

From a Whisper to a Roar

Interview Summary	
Name: Chryssy Hunter	Date: 07.10.2019 Age: 57
Key issues: Gender. Trans issues. Online groups. Trans scene. Sparkle. Trans Pride. Feminism	
Narrative summary <p>Chryssy was brought up in conservative Hull and by the age of 13 she was beginning to <i>be</i> different, rather than just <i>thinking</i> differently, but lacked the language to articulate this. In her teens she grew her hair and started buying make up. She and her friend came out as gay to each other.</p> <p>She left home at 16 to be able to dress as she needed to and go to places like the Silhouette gay bar. She reflects on whether some of the people might have been trans, but everything was framed in terms of sexuality, not gender. She had relationships with boys and then found herself attracted to girls, but always felt herself to be an outsider amongst outsiders.</p> <p>In the early 80's she 'ran away' to Northern Ireland during the Troubles. She had been back to nightschool and got a place at Ulster University. It was a very anti-gay place, but she connected with some tough butch dykes and was confident enough to wear make up in time. However, she met a woman there, married and had children. Chryssy didn't feel marriage changed her, but parenthood did. They moved back to England but her wife took the children back to Ireland when they divorced. This was very difficult in a time before cheap travel and easy communication, never allowing as much contact with the children as she wanted.</p> <p>All this time she had a sense of searching for something, but not knowing what it was. She went to work in Slovakia . Away from expectations, she became more aware that 'there was a gender thing', though without fully understanding this.</p> <p>In '99 she went to work in the Gulf where she suddenly had access to good internet connection and found a trans community online, helping her to develop an understanding of herself. The internet was crucial and online shopping for clothes and make up was incredibly important.</p> <p>She returned to London in 2002 and decided she need to do something. She began to connect with Trans women and talks about the clubs she went to and her growing confidence. She created a shared home where she could live authentically. She went to work abroad again – in Libya and then Pyongyang, discovering that she couldn't 'put the lid back on'. When she came back to London she pursued transition, now in her 40's.</p> <p>Her political engagement was around visibility at this point, getting involved in Sparkle in Manchester, for example, though, her politics now resonate more with Trans Pride in Brighton. She talks about the pressures trans organisations are under and the Gender Recognition Act review. She also traces the progress of recent legislation and its impact and considers the evolving discourse around gender and the feminist perspective</p>	
	Length of interview: 1 hr 37 mins



Evelyn: So, here we are. This is an interview for "From a Whisper to a Roar", an oral history project conducted by Opening Doors London, and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Today is the 7th of October 2019 and I am interviewing the lovely Chryssy.

Chryssy: Hi.

Evelyn: So, Chryssy. Just can you start us off by telling us a little bit about your early life, and how you came to an understanding of who you really are, which was probably quite a journey.

Chryssy: So, I was born in 1962 in Beverley in East Yorkshire, and in my early life we moved around a lot. Essentially, from being the age of five or six, I was brought up again back in Hull. We moved back to Hull and Hull, England, but Hull in ... this is my experience, was very insular. It is a very insular town still, it's a very insular town in a very insular country, I think in the 1970s in many ways. Very white, very straight, very conservative with a small c. Hull has always returned Labour MPs, always returned Labour MPs since the second world war, but is actually still very conservative. We lived on the edge of Hull, which I'm not sure where the demarcation is, but outside of Hull always said conservative MPs. It's quite class, there is a class division there, but it's not very ... And I think it socially, it's all very conservative. It was, all very conservative.

So I grew up in a situation where our family didn't know or didn't know that we knew, or certainly didn't talk about knowing anyone that was LGBT or Q. It wasn't part of like being whatsoever. And in mass media culture of course, we have the stereotypes that we all grew up with, I think.

Evelyn: Camp comics.

Chryssy: Camp comics, drag queens, jokes about sex changes and yeah, so the usual horrible rubbish. But still, by the age of 13, 12, 13 I was starting to be different, not just think differently. I had no language to describe what I was doing. So, it wasn't that difficult in the 70s: to look at pop stars for example. I was 12 in 1974, I turned 12 in 1974 and I was obsessed with glam rock and all of the big hair and glitter, and quite rightly so, I think. I think. Yeah, absolutely.

Evelyn: Yeah, don't knock it.

Chryssy: But it's a way into something, but I wasn't quite sure what it was a way into. And so, I don't know, on my wall, I had pictures of pop stars that I had cut out of Jackie [teen girl magazine], and we lived in little, little, small houses with small gardens and people could see in. And boys at school used to say to me, "Well, we've got footballers on our walls, why have you got pop stars?" And I was like, "Well, not really." And, from the age of 13, I guess I started to grow my hair. It was all expressed quite easily in terms of alternative society because I was quite drawn to the kind of Hippy thing, which was all the long flowy feminine stuff, or at least my version of it was all long flowy and feminine stuff .

Evelyn: And feminine. Nice floral shirts and...

Chryssy: Yeah! And well, Caftans

Evelyn: Oh yeah, of course.

Chryssy: And stuff like that. And big baggy trousers and big tall, big platform shoes. The platform shoes were the perfect excuse to wear high heels, weren't they?

Evelyn: Yeah, and you haven't changed to this day.

Chryssy: No. I've come back to it actually, I'll have to say. I just bought a pair, I've just bought another pair, ooh! And so, that was what I was doing and not really knowing how that works. And I tried my sister's skirts at home and then again not really knowing, there's no obvious drive for why to do that, but it's just

something that we did, or I did, we did, I did. And I remember from being very young, much younger than that just trying on nail varnish and playing with makeup and stuff, and then being told off, of course.

Evelyn: I was going to say, did your parents... How did your parents react? They didn't like it?

Chryssy: Well, when I was a young child, it was just playing, wasn't it? And then, but obviously, somewhere along the line I internalised the fact it was bad, but that's okay. You know, there's lots internalised fear and shame for all sorts of things. And the older I got, so I got to about 15, I looked like nobody else around me. And about the age of 14 or 15, I had a friend called Mark and we came out to each other as gay. And told a few people about it, but not that many people, and certainly not our parents. And I got my ears pierced and that was awful because my mother screamed and shouted, and then I started buying makeup and I bought nail varnish. Not too dissimilar, nothing's changed really, not too dissimilar to this look.

Evelyn: Yes, lovely green nail varnish today.

Chryssy: It was green, the first one I bought was green. Not this kind of green, my kind of green and well little bits of eye makeup and stuff. But still without any sense of what I was doing.

Evelyn: And did you wear it into school?

Chryssy: No, we couldn't do that. I left school at 15.

Evelyn: Oh, okay.

Chryssy: I didn't get my ears pierced till the... I couldn't have had pierced ears at school then. Things have changed a lot now, but I mean I wore high shoes and big baggy trousers and then the punk aesthetic came along, and that allowed different things to happen. People I knew were very much doing make it up yourself. Then I also knew people that were throwing away lots of Hippy clothes, so I got lots more Hippy clothes and we used to live above a clothes shop, a secondhand women's clothes shop and I used to steal clothes out of the bins. And I lived with a girl, a girl that shared our flat and she used to lend me her clothes. So this was very much going on, but without any agenda, there was no transitional sense of anything.

Evelyn: No, no, consciousness of this is a different way of living, or fun?

Chryssy: No. Not at all. Well, I mean it was a different way of living. I understood it was different because I was getting shit for it all the time. At home, on the streets, not when I left home, because I left home to be able to do this kind of thing. And of course, it's dysfunctional to leave home at the age of sixteen when I left home and exist on nothing and exist on £10.50 a week or whatever we got, £20 a week then pay some for rent and then live on £15 a week. And then, it's dysfunctional, but it's a question of survival. And I couldn't have lived at home without being supported by my parents and my parents didn't understand what the fuck was going on. At least I think they thought they did, but it wasn't what they thought, and it's not functional.

And because you've given no sense that you can live within society like that, or because I was given the sense that I could live within society like that, I chose to live outside of society. But it wasn't easy and it wasn't... I found no creative ways of doing this, it was just getting by. I mean there was a hedonistic side to the whole thing, which I think most teenagers... No, I think not most. I think there are many teenagers that are attracted to that as well, but if the only way you can get by is to escape into that. I mean now, we have whole, or we have had a whole gay and social scenes built on exactly the same thing. That kind of escape, that hedonistic escape from the oppression of society. So, it's that kind of thing.

And I'm not even dressing up anything, it wasn't special just sitting there. So, that was my contact. And then that wasn't working, and I cut my hair and started to wear softer clothes, but still carried on with the same people and discovered the Gay bar. The Silhouette, which was in Hull, I don't know how long it was before I discovered it, but we started to go to the Silhouette, which I might have talked to you about before, which was a club in Hull, which was a proper Gay bar. And in the late 70s with a disco downstairs playing, duh, duh, duh, duh I need you disco with a bar upstairs, with a back entrance because people didn't necessarily want to be seen. A front entrance if you didn't care, rooms above where things happened.

Evelyn: What things happened?

Chryssy: I think the term is rent boys who sold themselves, who were selling themselves, and they were raided, this was raided. Quite often it was raided. The people I knew used to work upstairs, and then they would have to pretend just to be sitting in the bedroom, because they have a little alarm knock from downstairs just be sitting there so. And this was good you know, there was... Gay things were happening then, I had to find those Gay things, but it was very much if then want. It was very much a demi monde. It was an underground thing.

Evelyn: And was it bit of dive downstairs?

Chryssy: No, it was very nice. Well, my memory's it's 40 years ago isn't it, I think?

Evelyn: It was sparkly and lovely.

Chryssy: It was 40 years ago. Yeah, yeah. My memories are really positive. I don't think... It wasn't one of the dives, it wasn't a horrible... There were pubs in Hull that I found out about later that were places where people used to go and cruise, much more working class. Which were not prissy pubs where people presumably had sex in the toilets, never been the thing that I'd been attracted to and the toilets were disgusting. So, it wasn't that, it was a proper club, it was a duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh.

Evelyn: Oh, nice. Yeah, so it was proper, was it very young?

Chryssy: Again, I mean, I remember seeing two... I don't know why these two people stick in my head, these women who just looked like normal women. And it was like, oh, and they were clearly on a date. But they seemed to me to be quite old, but I was 16... I was 17.

Evelyn: Were they Lesbians or were they Trans women?

Chryssy: Oh no, they were Lesbians. The Trans people I knew, I mean the people who I think looking back were Trans that I knew were not many, but were, themselves thought of themselves as Gay, then wore flamboyant, almost draggy... Well not almost. No, almost draggy stuff but not like the drag queens of the day did, they weren't that kind of, don't have this effemininity. They were feminine and we were quite friendly with one of them who had electroshock therapy, because his mum had put him into... Because, their mum he would have used a male pronoun. His mum had put him into shock therapy to stop him being gay. I don't think he was gay, I'm not convinced he was gay. Look, and he said he'd like to meet a man, get a house, settle down, and get married. That was his ambition and again, not necessarily something I could identify with then.

So, yeah. So, this was going on. And when you are the people who were telling themselves sex work has always gone on, but not on... The boys I'm talking about, not selling themselves on the street but finding ways of making connections and getting.

Evelyn: And meeting up, yeah.

Chryssy: Meeting up

Evelyn: It's kind of how you find your folk, isn't it?

Chryssy: Yeah. Well, one of our friends had... We lived, or we socialized a lot on the street called Springbank, which just hasn't changed really. Well, it's a bit more culturally diverse now but just some streets off there with bed sits and flats and things. And his, I think sugar daddy might be a grandiose title for this person, but this person rented him out flat at probably £10 a week, bought him jeans and that's where they went and had sex and it was fine. I didn't know people who were... I probably did know people, I didn't know that I knew people who were having problems with their sexuality. It was just a thing that happened, but it was framed in very binary sense and it was framed in terms of sexuality, not in gender identity.

But the politics, there was a group that we went to a couple of times, the Gay Group but it was all generically Gay and so, there were people there... Again, one of the guys was known as the person who was organising, well he was known as a cross dresser, but who knows what they would have been now, but the politics weren't good. In Hull, I presume was a microcosm at the time, even in the Silhouette club, at the other end of the long street there was a bar called the Polar Bear, which was where the butch actually used to stay because they'd fallen out with people in the-

Evelyn: In the Silhouette.

Chryssy: In the Silhouette over a game of pool or something, that pool I think it was. So at that time there was a split, and I understood the split kind of, but I thought it was a bit strange. I still think it's a bit strange but I do understand as well, the need at the time to...the political drive to address the patriarchy, of course pushed women into separate spaces. And I think there was a need to be more radical at the time, which I think actually I understand as well, simply because women were....

Evelyn: Patriarchy was so deep that they needed to really push the boundaries.

Chryssy: Yeah, Exactly, absolutely. So, the patriarchy needed a bigger challenge I mean, not that it's gone away, but it's shifted in some ways. And so, yeah, so there'd be a group of these 15 of these women sitting looking at me. I was kind of scared of everything really that was kind of... Scared might not be the right word, but kind of in awe of these women.

Evelyn: Very wary of these...

Chryssy: In awe, shall we say. And people I've worked with were... I was on government schemes, and I chose the schemes, I could choose where to work and there were always young Gay people around, Gay and Lesbian people around. I don't think bisexuals existed, not that I'm aware of. So that's always been a thing, but there's very little there about gender identity, because there was in my life, very little about gender identity. And it was just something that bubbled around in the background, and I attributed it to sexuality, and because I am with my sexual orientation very fluid, very non-boundaried in the sense that I prefer people and types of people, it was easier to shift in some ways into different types of society. I didn't have to stay and be one thing rather than not be anything else.

So, I had a little fling with the friend that I came out with, a little...

Evelyn: Teen affair.

Chryssy: Teen romance, and we weren't sexually compatible, and I think there's a good reason for that. Well, he definitely was Gay and he definitely knew how to work it. He had to learn but he knew how to work it. And that was the point at which I realized that we were different. But the only thing to do then is to... Well, for me, the only thing I could do then is retreat from it because I thought like, I'm not Gay, so that's not it.

Evelyn: Yeah, don't quite fit there.

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely, but then you've got years of not really knowing what to do and where to go. So, I slept with boys sometimes in 80s and the early 80s and then started to sleep with women. I've heard this downstairs that people thought then they could only, think of themselves as one thing, or the other. And at the time when I heard it, I thought I don't relate to that, but actually, yeah I think perhaps I can relate to that. So, then I thought well, that gay thing must be finished, which is fine. So, I carried on and started having affairs with women, which was good. Well, which was sometimes good of course, and sometimes less good.

Evelyn: Not so good. Yeah.

Chryssy: And then I stopped wearing nail varnish and still kept longer hair than most people, and I still felt an outsider but again, that's easily addressable by being... There was no such thing as Goth in the early, early 80s wasn't really a thing. Perhaps I wasn't yet born for that but I could still put myself in that kind of field. So musically and culturally and still attach myself to those outside things.

Evelyn: There's always a group on the fringe that you can associate with.

Chryssy: There always is. Yeah, yeah. The outsiders and that's exactly what it was. But I always felt that even there, that I was outside that as an outsider within the outsiders. I've not really known why. I mean, there's a certain amount of angst involved in that, but then there's angst involved in growing up anyway, isn't there? And then, I did the thing that I started to do over the next 20 years, which is run away. And I ran away to Northern Ireland and then of course, it's all completely different and that was a culture shock. And in terms of reference, I had to shift just to live in Northern Ireland just to exist in Northern Ireland as English.

Evelyn: And, where are we now, in terms of...?

Chryssy: 1980 to 1983.

Evelyn: All right, so, yeah things were fairly politically bubbly in Northern Ireland in the 80's.

Chryssy: Well, there was a war. Yeah, there was a war. So in 1980 to '83 I went back to night school and did A Levels, and I was very friendly with one of the people that had been to school with my sister, who I think was almost certainly gay, but was in denial, which didn't do him any good. In the end, he had a mental breakdown and starting living on the streets, not while I was there. And we were very friendly and emotionally quite close.

So these things still bubble, these connections were still there. We both go over to Northern Ireland and then it changes, everything because I suddenly put myself in a situation where I've got to boundary myself just to exist on a day to day basis, because I don't know the rules. Over the years I'd learnt how to deal with this, but then I didn't know. You go to somewhere that looks like the place you left, but you find out fairly quickly, that it's not like the place you left. But then because it's like the place you left, but it's not like the place you left, you don't know the rules, and it was interesting. I have to say it was very, very interesting.

And it was university, so I threw myself into my work in first year, and it wasn't difficult to make friends. It was really interesting to learn about things, but the big thing in Northern Ireland in the eighties was that it was very anti-gay and anti-LGBT. So, that just was kind of... I looked around and there were people that I think probably were, if you went to university in the eighties there was always a gaysoc, but it wasn't at the University of Ulster.

Evelyn: No.

Chryssy: But there was and this was someone who joined the same year as me, and I became friends, so that I was in the Philosophy department. But I became friends with quite a lot of people in the Communication's department, which was the precursor to the media study's thing that happened later.

Evelyn: Oh, right. Yeah.

Chryssy: And one of them was a woman called Sheila, who was a butch dyke from Manchester, who had been living in Belfast. And if the women in Hull, the butch dykes in Hull had seemed scary to me, the butch dykes who lived in Belfast

when I met them, were almost paramilitary scary. They must have been tough, tough women.

Evelyn: Tough women. Yeah.

Chryssy: They must have been to have dealt with them, to have done that. And they all were wearing essentially paramilitary uniforms, all in black, and she was one my best friends. And I lived with her for a little while, and I used to do the door for the Women's Society Discos.

Evelyn: Oho, so, what were they like?

Chryssy: They were nice, they were good. They were fund raisers, really, so more or less anyone could come in.

Evelyn: And was it a Lesbian scene?

Chryssy: I think Sheila would like it to have been, and I don't think it really was.

Evelyn: It wasn't as much as she wanted it to be.

Chryssy: No, no. No, the women-

Evelyn: She wanted a little harem in there, no doubt.

Chryssy: Yeah. Well, all the women she knew had lived in Belfast and they used to come up and see, and I was, "Oh, goodness me." And I think already, not so much, but it was there, and some of the women were at least.. had ambivalent sexuality, but I don't think she got... Oh, I think she got what she wanted, she wanted the politics of feminism. So, that was definitely part of it and that was the duty of that, which was good. So, there was that going on but again, this was in terms of women and men. The university of Ulster actually had academics after I left, who did quite a lot of research into Trans women before it was Trans women, they were talking about Male Femaling is one of the books.

Evelyn: All right, yeah.

Chryssy: By Richard Eakins. And I don't know how Richard Eakins ended up there but oh, he was talking them things he was talking about at the ... When, we went to...

Evelyn: Bishopsgate.

Chryssy: Bishopsgate.

Evelyn: Yeah.

Chryssy: We were talking about the archive.

Evelyn: All right, yeah.

Chryssy: Leaving the University of Ulster to go to Canada.

Evelyn: Oh yes it's.

Chryssy: And, it was Richard Eakins archive but this was later than that. But at the time I was there, these were not discussions that anyone was having at all in the women's group, and the gaysoc didn't exist. So it wasn't a thing and in the first year I got there, and I was a little bit cautious. By the time I was in the second year, the 80s had really taken off. It was 1984, so I was back to wearing makeup again, and it was ... I met one of the people I used to live with. I mean, I would never not been in touch, but he said to me relatively recently, "You know.". There is no level of non-acceptance here, it's just not talked about.

I mean, my transition is what I mean. He said, "Yeah, well when we lived in Ireland, I just thought you were weird." And I think that was basically that I could get away with that on that level.

Evelyn: Yeah, a bit weird, but we like them.

Chryssy: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. In the universities around there it was fine, so I wore lots of make up, occasionally lipstick, but there was also someone else there doing the same thing. One other person, who was gay who had loads of gay sex in the toilets, in the town that I wouldn't have had access to, because it's not my thing. It's not something ... And gay men I know do these kind of things and very successfully I'm sure. I hope he is still alive.

But I went down to different parts of Ireland and then things could be much different, because they were not used to-

Evelyn: No. Even more conservative. University is a bubble even if it's a fairly conservative one.

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, and yeah, so I mean, I do I remember ... If I've told you this story before, I forget maybe, but I remember being in Newry for the Easter Day Parade, and the friends that I knew that were Republicans were members of the official IRA, which were on cease fire then. And the war between the official IRA and the provisional IRA was almost as intense as the war-

Evelyn: Intense as.

Chryssy: Between the Catholics, and the Protestants in you know that they. So, anyway we went down for the Easter thing, we met in one of the Republican bars and then we went on the march, and I wanted matches to light the cigarettes. And I went to a shop and bought matches and came out and I'd lost them and this big march came the other way, and it was oh ... And it was the provisional IRA and they were-

Evelyn: So, it was an oppositional march?

Chryssy: Yeah, but they were all opposition to me potentially because I was very English. And this march was huge and really noisy and really brr, brr, brr, brr, brr and I thought oh, fuck. And I thought if I just stand here and then sort of trying to blend into the background.

Evelyn: With all your makeup on.

Chryssy: With all my makeup on. Before they'd even reached me, the ones at the front started whoa, they were starting to wolf whistle, and I knew that if they'd started to come round and question me and I'd spoken, I genuinely could have just been kicked to death quite, quite easily. And there was nothing I could do I just stood and then, suddenly from nowhere all these Policemen swoop down and took me off the streets. I've never been happier to be almost arrested.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" "I just came down with some friends." Well, no offense and they questioned me about my friends and, "Get the fuck off out of here." And I had to go back and find this club in Newry and Newry was not... Newry was a town at war, very much. And so, I had to find this club and knock on the door and say, "Oh, I was here a few minutes ago, can you let me back in?" And they recognized me strangely enough and let me in.

Evelyn: Okay. Makeup comes in useful sometimes.

Chryssy: But this is nothing about this is really Trans issues, this is just living a different life and somehow getting away with it. But with people who were very working class and very not used to this kind of thing. Well you know, if you live with difference, if you come from difference it makes it in some ways it's more acceptable because the rules can be different, and I did learn that quick, in Ireland. So yeah, nothing else happened in the 80s.

Evelyn: Moving swiftly on.

Chryssy: That's not true then in the 80s, I met someone at the university, and I got married, and we had children in 1990. And the person I met, this is just two people, two damaged people and she didn't know what she wanted, and we just found the insecurity in each other. It was the worst possible ... It wasn't the worst possible match. But it was a...

Evelyn: A difficult mix.

Chryssy: It was not a good grounding for marriage we weren't compatible in many ways. We were the opposite in so many ways. We're still friends, but we should never have really got married but we did and then we had some children and that of course ... There's a story of people thinking I'll be normal if I do this. Excuse me, Trans people who then come out later, but that wasn't really why. I just stumbled through there, stumbled into it, I wasn't trying to suppress anything. I wasn't trying to not do anything and getting married didn't really change me. And I'm sure I was a dreadful spouse in some ways. I'm sure I was a good spouse in others.

Parenthood changed me. Good, which is helpful isn't it on the whole?

Evelyn: It helps you grow up.

Chryssy: Yeah, I think it does. Yeah. But then we got divorced and then she was smiling, she took the kids away. There's another child in the middle of all this and that was complicated in different ways. And it's her birthday next week, this week, this week.

Evelyn: So, were you back in England at this stage?

Chryssy: We moved back to England after university. I lived in ... We moved back to Hull just because we moved up to Hull then we moved to London, stayed in London for a while then moved back to Hull because I got a job in Hull. Then we moved to Slough for a while, we moved to Cambridge for a while. We moved back to Hull, there seemed to be no escape, lived in Hull then for a couple of years, well few years and then I was like, "I can't do this anymore", and went to Bedford. So it was very unsettled, it was not a great.

Evelyn: And then your children back over in Northern Ireland, that must be tough?

Chryssy: Well it's tough on two levels. It's tough because ... It's not, it's tough, yeah. Tough for them, tough for me. It was before the age of cheap travel, so I couldn't just fly over every month. It was expensive, too expensive for me to travel regularly. I was paying for them, paying for me, which was fine I didn't mind that, but it meant because I'm paying that much I tended to see them less. It's the time before easy communication. We could phone, but we'd didn't-

Evelyn: It'd be landline phones.

Chryssy: I did have a mobile actually, but it was so expensive and no, no, you know, face-to-face communication. So you miss that a lot and of course though with us, we'd just got divorced. Although to be fair, I still went to see them. The year after they moved there they came over to Christmas... Taryn came over for Christmas, so there was contact. There was always contact, we never ever lost contact, but the contact was-

Evelyn: That's the important thing.

Chryssy: Yeah.

Evelyn: It was not as much as you would have liked.

Chryssy: Enormously not, and I looked at ways of going to Northern Ireland and there was nothing I could do there, where they were living, to work and there's still all this thing, this uncertainty in my life. I mean, it's not the foreground but it's always there but not feeling settled and not knowing why and not knowing ...

Evelyn: There's something not quite right.

Chryssy: Something not quite right. And then in '94 my mum died as well and that was catastrophic. So, '94 was dreadful and then getting through all that and then '95 I decided I was going to change. I was going to go away and teach, I was seeing my children twice a year essentially, and I thought if I go and teach I can probably still see them twice a year, which is exactly what happened. And going abroad that distance again, that's what it's about going to Ireland. I'd taken myself away from things and there's always the sense as well ... Sorry, one of the things I haven't said, in all of this time there is always a sense of looking for something, at least all the time I was functional. Always the sense of looking for something, searching for something and not knowing what it was, and trying this and trying that and trying something else and not finding it in lots of different ways.

And the going to Slovakia and then doing that and then, that was the release. So, for the first year it was just release and then going home and seeing my

children at Christmas. Yeah, seeing them at Christmas then going home in the summer and seeing them in the summer, and having that kind of contact and Taryn used to write me little things. It's oh, his little writing, and I used to write back, and we did loads of stories and things. By post, by post, the letters would take three weeks in both directions. It's very, very remote but it's there. And then after that slowly, the feeling that somehow I would really disciplined myself. I used to get up early every day. I think a lot of people used to go out there, younger than me, I was in my early 30s then, but used to go out there just after university and just enjoy and get drunk all the time.

And then they had to teach, and they just made that the ... And I was like, "No, I'm going to really engage myself in the teaching." And really took it seriously, went to the gym every day, religiously drunk at weekends didn't drink in the week. Really got myself into a disciplined space, which was great. And then, slowly I started to have proper deeper relationships than I'd had for quite a long time. First of all with women and then with one man and actually in Slovakia only one when I was in Slovakia, and just sleeping with a man again after all that time was like, "Oh, Gosh, I thought that had all gone away, but pho, here it is." And so, it wasn't like there was no shame, or just a bit of a surprise that it was still there. And then, suddenly becoming far more aware there was a gender thing and still not quite being able to put my mind on it, put my finger on it, but knowing that, that was something that was happening.

So, I was there from '95 to '99. So by '99 I knew that there was something there, so that I knew there was something to do with dressing. The expensive makeup... and that's how it manifests itself for many people, I think. And not quite knowing what to do about it and then, leaving Slovakia but having become a different person in those four years, but still not having become myself really. It's that separation that actual getting away from the cultural expectations and the pressure of your family and so forth. I don't mean the children, I mean parental, spousal and I thought spousal and sibling expectations.

Evelyn: The pressure to conformity and in a binary?

Chryssy: Yeah, kind of. In a way, yeah. And I think then moving to the Gulf in '99 and suddenly being... And we were online and from like I said '98 I suppose we knew that, that was the thing. But we didn't have it in Slovakia no one had computers at home, or even in the places we taught, there was no online computer, but as soon as we got to the Gulf, online computers everywhere. And then by, who knows how, but by intuition or by it seems to be by chance but it can't be by chance can it that suddenly I discovered that all these Trans people online?

Evelyn: It's because you've always been searching.

Chryssy: But I didn't know I was searching for that.

Evelyn: Yeah, you weren't specifically searching for them.

Chryssy: No, no. No.

Evelyn: But because you were always searching somehow.

Chryssy: Somehow, yeah.

Evelyn: You found, you began to find.

Chryssy: Almost straight away. It's simultaneously '99 I got to Qatar in early September '99 or possibly late August. No, it's September and before Christmas I'd found that this was the thing. And again, so many Trans people are not original... I know that I'm not original. So, many Trans people have said this of my age and around my generation, or the generation younger. And that's when we... People say that's when they discovered there were people like them, and that wasn't exactly true for me that's when I discovered what kind of person I was, which is not quite the same thing. When I said, "Oh, that's what it is." And I've had this you know, over years, that's what that is. That's what that is." So, when I had the Transgender queer, it's like that's what that is, it's not what it is actually, but that's what I thought for a while. It gave me a different way of thinking about things.

Transgender, that's right and transgender was a big like discovery, because transgender meant you didn't have to fit into the old construct of Transvestite or Transsexual, neither of which seemed applicable to lots of people like me. They're Transsexual because it was often very conservative, traditional femininity. What we're accused of doing, what we're accused of conforming to, and if some people want to transition to that, I think that's perfectly fine actually, but it's not what people want to transition to. That's not why people want to transition to be stereotypically like their mothers, I think. I was aware of the politics around this and sympathetic to that kind of resistance. And Transvestite, there was the whole of the tropes around that and that people were demonized for this. And it was felt to be shabby and I don't know all of the things, laughable and I've never really have thought those things are true, but still it didn't seem to be interesting there.

I went to... Because I think it's interesting, I went to Central Station last Wednesday and I went on impulse to Sweet Wednesday. Obviously, and I didn't know it was on and I've never been before actually. Sweet Wednesday once a month and it's for I think, they would call themselves these days T Girls mostly, and it took me back 20 years.

Evelyn: And the T stands for?

Chryssy: Trans.

Evelyn: Just Trans

Chryssy: So, rather than call themselves transvestites.

Evelyn: Yeah, yeah.

Chryssy: One of the people that I interviewed for my thesis said, "We call ourselves T Girls because it reduces the chances of us being subject to ridicule essentially."

Evelyn: And they would have traditionally been called Transvestites?

Chryssy: I'm not sure if they were self-described as, but they would have been described as. Yeah.

Evelyn: They would have. Oh, yeah.

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah. And this was like going back 20 years. So, when I... 20 years ago, slightly less, 17 years ago when I first came back to the UK and I was in those kind of discovering things. "Oh, this is interesting." And feeling a kinship, but also feeling separation. Blimey, that's my life story anyway largely. But it was very interesting to go back into that, and I'm never in those environments, and we used to see people come in and find their way, and then leave again. Some people consciously leaving. So, you know 'I'm past that, I'm beyond all that' and some people just drifting away. And I didn't really ever think that I would be one of those people, but that's exactly what I have done. Not purposefully, but it's just happened. Yeah.

Evelyn: It's interesting how the articulation is so important that the words and the-

Chryssy: Yeah, the language.

Evelyn: Language and the shades of meaning, is so important in helping you just even think out-

Chryssy: No, no. Totally.

Evelyn: Who am I?

Chryssy: Without the language it's impossible to do, and within certain kinds of language. I mean-

Evelyn: Because that language carries such baggage that it's not what you want, you need a range of language to find your place.

Chryssy: Yeah. Well, it's all the construct, isn't it? So, the construct of Gay and a Lesbian in the western sense in the second generation of the 21st century has been completely naturalized, but it's not a natural thing. It's one possibility one way of describing the same sex attraction but culturally, there have been many different ways of doing this and many different... Some societies it's completely naturalized over embedded in their social norms. Other societies have certain norms attacks of these attractions. Others, we always rule out the Greek thing where... But, it's a true thing where for certain times in a man's life, they would have an older man to teach them, then they might become the older man. But they were very formal, very understood ways of being this of acting this, performing this and it's naturalized in our society because this is our reality. But it's not natural at all, it's just a different way of constructing it.

So, we think of ourselves now as Trans, or if we do we might not, but there's only one way of doing it as there are political impulses to do it in a certain way now, because there's a backlash that's so strong. So. I think there's certainly. I would stand up for what I think I am now, but I would also recognize it's conditional and historicized. But the language is so important... As you said, language is so important because without the language you can't self-describe yourself, and I spent all those years not being able to do it.

Evelyn: So, how old were you when you first could articulate who Chryssy is?

Chryssy: In these terms, in 1999 and I'm...

Evelyn: Yeah. So, you were 30?

Chryssy: I was 36, which seemed old at the time but doesn't seem old now and...

Evelyn: Well, it is a long number of years to be searching.

Chryssy: It's a long number of years to be searching and also, having, and I really feel this, having got it right in the first place. And then not being validated and then not having ways... I couldn't find work. I couldn't have gone to Northern Ireland looking the way I did in 1981, '80, 1980, I think. I would have been...

Evelyn: Taken up a dark alley.

Chryssy: Well, something like that I would certainly have... Yeah, I couldn't have done it, it wouldn't have been possible. I wouldn't have dared to it anyway. I have no idea how I've got away with not being badly beaten in Hull on a regular basis. I just do not know how that didn't happen. So, yeah and even then in 1999, I didn't have the language, I had some language then suddenly I had a connectivity. Lots of those sites the first site I remember and it might have been the first site I found, it's the first site I remember, was the UK Angels. And it was set up again along the lines of the Beaumont Society for... I'm not sure if it said heterosexual cross dresses, but it said for cross dressers before the word T girl was being used, I think but definitely not Transsexuals.

Oh, no, no, no, no, and there was a number of people who were Kim Angel, Joanne Angel, Laura Handbag and there's others as well. And some of whom went on to find themselves in transition. Some of whom didn't, and it's fine both ways, isn't it? But the fact that they had that kind of definitely not Transsexual's tells you something about the culture of the time.

Evelyn: Time. Yeah.

Chryssy: And this was very early. It was a Yahoo Group to begin with, before it became anything else. A Yahoo Group where they used to put pictures on and links to pictures, and it just seemed, it was like "Oh, God. Yeah. Ah." The language and the visibility, those two things actually, but the language without the language you can do nothing. Then with the language and the visibility have some power in the visibility. And that's why so many Trans people that I interview they say, "Oh the Internet was absolutely critical, it was life changing, the Internet's been a wonderful thing." And to an extent that's very true, the Internet was critical in my life as well and life changing but we know now that the Internet is more complex than we thought it was. So.

Evelyn: So, at this stage, did you feel the visibility is increasing as well as ...that because, that's still a covert connection on the Internet.

Chryssy: Well, I was in Qatar, I was definitely covert.

Evelyn: Well, yeah. You were of course.

Chryssy: By then, I was buying clothes again and buying makeup and I mean, for the first time in my life not just using clothes but actually thinking about buying clothes belonging to women for me rather just wearing women's clothes like I used to when I was a teenager and much younger. Well, just thinking these are clothes

that I like, and I'm going to wear them without it being... It was just that's what I did. I had to then go back and make a conscious decision um to do that, and that was good 'to get that learnt' to quote Larkin[. Then it became a question of how to, how to...what to do with this thing?

And then, it was easier than, so we could... I also discovered Amazon at the same time but Amazon was also world changing, because you could buy all sorts of things on Amazon. And I did, I spent lots of money on Amazon. I also started to find books on Amazon that would talk about the things that I was interested in, and I've always read... I don't read very much these days, but I always did read an awful lot, and I started to read about this and learn about it as well as enact it. When I left Qatar, I left all everything there because I was moving from Qatar to the UAE, I didn't want to chance taking it across borders. So in the UAE I took makeup with me actually, I have always had makeup even if it's just an eyeliner, I think I can blag my way through that. And then started again in the UAE and so by the time I came home in 2002, it was definitely to do something about this, but I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do.

Evelyn: That was 2002 back in UK?

Chryssy: Back in the UK, March 2002 and I decided that I had to come out, and do something about it.

Evelyn: So what steps did you take?

Chryssy: Well, first of all, I actually gave myself a few months, because I was coming back to London for the first time since the 80s. I had a job, I came back with a job, and I sorted that out, sort the flat out. So, I'm in London now, 2002 I was 40. Turned 40, and I was 39 when I came back and then, I got to get my internet online. When I'd got my internet online, I also because 2002, Ebay! Everything's just made for me now, the markets have opened. And all of this, I've written a lot about this: the awfulness of the Neo Liberal project, but the Neo Liberal project also has advantages. And the markets that were opened gave us access to different things and ways of buying things.

So, I started to fairly quickly buy clothes, and it's easy to buy makeup, I've never had a problem buying makeup. But of course, this isn't the only thing that's happening in my life. I'm closer to my children again, and the few friends that I've got left in the UK, because my networks have been repeatedly broken and having to remake these things. I tried to find out about London, which was really exciting. I look back on that time with lots of affection, and then trying to work out what I wanted to do about this. So, I started to make contact with people and do you know, I honestly don't know how. I can't remember when TV Ticks came into my life. I don't think it was 2002, I think it was a bit later, so TVTICKS was a network that was functional for quite a long time. I met a lot of people through that, by 2003, I'd starting going out to clubs in London... Well, by 200, I started to go out into clubs, but 2003, I specifically started going out to Trans clubs, Trans night Trans clubs.

Evelyn: Tell me about some of those, what were they like?

Chryssy: Well, the Way Out has been going on forever and so, the first moment I see was the Way Out. The first place I went to was the Philbeach and this was a hotel in

Earls Court, and I just went there, I was in drag as you say, and then met Trans Women and got them to take me to the Way Out and...

Evelyn: And what were they like, walking in the door of the Way Out?

Chryssy: It was good. It's kind of like the first day at school in a sense, because you're walking into something that you've aspired to you know, when you move up at school you've aspired to, and you don't know anything and...

Evelyn: Are people going to like you and?

Chryssy: Yeah, kind of. Yeah, and very much an outsider wanting to be on the inside. Yeah, but it was a very quick progression. Then I met someone who's... And I don't know how I met them, called Simone who was a bit older than me, but we was in a similar situation, we wanted to do things. So, we arranged to go to Brighton together and we were going to get changed in the car and walk along Brighton. And we did get changed and then we got out and then we got back in and got changed again, because it was a bit too much. And then, we didn't have confidence or. And then, we started to go a club night called Transmissions, which was in Smithfield and it was 90% Trans women of different descriptions. And all of this suddenly big freeing thing, the big-

Evelyn: It must be very liberating-

Chryssy: Liberating's the word.

Evelyn: To be in room full of Trans women at their different stages and all their shapes and sizes?

Chryssy: Yeah, exactly. Very, very liberating is the word I wanted. And the first time we did it, we... But I was also going to the Way Out. So, the first time I went to the Way Out, I wasn't dressed at all. The second time, you could change there, so I changed there and that was once I did that, and then I was like, I'm not doing that again. And I started to meet people, I started to be able to get lifts to these places.

Evelyn: You would feel anxious going on public transport to any of these if you were dressed?

Chryssy: At the beginning. Yeah, but with good reason actually.

Evelyn: Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

Chryssy: I took some shit. Certainly, on the way out on the way back I was usually too happy, shall we say to bloody care? And then from Transmissions, people suddenly said, are you coming on, there's another club you can go to? And we've basically turned up right now and then it was, "Okay, let's go." We went to Stunners, the absolutely legendary Stunners, which is long gone now.

Evelyn: So, walking in the door of the Stunners.

Chryssy: Stunners.

Evelyn: Give me a picture.

Chryssy: Stunners was a seedy little place. It was in... if you go on the DLR once you get to Lime House and you look towards the river, there's a big edifice, there's a big building with a big doorway, and you walk into the doorway and through a courtyard and just left. And these are industrial places really, and it was just an industrial place. There was a corridor as you walk in, you turn right... The first time I went there when you turned right, they had a little Majalis place.

Evelyn: A what place?

Chryssy: Majalis, so like a little, Majalis is like an Arabic in a tent in fact with all the cushions round it.

Evelyn: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Chryssy: And the Majalis actually is where people go, and the Sheiks sits and people come and ask for things and the Sheik... It's like the decoration-

Evelyn: Yeah, where they dispense.

Chryssy: It's cushions. Yeah, it's basically largess and wisdom. But it was that kind of thing, you could go there and smoke Hashish. This was illegal and the first time I went, they had lost the license again, but they had someone that was selling booze out the back of the car. And I'd got someone to take me, I was leading teenage girl life, I'd got someone to take me from Transmissions and on the promise of nothing. But I think the promise was implicit but it didn't happen.

Evelyn: A promise of something they weren't going to get.

Chryssy: Yeah, absolutely. And there was a bar, there was a dance floor. All very dark and you walked through to the toilets on the left-hand side, there was a dark room, I didn't know was there. For years, I didn't know it was there.

Evelyn: Oh, if only.

Chryssy: And on that side there was a room with a bed, which, a sex bed but it yeah sort of. And then before the bedroom there was another room with a bit like the Majalis thing, but definitely for sex. So, it was a seedy club but so many people went there, so many people I know now went there. So, many people I know now that went there for a quite lot, so they say, but I never saw them there, but we spent hours... I became part of this, so we went week after week and met people there.

Evelyn: Networks grew.

Chryssy: My networks grew, and there was just actually different things, I experienced different things. I experimented with different things. I moved house in 2004 because the person I was living with was a friend of mine, but he was finding this whole thing a bit difficult. Very nice man, but finding it obviously a bit difficult and I'd looked for a place to rent and I was going to all these horrible places with all these straight people. Sorry straight people, and thinking this isn't going to work. So, I just found a flat and I thought I'm going to fill it with Trans people was my idea actually. And that didn't quite work, but I did fill it with people that I could live my authentic life with. Not at work, but when I

was at home definitely, and that's what I did. And that's how I manufactured a way to live as myself from 2004 onwards.

Evelyn: So, it's kind of a search for a safe space?

Chryssy: To create your own safe space, and it was absolutely what I did. And the premise of it, there was a thought through premise, people can come in here anyone can be accepted on the basis that they accept anyone. And again, that was the Legendary as well, it was the Legendary flat where all sorts of things happened. It got much bigger than I intended it to, because people weren't used to this kind of absolute... Again, it was quite hedonistic but absolute acceptance and that was the condition. And so, there was only one or two I always said, "That you can't come back" when they weren't accepting.

And at work, I was working in a dreadful environment, which wasn't going to be accepting. So, from 2004 onwards that's kind of a particular point in my life and this was 2004, I was reading, still reading a lot trying to make sense of things as well as going out. Every weekend we were going out and doing this stuff. I was going out, and I was starting to have a relationship with a Trans woman. She had a house in Manchester, she still has a house in Manchester, so we lived up in Manchester, Birmingham. She had a house in Shrewsbury, no big Trans scene in Shrewsbury but we used to go there sometimes anyway. And yeah, so it was a period of expansion. And then I was there, and I got to the end of that, and I remember how good it was at the time, but I'd reached the end of it and I hadn't still transitioned anything physical.

And I needed more, and I didn't know what more I wanted. There was a block on me actually going further but also, I was working in this place that would never have accepted it. I had to do something, so I went abroad again. So, I did the obvious thing, I went to Libya and in Libya I had to de-transition and found I couldn't de-transition in the way I wanted to. I thought I was just going to leave it for a year and I couldn't, I just could not do that. I'd moved too far, I'd opened myself up too much.

Evelyn: I thought Libya would not be...

Chryssy: Libya was the deeply conservative, deeply Muslim, doesn't make sense, does it? It was a deeply conservative country, and it's a Muslim country, things are different, the codes are different. This is the thing, but I'd learnt by then that we do a work around and I'd need to not engage myself locally, because that would have been pointless and dangerous, but I had to keep things to myself. So, when I went away in September with the idea that I was just going to leave everything behind for this year, just one year, I found I couldn't do it. Went home at Christmas, came back and I'd brought some things with me, I brought some makeup with me. I brought a few discreet items of clothing with me. I didn't bring shoes in here and wigs and things, but I'd brought some books with me and I was living in the community.

It wasn't a private thing, people had access to my house, to my flat, and so I was very, very discreet. But every so many weeks, we got taken to Tripoli to... It was a project I was on. So, these teaching centres in different towns mostly on the coast, it's actually exclusively on the coast except for ours. And so we'd meet all these teachers. And then I thought I could be more rampant and so, I was open with some of the teachers, some of the selective teachers. But all of

the teachers there would have generally thought I was Gay, but with some people, I got reasonably close to, I was more open. And that was good, that was also liberating, but I discovered something important, which was that I couldn't put the lid back on this, which was necessary for them.

But then, just because I felt I hadn't done enough, I extended my stay but not only in Libya, I couldn't live in Libya anymore, so I went to you know, anywhere and I went to Pyongyang just to deepen the isolation and just, because I thought this is a fascinating thing, and you can't be one thing. I needed to work somewhere, I wanted it to be somewhere interesting. Who would want to work in Pyongyang, my goodness what an opportunity? And in Pyongyang I was able to be myself ironically more than I had been in Libya. Well, there was mostly I think in fact, there was probably less privacy, but the invasions of privacy were of a different kind. I think we had quite a lot of protection, but we had to test the levels of what we could do. But I did take clothes to Pyongyang and I took wigs to Pyongyang, and I took a lot of shoes to Pyongyang. And I still have the shoes, and I still have some of the clothes. I took makeup to Pyongyang and when we used to go to Beijing every six or seven weeks and I used to wear makeup in Beijing.

I only had, apart from the clothes I actually went to university in, to work in, I only had women's clothes, but women's clothes that were, what's the word? Unisex?

Evelyn: Yeah.

Chryssy: Do we use that anymore? But anyway that

Evelyn: We don't but we know what you mean. It's a fairly neutral.

Chryssy: So yeah, so that's all I had, and I didn't wear make up in Pyongyang, because I think that would have been difficult. But I was very flamboyant, and I wore lots of ridiculous outlandish jewellery and lots of colourful watches and matching shoes, sunglasses, and I stood out. But then, that didn't really matter, because the fact that I didn't understand their codes meant probably they were not that sharp with my codes. Anyway, well, basically I survived and then came back and then within-

Evelyn: So, when did you come back to the UK

Chryssy: I said before I had no physical transition, but I actually had dabbled in hormones before I left, but not committed myself to it. And when I came back, I came back in 2010 and then again, I knew that I had to give myself time to...

Evelyn: Settle down.

Chryssy: Settle back. And it took me I suppose a few weeks, but not that long but to start wearing make up on a daily basis. I'd been wearing in 2007 makeup on a daily basis and to get back into that and to find out it felt alien again, and having to do it. And I'd taken some serious shit again for the first time in years, presumably because my motility had changed, the way I was moving had changed. My .. to cope with being in those alien environments for three years. Presumably that's what it was, or perhaps my makeup was just horrible. I don't know, the first few months I took some-

Evelyn: You took some stick?

Chryssy: I really did on the streets, and then just settled down. And by Christmas I was properly on the hormones again and seeing Doctors and then changing, ID and everything. So, something that should have happened... If I were young now, something that would have happened as a teenager. It took me to my 40s to happen.

Evelyn: Have you become politically engaged since then?

Chryssy: Well, sorry, yeah. So, if you're talking about politics, the politics of this so, in the '80s and '90s, I was never deeply involved in LGBT politics, but supportive all the way through. So, the women's stuff in Northern Ireland, there's limited stuff you can do as an English person in Northern Ireland.

Evelyn: Oh, of course.

Chryssy: But you could support that kind of stuff. And in the 90s, there's always been a left wing politics I was involved in that. I was involved in student politics, and I was involved in walking around the streets in makeup, which says something. It said something to me, but it wasn't a deliberate queer politics, but it was a deliberate-

Evelyn: Nevertheless, you don't think of it as such, but it is a political act to walk around in the street.

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah, definitely. But then by the time you get to the 2000s, and I'm back in the UK, it was definitely a political act. So, I definitely thought of it as a political act of being visible on the streets, increasingly. Probably from earlier in 2003 onwards, that was something that I was claiming, and I was claiming it because I wanted to be involved in politics. But of course, the politics, to be involved in the politics you need to be... I felt I needed to have sorted myself out more. And so, this was my way of keeping it political, and I think that was true, I think it was. I think the increasing visibility it was a big thing, and going to Prides from the '90s going to Prides when I was back in the country was a political act, because the best politics was hedonistic, isn't it? Isn't that always true?

Probably not always true, but I've been doing that, then to 2000s and being actively involved in things. So, being involved in... Well not involved, going to Sparkle for example, from 2005 or 6, I can't remember.

Evelyn: And Sparkle is in?

Chryssy: Manchester.

Evelyn: Manchester.

Chryssy: The thing I was talking about the other day. So, the people, the UK Angels who I mentioned earlier they were a northern based group, it depends of where people lived. And they wanted a kind of a Trans Pride but it was... I haven't been for years, it certainly was a kind of hybrid between a Trans Pride and a Pageant. And I liked Sparkle, I suspect it's still probably the same, I liked it because it was an opportunity for lots and lots of people who clearly didn't

often get the chance to do this to come out and do it. So, we know that there are people who keep their clothes, femme clothes in a bag in the car boot, or a bag in the loft or whatever. And are married and because of where they come from, they don't have the capital, the cultural capital to be able to do anything more openly. And they will do what they can when they can.

And people will say, "Oh, well, that's quite deceitful." And I will say, "Well actually, it's also a necessary part of their lives and if they felt more confident about being able to do it openly, then that's what they would do." It's sad, but it's true, it's not ideal, but we do what we can sometimes. So, I liked it from that point of view, and it started off very unpolitical in the sense that they didn't have political aims, they had Pageant aims. And why not? That's absolutely valid and perfectly okay, but it is a little, it draws off a different kind of discourse. And by the time I came back in 2011, I went to Sparkles for the last time, and they had workshops and things and Jenny Ann Bishop is very much involved in that side of things. And I got some contact there who I interviewed {for a PhD thesis}, who I... So, these are all incremental steps to my academic career but also my personal career as well. And that's nice, helpful.

So, this is very different from Trans Pride in Brighton started up by much younger people, far more political in a millennial sense. And the politics of Trans Pride Brighton I like very much, but I identify with politically and emotionally generally speaking. It's much queerer, I'm saying this by hearsay, by knowing the people who go to Sparkle, and the people that go to Trans Pride. And there's an overlap but there is-

Evelyn: There's a different feel.

Chryssy: It's a Venn diagram of people. There's definitely a different feel. Yeah.

Evelyn: So, there's a growing range of organizations, Trans organizations?

Chryssy: I think it's grown. I don't know if there's a growing range. I mean, oh, well geez, I'm saying that, they had Trans Pride in London, which I'm still a bit mystified about, because I still don't know the people who did it. And we didn't go to the march, because we had kids with us and there was lots of uncertainties about the march. I mean small, tiny children but when we went to Soho Square afterwards, it was a very diverse group of people from older than me Trans people. And you know, very binary kind of people like myself, and queerer, more fluid, trans youth. They're not young now are they? They're in the 20s and 30s but these younger people and also, but also a healthy dose of Lesbians, gay women who were there as well, which is always a good thing and a few buskers. It was nice, it was really, really nice. I was very, very pleasantly.. not surprised it was a pleasant experience. We were there for an hour and a half and it was growing.

So, it's growing, but I don't think it's growing... I think we've moved into an area in the past two years, but certainly in this last weekend where we have this fucking headline, I'm going to swear on tape, this fucking headline about hundreds of de-transitioners in the Daily Mail, or the Times is whatever it was. And this dishonest fuck whittery, this awful reporting based on non-truths. Based on...

Evelyn: Genuine fake news.

Chryssy: Genuine fake news, but dressed up as caring about children, but it doesn't take account of... It demonizes the organizations that are trying to help Trans children. It says that lots of these children will try being Trans and de-transition. Yes, of course that's true and no one's saying that people shouldn't try things and then move away from them. No one's giving children hormones to have irreversible effect. Children are being denied hormones by people that care about them Trans children or potentially Trans children. And children are being given space to make up their own mind, but to deny organizations who are run by a Trans people who have experienced all of this, the chance to give children space in which to experiment and think about their own sex genders and to demonize those organizations, and by extension to demonize the actual Trans children is dreadful, is a dreadful thing to do. And it just makes things harder for children who are Trans and in fact, children who are gender non-confirming.

So, we've moved back into a situation where I think we have a number of well established Trans organisations now, who are under increasing pressure. I read in the Daily Mail, this was the Daily Mail this weekend that Lynne Truss is going to abandon the GRA reforms. I don't know if that's true or not, but it was reported in the Daily Mail. And it wouldn't be surprising would it Lynne Truss after all. It's dreadful. And so, we think that there might well be a part of the forthcoming inevitable election, we think that we might be cannon fodder, because I think there will be a culture war, and I don't just mean Trans people. I mean Trans and gender non-confirming people in general. LGBTQ people in general may well be cannon fodder. Trans people definitely, we feel that and so, we should never think of things as lineal progress.

Evelyn: No.

Chryssy: We should always know that everything that we've...

Evelyn: Fought for can slip.

Chryssy: Managed to achieve can be taken away from us again. And I think we were complacent at the beginning of the GRA review, so we just didn't take it seriously enough. If it does get abandoned, in itself it doesn't bother me too much, but what that represents bothers me.

Evelyn: Yeah. I was going to ask about the successive legislation over the last 50 years that have gradually you know, that have impacted on the LGBT community and gradually moved their way towards to reach out to all of the groups.

Chryssy: Well, I mean, the legislation is in broad terms, you've got the 1967 act, which... I mean, there's an interesting thing here, which is how much does the legislation reflect what's happening in society.

Evelyn: Yes.

Chryssy: And then how much does it then in turn it affect society? And I think there's a dialogic kind of relationship. So, the '67 Act was a part of a liberalizing society a reflection of... It took ten years to enact from the Wolfenden report of 1957-

Evelyn: '57. Yeah.

Chryssy: To add the '67 Acts, but that's the sign of how in Trans, anti Gay attitudes were, and then as we know them after the Act convictions sky rocketed. We know that this is also tricky; then nothing really is there? There's nothing then for quite a long time. In 1970, you have the ruling not an act of law on Corbett versus Corbett when April Ashley was denied... April Ashley's marriage, sorry, was annulled on the basis that she has a post-operative, let's use an old fashioned word, as a post-operative Transsexual she could never be female, because three things that lined up in terms of describing female were chromosomes and genitals and hormones at birth, really didn't have many hormones, specially at birth. And so, that didn't change, that didn't change until a ruling the ruling in 1999 for Trans people.

And so, you have nothing that shifts between '67 or 2000... Oh, sorry '67 and 1970 nothing really shifts and then you have 1988, the section 28. So, nothing shifts positively, then you have section 28 until the Labour government and comes in, in '97 and starts to enact socially liberal um legislation in a neo liberal environment. So, even that changes, so the reason for doing it changes. And in terms of just Trans issues, you have the Gender Recognition Act enacted in 2004 and enforced in 2005, which for the first time allowed people to change their birth certificates. And therefore, their passports and driving licenses and everything, which prior to 1970 people could do if they were well connected, and you had (the money)to do it.

Evelyn: Yeah. It was class issue then.

Chryssy: Yeah, it was a class thing. Yeah, yeah but after 1970 it was impossible to do, however well connected you are. But this is drawn on the very narrow descriptive gender reassignment, and it was radical at the time, because you didn't have to have had a physical reassignment. But you had to be living intending to live, or you have to be intending to live or living in the gender opposite to the one you were assigned at birth permanently, in order to be able to get a gender recognition certificate, which enabled you to... And this is still the same, which enables you to change your birth certificate.

And nothing again until 2006 actually you have different changes in legislation... (Excuse me) under the Sex Discrimination Act, where small amounts of progress were made for Trans people in particular court cases. And there was an Equality Act in 2006. In terms of equality for Trans people. 2010 is the Equality Act that is important. And again, gender reassignment's used there, but you have... This is what's interesting now, so in the Equality Act of 2010 you have nine protected characteristics. One of which is gender reassignment, one of which is sex and now, the people who are most anti Trans would like to see the Equality Act and the Gender Recognition Act. Quite openly they're stating this, both of them should be taken off the statue books. This is how bad things are at the most extreme neither of which are likely to happen, I think.

Evelyn: No.

Chryssy: Who knows?

Evelyn: Over our dead bodies.

Chryssy: Well, it might come to that I suppose.

Evelyn: Yeah.

Chryssy: So, they're saying that sex and gender are two separate things and legally they always have been. And so, the recognition of gender, so we've moved from the Corbett versus Corbett thing of physical attributes, and then the Gender Recognition Act says no, gender is important as well. Well, a person's sense of self is important, and the person's social living is important their social expression. And if they're not aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth, then the fact of their gender is sufficient cause for us to be able to change the sex on their birth certificate. But if you think about the thinking behind that, it's strange thinking, because we've got these two things and increasingly, over the past thirty years, gender is used in every day speech to mean sex.

We talk about people's genders when we mean their sex, and I'm out on a limb here, the people are not doing this in academic circles, I am. I am saying, "Well"... I know some people are there was feminist called Toril Moi, who so wishes to abandon this distinction. Some time ago, it's not new, and I agree with Toril Moi, that we should abandon that distinction, because how do you have this distinction when you have people whose range of identities stretches from one end of the spectrum, with even the spectrum's a bit of a construction. But one end of the spectrum where sits masculinity, one end of the spectrum that sits femininity. But also, in terms of bodies, we understand that bodies lie in the spectrum. Most people lie into one, or the other spectrum when they're born, but we can change things.

Increasingly, we can change things and increasingly people are changing them, but they're not changing them according to the old understanding's that they would changed from one to another. There's something happening in the middle, there's lots of people doing different bits and pieces, different parts of this. And so, whether we match the bodies and the gender identities and it's too un-binary to make sense that we have this. So, to someone who changes their bodies with hormones, but wants to identify masculine as masculine... I mean, sorry changes their bodies with female hormones and wants to identify as masculine, it's not impossible, is it? So, what is this sex gender distinction? What use has it got? And old fashioned feminists will say, "Well, because sex is to do with... I mean lots of women's oppression is to do with their bodies.

I agree. Of course, it is to do with their bodies, to do with menstruation, to do with pregnancy. To do with the effects of hormones on a cyclical basis and then them running out, so, aging. And in many ways that's absolutely true. That doesn't mean that we should just abandon all that. We can still recognise that, we can still fight fights about people's reproductive rights, because some of the people now, who are having babies are men. And in fact we lost a case, or we didn't, someone lost a case on the 25th of September a Trans man who wanted to have man put on his birth certificate.

Evelyn: Oh, yes. Yeah.

Chryssy: Freddy, Freddy McConnell failed, and I think may succeed in the future. So, nothing is straightforward. What purpose does the sex gender distinction serve nowadays? And it used to be very straightforward and (indistinct) well, we're born female we identify as feminine, but even pre, I know that you have

Simone de Beauvoir, who will explicitly say this is all a construction. This isn't true for all time, this is what French femininity is now and in very different times and a very different context, but is still recognizing the constructive and historicizing actuality of all of this. What distinction sorry what functionality has the distinction got now? And my answer to that is, well, we should recognize that femininity itself is what is demonized by the Patriarchy, and we know that feminine men not feminine assigned male at birth Trans people, feminine men are discriminated against in our society. It's femininity that is at the core of what's discriminated against, and things associated with assigned female at birth physicality is part of that.

We should not lose sight of that. We shouldn't say that, these are not fights and cultural fights and legal fights that we should abandon. And it's complex because there's lots of resistance for that in many areas. I think we need to have these discussions with sensitivity and with compassion, and with self-awareness of dropping out as a women, with Trans history. So, it's not my intention to colonize anyone's discussions but to be supportive of these discussions, which is not the same thing.

Evelyn: No. No, not at all.

Chryssy: Not to be excluded from things but not to say that I've got expertise in discussions about menstruation, because my experience is limited and not first hand quite clearly. But it doesn't mean that I can't be supportive as feminists should be supportive with each other and broadly, but so many feminists want to not be supportive of women, Trans women, or women with Trans histories or non-binary women.

Evelyn: Outside the traditional concept of what is feminine.

Chryssy: Yeah, or what is female, because they claim that sex is important, and the whole discourse of 'abolish gender' is a strong feminist discourse in certain circles. And what does that mean, abolish gender? What does that mean in terms of people's self understanding of themselves? Not for Trans peoples, I don't mean for Trans people, I mean for the population in general. Well, we can abandon gender in the way it's been constructed previously, I'm suggesting that we do, but if gender is to do with how we think about ourselves, how the way we feel about ourselves, in terms of masculinity and femininity, I don't think the human beings are going to stop relating to themselves in those ways, because-

Evelyn: It would be a very long journey.

Chryssy: Very long journey. And not necessarily, why should we want to do that anyway. We know that the default or the danger of the default visibility of queerness, is some kind of watered down masculinity. And if you look at the gender critical feminists on the whole, they're masculinized by default, and it's not... It's there, it's just there. Yes query it, by all means query it, that's what we should be doing, query it at every possible opportunity. Challenge it and query it as de-naturalized, de-naturalize it and challenge it, but to abandon it doesn't seem to have any... It's a very superficial political claim to me.

Evelyn: Interesting times. Interesting times finding our way through it all. It would be interesting people perhaps listening to this interview in many years time.

Chryssy: Yeah.

Evelyn: How it will have all panned out by then.

Chryssy: Yeah, I think so. I hope so. Yeah. So, from 2010 onwards to go back to a question that you did ask a long time ago, I increasingly got involved with the politics of all of this when I felt that I was able to. But I would also say in terms of... I know that this is... No, no, I will also say, and I think the politics of this, the politics of Trans is often claimed to be a set of the Trans Lobby, we hear about the Trans Lobby far too much, because there is not really a Trans... there are Trans Lobbyists, but there isn't a Trans Lobby said to be interested in Trans issues and nothing else and to be self-serving. But I think we can't detach Trans politics from wider politics. I don't think Trans politics can be detached from feminism. I don't think Trans Politics should be detached from some kind of re-distributive vortex.

I think to have a political view as a political Trans person or person with a personal Trans history, I think a good post humanist view is helpful, which would situate and centralise ecological questions at the heart of our politics. I think Trans politics sits within all of these things. I think Trans politics sits within politics of abolitionism and for a kinder more just society, and I think the politics of abolitionism sits very, very necessarily within a politics of a distribution and realignment of power and of resources.

Evelyn: Put the world to rights. So, is there any issues that you feel we haven't discussed that you'd felt you'd wanted to raise when you were thinking about this interview?

Chryssy: No. I mean, I think that we should be... I think they are interesting times. I think the possibility of Trans people I'm talking now on a narrow sense, the possibility of Trans people living openly and relatively full lives has increased. I think that's very uneven. I think people with more cultural capital have much easier time with doing this. I think people from certain communities have a much more difficult time, and I think that in general we're living in times of precarity for the entire population. And I think that affects all lives and Trans lives in particular ways.

I think it still treats Trans people as historically... I'm talking now about my own history. I think that I wouldn't be where I am now in terms of poverty and precarity had I not been Trans. Or possibly, I don't know how this is going to pan out for the younger generation, if I had been able to be, not be searching for such a long time for a way to live that was authentic. Not a word that I'm over fond of, but then perhaps I would have been able to live a life of less precarity and less you know... There are lots of broken cycles in my life, and I still have friends that I've had most of my life from different periods of my life, but it definitely would have been much more of a consistent life, if I'd been born at a different time.

Evelyn: Yeah. More socially consistent and probably more... Would have been an easier career path and more financial stability, which I think is, I get the impression has been impacted by.

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah. Definitely. Oh, definitely. Yeah. On the other hand, I might not have done some of the things I've done.

Evelyn: Yeah. You've done a lot of interesting things.

Chryssy: So, that's another thing, but you know, there are things that I've missed out on to some degree, but we can't have everything, can we? Unless we're very lucky.

Evelyn: So, that young Chryssy.

Chryssy: Oh, yeah.

Evelyn: The chrysalis Chryssy tucked inside that funny frame, what would you say to her?

Chryssy: I think the 17 year old would recognise exactly me now, 17, 18 year old would recognise and that

Evelyn: ...

Chryssy: Yeah, yeah. And I wouldn't say just keep on doing it. Yeah, I suppose I would keep on doing it. Here's the knowledge I have, let me give you that knowledge, let me give you a pathway. Let me plot it out, this is going to be really hard, because things don't exist the way they have done for me later on, but still if you have an idea of what you're doing then, let me help you find a way of doing that.

Evelyn: I mean the words to start with, probably.

Chryssy: Right exactly. Having the words and feeling good about yourself in ways that took you such a long time to be able to do, feel good about yourself in those ways in 1979, 1980. Yeah. That's what I would say and do.

Evelyn: Wow! We are going to have to stop there. I think I could probably go on for hours, but you would probably just drop dead of exhaustion. So, thanks a million Chryssy.

Chryssy: You're welcome.

Evelyn: It's been fascinating hearing your story.