kind of assumptions which can be, even with my name for instance, within a family setting people can be great they can try to remember but they don't always and may be have use my old name and you decide whether it is a personal thing or it is just a mistake that anyone could make and not made in a hurtful, purposeful way so I am negotiating this kind of personal spaces and it's not a continual compromise but it just having to maybe be a bit more understanding and sometimes think of that feeling of being ahead of your time, I know that may seem a bit arrogant it in all kind of ways thinking that people may get this but not yet, it may be a long wait but umm yeah so

H: Thank you. Let's see, so you talked about some of the spaces you feel comfortable in (Luton: yes) you mentioned there are few spaces that transgendered feel comfortable and safe in do you want to talk some more about those spaces and what makes them unique?

L: Yes, they are quite rare actually as well even in a city like Brighton, ummm for instance things like the public restrooms or bathrooms, toilets that is a big issue and even within an academic setting urrh there still isn't often an option for a gender neutral space for instance and if you are unpassable in the sense you don't necessarily look male or female depending on who you are or what you are or what you hope you are embodying but not necessarily it can be quite difficult, it is not always safe to go into certain spaces if you don't look like you belong there, it could be awkward, it could be embarrassing, it could be threatening ummm I think something that is unique about, say the Cowley Club, and that doesn't actually have neutral toilets, which there are other spaces that do, what is unique about that I think is that it is open minded people don't seem to care which one you use, it feels just because of the ethos of the place, ideally it sort of to be... people, people that will get that there is many spaces where you will not get that, buying clothes is another kind of issue you will get that and changing rooms and gendered changing rooms and anything actually that is irreverently gendered can be really awkward but I think it is possible to find, sometimes you have to put yourself out there a little to find these spaces even in everyday practical situations say medical situations ummm with the doctors I have had to change my name there and they usually put your name up on a big sign with flashing lights and umm kind of and it's usually Mr or Mrs whatever I have

changed my title mx which is a gender neutral title, mixer is how I think it is pronounced, I tend to say m-x and often it can be quite difficult to get these changed on bureaucratic forms and medical forms but after quite a lot of perseverance they have changed it and it says mx Ludo Foster and maybe someone else goes in they have heard of this and it won't be so strange so sometimes you have got to and it's not always easy and not everyone is in such a position, in a privileged position, where they can go in and fight their corner so that I think is definitely a factor and I thinking of spaces that aren't so safe they recently had a night called, what was that night called it was a takeover, take back the night I think it was called and there was some trans exclusive in that and I think that's also an issue, particularly of trans women, can be really sensitive to that that's one of the biggest issues in a way of attacks, even in places like Brighton, on trans women but in general you can feel quite, there is a level of vulnerability, you know yet again that can be tied in with an ambiguity, I have got a friend who I was talking to just recently they have actually umm they identify as male for many years they have gone through an umm some kind of a process and they identity as male and they as a result look a lot younger than they are actually, then masculinity sort of umm sort of understood and they were saying during the beginning of their transition they would go out socially and all of sudden teenage boys would come up to them and start talking aggressive as if they were talking to another adolescent boy so they can maybe these different, I have not experienced that luckily yet, there can be these different little subtle levels of, I don't know if it is danger or threat of maybe being mistaken for something and sort of so they be them kinds of , so maybe any space where you can feel comfortable, I don't feel quite so comfortable, I did have sort of at one point as I said there is a fluidity to my identity like sort of trans guise or gender queer people I would be relatable but certainly not all a bit like connecting myself to a lesbian identity so maybe you will inhabit those kind of spaces but they will start to feel differently as your identity kind of umm I won't say changes but as you start to identifying in a different way umm in more masculine way, because there can be this segregation with genders you know that have, for all kinds of reasons but umm that can be and I know other people have said to me that they can sometimes feel pushed out of spaces they would still like to inhabit but now they are seen differently especially if they have taken hormones for instance and umm yes so I think this is one of the reasons if i can find a space that is gender queer this is where I would feel more comfortable but they are really few and far between as far as I know even in Brighton, so it is the cowley club and the Marlborough even though its known umm a pub that caters to a big lesbian cliental it is pretty inclusive they recently had a benefit some months ago for transgender ftms and umm so it is a pretty inclusive, it feels relatively comfortable but umm so

H: Umm, what about falling in love in Brighton (L: Oooo, (excited/ happy ooo) and looking for love in Brighton? that is another interesting topic in terms of talking about space (L:yes) any stories about that you want to share?

L: It is interesting it is a social city I would say it is easy to meet people in a kind of umm in that sense but often it can be difficult it just depends i guess on where you are going socially you can build up meaningful relationships and friendships you know sort of but it takes a while and I think that as well is to do with sort of how social able you are as well especially if you are new to a place umm I actually think though Brighton of all the places I have lived offers the most in the sense of opportunity for meeting many people from umm especially in the queer sense and that can often be difficult but I find I feel it was

actually easy when i was identifying as a lesbian it was easy to meet people in a strange way it is becomes a whole other issue when especially when you are between I see myself not necessarily between at a point where you are sort of exploring your gender identity and kind of identifying on that trans masculine spectrum and you at a stage where it is not necessarily new to you but you are kind of processes all that it can be difficult to get other people in a romantic sense as well to understand it can seem like a very complicated identity and a sort of and so that and just the general meeting people can be quite, I have known other sort of trans guys said that you know what do you tell people how do you want them to see you people will often project on to you lesbian identity and that can be quite difficult if that is not how you see yourself you know so umm so meeting people it will be great actually if they were more spaces in general it's probably an issue all over the country I imagine even in a city like London that can be quite difficult there are kind of groups where people can met know there is a bisexual kind of meeting group for instance and certainly plenty of social places but I not sure if pubs and clubs are a great place to you know if you are trying to get to know someone in depth there are things like dating websites I actually when I was identifying as lesbian I did met a few people there is a website called gay dar girls that was quite useful but there isn't anything really like that for the trans people you know but umm I find that the internet is still a kind of useful kind of quite private meeting space on things like that. I am not sure on the kind of falling in love you know sort of I have certainly met people since I have been here and had romantic interests with people but umm I have not found it easy necessarily to build anything lasting at this point but I think there is certainly a lot of opportunity in a place like Brighton sort of if you identify as queer there are more opportunities in other places but I still think online is quite often quite a safe place in a strange way you know depending on the groups that can often be quite a good way so ummm yes I'm sure what else to say on that

H: Yeah, great, Thank you. Umm, how have you been political in Brighton I think this can wraps up what we have been talking about already in terms of gender of health, employment, feminism.

L: I wish I had been more overtly political actually but maybe I can change that I have never been one to march and things, you know and one of the things that I noticed I am not really done a lot was on Brighton pride but I noticed this year it wasn't very, and maybe for quite a time now, cynical about it that it doesn't, I think my political of attitude extends to more global concerns than are reflected in something like pride for instance umm Brighton pride, I wouldn't say about the other prides but umm I wish I had been maybe in some ways more involved I am not comfortable with the idea of marching protesting in that sense I have a lot of friends that do that but that just isn't umm politically I-I just on a personal level I vote and is something I also like to do I feel it is really important to use that vote even if there is a lack of choice even if you decide to ruin, put a protest on the thing, but to get heard in some way and on a small level I guess I just try to challenge things again in the personal sense by trying embody sort of what I believe in trying to live that as I described with the doctors just informing them of this gender neutral word, doing the same with the banks ummmm I suppose this is maybe a privilege and luxury as well because I know some people live on a stealth life which is they present, particularly in the trans community this relevant if they are taking hormones maybe don't tell anyone they what is classified as anything other than male in the world ummm I don't at the moment have the privilege I think I have lost my train of

thought but I do sort of have the privilege to engage with institutions have the luxury of family for instance a lot of people don't have it I am so aware it is a luxury that my family are very accepting, my mother is religious nut she has also been incredibly open and accepting sort of LGBTQ rights even when others around her would be quite anti that she always had an attitude of take people as you find them which comes from her upbringing as well which is pretty unique actually and I am aware of that coming from this working class background and in south wales I think that has allowed to umm to be able to be open with people about my gender identity choosing my moments obviously some people you think of safety personal safety but the most part I am able to be open with people when I need to be and open with my family so ummm but i am aware that certainly isn't typical a lot of people, yes so politically I kind of wish I could get more involved in global things but I suppose I am doing that in small ways by my write in, what I am putting out there in my thesis which is ground in my own in some of my own experience and also in my political viewpoint and religious viewpoints also I am able to take that with to conferences and I have been lucky enough to attend a few conferences and workshops where I have met people in a more global international setting in Europe people from all over the world and I have been able to engage more widely with what is happening you know and kind of get outside, this for me is the positive side of politics I tend to shy away from, not shy away but purposefully, very cynical about the kind of umm the media in general, the mainstream media I am quite choosey sort of engage with when it comes to stories and sort of what is being flagged up often very cynical and sceptical about these things and try to seek out and become more informed about the wider picture actually because I was brought up with this, without this I wasn't brought up with such a global view of things you know, before the age of the internet and this kind of stuff it is encouraged I assume a lot more in schools and stuff these days but even saying that I come from a very strongly socialist background, small town in south wales ummm the politician Bevan came from there, always in my family we were labour voters at least my grandfather we were always made very aware we had the pride of, still pretty proud, that the health service, the nhs started in this small town, a working class guy Bevan umm it was his concept as far as I know and he grew up not far away from, this was something I grew up knowing about umm in the 1980s I saw that sort of fallout when i was in school of the miners' strike with Thatcher years so I was aware of a lot of those changed even if I didn't understand them I knew they were peoples fathers out of work so umm I come from a sort of single parent family brought up by my mother there were three of us so politically that has informed my attitude these are the kind of things that stay with me now but the sense of actually going out there and that is something I have not yet done but umm I think something will, I would look forward to maybe, a had a friend who recently at the the take back of the night gave them a short talk about what it is like to be trans in that situation, that encouraged me maybe if I get the opportunity thing like that to get involved but I suppose you know I am learning and growing and changing all the time I guess but I have this quite strong it's interesting now that I talk about it I have this quite strong socialist working class upbringing kind of informs a lot of things even when I am not conscience of that it is there.

H: Great, thank you. And you were talking a little bit about maybe not discrimination but the challenges of trans within Brighton ummm but would you describe or would you have any examples or have you experience any discrimination because you identify as queer or trans or gender queer?

L: Well, I subtle things mispronouncing you know I have not had a huge amount this is my own personal experience of homophobia or queerphobia or transphobia I have not experienced sort of umm huge amount in Brighton I think that would be different in my small town in south wales I remember growing up for instance and you would never it was very unusual to hear about a trans person at all and there was a story in our local paper about a trans woman in the next town, who this became a big story they were working as a taxi driver and because they had been in the paper or because they were noticeable in some way maybe in their presentation they did receive a lot of, in this small town, negativity, this would have been about 15 years ago now and they would eventually forced to move from the town and I remember at the time because it's taken me quite a long time to sort of negotiate my own sort of identity at the time I wasn't sort of I was a lot younger than and thinking that must be really hard but not connecting myself but growing up certainly in the small town as a child because I was androgynous I was a shortie dressed in a stereotypical boyish style I did get quite a lot of teasing, name-calling and sort of which I found very embarrassing at the time, I didn't have anything to judge it against and ummm but since I have been in Brighton actually that has been my personal experience I have not had apart from the the subtle things the mispronouncing, the difficulty in finding spaces and bathrooms and things like that never anything overt but I wouldn't know if that is typical maybe that is just the circles I have moved in and the places I have been too and the people around me I have got my group of friends if they don't always get it they are quite understanding so I know that isn't always the case for people this has been my experience and I try to keep safe as I can I have not put myself in any situation I might feel gone into certain pubs or clubs maybe wouldn't be as accepting so that has been my personal experience

H: **And how do you feel language is important your time in Brighton how have you changed your language to help you identify or the way you speak about queer or identity.**

L: Yeah I think a lot of that has been informed by the course and the research generally just naturally I feel language within the queer community does change a lot anyway and that seems to be a big issue there can be an tolerance or a lack of understanding of people who do not necessarily have that awareness for instance someone said to me the other day they didn't know what cisgendered meant that is not unusual I think people can forgot this can be quite exclusive, it's almost like being part of a clique where people will use these terms and that can be a privilege thing and it can make some people feel excluded I have access to this terms and have to have access because of what I am writing so certainly a lot of the umm as well as identifying as gender queer for me is something I have since I moved to Brighton I guess I sort of in Winchester I have sort of cemented that more, it has become more cemented since I have lived in Brighton I have kind of out that out there more and told people and obviously not a lot of people have heard of that term but you can explain to people and this is why I say trans masculine and trans masculine as well because there are so many different ways of identifying even within sort of umm within female to male, male to female, I suppose you judge he situation sometimes maybe you want to keep things simple so maybe sometimes you might say trans gender to someone who would not necessarily understand things like gender queer but certainly my use of language on that sense has changed I did always use been very comfortable with the term queer so i use that most of the time actually and umm so use I would say there has been some change but just in a natural that's been informed by reading quite a bit but being aware these things are really changeable but

umm so i think i don't know if Brighton has particular had that effect on it though my use of umm possible you know maybe going to trans groups you know you more aware of certain expressions and things like that and ummm you kind of if you are comfortable with these word you kind of adopt them there is a certain you forgot in a way these are not terms people would be a aware of so umm i would say yes i don't know if that is directly related to being in Brighton though i don't know if Brighton is a little bit more inclined to having gender neutral I know in the council there are gender neutral forms and things like that which is quite unique became a bit of a national story I think and this seems to be quite unique within this country so to Brighton there maybe is some awareness and mx the gender neutral title is something I have only learnt about since being in Brighton so umm so for me this has been but I think this is quite unique to the situation in academic and moving in some sort of queer circles I know there are some people outside of that and maybe wouldn't have those words or language a lot of people maybe just think they are a nonsense anyway there is always that but umm yes so that has given me something to think about what has changed since I have been here a lot has changed actually for me personally you say language as well and this isn't something I can go into in any kind of real sense of personal knowledge but since I have been travelling and done a few of these conferences I notice in Europe anyways there is a big move regarding regardless of where you come from everyone presents their paper in English which has made me quite sensitive you know and more aware there is an arrogance and an assumption I think that everyone will speak English so you are aware of this privilege the fact that you have that I come from this south wales where there is this welsh language I don't speak it I didn't have the opportunity they teach it in schools now when i was in school they were not doing that but I am also aware it is quite difficult I started to think someone had mentioned to me something about the FTM group the fact there is a particular kind of erson there I think they were thinking racially there seemed to think there was a predominance of white people my attitude was well this is Brighton and the nature of it it is most of the population are at least identified as mostly white and umm I didn't go into the group thinking that so I didn't see things in that way but I know there is another person in the group who comes from ummm I think an Indian background and a Muslim background I know they have written some things that ummm this is how they have seem it they this quite clumsy, what I am saying is quite clumsy but it made me aware of race I suppose and everyone should have that in a sense and not just of these racial groups but in all kinds of ways maybe you can't make an assumption about who is in the group its quite tricky because I am really against this idea of tokenism but representation is very important but I think that across a wide variety of things class, race and even within race the various obviously different catorgies and inceptions within that and I am also quite aware my cultural background I come from a mixed background but very brought up with the welsh this has been my experience but I am aware many people may have not come, talking to my friends from different cultural backgrounds, they have maybe not had that experience so for them even within something like an FTM group in Brighton might be something culturally very different and maybe groups and certain groups could become exclusive if they choose to be but I am not sure exactly people find these things quite awkward I can relate to that as well I think people find discusses these things problematic awkward with all kinds of hierarchies you know I come from quite a unique position I think I was talking to someone about this in the sense of I have got my foot in a few camps so I can kind of there isn't the awkwardness if I am addressing these issues as well with people probably they are going to be probably comfortable with me whereas if this is coming from someone presenting

or seeming to be white or identifying in that way it can sometimes be awkwardness sort of you know whereas I negotiate that the sort of privilege I guess of my own up bringing it does make me aware though that all kinds of situations could be much more it goes without saying there shouldn't be people having to fight for natural inclusion and not just in a tokenistic way but in a completely umm this is one of the interesting things about the Cowley it is one of the few clubs I have been to maybe there are many I don't know where you got to be a chair on the dancefloor and that even though it is a small space you don't see that in a lot of places and umm one of the courses I have done recently is about disability sort of studies so it is kind of I have also been kind of sensitive to that but it has also made me a lot more aware of that and yes I think a lot of these things can be quite ethically seem to be difficult I am lucky in a way I have got a space I can talk about these things often times people find having these discussions difficult even within queer community so much sort of hierarchies I meant the LGBTQ community in general and certain voices that are heard obvious more than others seen in pride very much in Brighton it is obviously white male gay male which is predominating in Brighton which is the gay capital in that sense yes so it just about making and I am hoping to address some of this in my own thesis you know getting rid of some of these assumptions and you know kind of an idealist you know quite optimistic about some kind of change you know but probably going to take a long time, feel like I have gone the track a bit there

H: **What kind of change would you like to see?**

L: Oooh as I say complete inclusivity these things go without saying things like race being seen as just man made human made concept it is I find the America one drop theory one drop of black blood for instance is no different as one drop of white blood the idea of contamination through blood. I wonder I feel one of the ways people can get you know come to terms with some of these things is within these sort of maybe within I don't know maybe this is very idealistic thinking about these it's not a new thing there have also been the mixing of different kind of groups so maybe if there was more of an awareness we talk about things like hidden histories or more of an opportunity if these were no longer hidden in mainstream history so people were aware of these things it is a very powerful thing so I think these things need to change hugely in educational structures, power structures, there are so many things that these things are so ingrained within cultures as we have seen in America and I am not being blindly optimistic about Obama and all that but for instance the slight change in demographics people were quite surprised I think about Obama appealing to many different groups, that doesn't surprise me because looking at his own identity and fluidity and I know he identities mono racial way which harks back to the one drop I think people know an awareness that he is, one of the biggest ethnic group according to this new survey or consensus the half race group which has always been there but now there is a box people can tick so now people are more aware so I don't know if that will have an impact and help to make some sort of changed but this is very idealistic you know and also just looking at one thing I think but umm of thing I would change but certainly more inclusive, a more inclusive environment more representation it is quite important I suppose who you see in your box and on your screen and how you see yourself reflected this is why in trans community, for instance there is a magazine called original plumbing which is quite original is they have quite variety of trans men not the normal white trans guy which can often be the way they seem to go out of there way I that I think it is more than a tokenistic gesture but the rule and umm I hope to see more of that for my own work my thesis people looking for films,

for books, I was brought up I look at the tomboy identity most of the literature I was brought up with it was very natural this is just the way it was often the main protagonist would be a white tomboy I wasn't aware at the time but looking at it now I see and I hope there will be more of a variety of representation of genders of identities of possibilities in film and literature and reflected in the educational system very much a class based thing as well so there is a lot to be changed I think

H: **do we have time for it, you brought some things you wanted to be discussed today**

L: just a couple of little things, just personal things, obviously I have talked about these things these were important to me I never knew on my father's side, my father was ten years older than my mother and his family lived aboard and his parents past away before I was born I think because he was ten years older than my mother would have been quite elderly, I did not have grandparents, they weren't in my life and they are still to be discovered I haven't seen photographs for instance. It's not that unusual though, my mother had only met one set of grandparents because of the generation and the age she lived my grandmother was in her late thirties when she had my mother so her mother wasn't alive for very long before she passed away so my mother wasn't really brought up with her grandparents so I am lucky actually to have had the one set I did have this amazing maternal grandparents in my life as well and umm I was talking to someone recently about, at a workshop and we got talking about identities, we had a little chat and they said ooh I didn't think of that, can we press pause for a sec.

Next rack

L: I looked round for bits and pieces and looked around and I suppose there was lots of things that I could have brought with me but ummm when I did my BA honours in fine art, I enjoyed the course in general it was an amazing course it was very good it was in Herryford but I started to really enjoy, and this quite weird for a fine arts student, I started to really enjoy the written side of the course a lot of people really despised doing dissertations and essays but I started to really enjoy especially if I could incorporate my personal interests and I wrote my final dissertation in the third year about the umm musical performers I don't know if you have heard of them of the female, male impersonators which was kind of ummm it became a huge part bit of a geek you know for this kind of stuff the musical, the Victorian kind of and I got this cd, I suppose a lot of this links in, do you remember tipping the velvet and the adopation on tv as well as the book by Sarah Waters and this was music that was not in not in the programme but inspired you know ummm these are actual early recordings of some people like Vesta Tilley and some other performers Ella Shields is another one and it is pretty cool actually you can find a lot of these things online as well but you know this is quite overtly queer the kind of the way it is packaged and the agenda behind the selection of music as well you know the kind of almost and some of the song lyrics are quite amusing and they have even got a little booklet inside it kind of and actually it kind of links to Brighton in some way because if you go to the hove seafront there are some big old houses an Italian restaurant that does ice cream and things like that and nearby one of the old houses has a blue plank and it says that Vesta Tilley lived there at a certain point that is quite a nice connection I think a lot of these people would have with Brighton any just for the nature of the place the first song on here is brilliant it's one of my favourites of this kind you have to hear it in a way to get it, it's called masculine women feminine men and the lyrics go "masculine women feminine men who is the rooster who is the hen it is hard to tell

them apart today” and it kind of goes on and on about you know, that was 1926 that was, so it shows there was always this kind of gender play and kind of a camp sensibility as well you know interesting to find these are not all the male impersonators actually some of them were sort of make performers who maybe had a camp sensibility or some that performed in drag as well there is some that had a connection to Brighton actually if I can there was a really good play at the Marlborough under the pink fringe or the Brighton fringe and I can’t remember the name but it is a Brighton based author who has also done a one man play where they sort of reference some of these performers Douglas Bing was the name and he was apparently very camp umm sort of entertainer.

H: should really get involved with queer Brighton because the event I first went to of theirs was a local performer that dresses in drag

L: Maybe this is the thing (H: and sings this song) I think this is the thing I went to see actually it had the history didn’t (H: I’m not really sure how that person identifies but it was really quite lovely and refreshing) definitely and kind of humorous reminds you that people were going and this is kind of the appeal of some of this even who knows historically, given the historical context how they would have identified, I know Vesta Tilley at least in public she identified as a female she was married she was part of the establishment become a lady, her husband was lord something and umm so she was hugely part of the establishment but there certainly was this undercurrent especially on a class thing as well there was a performer called Hetty King whereas Vesta Tilley would maybe do the more middle class chap about town and young and about town Hetty King was the sort of sailor and working class guy and had all the mannerisms and then you had a camp sort of performer like this Fred Barnes, I think he, well I was obsessed with all these people at one point

H: **When you say camp, camp what do you mean?**

L: I mean camp in the sense that he was actually inspired by Vesta Tilley and I would have said he was in the tradition, there seems to be a little bit of a tradition sort of the maternay idol I suppose you know in this country he was a welsh performer called umm oh what was his name Ivan o’vlo and they named the Ivan O’vlo awards after him he was an maternay idol in that he had a lot of female fans very handsome but in his private life he was a gay man and umm it was the same with this so that kind of sensibility came through so it like kind of maternay idol so I mean camp maybe not in an overt way but he inspired I think in Vesta Tilley so I think there was a lot of interest in gender kind of umm he was almost doing an impersonation of a male impersonator you know in a strange kind of way but the sound of it as I have never seen footage of him going by the descriptions and umm there was also this Douglas Bing and there is not a picture of him in here but he was in this play and I think he use to dress in drag and the songs are overtly and if you listen to one of the songs for instance is called I am a bird and his language and his style is very much in the British camp tradition I very much thinking of, I am trying to think of people to compare him too, but umm maybe that umm Oscar Wilde, Quentin Crisp but also the kind of drag performs the kind of sensibility there is another in here what’s it called, I’m a mummy an old Egyptian Queen he was quite overt I think he his kind of camp which I think has always been a whole part the British entertainment world anyway loved and been very comfortable with these types of performers this is why I thought the male impersonator were quite interesting because even though we still find a lot of the drag queens and the very famous female impersonators these days and I

remember growing up these some of these people on TV and things like that, the male impersonator despaired it wasn't a figure you would see, we have got drag kings now but this male impersonator was a mainstream entertainer and that seemed to disappear totally you don't hear people in mainstream sense going let's go, unless maybe panto which a lot of these people, which is again very British, the principal boy, dressing as peter pan and things like that so yeah this cd basically umm it kind of connects with this fascination I had and dissertation and my own interest in, I am very interested in this kind of dandyish quality that I guess these performer conveyed and umm just find them..

H: **And when did you sort of get involved in this as an interest?**

L: It was quite a while ago actually so it would be some years ago now maybe eight to ten years ago but it was an on-going sort of interest that tied in this dissertation and umm but focussing particularly the whole musical thing was of interest but especially these performers had a particular interest and certainly some of these songs are umm ooh there is another one on here as well see if I can find it Burlington Bertie from Bow which was actually performed by Ella Shields who has a very androgeous voice if you could listen to her and you can actually see there is a clip of Ella Shields Performing of that on YouTube because she was one of the performer that umm was still doing their thing, a lot of these people kind of just about missed the boat when it came to film and things like that they were more recorded artist but umm there is a clip of this Burlington Bertie from Bow and that became it is just quite an interesting song in itself really and umm there but there is another cool one, I think Ella Shields would be my favourite really of the of these I don't know what she was an American I am saying she I am not exactly sure what she identified, she was an American entertainer and who then established themselves in this country but they were more canned in some of their songs there was another trying to find it where it was but there was another one she sang one called why did I kiss that girl and I think there was very much a more canned knowingness you know ummm you know sort of the suggestion of something queer you know which is quite interesting to find that point sort I don't know maybe you are talking 1990s something like that you know so maybe a little bit later so yeah it is just an interesting thing and the music is definitely if you have got any kind of interests I quite like those types of old recordings anyway you know that is quite cool this cd just brings it all together under a quite a cool way but urr but that was my little random, I got these in a sort personal sentimental photographs and yeah these are my major inspirations you know I said before I never knew the grandparents from father's side of family and I was brought, my mother brought us up on her own my parents were divorced and umm I was lucky enough to have these amazing grandparents who were a big part of my early life my grandfather actually past away when I was going on sixteen but my gran actually only just a few years ago actually she live to be ninety-six and that was a photograph I captured of her she loved cooking and she would have been in her nineties in this picture and she she had actually been in service domestic service and from quite a big family so she had to go out to work at a young age and she continued though she this absolute love of the domestic cooking, nurturing as well as being quite a big personality she loved urr people she loved to talk, she was very warm and very curious and very interested even when I told her I was a vegan she trying to get her head round it, trying to think of things I could have and umm yeah so I would say she was an umm this was a morning I remember she was doing something trying to think what it was like a tart with lemon curd and lemon or something like that might have been rhubarb actually, yeah a rhubarb tart and I sneaked in and took

all these photos you know sort of umm her doing what she did, her in her element and yeah there is my granddad he was massive in the sense of both him and my father actually I often think of the idea of masculinity and learn these things what does it mean to be a man and you your learn your ideas of this kind of thing for me I suppose an informative idea of that kind of thing would have been my grandfather, my father even though they were very different in so many ways they were I have realised over the last I don't know since I have been thinking about it actually that were they were quite similar their presentation quite smart quite gentlemanly you know in many ways from and my granddad anyway was from, my father I guess was from a more middle class background, whereas my granddad more of a working class yet always very umm I would say gentlemanly so this was an early idea I had about masculinity you know he loved music, he loved classical music passionate he was about his music he was always the kind of person that would write to the BBC about things you know if he was interested he would always write off for information so was a self-taught person so they mean a lot to me, someone recently, when I went to Sweden, I asked them how they identified because they had asked me the same they said they found this really cool term they related to and it was power-fem and I was thinking that is so cool that I was thinking my gran was kind of an early version of because she was she really was all those things and she has given me a love actually because even though I connect very much with a masculine side unlike my mother who was never into cooking my gran kind of installed into me this love, passion and I don't see any sort any umm I don't know what they word is I umm don't see, I see they can work quite well together you know a masculinity but also a nurturing, caring they don't seem like different things and umm or mutually exclusive so they are massive influences basically these are sentimental I don't get the chance really to show these ummm photos to people outside of the family so this was John Field, my Granddad and most people knew him as Jack and Dorothy, was Dorothy Bevan and Dorothy Field and Dolly I use to call her and umm proper wonderful pair you know that's I was very lucky actually and urrrr yeah so that's kind of the the element of the family of the family history yeah this was something I picked up in ummm when I went to another inter-gender course in somewhere called Woodtreck, is it wood-treck how you pronounce it, it is near Amsterdam, little city in the Netherlands and there is like a queer bookshop there really cool, servanabay I think it was called so if you get the, maybe you will get, the chance to go there actually you would really like it. They had these really cool things and I managed to get this James Bolding and sort of looking back and taking an interest really in his work so there is quite a cool quote "so there is never a time in the future in which we will work out our salvation the challenge is in the moment, the time is always now". I just love, sort of anything that grabs me and umm you know sort of quotes and things like that thought it was quite cool and I enjoy reading as well and exploring his work actually this has been a year actually of discovering so many cool. Something I would have liked to have brought in but it was um too big to carry, this picture that has been really important this year, as well as discovering the writer actually, someone called C.L.R. James was umm I had not known anything about him before this I should have done actually but he was a Caribbean author that umm he had written a lot about post-colonial, sort of theories, he was a Marxist, a Marxist thinker and umm he wrote many interesting things but there is this one but there is this one particular photograph often quite drawn to the human element you know and this is a black and white photograph and its really weird but he reminds me of my gran, I get a west Indies version, male version of my gran and in this particular picture he has got the white hair and that kind of and that was something that I brought that would have been a powerful picture actually

and umm yes and hopefully he will be someone I talk about within my work. with James Baldwin he has written, I discovered in my reading more about him, he had written a children's story sort of book which I knew nothing about it was in the 1970s and there is potential to maybe include this character in the book called Blinky I think which has a kind of tomboy quality it's kind of umm deceptively simple children's a story he has illustrated as well but that to me is quite interesting if there is a way to umm incorporate that character and maybe reference some of those thing. and yes I brought this as well I just thought there is a lot of films I could have brought but umm its David bowie: the man who fell to earth I like all kinds of films but this ummm there is something about this film you can go back to it, watch it many times and I suppose some of the themes in it as well you can have a different perspective on it every time you come back as well its quite seductive you know the visual style of it and umum David Bowie at that point in his career and won't say the heavy kind of stereotypical things like alienation and that kind of thing but just very interesting just very appealing it appeals to me so I don't know why I just kind of picked it up as kind of, you know quite enjoy his music as well but this is a great film and umm but for my actual PhD umm two of the films I have looked at, I am always open as well to new ideas but that umm, xxy and tomboy there is an always a kind of pace to the kind of films that appeal to me now I would say this has the same kind of linear umm I don't know, do you know the film

H: I don't know I haven't seen those

L: it's pretty, it's pretty cool actually it's it's filmed in the 1970s sort of quite fragmented and umm it is based on a novel as well, you might think it's a rock star in a film, it is going to be not so great but it seems to have been perfect for David bowtie at that point and his career and he play that part really well, maybe it wasn't too far of a stretch because he was playing that alien type figure anyway, I suppose so it wasn't too much of a stretch, it is interesting to look at it now and I have even started to think we were talking about the idea of the invisibility of whiteness, you know and this film started to make he think then it this alien character, he is an alien but more of an English man in some ways in America in some small town America so he has obviously been between all kind of things as well as being from a completely different planet. Made me think as well of this kind of idea that he is still a white man within this setting as an alien and it just made me think of the different cultural sides to this umm you could watch it from the perspective of etching it from whire masculinity and if you wanted to think about it in that kind of way different kinds of power structures and homo social kind of bonding and that kind of stuff, so there is a lot, I think there is also as well as being just an enjoyable film you can watch and enjoy the visual and umm that is it you know, this is (H: your collage) my little kind of selection of bits and pieces

H: Great, should we take a picture of it

L: Yes, okay. That like that, I am not sure how you want it

H: I think we have missed out on the daylight

L: oh, right.

H: Really lovely, ummm

[picture being taken, some mumbling, unable to make out what]

H: the lighting is a bit weird in here but I can send these to you

L: they look not too bad, they are not too bad, not too bad at all actually, I mean if you want to take another if I can position them in a ummm better camera than mine, always had problems with cameras

H: I hesitate getting pictures of you in this light, maybe if there is another time we can get pictures

Finished .