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**‘Existential Migration’: Voluntary Migrants’ Experiences of  
Not Being-at-Home in the World**

**Gregory Madison**

**School of Psychotherapy and Counselling at Regents College**

**City University**

**London May 2005**

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VOLUME TWO (Parts One and Two)**

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# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Participant Information Sheet**

**STUDY TITLE: An existential-phenomenological study of ‘the unheimlich’ through the experiences of voluntary migrants.**

**RESEARCHER: Greg Madison, Visiting Lecturer and PhD Student, Regent’s College School of Psychotherapy and Counselling**

**SUPERVISOR: Professor Ernesto Spinelli, Dean of Regent’s College SPC**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you will participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with fellow colleagues if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

### **Purpose of the study**

Research has suggested that migration can be a difficult experience in various ways. However, very little research seems to have been done on the experiences of voluntary migrants, those people who choose to leave home to live in a foreign place. The current study seeks to explore the motivations for choosing to leave home, the experience of living in a foreign place, and the effect this has on the meaning of ‘home’, especially for those who visit home or who have eventually chosen to return home.

Specifically, this study represents an attempt to uncover a deeper existential dimension to the phenomenon of choosing to leave home. As well as psychological and biographical reasons for leaving home, the study will concentrate on the original motivation to leave in terms of an individual’s sensitivities to different aspects of existence. It will also concentrate on what our responses to leaving home may reveal about being human and our attempts to feel ‘at home’ in the world.

It is hoped that the study might not only be of interest to individuals who have experienced the process of leaving home, but that it may also have some practical relevance to professionals working in foreign cultures, professionals working with dispossessed people, as well as those involved in therapeutic settings.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have met the following conditions:

1. You are either living away from home at the moment, or you have recently returned home after living abroad.
2. You have defined yourself as having 'chosen' to leave home to live in a foreign place and thus fall into the group of 'voluntary migrant'.
3. You have indicated a willingness to reflect upon your experiences and the deeper meaning they may have for yourself and for others.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Participants are asked to commit to an initial taped interview, to possibly attend an informal group session when convenient, and to consider participating in a moderated email discussion group over approximately one year. However, any participant who decides to take part can agree the level of their participation after the initial interview, and remains free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This will not affect your status, standing, or position in any other activity.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be invited to complete an initial taped one-to-one interview during which you will be asked some questions about your experience of leaving home, living away from home, and how it has affected you. This interview will be unstructured and will allow you to pursue your own ideas as they develop. The interviewer will mostly ask for clarification and further information. This interview may last one hour or longer and will culminate in a period of self-reflection using the method of Focusing. Focusing will be explained to you and you may, as always, choose not to participate in this aspect of the study once it has been explained to you. The interview will be conducted in a neutral venue where there will not be interruptions. After the interview is finished it will be transcribed and shown to each participant for comments and corrections. Participants who have completed this first part of the study will then be invited to join the email discussion list in order to share their experiences with others, receive updates on the lead researcher's understanding, and have their own understandings continue to develop in dialogue with other participants.

### **When should I not take part?**

If you are undergoing considerable stress in your life and feel that reflection upon this topic might add to your stress, it is best if you do not participate at this time. If you feel that reflecting upon your feelings may require more social or professional support than you currently have, then it is best that you do not participate in the study. The researcher is not able to engage in a therapeutic relationship with any participants. If you do not have a personal interest in your motivations and experiences regarding leaving home and living in a foreign place, then it is likely better if you chose not to participate in this particular study.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

At the very least, you will likely learn more about your own values, assumptions, and feelings regarding the meaning of your leaving home. You will have access to dialogue with others who share this experience and who may offer different perspectives and understandings of it. You will have a practical experience in Focusing, a method highly correlated with change in psychotherapy. You may develop a deeper 'existential' understanding of this and other life experiences. All participants will have access to the findings when the study is completed, approximately one and a half years after participation.

### **Confidentiality**

Your participation will not be recorded under your name, so your participation and all your comments will remain anonymous. Participants will be encouraged not to discuss the content of email discussions or group sessions outside the cohort. Access to 'raw' information from the study is initially limited to the researcher and others assisting with data analysis, however eventual library copies of the final thesis will include the interview transcripts. Your names will not appear in the final report, though some of your comments may. A breach of confidentiality may occur if a participant is a counsellor or trainee counsellor and reveals information that contravenes UKCP ethical guidelines or information indicating that the participant may be in danger, for example someone is indicating harm to self or others, or someone is engaging in a form of malpractice. In this case, the participant will be encouraged to discuss the matter with a relevant person and the researcher will inform his supervisor.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this research will form the basis of the researcher's PhD study. Also, specific themes that arise, and their analysis, may serve as the basis of articles for academic journals. These would be likely to be printed in psychological and psychotherapeutic journals, and perhaps anthropology journals.

### **Contact for Further Information**

Please contact Greg Madison on 0207 278 2585, [madison@beeb.net](mailto:madison@beeb.net) for any more information or questions you have about the study or your possible participation.

If you have a complaint or comment about the way this study is being carried out, please contact the researcher's supervisor, Prof. Ernesto Spinelli, through the Regent's College SPC office, 020 7487 7406.

Thank you very much for reading this and considering participating in this study.

Greg Madison

14 January, 2002

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Consent Form**

Telephone: 020 278 2585

Email: madison@beeb.net

Study Dates: January, 2002 - January, 2003 (approximately)

Participant Identification Number (PIN): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: **Greg Madison**, PhD Student, Regents College School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

**Re: An existential-phenomenological study of 'the uncanny' through the experiences of voluntary migrants**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet titled 'Participant Information Sheet' for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without being penalised in any way.

☐

3. I understand that the sessions described are confidential within the limits described on the Participant Information Sheet. I give permission for extracts from sessions to be quoted in the final thesis on the condition that all comments remain anonymous.

☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

-----  
Contact Details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DoB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3

### Interview Notes

Participant Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher: Greg Madison, PhD Student, Regents College School of Psychotherapy and Counselling**

**Re: An existential-phenomenological study of 'the uncanny' through the experiences of voluntary migrants**

1. a. Could you begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home? b. As you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you *really* left your home?
2. When you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you? Do you think about returning home?
3. What does it feel like for you to talk about these things? Can you stay with and try to describe that feeling a little?

## APPENDIX 4

### Clustered Participant Themes

#### 1. Issues of Self and Identity

Sense of Self/Identity- NINA  
Fear of a loss of self- PATRICIA  
Crisis of identity- CHRISTINE  
Giving birth to oneself- PETER  
Developing a new identity- CAMILLA  
Name and label- GRACIELLA  
Returning in a self-defined and respected role- GRACIELLA  
Deep identification with the native land, despite minimal contact- KUMAR  
Identities as constructions and givens- KUMAR  
The limits of identification with one culture (a comment on No.6) - ANNA

#### 2. Significance of family circumstances and relationships

Family circumstances are a significant factor in leaving home- NINA  
Importance of finding a way to leave that keeps relationships intact, especially with father- PATRICIA  
Leaving as an escape from family situation- EVA  
The impact of family circumstances on deciding to leave home- CHRISTINE  
Relationship with parents- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
Relationship with father- PETER  
Family relationships generally- PETER  
Leaving as related to but more than family experiences- PETER  
Family circumstances- KATHY  
Family relationships- RITA  
The relation of leaving to family dynamics- CARL  
Secretive family environment- FIONA  
Meanings of moving related to early experiences- FIONA  
Family dynamics then and now- INEZ  
The family circumstances- GRACIELLA  
Family relationships and effects on later choices- SARAH  
Relationship with family, especially mother- MARTA  
Relationship with mother- BEN/FRANCOIS  
Family relationships, especially with mother- MARTIN  
The original home environment- CARL

#### 3. The experience of not belonging (before leaving home)

Never belonging anywhere- NINA  
Not fitting in related to value placed on independence and meaning of conformity- PATRICIA  
Not feeling connected or belonging in the home environment- EVA  
Rejection by peers can encourage the desire to leave home- CHRISTINE  
Alienation among peers- PETER  
Feeling rejected by the home culture- CAMILLA  
Not belonging in the home environment- RITA  
The pain of not feeling at home at home- CARL

The need for meaningful engagement with the home country- INEZ  
Late adolescent development instigating a feeling of not belonging- INEZ  
Motivations for leaving and continuing to travel. - BEN/FRANCOIS  
Straddling two cultures, not belonging entirely to either- KUMAR  
Alienation from larger social context and national culture- MARTIN  
The issue of race in his 'adoptive' land- KUMAR  
Sexual identity and the loss of home- CARL

#### **4. The high value of independence, freedom, and choice versus conformity**

Independence as a personal characteristic- NINA  
Not fitting in related to value placed on independence and meaning of conformity- PATRICIA  
Proud of being different and being independent- PATRICIA  
Travelling and the excitement of self-reliance- CHRISTINE  
Escaping home limitations on personal development- ANNA  
Freedom through leaving- ANNA  
The confidence to travel- PETER  
Finding a direction- PETER  
Personality characteristics- KATHY  
Self-directed rather than conformity- RITA  
Independence- CARL  
The connection between physical space and independence- RENATA  
Engagement with limitations- FIONA  
The advent of choice and freedom- INEZ  
The value of freedom and choice- SARAH  
Travel as a way of testing independence from parents- KUMAR  
Suffocation and freedom to live in relation to thoughts of not leaving- MARTIN  
Thoughts of returning home or leaving London revealing the importance of choice- MARTIN  
Living out of the mundane- BEN/FRANCOIS  
Having to confront growing up (opposite of valuing independence)- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
Returning in a self-defined and respected role- GRACIELLA  
Dynamics of current relationship- SARAH  
Valuing justice for the underdog- RITA  
Creating own luck and envy of those left behind- RITA

#### **5. Wider life perspectives**

Wider perspectives on life (spiritual or philosophical)- NINA  
Spirituality as a driving life force- ANNA  
The affinity to mystery- PETER  
Connection to place and ancestry- FIONA  
Spiritual understanding of leaving- GRACIELLA  
Attraction to mystery and spirituality similar to travel- BEN/FRANCOIS  
Living out of the mundane- BEN/FRANCOIS

#### **6. Suffocation, feeling trapped, adverse side of belonging and relationships/ need for space**



Tension of responding to the other- NINA  
Ambivalence about relationship and solitude- PATRICIA  
The need for private (transitional) space- PATRICIA  
Belonging and feeling trapped (other pole of No.8) - CHRISTINE  
Staying as a challenging choice (opposite choice to No.6)- ANNA  
Needing a physical place of escape- KATHY  
Belonging and suffocation- CARL  
Entrapment and escape- FIONA  
Travel and the in-between space as possibility and loss- GRACIELLA  
Suffocation and freedom to live in relation to thoughts of not leaving- MARTIN  
Travel and the in-between space as possibility and loss- GRACIELLA

## **7. Conflicts, contradictory understandings, paradoxes, and unforeseen consequences of leaving**

Consequences of leaving home- NINA  
Conflicting motives or contradictory understandings in narrative- NINA  
Unforeseen paradoxes of leaving home- CHRISTINE  
Paradoxes in the feelings towards people who settled back home- CHRISTINE  
The unintended phenomenon of being a 'global nomad'- KATHY  
The price of leaving- INEZ  
The longing to settle and the need to keep moving- GRACIELLA  
Flexibility as gift and curse- GRACIELLA  
Difficulty of dealing with unexpected and unacknowledged cultural differences- SARAH  
Experiences and surprises since leaving- SARAH  
Original non-problematic view of leaving home and settling in London- MARTA  
Original rationale for staying away- MARTA  
New realisations during the interview- MARTA  
Conflict and compromise between staying put and moving on related to age- BEN/FRANCOIS  
The returning symbol of the kitten (what is left behind)- GRACIELLA

## **8. Issues of home (implicit in above, but also as explicit themes) and returning home**

What and where is 'home'?- NINA  
Returning home?- PATRICIA  
Aging and returning home- EVA  
Visiting home and the need to be looked after (other pole of No.6) - CHRISTINE  
The experience since leaving home/thoughts of returning- CHRISTINE  
Visits home can assess change- ANNA  
Thoughts of returning home- ANNA  
The disintegration of home- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
Home recreated but never the same- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
Thoughts of returning home (home city) - VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
An emerging sense of home- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
The experience of returning home now- PETER  
Being American and living in America- KATHY  
At home in oneself- CAMILLA  
Feelings of home in various locations- RITA

The original home remains significant but will never be home again- RITA  
 A conscious choice to seek a replacement home- CARL  
 Sexual identity and the loss of home- CARL  
 The experience of being at home here since leaving - CARL  
 The family home as a place of grounding- RENATA  
 The impact of war on the importance of home- RENATA  
 Qualities that allow feeling at home in certain cities- RENATA  
 To return home and be there for the first time- FIONA  
 Connection to place and ancestry- FIONA  
 Returning in a self-defined and respected role- GRACIELLA  
 Shifting attachments of home- SARAH  
 Thoughts of home, but not of returning- SARAH  
 Rejecting thoughts of returning as returning to what was escaped from- MARTA  
 Returning always linked to the house and mother- MARTA  
 Thoughts of returning home? - BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Two senses of home- KUMAR  
 Thoughts of returning home or leaving London revealing the importance of choice- MARTIN  
 Imagining fulfilling longing to return (to native country left at age 3)- KUMAR

#### **9. Need for acceptance, relationship, to belong in some way (Eventually incorporated into Cluster 4 as part of one diametrical feature)**

The need for acceptance- PATRICIA  
 Complex need to belong maintains a difficult position- CAMILLA  
 The pain of comparison with others- CAMILLA  
 The meaning of comparison with the home culture- SARAH  
 A group that combines difference and sameness- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Deep identification with the native land, despite minimal contact- KUMAR  
 Similarity and belonging- KUMAR  
 Importance of relationships- CARL  
 Contemplating a culturally matched relationship- GRACIELLA  
 Dynamics of current relationship- SARAH  
 Improvement in experience here related to transformative relationships- MARTIN  
 Sexuality and belonging- PETER  
 Religion as providing acceptance and then rejection- MARTIN

#### **10. Openness to difference and experiences of difference/foreignness**

Proud of being different and being independent- PATRICIA  
 Exposure to a foreign educational culture can support pre-existing desires to leave and facilitate opportunities for foreign study- ANNA  
 Hidden parental foreignness- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
 P's experience of foreignness- VALERIE/FRANCOIS  
 Sexuality and belonging- PETER  
 Attraction to difference- RITA  
 Sexual identity and the loss of home- CARL  
 Openness makes you different- CARL  
 The experience of being a stranger- RENATA  
 Meeting a foreign group as a trigger for leaving- INEZ  
 The attraction of English- INEZ

Exposure to difference divided the experience of life- INEZ  
 Late adolescent development instigating a feeling of not belonging- INEZ  
 Contemplating a culturally matched relationship- GRACIELLA  
 Adapting and the usefulness of contrast- SARAH  
 The attraction of the language- MARTA  
 The 'innate' sensitivities evident when young- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Attraction to difference- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Attraction to linguistic differences- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 A group that combines difference and sameness- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Encountering otherness through travel develops awareness- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Similarity and belonging (opposite to attraction to difference)- KUMAR  
 Sexual difference as a motive for leaving- MARTIN  
 Difference as a source of persecution- MARTIN  
 The distinction between positive difference and negative difference- MARTIN  
 Fascination with travel- KATHY

## **11. The processes of leaving, adapting, and the overall experience of the choice to leave**

Preparing oneself to leave home for a foreign country- EVA  
 Disillusionment with the new place- EVA  
 The experience since leaving- ANNA  
 Leaving as a difficult necessity- PETER  
 Needs and reasons are different- PETER  
 Finding a direction- PETER  
 Accumulating reasons to outweigh the risks of leaving- CAMILLA  
 The experience of having moved- CAMILLA  
 A desperation to leave home- RITA  
 Leaving as a gradual process- RENATA  
 The need to go is different than wanting to leave- RENATA  
 Leaving as engagement with learning- RENATA  
 Negotiating the experience of leaving- RENATA  
 Looking for resolution- RENATA  
 Fantasy and imagination as preparation for the outside world- FIONA  
 The steps of leaving complicated by personal difficulty- FIONA  
 Overview of the experience since leaving- FIONA  
 Struggles since leaving- INEZ  
 Determination in leaving- GRACIELLA  
 The experience since leaving- GRACIELLA  
 Leaving circumstances- SARAH  
 Feelings about travel- SARAH  
 Expectation of travel but not moving- SARAH  
 The experience since leaving- MARTA  
 Leaving as a stepwise process- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Motivations for leaving and continuing to travel. - BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Description of experiences since leaving home- BEN/FRANCOIS  
 Incremental steps toward increasing independence, culminating in leaving- MARTIN  
 Leaving as a positive but difficult choice- MARTIN

## **12. Possible motivations for leaving, travel, movement (implicit in most of the above themes)**

Parental history of travel, movement, migration- NINA

Parental migration can affect next generation's identity and experience of home- PATRICIA

Promise of a better life- EVA

Needs and reasons are different- PETER

The affinity to mystery- PETER

Challenge and boredom create each other- KATHY

Frustration with surrounding culture- KATHY

Immigration with parents at an early age (no choice)- KUMAR

### **13. Unthematized**

Indebtedness and guilt (mostly in reference to contributing to his homeland) - KUMAR

#### **Feelings of the interview:**

Nina

- Talking about one's journey and reasons for leaving home can elicit all the feelings of the journey itself, from deep sadness to elation.
- Speaking to a fellow foreigner makes it easier to connect and talking to someone who can understand is a relief.
- Physical sensations are pronounced in the shifts and openings that have happened as a result of the interview.
- The 'movement' during the interview replicates the movement in P's life.

Patricia

- It felt more comfortable than P expected because she didn't have to intellectualise a lot.
- P felt engaged and it felt good to go deeper and deeper and to verbalise some new things and to make connections between loving and hating being with people and loving and hating being alone.
- Although physically she is left feeling quite good, warm, rooted, centred, it was also frightening to say some things.
- By the end of the interview, P felt neither of the extremes described, not alone or imposed upon – which felt really good, and like a different kind of being with someone.

Eva

- It's inspiring to feel that the interview process has initiated some new connections. P feels more excited than emotional but wonders if the emotion of being kept at bay at the moment. She is left feeling calm, comfortable and without tension.

Christine

- The interview was experienced as a difficult and comprehensive life review leaving P feeling strengthened in her choices as opposed to the self-doubt that she can experience when in her home environment.

- It can feel good and positive to feel something raw and uncomfortable at the end of the interview as it presents an opportunity to understand more about oneself with the help of therapy.
- P feels she has learned two things: the difficulty of holding onto two places at one time and also feeling trapped by expectations in a place where she could feel welcomed. Those two insights unblocked something that P wants to explore further.

Anna

- The interview was experienced as an opportunity to talk deeply about oneself for the first time in a long time.
- It was like a journey or a therapy session to talk to someone who understood so much about these things that people don't usually talk about.
- P monitored the level of her emotional disclosures but there were moments that touched her deeply, and she found that both useful and difficult.
- P is preparing to leave again so its perfect timing to be able to explore what is the theme of her life at present.
- P feels she might return to some of these feelings later.

Francois/Valerie

- Reviewing a life story centred on the issue of home can feel very intimate.
- Although P does not tend to think of these issues much at this point in her life, she found that the interview gave her a feeling of having more of who she is.
- P can think of the interview pragmatically as sharing information for a study on this topic as a way of minimising the feeling of having said such important intimate things to the interviewer.

Peter

- It was a meaningful and unusual experience to contemplate the themes and issues of life in a chronological order and in some depth.
- The interview felt emotional, sad, fascinating but not upsetting or joyous and P feels happy to be in an uncertain, inconclusive space which compliments his attraction to mystery in self and world. He realises there is an indeterminacy to the mystery we've been describing and it feels optimistic to allow that to be OK. It relates to current learning for P to just let himself be as he should have been able to do as a child but couldn't because he was having to be strong and cope with everything like an adult.
- P finds himself wondering what form of relationship might fit with this sense of himself and his life he is describing and one thing that seems clear is that he need to let himself relax about entering a relationship without knowing what it is or might lead to or what he's really doing.
- Key themes for P were the concept of inner and outer mystery giving a sense of equilibrium, and the continuing sense of alienation and it feels calming to talk about this.
- The dynamics of the interview seem to recapitulate the themes of P's life and his attempts to have experiences that free him from, rather than make him repeat, the upside down dynamics of his earlier life, though it is

important not to reduce his life experiences and his need to leave home to this early environment

Kathy

- P has been thinking about these issues a lot since she is anticipating another transition in her life and her dying friend has made her consider what she really wants out of her life, where she wants to be. P feels there is something amiss in the world and she is trying to make sense of this in her own life choices.
- P is hoping to get insights and knowledge from the interview process. She repeatedly asked about the experiences of other participants, signifying a desire to learn from others, perhaps also compare her experience with others who have left home.
- My impression is that P's responses indicate numerous contradictions and discrepancies in her self-understanding. It seems as though the more personal level of her experience can contradict the more easily described level, leaving the impression that she is more outward-looking in her questioning and search for answers than introspective. I am wondering if this difference between her and the experience of interviewing other participants is partly an expression of a cultural difference, a more culturally 'American' way of being, and of understanding being homeless in the world?

Camilla

- Strangely emotional, sad and tearful, realising how confusing this all is feels illuminating, and it's a relief for P to think about that little girl that didn't belong (emotional). The interview has allowed P to feel compassionate towards the person that was so blocked and thwarted, which feels very valuable.
- P needs time for it all to unravel and clarify but there's a growing positive feeling of having moved on from being able to talk like this.
- One thing that P found interesting from the interview is the way that she was in a victim role regarding her national identity, putting herself in the situation of being shunned by a culture and yet trapped into wanting more of it.

Rita

- It feels quite interesting, P will go away and reflect on things but it hasn't pressed anything really distressing that wasn't known about before.
- P is reminded of a time of feeling very sorry for all those people living on estates, no shops or town centre, and then thinking how patronising, maybe they like it there, just because P doesn't. It was a revelation that some people seek that out and don't really want to go anywhere.

Carl

- P reveals that in an earlier part of the interview he had the experience of trying to say something but powerful emotion stopped him. He says that it is easy to make himself cry sometimes by listening to meaningful music. Part of his emotional pain is the feeling that so much of the pain is unnecessary. He feels this in his chest area and when it's most pronounced he loses his voice. It was not so difficult at the end of the interview since he has been speaking about it enough that it's more integrated and therefore controlled.

- P thinks about these issues a lot though some of the interview allowed him to think about things differently. He loves his parents and feels that their own anxiety and life struggles have made their relationship difficult. P wishes real communication with his parents was possible so he could explain how he sees their lives as fitting a specific context and how he can view them as individual people without adopting their beliefs and he wants his parents to be able to view him the same way.
- P's physical feeling is like being pulled together and locked, like a small channel suffocating. It feels like there are other people in that space, including his family, making a collective unconscious. He can see some parts clearly and they feel like moving inside. This is mainly connected to his mother and it feels like she is holding onto him. P talks about how strong their bond is to each other, how they know how the other is feeling and that he used to love this closeness but now he hates it. There is a real letting go process for P and his mother is also aware of it. He can feel their merging loosening and she indicates that she feels he is leaving her. At this point P feels he would cry if he continued.

#### Renata

- P is trying to control the difficult emotion she has from talking about these issues.
- When the significance of issues of home and identity are not recognised there can be miscommunications with people who do not understand these experiences. It is always easier to communicate with others who have had the same experiences.
- It is often taken for granted that P understands as a local person would since her difference is not as noticeable as if she were Black. Without taking into consideration the issues of home, difference, being a stranger, communication becomes difficult. P often feels she should avoid making explicit these issues as it's very self-revealing but she says it is always there anyway.
- Having this secret issue of ungrounding makes P feel like she has some kind of defect, like an abandoned child.
- P feels there are advantages from making the big change of becoming a stranger in a foreign country. It really makes explicit all the issues of home, which are not revealed otherwise.
- On the other hand, P finds it difficult to consider what is lost by moving. As time goes by the feeling that something is lost grows and P now accepts that something is irrevocably gone because she left home. But she acknowledges that she had to go, so it's a process of damage and damage limitation, with some compensation.
- (P discloses that she's doing a Masters on cosmopolitanism, being a citizen of the world, what does it mean to be without a home? – very topical now, more people moving etc.).
- She hates the phrase 'home sweet home' but likes 'there's no place like home'. Presumably the second phrase fits her own experience better and is more neutral about the value or not of home, whereas the first phrase is too sentimental about home being the best place to be.

#### Fiona

- P has been contemplating these experiences for some time and talking about them provided further elucidation, clearer articulation, especially

regarding the theme of the importance of her mother's death in her return. She wanted to do the interview and it felt comfortable.

- It may be that this issue can be expressed in different ways, some of us have done it on a global scale, others on a local scale, and yet it deals with the same inner experience, the sense of lost-ness, not being connected to a sense of home, and P sees this in her work as a therapist.
- The phrase 'on the way home' really resonates for P, as if we can only ever be on the way, never really getting there, that there is no way back.
- The public declaration of P's claim to her nationality is significant. She has resurrected her maiden name and requests that the interview information is not disguised by changing her national identity from Scottish.

Inez

- P has never had the opportunity to put together these circumstances and the language of transition, it's impossible to put into words but she feels I managed to get to the core of her experience. She was grateful for that as it was not easy to tell this story.
- P felt safe and learned many things that were in me but new, especially the issues of freedom and choice. She feels that we don't get the opportunity to talk about these things. In her writing she can't convey the sadness she feels about all this.
- She looks forward to seeing the transcript to her own words in English and to be able to look at her own grammar. This concern seems to recapitulate her original desire to learn English.

Graciella

- When she first arrived, P wondered about her ability to recount her experiences in a way that would make sense. P found the experience to feel a bit unreal and she had to keep grounding herself. Thinking about these things in a way that feels real to her feels different.
- P can feel physically how she constantly has to negotiate fitting in to a certain extent but not too much. It feels like she's dealing with a struggle to survive in some way, breathing in but also keeping herself back, and this requires a lot of energy.

Sarah

- P found the interview interesting, it provided a different way to think about things she often thinks about. She found some of the links were interesting but was left feeling quite shaky and raw, unstable. A sense that some of it was quite deep and difficult to articulate. That feeling of shakiness may be how P feels most of the time, though it's not acknowledged.
- When P feels very alienated here she feels she's actually in exile, that this isn't what she signed up for. P is well aware that she is here by choice and that is totally different from an exile with no choice, yet there are times it has more the sense of exile, no choice.
- P feels at times that she would like to announce to people in her home country that she's immigrated here, in order to settle her sense of who she is, yet she has not done this after years of living here.
- When things are difficult, P has a sense of something within herself that she can hold onto. It some stability in her that she recognises as herself and that she values.



Marta

- At the end of the interview P felt very tearful and emotional and expressed a desire to go someplace secluded and cry.
- The interview felt very positive for P, though also emotionally overwhelming. She felt liberated and wondered why she has not made these connections before. P says she always knew there was that constant pull home and that her leaving was linked to her relationship with her mother, but it's good to have someone else see it. No one picked up on it before, and she feels it's not very existential.
- P feels she can relate to her mom easier now that she's made these connections more explicit. P found it most useful to understand that she is looking to relate to her mother in a new way. P would like to be in change and her mother is avoiding that.
- Talking about these things feels soothing to P. She also felt some shame as she realised how much she's been shaped by her mom. She felt quite childlike in the interview and assumes she's probably not the only participant who's felt this.
- At the end of the interview, P's experience is that either she's described the whole story or that this is just a beginning and another set of revelations will emerge later. For now it feels settled.

Francois/Ben

- P found the interview very interesting and felt that some of what was discussed would continue to process itself in some way. He enjoyed the experience, especially being able to put into words thoughts that were previously implicit.
- The new ideas of travel being character-building and the idea of needing a challenging threshold to respond to, were interesting and useful. P feels that these themes and the whole issue of having left are part of a thread that includes his compulsion for spiritual experiences when he was 15, and that goes further back into this past, and that feels positive to him.

Kumar

- The interview felt fine for P and he found it useful to talk about these things. The dept of emotion was less than in most or all of the previous interviews and the topics and experiences discussed were not representative of the research group as a whole. P stood out as not having had similar issue or having lived through similar choices, in fact in places representing an opposite experience, which is equally interesting and useful as a counterpoint.
- Doing a previous workshop on the topics of foreignness sensitised P to some of the issues we discussed. He does not feel he has any answers yet but that does not disappoint him as it seems like a journey that he is content to follow along.

Martin

- P has found it interesting to talk about this from this point of view because he has never focused on leaving home as such. It's revealed new connections for him about how things happened, including with his mother.

- P feels we've managed to go as deep as he possibly could at the moment. The whole subject feels a bit loaded, but it also feels good to talk about it, to think about it and get more of the whole picture.
- P does talk about these things a little with his friends but not in this depth, like talking to someone with some similar experience of leaving home for a foreign place makes a difference in how deep the discussion goes.

"Anna"

GM1 - So, the first thing I would like to ask is could you begin by just relating the circumstances of your leaving home? Just kind of at what age you left home, maybe where you went, where you went from there, the general starting ...

P1 - I think I was at the age of 16, 17, and I was really looking forward to leave. Somehow I knew that things that in my heart or in my mind I wanted to experience were not in my country, I felt I was limited, limited intellectually I would say, and spiritually. And the United States at that time was very much in my life, number one because I attended a Greek/American high school, so I had a great influence, you know, the teachers, the school, everything that was promoting the United States is a very good way of educating oneself. All this was, kind of, ..... very much, influenced my mind. But it was difficult about time to jump, I knew that, because of my parents and my aims, and being a girl. I was brought up, at that point, in Thessaloniki, up in the north of Greece, the second capital city of Greece, it was still a little bit limited, very cultural, into itself you know, the children of the family have to stay with the parents, and especially a girl, having a very dangerous life, it was very difficult for them to understand that.

Well, regardless I tried degrees, and I got a scholarship, I was attending an American college in Athens, I had moved there, I was studying Psychology as a major, and I got a good scholarship for another American university that was in Cyprus. And that was really, I would say, leaving home because it was getting the plane and going to a totally different country. I found a job there, I had for the first time my own apartment. Sort of, experimenting with things that I could not do before. I felt more free. And so I studied manically to go, you know, to different lectures, anything spiritually that was in my interest. The physical lectures were psychology, psychotherapy, I was involved with um, acting, I was performing, um, and that was very successful. I continued fully with my scholarship and all that, and within a year and a half, and that was it, I went to the United States, which proved that it was a good briefing(?)..... you know, for my parents, and for myself, you know, kind of an examination ..... and myself going really far.

Now, I don't know whether I answered completely why, you know, what really happened that made me do that.

GM2 - Can I just ask at what age was it that you finally made the bigger step of going to the..... ?

P2 - Nineteen. As soon as I became 18 then I kind of got wise for, you know, a foundation course, and then at 19 I went the last, back home, ..... Thessaloniki, my home place, knowing that that would take many years, and I knew that, I was very conscious of that.

GM3 - You knew that you'd be away for many years?

P3 - Yes. It was what I wanted. I couldn't wait (Laughs). I don't know, I had an inner reason I suppose, I was not being really influenced very much by other people, it was more my inner reasons. And in my mind, at that time when I was going to high school, it was that the world was big, there were a lot of things happening on this Earth, you know, I had many questions about who we are, why we are here, how it comes that there are different races of people, and I mean, of course with a bit of romanticism because of my age, but still I had many questions that couldn't be answered. I wanted to see that.

GM4 - So you went looking for the answers in a way?

P4 - Yes, but also a space that I can expand, and you know, allow whatever is inside to perceive, to develop, manifest, because there was something there that I couldn't really grasp or allow it to express it, because constantly it was suppressed, people could not accept my spirituality. They were very superstitious in their thinking. I was always perceived a little bit, you know, like, very future orientated, leading another venture somewhere in the future, my ideas were very advanced, and that couldn't be heard.

GM5 - So your experience of being at home was that there was something different about you?

P5 – (pause) Yes.

GM6 – Enough so that others couldn't quite understand you in some way?

P6 - I don't know if I had a problem with others to understand me, that wasn't so much a problem, as much as within myself. I wanted to be in an environment that could hold, you know, where I could express myself more, I wouldn't say fully, but more. And yes, my family situation at that time was not great, there were a lot of problems around it, that would I guess, it kind of helped me to want to decide to go, to get of it, saying to them this is not where I want to be, this is not my problem, I don't want to always feel the (burn cycle?), I can't take it, I need to explore things for myself.

GM7 - And you had a sense that if you left home you might find a place where you could get the space to do that?

P7 - Yes. I mean, without even meaning to, even from Athens because it was like wow you know, I have my own space, it was different I suppose. At that time, I don't know, because I was only 18 or something like that, and it felt great (laughs).

GM8 - Then you moved on to Cyprus and to America? So what happened then?

P8 - In the United States? I went to university because I continued to have a scholarship, to finish my degree, I went to New Orleans and I was staying with a friend that, my best friend from Greece, he was teaching English in a college, so I think, I can't remember exactly what kind of cancer he had, but he had severe cancer developed that couldn't be, he didn't know exactly how long he would live, and he said, you know, I know it's always been a dream that you wanted to come to the United States and stay, so I took an offer, come to my place, and make it reality. And so it was a nice way to start, you know, especially emotionally he was really there, a very good friend. I started to explore many things (pause). I didn't stay very long because as soon as I finished there was something else that was emerging that was more, I wanted more to indulge and go into my spirituality and that was a whole other journey in itself so it was more searching spiritually for who I am. And things started to happen, I was reading books, or I would happen to meet people or visions or stuff like that I started to trust, and I found myself in California, and the first thing that I have met before in my visions who became later my spiritual teacher and I stayed there for a long time... And I met another challenge and that was whether to stay in the United States and pursue further education, or to really give myself to my spiritual quest. And only now I understand I have this choice in my hands, so I had two equal different paths and was feeling like that. That is a challenge and test for you more, but I didn't have, I didn't really if I can call it groundless, it was more that I was so enthusiastic about this spiritual quest, and being very young I was very, you know, I gave myself to it, like when you fall in love with something and you can't control, and I couldn't at that time feel let's say, the logic would say I'll be more free if I study and feel I can get touch with it but I couldn't see, it was very much an extreme for me, either giving myself to that or not returning. Sometimes I regret that I had to take, that I took that decision rather than staying in the United States.

GM9 - So taking that spiritual journey meant that you left the United States?

P9 - Yes

GM - OK.

P9 –Ya, I went for three years. I stayed in India, in Nepal, I was predominantly doing retreats, so I went to the Himalayas and I had a retreat and I experimented with what it means to be, you know, in total isolation, meditation, applying these practices and I was initiated, by a lama in the teachings I was attending. things like that, and then I was sent by my teacher at that time to Malaysia to study with a Malayan healer, a Shamanistic healer, and I went and I stayed in Singapore and Malaysia because I had to go back and forth, for a year with him and some others as well. And once it was completed I went to New Zealand I found there a retreat, and then Australia and then I went back to Greece and um, started to go round Europe, a lot, and this was the time this decision came that I came to London and a whole new lifestyle. But up to that time it was very much travelling.

GM10 - So when you came back to Greece at that point, was that the first time you'd been back since you left?

P10 - No. I had been back twice before, for short visits.

GM11 - What was it like to be back there?

P11 - It wasn't very different because I went through so many stages, and every time it was different and every time I started to appreciate it that 's great because I lived in Greece, this is where I started from, so it very much became like mirroring, reflecting back what I'd done, you know, and what impact you know, my past had upon people that knew me, because they somehow were influenced to a certain degree, and so they would feedback what they saw, and I went through many stages, so there were different kinds of reactions. Not necessarily all the time positive ones, so, I explored different parts of myself I would say, when I returned, and I was bringing that back with me, the way I was dressed, my haircut, the way I was speaking. My whole beliefs, every time I was different. And also to see the change that was happening gradually to my family, it was blossoming into a very powerful friendship, which was amazing. So all this difficulty that was there when I left completely changed, I saw my parents very warmly. And therefore we became really close. I have a very beautiful relationship with them up to now.

GM12 - I want to hear the rest of your stories, but wanted to ask this before, what do you think it was about you that you lacked? Why do you think you had this yearning, this spiritual longing or hunger?

P12 - Well it was there from the beginning.

GM13 - As long as you can remember it was there?

P13 - Yes, it's amazing. Sometimes it was very painful living there, isolated, emotionally, ah... Yes I remember up to 16 because I had nowhere to express that I was fighting a lot, because I needed to express that.

GM 14 - So then you made the choice to come to London? And if I remember correctly, you said a new life started then?

P14 - Yes, and that was a vulnerable time because for me there was a whole block of a year after the United States, because in the United States I explored you know, like all young people do more or less, they put a foundation for later on in life. They study what they want, they start to have a job, you know, and I'd done that but I stopped it, and I looked at a whole other you know block that was completely spiritual. I don't want to label it spiritual because spiritual can be anything, that's my philosophy, spiritual can be anything, even the most simple things, but I'm trying to discriminate, you know to separate it from the ordinary life. I was literally living in a very spiritual environment 24 hours a day, this is where was my practice, and that's what I was studying, you know, I was applying all the things that I was learning. And then, London came as a new area where I had to learn how to integrate all that in a normal life, in a country that very much functions, especially in London, because I had been away from the system of society, all these things were a shock. I went through all the stages where I had my resistances, you know, starting to see the separation of myself, and separate from spirituality then suddenly things started to happen that I kind of embraced that and it lead to a transformation. And landed me, because I started to do manual work, you know, I started to study psychotherapy so all the things that I needed to talk about I started to express in different ways. Not through a spiritual lama nor monk or you know, that was me and another colleague. And psychotherapy kind of, you know, brought a new area to understanding myself, filtering all these experiences. So that was, it was a totally different block of fear. And still I wanted to fly away, you know, there were years that I couldn't stand it, you know, I was walking the streets thinking what am I doing, I don't belong here, what is this whole point about life, of course I was going through this but I was surprised that I stayed for six years. And that I find mega-interesting.

GM15 – Ya, why did you do that?

P15 – It was an investment in myself, for the first time. Now saying that, I also created a lot of fears around me that I didn't have before, now I can see that because I'm thinking of going to the United States and I'm scared, a lot of these things hold grace, you know,

it doesn't matter, I can go anywhere, I trust the universe that things will happen, and I don't have that anymore. I created something that more or less was very stable here, and my space.

GM16 - So the two kind of excluded each other? That if you create a kind of stable space, it sounds almost like a home of some kind that that somehow doesn't allow the other kind of just living and trust and go with.....?

P16 - Yes and no, I think for me, that was the experience being here to a degree maybe because of the things that happened here, I started to lose my confidence. I had a really tough time.

GM17 - And you still feel that?

P17 - Yes, I am cursed myself (we laugh), no matter what, and maybe because I was thinking I have that slight regret that I didn't finish in the United States what I went for. I mean my feeling this was my last chance, this is where you know, this opportunity is coming back and if I don't do it now, and also I put in question a lot of, you know, do I really want to endlessly live through, in a spiritual sense, after a whole period of time, spending so much time with them, I started to question things, I started to change in my values, my you know, things that I, my own needs started to change. And these things, you know, there was no magic to explore, everything was fixed, that's life. So because of all these things, there was nowhere to go, except myself. So I didn't see that this time being here as the journey outside, but the inside. And the things that could anchor me to do that was my studies. Five full years of holding on to studying psychotherapy.

GM20 - And you said that at one point you thought of leaving because you didn't feel you belonged ?

P20 - Yes, I had some problems like that but I feel I would think and make a decision ..... and sort of say ..... . And because I hadn't completed my studies also I didn't want to fall back, I didn't want.....

GM21 - It was a chance to take that choice you hadn't taken in America, and you really wanted to do that? It was a way of being able to take both roads?

P21 - Yes.

GM22 - I wonder whether you feel you belong, if you feel a sense of when you do and when you don't?

P22 - I feel like there's always something there very subtle, that sense of not-belonging and I think before for many years I was trying to adopt a system, whether that was you



know, a culture or, because I'd been to many cultures, whether that was spiritual, and it's not really me, there were maybe some things, some elements there that I was, but I was ending up to really find out, this is not the life, you know, this is not the answer. And also the fact that I was going always back to Greece, that sort of, because I had changed and with my friends, the people culturally, their change was very slow, and it feels the same, so the gap between us was coming bigger and more of the time I'd feel I don't belong. Many times I would imagine myself, 'how will I be in Greece?' you know, let say I have no choice I have to live in Greece and I have this panic, like suffocation, will I be able to survive in my mind more, and I've always perceived it as limited.

GM23 - So what is it about that limitation, or that limited kind of place that's so suffocating?

P23 – (pause) That's a good question. I guess I always wanted to, I had a very strong sense of freedom, and many times things that were imposed on me, or you know, trying to fit exactly you know, to the rules, it couldn't work, I just couldn't do it, I had difficulty. So for a period of time I would appear I'm OK with it, because I'm very flexible and because I like to explore, but that was me, but then I have to find a way out, and it doesn't mean that I break that relationship necessarily, but I will have to talk to the others or do something so they allow me, they also respect my freedom. And if that is not negotiable, then I have to go, because freedom for me is my priority something you know, I can't explain.

GM24 – So what would happen if you are in a situation where you felt, what you've been describing, you couldn't go?

P24 - That happened here (Laughs).

GM - That happened here! (Laughs).

P24 - It was hell, sometimes it was, yes. But I managed well, I found ways of doing things that I like. I guess I was lucky, or it was my choice that I came to London. London is big. You know, it wasn't something that was, there was always something I could do if I needed to do something different and other people and go to another sort of area altogether, flights were cheap to go to visit friends in Europe, that was a way of breathing, and I found that quite often.

GM25 - I'm wondering what is it that makes that so necessary, to get out? If you didn't get out what would happen, if you didn't have these escapes, what would happen?

P25 - I don't know. I never experienced that.

GM26 - What were you afraid would happen, what's the panic?

P26 - To lose my freedom.

GM27 - That you'd lose your freedom?

P27 - Yes.

GM28 - And so what if you do lose your freedom?

P28 - Death, almost you know, spiritual death.

GM28 - That something in you would die?

P29 - Well, that's the fear, I don't know if it's true, it could be a complete illusion, but it seems to be the thing that comes up. And because I never really, really experienced it, (laughs) I can't really talk about it, you know.

GM29 - But I can understand your not wanting to experience that.

P29 - Well, so far. But I guess my feeling is that I am, I'm about to experience that now, my new ... I feel that, that's why I feel very, very scared, because I'm returning to the United States completely you know, a completely different feeling, and I'm going with the intention of committing myself to a job that will allow me to go as many times as I wanted, so, I want to do my PhD, so it's different. Whether that will work or not I don't know, but we'll see, and I'm cautious about it, so now I'm you know, because I'm aware, I know what's going on, I make a conscious decision, so I say yes, I'm ready for it, whether I'm entirely ready or not, but I'll do it because I want to have the experience. I want exactly to answer these questions for myself. What will happen if I'm not able to escape? Will I lose my freedom or will I find a different kind of freedom? I need to answer that for myself, because I don't think I will be in peace otherwise. This is my (pause)....

GM30 - Can I just ask you, you covered a lot of stuff, and I just want to ask a few of these things, although I think you've answered them to some extent, to see if you feel there's anything else you want to add? So as you reflect back to when you left home, why now do you think you really left?

P30 - After all this time? I think to explore or find myself in the world.

GM31 - And when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, as we've been talking about it, what's it been like for you? Has it lived up to your expectations...?

P31 - You mean reflecting then?

GM - Just reflecting back now on the whole time since you left home?

P - Oh. What was the question again?

GM - Just what's it been like for you, has it lived up to your expectations, or has it been surprising in any way or unexpected consequences..?

P31 - Yes, it's been an adventure. To some degree yes, my expectations have been met, other expectations I realise that they were getting very subjective and therefore bound to change because of, you know, the things that I was told, the connections that I made, my expectations started to change. And other things were a complete surprise. And there was a lot of stories and a lot of pain and suffering also, I mean, a hard journey.

GM32 - Was it hard in ways you didn't expect?

P32 - No it was hard because I had to go through sometimes both physical and emotional pain, it was inescapable.

GM33 - But for some reason you had to do that, you had to take that path, whereas other people didn't have to?

P33 - Oh, not even for a second I was thinking that my life could have been better if I was in Greece.

GM34 - What do you think it would have been like if you hadn't left?

P34 - Perhaps more limited. I wouldn't have come to these realisations I suppose, and my fear was that I would have been identified by this time because I would have stayed there and not been exposed to other cultures and situations, and being by myself. I would have been so totally fixed by the system there, and identified with the label of what it means to be Greek, and living accordingly, but that was not my philosophy. I'm thinking if I had stayed there, things wouldn't have been acceptable. I don't want to allow this to myself to happen ever.

GM35 - What would that mean to you? What is you don't want to allow?

P35 - To completely identify with the culture and therefore, for meanings that then define, like the people when I go to Greece they're so much into their world, being Greek, that they don't allow themselves to grow up, it's very difficult, they always judge things according to their Greekness.

GM36 - But what is it about that that you.....?

P36 - Oh, that could happen in any country, I would have been not, you know, it's not about being Greek, because they're wonderful people, there are some Greek qualities that are wonderful and I honour them. But what I'm talking about is that total identification, you know, the same thing that I've seen with people being in Buddhism, and it continued to be so identified with their role that nothing else exists outside of there, it becomes an elite, a spiritual elite, and they don't want any other challenges, not

that they have to, but you know, I perceive that as very limited in the sense that it needed to be universal, you know, maybe because I studied Tibetan Buddhism there are some things that I learned better, like not to identify with anything because everything is empty anyway.

GM37 - I'm wondering if you're moving from place to place is a way of avoiding that identification that it sounds like, it's almost like a loss of a larger perspective or something?

P37 -Yeah. I bring things with me from ..... of course, there are other pieces of myself, and other things and other experiences, I don't want them anymore and I don't want them to be part of myself, I left them behind, or at least I choose not to be active any more, something like that. And travelling to different countries and different places and playing different roles, it was for me an exploration of what is human life and how ..... I mean the shock was after being surrounded by Buddhist culture I found myself grounded by the Muslim people, and in other cultures in countries the Christian way, so it was important for me to do that, there was a longing somewhere that I wanted to explore that. Not by reading a book, but by really being there, with these people, wearing their clothes, learning their values, praying with them even if that was not totally my belief, but really exploring that. I don't have this need any more. I think. I've done that. But that's how it was before.

GM38 - So before it was a search for something, almost a search to get into different kinds of expressions of human feeling?

P38 - Yes.

GM39 - And trying to put together the larger picture in some way?

P39 - Yes, exactly.

GM40 - And somehow this didn't satisfy you?

P40 -yeah. I mean, still I feel when I meet people, you know, I recently went to Edinburgh in Scotland and people were speaking differently and walking in the street and there's always slight differences, but we common human somewhere, it's not any more a dream, it's more observing that, yes.

GM41 - So what is the fear of kind of, settling to do your PhD then? Something's been resolved almost to some extent, but there's still this fear?

P41 - What I've also discovered for myself is that I have an equal fear of success and fear of failure,(pause) I can't explain it but I also feel very strongly that if you're going to have it, something, even though I had around me other opportunities, other things that

I could easily have done, and the same feeling that I had here, like, that I can't help it but this is my anchor, it anchors me, and if I'm doing a PhD I need that for myself. So although I fear it, at the same time I love it.

GM42 - Do you fear it but also need it to hold you in place or something?

P42 - Yes.

GM 43 - I'm going to ask just one more thing. Do you ever think about returning home?

P43 - No. The only thing that scares me is if something happened to my mum, and then I have to go there for a long time. I wouldn't like that.

GM44 – You wouldn't like that. You have no intention to move back and live in Greece, unless something happened and you got called back for sometime, but it scares you?

P44 - Yes. It would be difficult.

GM 45 – OK. I wonder what would be difficult about that?

P45 - I feel like a failure in my own country. There are things that, once you start to live there, you kind of, the river takes you there because everybody lives like that, and I don't want that, and people tend to be very much on your case, always, they kind of check things, and I don't like that, and I don't want them in my face, .....it becomes very difficult, they expect you to call them every day, that you share all of your life story, you know, you eat from the same plate, literally, you have to eat from the same salad, and if you don't do that, there can be trouble, people .. the sense of boundaries is not very strong and I don't like that I find it abusive ... it feels a bit more healthy if things are a bit more clear cut and it's never like that in Greece (Laughs). And I don't like that, also. There are other things that when I go, I love them for this, because they are very open hearted and I appreciate it, of course and I feel I will keep them, they are in my genes, these elements, they are there, ... we'll see (Laughs).

GM46 - (Laughs). What does it feel like to talk about these things?

P46 - Well, first of all I wanted to come here because of the scene, because it's so about me, also, I haven't talked about myself for ages. Also, the questions are very useful for myself to reflect, and were very skilfully put, to reflect back and you know, combining almost a therapy type thing, so it was a journey in itself (Laughs). And I found it very useful, it made me go back, not that I don't have that somehow in my mind, but it's different when you actually you know, speak about it.

GM47 – Are these the sorts of things that you would speak about normally?

P47 - Well, people don't ask. And then it's not like, you know, I have to say there was a point when I was talking and I was feeling, hey you know, this guy knows everything (Laughs).

GM - (Laughs).

P - And I don't even know him (Laughs). And it's like part of my problems, myself, it's like, that was another think that I need, you know, to talk about it, but I think because I haven't been shared myself with others for sometime, you know, so I have this feeling.

GM48 - So I'm just wondering what it feels like to have shared yourself some very important parts of yourself, who you are?

P48 - Well, I selected what I would say, in an interview, but to keep it to a level, but there were points that were hitting me, deeply, like oops, and then dive out, and that was what I found very useful for today and that is what I found very difficult.

GM49 - So you might go back to some of those places that we just kind of, touched upon?

P50 - Yes. I mean, it's there, and it is the theme of my life at this stage, and moving on again to another place (pause) and it was perfect for me to reflect.

GM50 - Is there anything else that we've touched upon that you'd like to say, or is there anything else that you'd like to add?

P51 - Not really. Is there anything else you want to ask?

GM51 - No. I feel you've really said a lot and it was very interesting.

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## **“Anna” Meaning Units**

### **The circumstances of leaving home:**

1. I was 16-7 and looking forward to experiencing the things I wanted but couldn't in my country.
2. I felt intellectually and spiritually limited in my country.
3. Attending an American-Greek high school influenced my feelings about American educational opportunities.
4. I needed to leave soon to escape the cultural expectations that would be pressed upon me.
5. I came from the North, a traditional environment, especially concerning a girl's role.
6. I got a scholarship to attend another American college in Athens to study psychology.
7. I felt I really left home when I got another scholarship to an American university in Cyprus and I had to take a plane to a different country and for the first time had my own apartment.
8. I felt more free and experimented in different ways.
9. I pursued interests in psychology, performing, and especially spirituality.
10. This was all a good preparation for me and my parents for leaving 1.5 years later to study in the US at age 19.
11. I went back home to say goodbye as I knew I'd be far away for years, I couldn't wait.
12. I had 'inner reasons' for wanting to go. I had many questions about the big world, what was happening on earth, why we are here, I wanted to explore, find answers.
13. I needed space to expand, to develop whatever was inside because at home it was constantly suppressed.

### **The spiritual journey and travels:**

1. At home people could not accept my spirituality, it could not be heard. I was different.
2. I needed an environment that could support my self-expression and things were difficult in the family situation but that was not my problem.
3. I studied in America and lived with a very good friend from Greece.
4. Soon my interest in spirituality dominated, searching for who I am, and I began to trust my visions, experiences, and moved to California for a long time.
5. I had a choice between the educational and spiritual paths and I gave myself, like falling in love and not being in control of it, to the spiritual life, it was beyond logic.
6. Taking that decision meant leaving the US and sometimes I regret that.
7. I spent 3 years in Asia, sometimes in total isolation, being taught practices. Living in India, Nepal, Malaysia, then when the training was complete I went to New Zealand, Australia, and back to Greece.
8. I spent time travelling around Europe a lot until I decided to come here.

### **Going home on visits**

1. I visited home twice during this time and it was great to go back to where I started from and using it like a mirror, reflecting back what I'd developed.
2. Also others who knew me were influenced too and they would give me feedback.
3. I went through many stages so there was different feedback along the way.

4. Every time I came back I was exploring different parts of myself and looked and spoke different, had different beliefs, and the reactions weren't always positive.
5. Also, my relationship to my family was blossoming into a powerful amazing friendship. The difficulty that had been there changed and I felt warm towards my parents and we became close like we are now.

The spiritual longing was there from the beginning:

1. As long as I can remember this yearning was there, which made it very painful to live in this place where I felt to emotionally isolated.
2. Up to the age of 16 I was fighting a lot because I had nowhere to express all that.

A new life in London:

1. It was a vulnerable time for me. I had stopped building that foundation for later life, studying, getting a job etc. like all other young people do.
2. Instead of the ordinary life, I'd chosen to live in a spiritual environment 24 hours a day.
3. My philosophy is that spiritual can be anything, even the most simple things.
4. London was a new era where I had to integrate my spiritual learning in normal life and I had been away from the system of society so London was a shock.
5. I went through stages, had resistances, saw the separation of myself from my spirituality.
6. Then I embraced what started to happen and it lead to a transformation and I started to study therapy.
7. Then all the things I needed to talk about could be expressed in different ways, not through a Lama but with a colleague.
8. Psychotherapy brought a new understanding to myself and there was fear and I wanted to fly away for years.
9. I couldn't stand it for a long time and I was thinking what am I doing, I don't belong here, what is the point of life, but surprisingly I stayed 6 years and I find that very interesting.

Why did you stay?

1. It was an investment in myself for the first time.
2. But I also created a lot of fears around me that I didn't have before and I see that now when I consider moving to the US and feel scared.
3. I can go anywhere and trust that universe, but I don't feel that anymore.
4. I created something very stable here, my space.
5. I had a really tough time here and started to lose my confidence.
6. I have that slight regret not finishing my studies in the US and I felt this was my last chance, my opportunity is coming back and if I don't do it now I won't.
7. I also began to question whether I want to endlessly live that spiritual life.
8. After spending so much time with them I began to question things and to change in my personal values, my own needs began to change.
9. Everything was fixed, there was no magic to explore, there was nowhere to go but to myself. Rather than the journey outside this was a time of the journey inside and my studies anchored me to do that for 5 years.
10. There were times of feeling I didn't belong, and wanting to leave, but I decided I wanted to complete my studies and not fall back.

The sense of belonging:

1. There is always something subtle there, a sense of not-belonging.
2. For many years I tried to adopt a system, culture, spiritual beliefs, and they partly fit for me but none were the answer.



3. Returning home, I could feel the gap between me and the people there was growing because I had changed but the pace of change there was slower, so more of the time I felt I didn't belong.
4. Many times I would imagine having to live in Greece, having no choice, and I feel panic, like suffocation and I wonder could I survive in my mind but I always perceive it as limited.

Suffocation:

1. I have always had a very strong sense of freedom.
2. Imposing things, trying to fit the rules, I just couldn't do it.
3. I can be flexible for a period of time, and I like to explore things, but then I have to find a way out.
4. I don't necessarily have to break the relationship but I will have to do something to find a way to have my freedom respected by others.
5. If it can't be negotiated then I have to go because freedom is my priority.

What if you couldn't go?

1. That's what happened here and it was hell.
2. But I found ways of doing things I liked and London is very big, there was always something different to do and other people.
3. I often took flights to visit friends in Europe and that was a way of breathing.

If you couldn't escape, take breaks, what would happen?

1. I don't know, I never experienced that.
2. The fear or panic is that I would lose my freedom.
3. If I lost my freedom it would be like a spiritual death.
4. The fear is something in me would die, it might be a complete illusion but that's what comes to me.
5. I haven't experienced that yet but I feel very very scared that going to the US this time is like that. I intend to commit myself to a job and study and I don't know if it will work out but I'm making a conscious decision to try, to have the experience.
6. I really want to get answers to these questions for myself, what will happen if I'm not able to escape? Will I lose my freedom or find a different kind of freedom?
7. I need to answer this in order to be in peace.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. To explore or find myself in the world.

How has it been since leaving?

1. It's been an adventure, a hard journey.
2. My expectations have changed along the way as I experienced things, and some have been met.
3. Other things were a complete surprise.
4. There's been a lot of pain, physical and emotional, and suffering, but that's inescapable.
5. I didn't think my life would be better back home even for a second.

What do you imagine it would have been like if you hadn't left?

1. More limited in that I wouldn't have come to these realisations and I would have been totally fixed and identified by the home culture because I wouldn't have been exposed to other cultures.

2. It would not have fitted my philosophy and it wouldn't have been an acceptable life.
3. I don't want to allow this to happen to me ever, to completely identify with the culture.
4. When I go home, people are so much into their Greek world that they don't allow themselves to grow up, they always judge things according to their Greekness.
5. This happens everywhere, its not specifically Greek, there are wonderful Greek qualities that I honour.
6. It's the total identification with something, (like in Buddhism too) to totally identify with a role, it becomes and elite and challenges are not wanted, and I perceive that as very limited.
7. In my spiritual practice I learned not to identify with anything because everything is empty anyway.

Travelling helps keep the larger picture:

1. When I move from place to place I can bring pieces of other experiences with me and I can leave behind things that I don't want to be part of me.
2. Travelling to different places, playing different roles, is for me an exploration of what human life is.
3. There was a longing for me to explore the differences, like living in a Buddhist culture, then Moslem, then Christian, not in books but by living there with them, wearing their clothes, praying their prayers, really exploring all that to put together the larger picture.
4. There's always at least slight differences but we're all human somewhere and I've observed that.
5. I don't have this need any more, I've done that now.

Fear:

1. I have an equal fear of success and of failure.
2. I can't explain it but if you are going to go for an opportunity, it becomes a kind of anchor. I need that for myself, like the studies in the US, so although I fear it I also love it.

Do you think of returning home?

1. No. I am afraid that if something happened to my mother I'd have to go there for a long time and I wouldn't like that. It would be difficult.
2. I feel like a failure in my own country.
3. Once you live there you feel a pull to live the way everyone does and people put pressure on you, check how you're living and I don't want that intrusion.
4. They can expect you to call them every day, that you share all of your life, eat from the same plate, the boundaries are not strong and I find that abusive.
5. If you don't accept their way there can be trouble.
6. Having things clear cut feels more healthy to me and its not like that in Greece.
7. Things I love is that they are very openhearted and I feel I am connected to these qualities, they are in my genes.

Feelings of the interview:

1. I wanted to do this because it's so about me and I haven't talked about myself for ages.
2. The questions were very useful and the style was almost like therapy so it was like a journey in itself.

3. I found it very useful to speak about these things that people don't usually ask about and I felt that you really knew all of these things.
4. I feel I've shared something of myself for the first time in a while, with someone I don't even know!
5. I did select the level of what I would say but there were point that really touched me deeply, like oops, and then move away again and I found that both useful and difficult.
6. I might go back to some of those point and it's perfect timing for this reflection for me, it's the theme of my life at this stage.

“Anna”

## Meaning Clusters

### **Exposure to another educational culture:**

1. Attending an American-Greek high school influenced my further studies and educational opportunities.
2. I studied psychology, arts, spirituality on scholarship in other American colleges and then the US.
3. Leaving for Cyprus was a good preparation for my final leaving at 19 and I knew I'd be away for years and couldn't wait.

### **Leaving home to develop personally:**

1. As an adolescent I was looking forward to leaving to experience what I couldn't at home and to escape the cultural role that would be imposed on me as a girl.
2. I needed space to expand, to express whatever was inside me because at home I was intellectually and spiritually suppressed.
3. I was different at home and that environment could not support my self-expression or hear my spirituality.
4. When I got my own apartment I felt more free and began to experiment.
5. Things were also difficult in my family but I felt that was not my problem or the reason for leaving.

### **The dominance of spiritual interests:**

1. My reasons for leaving home were inner and about what was happening in the world, why we are here, I wanted to find answers to spiritual questions.
2. As long as I remember this interest was there as a yearning that made me emotionally isolated from others around me and that was painful.
3. I had to choose between educational and spiritual directions.
4. My spiritual interests took control of me and I began a search for who I am, to trust visions, move to California.
5. Sometimes I regret that choice and leaving America before finishing my studies.
6. I travelled a lot in Asia, learning spiritual practices, sometimes living in isolation, then spent time travelling in Europe before coming to London.

### **Changes revealed through visits home:**

1. I could use visits back to my origin like a kind of mirror, reflecting how much I'd developed and the different stages I was going through.
2. Visiting home I could feel the gap between me and others growing because the pace of change was faster for me than at home, so I increasingly felt I didn't belong.
3. Others were influenced by my changes and gave me various feedback, not all positive, as I explored different parts of me, changed my appearance, way of speaking, and beliefs.
4. My family relationship improved into a positive friendship and I felt a new warmth towards my parents and we have remained close till now.

### **London as a new kind of choice:**

1. I felt vulnerable about stopping my preparation for later life and deciding to take the spiritual direction. I wasn't building a foundation through study, work etc. like other young people.
2. In London I had to integrate my spiritual learning in ordinary life and it was a shock to deal with society again.

3. I went through difficult stages of resistance until I embraced this life and let it transform me.
4. Studying therapy allowed a new avenue of expression for me and a new self-understanding.
5. I felt fear and wanted to escape for years, thinking what am I doing, I don't belong here, but surprisingly I stayed for 6 years, which is very interesting.

#### **The experience of staying:**

1. Staying put in London was the first time I'd decided to invest in myself.
2. I regretted not finishing my studies in the US and I felt this was my last chance, my opportunity coming back to me.
3. I had also began to doubt endlessly pursuing a spiritual life that I had begun to question. My own values and needs were changing.
4. It was difficult, I started to lose my confidence and lose the feeling that I could go anywhere and trust the universe.
5. I created a stable space here and now feel scared about moving on.
6. Completing my studies kept me here when I felt I didn't belong and wanted to leave.
7. Rather than journey outside, there was nothing else to explore, this was a time to journey inside and my studies were an anchor for 5 years.
8. Not leaving was like a kind of hell but I coped by exploring London, there was always different places and people, and by taking frequent flights to friends in Europe, that was a way of breathing (avoiding suffocation).

#### **Leaving as a kind of freedom:**

1. I have always had freedom as my top priority and I have a panic if I feel I would lose that.
2. Losing my freedom would be like a spiritual death, the fear is that something inside me would die.
3. Trying to fit myself into rules, imposing things on me, doesn't work.
4. I can be flexible for a period of time, I don't have to end the relationship, but then I have to have my freedom respected or I have to leave.
5. I don't know what would happen if I couldn't escape but my next move, to study and work in the US, is a conscious decision to experience that, and I'm very scared.
6. I really need to answer this question in order to be in peace – will I really lose my freedom or find a different kind of freedom?
7. I have an equal fear of success and failure but opportunities are also like an anchor, so something like going to study in the US, I love it and fear it.

#### **Identifying with one culture:**

1. There is always at least a subtle sense of not belonging.
2. If I'd stayed home I would have been fixed in a role there, limited by that perception and not had these realisations because I would not have been exposed to other cultures and this would be unacceptable for me.
3. For years I tried to adopt a system for myself, cultural or spiritual beliefs, but they only ever partly fit for me so none was the answer.
4. The thought of having no choice but to live back home brings panic and suffocation.
5. People are so into their culture that they don't grow up and always judge things from their own familiar references. I don't want this to happen to me ever, to

totally identify with a culture, spirituality, or role, it is so limiting and excludes challenges.

6. Spiritually I learned not to identify with anything because everything is empty.

**A bigger picture through travel:**

1. Travelling allows choices about what of yourself to bring with you and what to leave behind.
2. Travelling, unlike books, allows the living of difference, different beliefs, clothes, different roles, different places, in order to explore what human life is, to put together the larger picture.
3. There are always differences but we're also all human and I've been able to observe that but I'd don't need to continue to do that now.

**The experience since leaving:**

1. It's been a hard adventure, with some complete surprises.
2. Expectations have changed in interaction with experiences and some expectations have been met.
3. There has been a lot of physical and emotional pain and suffering and this is inescapable.
4. Don't regret leaving for a second and don't believe life would have been better at home.

**Thoughts of returning home?**

1. No thoughts of returning home and some fear that if something happened to my mother I'd have to return and that would be difficult.
2. I feel like a failure in my own country.
3. There is a lot of pressure to conform to the way of life and it feels intrusive, the boundaries are not strong and that feels abusive. Having things clear cut feels more healthy to me but that is not the culture.
4. I also love some of the qualities of my home culture and those are part of my own makeup.

**Feelings of the interview:**

1. This is an opportunity to talk deeply about myself for the first time in a long time.
2. People don't usually ask about these things and it was useful to talk to someone who understood so much about it, like a therapy session, like a journey.
3. I selected the level of what I would say but there were points that really touched me deeply, and then I'd move away again and I found that both useful and difficult.
4. It's perfect timing for me as I'm preparing to leave again and it's the theme of life for me at this point. I might go back to some of this later.

## **“Anna” Themes**

- 1. Exposure to a foreign educational culture can support pre-existing desires to leave and facilitate opportunities for foreign study.**
- 2. Escaping home limitations on personal development**
  - The home environment and its surrounding cultural environment can be experienced as limiting individual potentials, for example, due to available gender roles and a more supportive environment can be sought.
  - The home environment can be intellectually and spiritually suppressive for someone who experiences herself as different and the need to expand can necessitate leaving this environment.
  - Even when family difficulties exist, they may not be the primary motive for needing to leave home.
- 3. Spirituality as a driving life force**
  - Seeking answers to inner spiritual questions can lead an individual on a quest to foreign cultures.
  - Even at a young age it is possible to chose to dedicate one’s life to living in the foreign cultures that can teach spiritual practice rather than following the conventional life choices of one’s own culture.
  - A spiritual yearning can isolate one from others in the home environment who do not share this need and that isolation is painful and may enhance predispositions to leave one’s home.
  - Following a spiritual direction may necessitate giving up on education and other activities and may include isolation and years of travel.
- 4. Visits home can assess change:**
  - Visiting one’s origin, and getting feedback from family and friends, can indicate the degree one has changed and developed during experiences abroad. Home is like a reflecting mirror.
  - Others can react positively or negatively to these changes and the increasing gap that forms between the one who left and the ones who stayed behind as they change at different rates. It can also increase the alienation and lack of belonging for the person who left.
  - Visiting home after a period away can provide opportunities to form new, more positive relationships in previously difficult family situations.
- 5. Staying as a challenging choice (opposite choice to No.6):**
  - Settling in one place can require integrating extraordinary travel experiences into an ordinary daily life.

- Returning to a structured societal routine can be a shock, eliciting resistance until the new situation is embraced and the person allows herself to be transformed by it.
- Choosing to stop one's preparation for later life through pursuing conventional choices of study and work can eventually make a person feel vulnerable and regret this earlier choice. The motivation to rectify this can be strong enough to persevere through strong feelings such as fear, not belonging, wanting to escape, in order to finish a course of study that's providing new avenues of self-understanding.
- The choice to stay can feel like a decision to invest in oneself and like one's last chance.
- Exploring different environments and people as well as frequent holidays abroad can give the breathing space needed to stay put without feeling suffocated.
- Changing values and needs can lead one to question previous commitments but this process can also be difficult, causing a loss of confidence.
- If one stops travelling, the feeling that one can trust the universe and go anywhere may be replaced by fear of moving on and not wanting to leave a stable place.
- Rather than just journeying out into the world, it is also possible to journey inward, anchored through psychotherapeutic studies.

#### 6. Freedom through leaving:

- If freedom is one's primary value, losing freedom can cause deep panic and the feeling of a spiritual death.
- For people who value freedom, there can come a time when one can no longer be flexible about imposed rules and demands, and one's freedom must be respected or leave the situation. Leaving can be the expression of and survival of personal freedom.
- This type of person may have never stayed in a restricting situation long enough to know what would happen. It is imagined as very frightening, but staying and confronting this experience may lead to a feeling of peace and perhaps new expressions of freedom.
- Travelling allows freer choices about one's identity, what one brings and what one leaves behind.
- Travelling is the living of difference and this gives an insight into what is common to human life. It gives a bigger picture of life.
- Opportunities that require remaining settled for some time can feel like an anchor and be both feared and loved at the same time.
- P has lived enough of the differences in cultures to not feel the need to continue to explore this through travel now.

#### 7. The limits of identification with one culture (a comment on No.6):

- Staying in one place can result in being fixed, limited, while always at least subtly not belonging.



- Exposure to other cultures is less restrictive, allowing one to experience various beliefs or views without having to become identified with any one which would only partly fit the person anyway.
- To be totally identified with one's own culture can prevent one from growing up and being open to challenges.

#### 8. The experience since leaving:

- It has been a difficult journey with a lot of inescapable physical and emotional suffering.
- It has been an adventure with some complete surprises and with changing expectations as the years have gone on.
- There is absolutely no regret about leaving and no belief that life would have been better by staying at home.

#### 9. Thoughts of returning home:

- Thoughts of returning home still generate fear, panic, and suffocation for P and she would find it difficult to return to look after her mother if that was necessary.
- The culture creates significant pressure to conform to a way of life and it feels intrusive to P. She prefers clear-cut boundaries but strong boundaries don't exist and that can feel abusive.
- P feels like a failure in her own country.
- P loves some of the qualities of her home country and she feels those exist in her own genetic makeup.

#### 10. Feelings of the interview:

- The interview was experienced as an opportunity to talk deeply about oneself for the first time in a long time.
- It was like a journey or a therapy session to talk to someone who understood so much about these things that people don't usually talk about.
- P monitored the level of her emotional disclosures but there were moments that touched her deeply, and she found that both useful and difficult.
- P is preparing to leave again so its perfect timing to be able to explore what is the theme of her life at present.
- P feels she might return to some of these feelings later.

## "Camille"

GM1 - The first question I'd like to ask is a very general question, if you could begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - OK. I left home about 13 months ago. I had been thinking about moving out of Glasgow for some time, and it took, after many years actually, and it took a while to get the kind of, courage of my convictions and make that move. I came down here because I had already been offered the job here at the SPC, and I waited until there was a sort of critical mass of people that I knew in London and before I took the risk, it felt like a bit of a risk. But I was unhappy and feeling stuck in a rut at home, so that was what precipitated the move. Strangely enough my, anyway my father died at the end of May and although I had, he had been ill for a couple of years leading up to his death, but the death came unexpectedly and I had talked to him about moving to London before, but I think it would have been actually harder, without sounding callous, there was a feeling of liberation I suppose that came with the death, because he'd been very ill before and it would have been hard for me to leave a very ill parent who I was so close to, so close to him, ..... and I did feel some guilt about leaving my mum, kind of, fairly, newly bereaved, but I don't think that was as strong a feeling as it would have been to leave him so ill.

GM2 - So are you saying that when you were in Glasgow there were a few things going on and there was some feeling in you of unhappiness or dissatisfaction about staying there, but at the same time there were relationships to your family, your father, that was kind of, keeping you there?

P2 - Yes, that's a good description of it.

GM3 - And what was the unhappiness? Do you know what that was about?

P3 - I felt dissatisfied with how my life was panning out. I had been doing a PhD for four years, I was enrolled in a PhD programme for four years and I finally abandoned that at the end of '97 and started doing admin' work after that, which was always thought of as a short term measure, so I felt as if my career wasn't going anywhere and there didn't seem to be a great deal of avenues open to me in Glasgow. Also I felt that my peer group was changing, my closest friend had got pregnant and had had a baby just before I came down here and I must admit I felt as if people were moving to different stages in their lives and I was being a bit left behind. In fact, she did physically move as well, she moved to Rotterdam, I was very close to her, so I think if she hadn't moved, again I would have found it difficult to leave home. And other friends were getting married and having children, and that was having the effect of making me feel quite kind of, a remnant from a bygone era almost (laughs).

GM4 - So it sounds like there's this funny thing about having stayed in one place and that actually bringing some pretty drastic changes?

P4 - Yes, the changes that had happened to other people actually impacted a lot on making me aware of my lack of change. And it was interesting because I never really felt at home in Glasgow as a child, because my parents, I've got Tartan blood in me so

my parents, my father was Australian and my mum is from the South of England, and so neither of them had Scottish accents. Before I started school I didn't have a Scottish accent and even though I quite rapidly acquired one as a survival mechanism, there was always a feeling of being a bit of a phoney actually at not really being Scottish, and not being Scottish enough. And my family was seen as quite different from Scottish families that I met, and they didn't socialise with Scottish people, they socialised exclusively actually with, they were both lecturers, so with the academic community which tended to kind of, quite an international bunch of people. So, if there was any sense of home, there was a sense of home in that academic community and I think that's really why I found it extremely difficult to leave, to let go of the PhD, and in fact I suffered a bit of a breakdown because I was absolutely terrified of the outside world, outside the confines of academia. I hadn't been equipped really to ..... which really had an indication of how to function outside that world.

GM5 - Can I just ask just out of my own curiosity, what was the PhD in?

P5 - In English Literature. I was writing about a contemporary, Californian, gay author called Dennis Cooper. Interesting man.

GM6 - So it sounds as though your experience of Glasgow was actually, rather than a homogeneous Scottish environment, it was really quite an international environment?

P6 - Yes. I'd say so, yes.

GM7 - And why did you stay so long if you didn't really feel at home in the wider context?

P7 - Well, strangely this feeling of not being at home was equally matched by a feeling of wanting to be accepted there, and so I, and maybe all children do this and put the opposite of their home environment conditions as very highly prized and I really wanted to be a proper Scottish person. I wanted to have this very kind of, standard experience that I thought my friends were having, so yes, and I mean, I still, I probably, have this weird, ambivalent relationship with, I still pride Scottish-ness a great deal and I would like to be able to claim it as my own identity, and maybe it's easier actually to do that out of Scotland than it is to do it in Scotland.

GM8 - What would that mean to you? To have that kind of firm identity of being Scottish?

P8 - That would mean being accepted, as being safe and feeling confident, (pause) but I suppose not feeling freakish, the absence of feeling freakish. A (pause) kind of steady, stable kind of, faith in which to root an identity on.

GM9 - And you have a sense that some of your friends that were more firmly rooted in Glasgow, and their families go back for generations or whatever, that they have this safety and confidence?

P9 - They seem to yes, but then I might have just have been projecting this onto them, I don't know. Yes, I mean, also a kind of way of relating to each other, there's a kind of banter thing that I suppose I've always really wanted to be able to do and not felt able to do, and just, I suppose the way their families are all sort of, interconnected. Maybe it's

particularly working class Glaswegians I'm talking about. They just seem to have this kind of aloofness, I get a mixture of kind of quite hard, bitter, but also quite humorous way of looking at life. A lightness.

GM10 - And you'd like to belong to that?

P10 - Yes.

GM11 - So you said moving down to London, it sounded like you had almost to work your way up to that and that there was some risk involved? What seemed risky about that?

P11 - I suppose fear of the unknown. Of feeling isolated and I suppose that was why it was easier when there were some friends that I knew here and at the same time that that was being eroded in Glasgow, actually that sense of being connected with a group of people. So, yes, I suppose there was that feeling that everything, it might be a very isolating experience, I might feel very alone in a city without, although I wasn't frightened of what that meant in terms of not fitting into a dominant culture, because I didn't feel that I fitted in to the dominant culture anyway, and anyway I kind of, guessed that London would be so diverse and so much of a melting pot that there wouldn't be just one group that you know, you would be on the outside of when you're just newly arrived.

GM12 - It's interesting, it sounds almost as though in some ways, you kind of had to go to a new place in order to feel some of the belonging and sense of identity you were looking for?

P12 - Yes, or certainly at least share a sense of a lot of people being outsiders, and that most people didn't come from London, that they've moved here from other places. And also, at odds with that there's the sense of, yes, I can be more Scottish here, that that's something that people pick up on, they don't question, I think in Glasgow my accent was quite ..... quite a middle class accent and here, and maybe people would kind of, question the voracity of my accent at home, but here it was just a sort of, instantly assigned me to being Scottish, and that seems to be quite positively perceived.

GM13 - So what's that like for you?

P13 - I like it because I would have liked to have been, because well the values that I associate with Scottish-ness that pleases me but at the same time there's a slight sort of vestige of feeling of inauthenticity and quite often I will explain to people that I'm not properly Scottish and I'm not a proper Scot.

GM14 - What would you have to be to be a proper Scot?

P14 - I suppose a kind of sense of your right to be there, I suppose, because I don't really feel that we had a right to be there or that we really fitted in. I mean, I don't even think it has to be a sort of generational claim to having been from there, and then maybe it was the fact that other groups, that there wasn't any attempt to really kind of be part of the dominant culture by my parents. I suppose that was their choice and that impacted on us. Strangely not my brothers so much, I think they're much more at ease with their Scottish-ness, but I think it always me feel a bit fraudulent and inauthentic,

because almost I felt my parents' non assimilation, their voluntary non assimilation as a kind of dismissal of Scottish-ness.

GM15 - That somehow they didn't value it?

P15 - Yes.

GM16 - It's interesting. The impression I'm getting is that a place like Scotland where there's quite a strong identity of what is Scottish and maybe what isn't Scottish, that your experience of that is both to have an attraction to being part of that and also because it's quite a strong identity a feeling of being excluded from it?

P16 - Yes, I think that's exactly right. And it was made more complicated by the fact that my mother's from the South, she's English. So as far as, I mean, one of the aspects of Scottish-ness that I don't like, that as I understand is that as a nation it's been oppressed by England historically, they still have a huge hatred of the English, so my mother was the enemy in a lot of people's minds, and I suppose there was that sense of corruption by her English-ness as well, and strangely I mean, I always found it much easier to kind of, associate myself with my dad's Australian-ness which didn't have any of those negative connotations, I kind of almost hated my mum for being English, it was part of a hated group I suppose.

GM17 - I can imagine that could be quite a difficult position for you to be in, kind of on the edge of not belonging and belonging to a family that, because of your mother I suppose, were kind of rejected, and yet this strong feeling of wanting to belong?

P17 - Yes, it's funny, it's kind of like hating your oppressor I suppose in a way, because, I mean we were mocked, my father I remember at school quite clearly we had to do this run, this charity run and it went past our house and my dad was standing at the doorstep and he shouted some words of encouragement at a friend, and this just followed me around school for about three years of people mimicking my dad's accent (Laughs.). And you know, there was lots of mockery and it felt, maybe it wasn't as strong as feeling as shunned, but it felt like being shunned, but maybe that was a child intensifying something that wasn't supposed to be as strong as that. But yes, because it worked a similar way with my mum's family, my grandmother for instance finds it quite difficult to understand my brothers' Scottish accents, and she would sort of, suggest that we were putting it on, again kind of, dubbing it as inauthentic, this is not what you are, you're really English children living in Scotland. Why have you got these ridiculous accents? So, yes, it's quite a marginal position.

GM18 - Absolutely, it's like not being truly Scottish, not being truly English and almost being accused of pretending to be one or the other?

P18 - By both camps.

GM19 - Yes (Laughs.).

P19 - But I suppose at one stage I did feel that I just came from another planet. It just felt like I came from another planet.

GM20 - I'm still wondering, I guess I'm thinking if I was in that situation I don't know if I would want to stay very long? But you seemed to have stayed and really kind of, toughed it out?

P20 - It was this attraction/repulsion thing, or attraction. And fear, a sense of fear I think, that the, the outside, I mean I suppose it had parallels with this problem of letting go of the PhD and daring to kind of, go outside the confines of academia and to see if I could make my way in a world that I didn't know about. Similarly, it was this feeling of well, can I go outside this city, which although I have a problematic relationship to, it's the world that I at least know, I understand how it works because going off and being thrown into a situation where you don't really understand how the other place works.

GM21 - It sounds almost like there's this kind of, dynamic of sameness and difference and kind of, balancing that, but also this thing between the known and the unknown? Of what's known is problematic, there's something in that, it's not easily just tossed away?

P21 - Yes.

GM22 - And the unknown has some element of fear associated with it?

P22 - Yes, that's about, I mean it's quite a kind of, it feels like quite a comfortable trap to be in, to be feeling that fed up because you're not going anywhere, but you're kind of in an environment that's very familiar to you. It was sort of, an excuse for not achieving as well, because you just say oh, there aren't any opportunities here. And I suppose given that our position in that context as a family was quite weird, I suppose there was also a kind of close sense of wanting to stay near the family members too, that they give your life a sort of meaning because we found that easily attainable outside. But again, I mean it was a sort of hating, feeling resentful of the heritage that they'd given us. Given me. And sort of not wanting to replicate their way of life and not being able to. But at the same time finding it really difficult to extricate myself from it and move away without that kind of weird little family unit that you just didn't make sense in any other context, in that you would kind of dissolve. Yes, so I suppose that was an unknown thing, too.

GM23 - What is so frightening about the unknown?

P23 - That it's unpredictable. (pause) That you're alone. (pause) You don't, I mean, I also found it exciting this idea of being able to recreate yourself because *you* are unknown and that there would be unknown opportunities, but I suppose the sense of that it would, there was no sort of validity in terms of being able to predict what it would be like.

GM24 - The scary thing about the unknown is that it's not known?

P24 - Yes. (Laughs.) That's probably the best way of putting it.

GM25 - (Laughs.) OK, I'm just wondering, after talking about this for a little while, as you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you really left?

P25 – (long pause) I suppose it was to see what would happen, to give myself space to see how I would emerge, to kind of remove, get away from all those quite conflicting, debilitating sets of pressures about who, about identity, to just see what happens in a neutral kind of environment. Let myself emerge, I suppose.

GM26 - What was it that you wanted to come out from that ..... ?

P26 - A sense of freedom I suppose.

GM27 - Freedom in what sense?

P27 - Freedom from feeling that I wanted to fit in, but that as hard as I tried I couldn't fit in. It was impossible to fit in because everything just seemed so contradictory. And also, as hard as I tried to fit in with for instance the chronology of my friends' lives, their deepening attachments, weddings and babies and things, the desire for it was preventing me from actually functioning at all, so that to free myself from all those pressures and find space to see what happens I suppose without trying too hard to put yourself, to compete with other people, and to try to run is quite ridiculous, race to kind of keep up with what it would take to be properly Scottish, or to try and keep up with what my friends were doing. Just to remove those pressures. (pause)

GM28 - It sounds to me a little bit as though, and correct me if I'm wrong, I don't know if this is right, almost as though there was a point where you had to leave in order to keep things the same, which is possible? Change was intruding on a life, I know there's difficulties to your life anyway, but it's like your friends are changing, things were changing anyway, you couldn't avoid that, but if you left to come to London there might be a chance of kind of re-establishing a way of being that wasn't so unfamiliar to you?

P28 - I think there's some truth in that, it's intriguing that, and certainly that in some ways some process of judgement could be suspended here that I think fits in with that, that I felt that it, and it's an internal judgement, but that it was becoming obvious that I wasn't moving on and that I was underachieving in an employment sense, and also in a sense of achieving life goals or whatever, and moving on. I suppose by moving away without having those comparisons with your friends and things so obvious, yes, when I left it felt like less of a judgement, though it's a bit confused.

GM29 - It is confusing, isn't it? It's very complicated?

P29 - Yes.

GM30 - Very complicated to bring the strands together? I guess I'm wondering what, I have a little bit of an idea of the belonging aspect and why that's important and you spoke about that, and I'm not too sure about, this almost, being compared and judged in some way? What was it about that, what does that do to you? What's that experience like?

P30 - I think it was something that was internal and to a certain extent I kind of projected it out so I felt that other people would judge me and look at me and say, what's she done with her life? And it felt really painful, that felt really painful, (gets emotional) that feeling of not having done as well as other people, as I perceived it,

having lived up to my own expectations of what life would be at this point, at this particular age, I think it was quite linked with age.

GM31 - You had some expectations of what life at that age should be like?

P31 - Yes.

GM32 - And you felt that you somehow hadn't met those expectations?

P32 - Yes, that I was falling way short of them.

GM33 - OK.

P33 - And I mean that, those feeling are still there, but they seem to have, they're lessened. Maybe it's a diversionary tactic actually, that if you just move and create lots of new stimulus for yourself, and also the sense of possibility, there's much more of a sense of possibility here, richness of possibilities. But somehow it's not such an intensely bearing down on you feeling of depression I suppose, an inability to see how things could change for you, for me. So whether geographical change maybe in a sense gives the illusion or gives the sense that change is possible. (pause)

GM34 - That leads on to something I was wanting to ask, if you reflect back you've been away for 13 months?

P34 - Yes.

GM35 - So if you just reflect back over the 13 months, what's it been like for you?

P35 - It's been intense, it's been enlivening and yes, I suppose it made me feel more alive than I had done for a long time, many years. I like novelty actually, I like change, although it frightens me there's a kind of weird sort of standing at the edge of the diving board, you know, actually once I've made myself go, I don't like that process of making myself go (Laughs.), but I like it, I like the change and meeting new people and investigating new places. It's exciting. But at the same time it seems, it's been really unsettling, incredibly unsettling. I mean, I'm now in my third flat. The first flat I was asked to leave after 3 months and they couldn't qualify why they wanted me to go, they just said they didn't like me and didn't want me to stay. That was horrible.

The next place I lived in the first night I was there I was caught up in the midst of a domestic abuse scenario and the landlady said kind of, was being badly beaten by her boyfriend and I had to intervene and she proceeded, that kind of ended up being, although it wasn't violent again, but they were living a very excessive lifestyle, lots of drugs and emotional ups and downs, and drink, and it was a very small house, so that impacted and I ended up feeling so, not frightened but, I mean I didn't want to leave my room, sometimes I would just go straight up to my bedroom and kind of, see if the coast was clear to venture out to go to the loo and not even wanting to go down and make tea because it felt like a fairly unsafe environment to be in. And then it was very difficult, I kind of lost my confidence in the ability to find a household that would be alright and so it was, I stayed there longer than I should have I think.



I finally found the place that I'm currently in, in November, and that's been great. Strangely enough she's Scottish, my flatmate, and I met here when, she was the girlfriend of somebody else who had been advertising a room in a flat and I went to look at his room and didn't want to move in there but then found out she was looking for a flat. And she had a tenuous connection with my family actually, she was a friend of my brother's girlfriend, so somehow she was locatable and she seemed like a safe bet.

GM36 - (Laughs.).

P36 - I don't know whether it's because, I'm sure it's not because she's Scottish, but anyway we have got on really well and that's worked out, but the kind of, constant having to move and upheaval and things was really a horrible and unsettling start to my life in London. So yes, it's been very much like an emotional roller coaster. But then I think that's been better than the quite oppressively, increasingly oppressively, heavy feeling of not having achieved enough or, being a failure essentially back home.

GM37 - So, it sounds like getting out of that environment, that even if you had internalised some of that judgement or whatever it was, that being in this environment doesn't seem to recreate itself in the same way?

P37 - Maybe there's just so much going on it doesn't have a chance to prey on me, (laughter) I think there's an element of that. And I think there is sense that there's lots of opportunity here. There seems to be more opportunity to meet new people, so at times when I felt that I was really going nowhere on the relationship front at home it felt like there only were sort of, five single men left in Glasgow, and I'd been out with them all and been dumped by them all probably (Laughs.), so that feels more positive here. And also, in terms of job prospects and training prospects and things, it feels like there's more scope, and maybe having taken the risk, maybe it sort of, maybe it creates the conditions where you can take more risks maybe, maybe you feel that well, I've survived this, and it's been pretty tough, and I can go on to try other things that are intimidating in prospect. So, it has that kind of, strengthening aspect to it. It kind of counters the internal judge thing, yes.

GM38 - It makes me wonder if something about this newness and kind of, going into the unknown as you have, that something about that changed you in some way, and you changed the way you see yourself for some reason?

P38 - Yes, I think it has. I think it's given me a bit of pride and I think pride was the thing that was lacking (emotional). I think that that's probably the connecting thing that the shame attached to not being Scottish enough and the shame attached to being 30 and single, and the shame attached to having given up the PhD, and the shame attached just doing secretarial work, and somehow that actually having survived and having managed to cope with it all has given me a sense of pride. It's maybe quite a new emotion actually for me.

GM39 - OK. So, it makes me wonder if you'll ever return home?

P39 - Oh no, the climate's too awful (Laughs.).

GM40 - (Laughs.)

P40 - ..... I don't know.

GM41 – Unlike here (Laughs.).

P41 - I don't know. Maybe it gives me a sense that in fact what my kind of, mixed heritage gave me was a kind of world citizenship or something like that, a feeling of actually maybe I could make homes in other places because my parents had to make a home in a new place and maybe I have that ability also. So, I mean I don't think that I would stay in London, that always seem to be a sort of launching pad, the first place that you leave home to go to, the sort of obvious choice, and then kind of go to the next place. But I don't, I felt weird when I first went back to Glasgow because I felt really strange because I found it easier to be sentimental about it, easier to kind of look at it as an affectionate visitor, but it didn't feel, none of that feeling of kind of, all the authenticity and authenticity about my own Scottish-ness all that stuff didn't feel, you know, I thought well I don't live here anyway so I'm perfectly entitled to come up and visit my family, you know, I'm just visiting, and I've every entitlement to do that.

I can imagine myself going back to Scotland, but I can't imagine myself going back to Glasgow, in fact I can imagine living in Edinburgh, living in the Highlands maybe, but I don't think I'll go back to Glasgow.

GM42 - It sounds like going back as a visitor you find it has some legitimate relationship, it sounds like?

P42 - Yes.

GM43 - It's interesting (Laughs.).

P43 - Yes, it's weird, it feels more like home in a way without that being so fraught, yes. I do feel much more legitimate about being there.

GM44 - And the other side of what you said I'm interested in as well. It sounds like moving to London might be the start of some process of discovering that you belong to the world in some way? As if that's your belonging, perhaps more than belonging to one particular place?

P44 - Yes. I think although the idea of living in a culture with a different language is intimidating, I think the notion of being able to kind of, that somehow it's freeing not to have this close, this defined feeling of a national identity, somehow that's quite a freeing thing not to have. Or I just feel quite fluid about it. It enables you to feel like it was easier to fit in to completely different cultures. And maybe that comes from, I think about my dad when I say that, because I think about the move across from one continent on the other side of the world to this one, and I think about my mother and I think about how she's sort of struggled against adversity really to make a place to feel at home in a culture where she's actually been quite cruelly treated, and ironically because of the fact that actually she

*[tape changes over.....]*

P44 cont. - Felt more at home in Glasgow and that was politically, but because of her accent she was perceived from the outside as being a snob, part of the English ruling

class or something. The fact that she stuck that out and managed to make a place for herself there I find that, it's quite an encouraging example.

GM45 - How did that encourage you?

P45 - (laughs) You don't need to be liked to be at home, and this being liked thing, I suppose. I suppose it's quite sort of central to me.

GM46 - It's like being at home and being welcome are so linked?

P46 - Yes.

GM47 - And your experience is not really to have been as welcomed as...?

P47 - Yes, that's exactly it, yes. That's it in a nutshell. It gives you a sort of, I mean I suppose to be at home in yourself is my goal now. I suppose that's what I mean about freedom and the world citizenship or whatever, is that if you could feel, or if I could kind of feel at home within myself that that would enable me to be at home anywhere. And that's a quite difficult to achieve because it does mean looking at these feelings of not belonging and not being authentic and things like that, and kind of working through those, childhood feelings, experience and kind of coming to terms with them. And I think this seeing yourself in different contexts, it's easier to spot elements of continuity or just find out who you are. Somehow the things that stay the same you know, are easier to spot, or you're closer to that aspect, it's easier to spot.

GM48 - So, you started to find out who you are by being aware of yourself and being in different situations?

P48 - Yes.

GM49 - And start to piece together what's you?

P49 - Yes. Yes, and certainly moving out of Glasgow where there was so much trying to be, trying to be things, and acquiring accents, not consciously, I didn't consciously just put on an accent, but you know, there was a definite striving to want to be something that actually removing yourself from that context and seeing what you really, what you strive to be in the next context or what is no longer important, in some ways gives quite a jumbled person like me a bit of a clearer sense of what is essential to you and what is just about your environment.

GM50 - Can I ask one more thing, it sounds as though part of the sometimes painful difficulties and conflict of this living in Glasgow was wanting to belong to this culture, this society of human people who had such a strong identity that they rejected anyone who was different? I wondering, is that right?

P50 - I would say that they have such a strong identity, but it's kind of like a victim identity in a way, and so they have to continually to maintain their strong identity by a sense of an oppressor and England, so I think they're quite welcoming to other people, but just the specifically English.

GM51 - So why did you want to belong to that group?

P51 - Just people that didn't like my mother .....

GM52 -(Laughs.).

P52 - I think there's probably some element of that.

GM53 – OK – that you had some allies there?

P53 - Yes, somehow the kind of, the fact that I suppose I was quite resentful, for some reason, I don't know why she should have to be the one that perhaps takes responsibility for choosing where you bring your children up, it's just kind of fate that brought both of them there independently of one another and that's where they met, but I suppose there was a sense of resentment against her particularly and that somehow that was justifiable because as a nation they were bad. It was justifiable to feel bitter towards them. This powerful and don't really think very carefully about the impact on, I'm getting jumbled now, why did I want to be part of a group that was so opposed, so closed in their conditions of?

GM54 - It sounds like there was an oppressive-ness there?

P54 - Yes.

GM55 - And I'm wondering what was really so important about belonging to that?

P55 - I think there was mistaken belief that external approval with me would translate as, would make me feel OK about myself, that that in fact is all you needed to fit in. But in fact any feelings of not being OK, that you didn't like yourself very much was because you were weren't part of this group. So if this group liked you then you would be OK, I suppose it's like kids and wanting to be part of the popular gang at school, there was an element of that, if you could be accepted by them then you would be an alright person, so that you could be accepted by sort of salty hard bitten Scots then. The you fulfilled quite a high criteria or a quite exacting criteria with them about whether you were an OK person.

GM56 - So what if you weren't an OK person? What would that matter?

P56 - In a sense of being part of the dominant group or just in a larger sense of not being OK?

GM57 - Well, in sounds like you're saying it's part of wanting to belong is to feel OK?

P57 - Yes.

GM58 - So what if you didn't belong? So what? What if nobody accepted you? .....

P58 – (pause) I can't function without feeling like I'm in a network of people, I can connect with the people, I would find it very difficult to sustain, you know, on a desert island outcast whatever, and that would be the equivalent of it, you know, just feeling, incredibly sad, can't imagine feeling happy and feeling alone, I can't imagine. I mean,

alone as a matter of choice, in some sense is one thing, but that's for a temporary period, but permanent isolation is.

GM59 - Well yes, that's interesting in itself, that it's not choosing to be in solitude, it's being exiled almost?

P59 - Yes.

GM60 - Do have a sense of what it is about connecting with others that brings happiness to you?

P60 - I think it's because it takes me away from a kind of self criticism really that actually in isolation on my own I revert back to this little internal judge that says you've not achieved, you've not done anything, you've not lived up to that, you can be heard, when in fact other people are the best diversion from that. There's a release from that sense of low self worth. Yes, it's something about connecting I suppose makes me feel like I'm a little success every time, and maybe that was to do with feeling part of a, quite alone as a child both in Glasgow and I suppose the position in the family as well, having got siblings that were much younger, there was an age gap, and I'm the only girl. I suppose maybe that has got something to do with it as well.

GM61 - It's interesting, it sounds as though to some extent you really have this experience of not quite belonging since childhood?

P61 - Yes.

GM62 - And some people's response to that is, you know, since I didn't belong anyway it's easy for me to just go?

P62 - Yes.

GM63 - Your response to that is seem, if I've understood, is that not belonging kind of reinforced the importance of belonging?

P63 - Yes.

GM64 - And sometimes keeping in those difficult situations to fight this?

P64 - Yes, it's kind of like battering at a window, you know, and seeing people there and let me in! (Laughs.). What do I have to do be let in? Oh dear, do whatever was necessary to be let in, and that meant actually compromising things that were you know, acquiring things that didn't feel right, you know putting on clothes that didn't feel right, in a sense I didn't quite feel right and adopting views that didn't feel right. But it was of vital importance to be accepted and let in to that group. But then that in itself becoming harmful because then there was this loss of myself, so as I got closer to being able to be part of it there was an internal kind of disintegration, because I lost a sense of home, I was getting further and further from the internal home and trying to be accepted to find this external sort of belonging. Because there was a kind of, yes, without, there was a feeling of fraudulence, stronger than inauthenticity, it was of being fraudulent.

GM65 - So the closer you got to maybe being accepted out there and belonging and feeling at home with others out there, the more incompatible you were with yourself in some ways? Not feeling at home with yourself?

P65 - Yes. I mean I haven't really thought it through before, but I think that's what, it did happen.

GM66 - That where you grew up being at home with yourself and being at home in the culture were something incompatible?

P66 - Things seems to be, to end up like that yes.

GM67 - And moving away to a place like London I'm wondering if there has been more of a match between being at home with yourself and finding a more open situation?

P67 - Yes. And I think it's the openness which is the pivotal thing. I think it's the sense, and the hybridity of it, the sense of, there it felt like it was quite defined and solid and immovable the kind of criteria that you had to meet, whereas here there just seems to be a whole load of, there was just such a variety of people and whose history was so chequered. In fact, maybe the thing that defines most people that I've met is that they've moved, that they didn't feel sufficiently at home where they came from to want to stay, and that somehow there was a meeting of, there was a kind of feeling of comradeship there and a connection there, similarities which bridges the difference.

GM68 - One final question, and that is just what does it feel like to be talking about these kind of things?

P68 - Strangely emotional actually, and confusing. I felt quite sad at times and tearful, and very confusing, but somehow actually thinking about how confusing it is is illuminating, and actually feeling a great deal that, I suppose for a little girl that had a sad feeling about not belonging (very emotional). (long pause) And it's kind of relieving actually to think about that, think that through. It feels better, a sort of unblocking of something that's been quite blocked. It's still quite confusing. I think it's something that will actually kind of, maybe emerge, unravel and clarify as time goes on a bit. And also there's a mounting nice feeling of kind of, having moved on, having been able to talk like this and, I suppose that's another unblocking kind of moving thing, and that you can reach a stage where you can feel compassionate for the person that was so stuck and feeling so thwarted. Yes, it's really quite a valuable experience actually.

GM69 - Yes, it sounds like you, now in your life you have the distance to be able to look back in a way that is helpful?

P69 - Yes. And it's funny to think of actually, I don't know, I used the analogy in terms of Scotland and the nation having this victim sensibility, but I think I also was in a victim role with regard to my national identity. My notion of people that keep getting bashed by their husbands and keep going back for more kind of thing. Thinking about now how weird it was to be in that culture that was such a shun to me, and wanting more and more out of it, it just feels like that maybe I adopted a kind of victim relationship. That's interesting.

GM70 - Is there anything else that you want to add that I didn't ask and should have asked? (laughter)

P70 - I can't think of anything at the time being, but as I say, I think I'll, I've got food for thought now, so if anything comes up I'll let you know.

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## **“Camille” Meaning Units**

### **The circumstances of leaving home:**

1. I'd been thinking of leaving my hometown for many years and just 13 months ago I got the courage of my convictions and left.
2. I was offered a job here and there was a critical mass of people I knew here, but it still felt like a risk.
3. I was unhappy and stuck in my life at home so that prompted me.
4. My father's death just before I left made the leaving easier, I felt somewhat liberated by his dying.
5. It would have been hard for me to leave a very ill parent who I was so close to.
6. I also felt some guilt leaving my mother quite newly bereaved but leaving my dad would have been harder.
7. Relationships were keeping me there though I was unhappy.

### **What was the unhappiness?**

1. Dissatisfaction with my life.
2. I'd given up on my PhD, temporarily doing admin. work, feeling of lack of opportunity and my career going nowhere.
3. I felt like peers were moving into different stages, like getting married and having kids, and I was being left behind.
4. Other's changes made me aware of my lack of change.
5. I never felt at home in Glasgow. My mother is from the south and my father was Australian so neither had Scottish accents.
6. I had to acquire a Scottish accent as soon as I went to school to survive.
7. I always felt like a phoney, not actually being Scottish enough.
8. My family was seen as different and we socialised with others in the academic community, quite international, not with Scottish families.
9. The only sense of home was in the academic community, so letting go of my PhD meant letting go of that world and I was terrified of the world outside the confines of academia.
10. I wasn't equipped to function in the outside world and I had a breakdown.

### **Why did you stay so long there?**

1. The feeling of not being at home was matched by a wanting to be accepted there.
2. I prized the opposite of my own family environment and instead wanted to be a proper Scottish person, to have the standard experience I thought my friends were having.
3. I still pride Scottish-ness and would like to claim it as my identity and maybe it's easier to do that outside of Scotland.
4. To have that firm Scottish identity would mean being accepted, being safe, feeling confident, the absence of feeling freakish.
5. A steady stable faith to root an identity in.
6. My Scottish friends seem to have a way of relating to each other, a banter that I've always wanted but been unable to do.
7. Their families are all interconnected, particularly working class Glaswegians.



8. They have an aloofness, a hard bitterness mixed with humour and lightness and I'd like to belong to that.

What was risky about moving down to London?

1. Fear of the unknown and of being isolated, I needed a sense of being connected to a group of people.
2. I didn't want to feel very alone in the city, although not fitting into the dominant culture didn't bother me as I was used to that, and I guessed London would be more of a melting pot anyway.
3. I would be sharing the sense of being an outsider with a lot of people that didn't come from London, living here.
4. I felt I could be more Scottish here, people don't question it here.
5. In Glasgow my accent was quite middle class and here people don't pick up on that, they won't question the veracity of it.
6. I like that but there's still the feeling of inauthenticity and I often explain I'm not a proper Scot.

What do you need to be a proper Scot?

1. A sense of your right to be there. We didn't have that and we didn't fit in.
2. We didn't make any attempt to be part of the dominant culture. That choice impacted on us, but my brothers less so.
3. I always felt fraudulent and inauthentic because my parent's non-assimilation was a kind of dismissal of Scottish-ness, they didn't value it.
4. And the Scottish have a hatred of the English and my mother is English, so she was the enemy.
5. I found it easier to associate myself with my father's Australian-ness because it didn't have those negative associations.
6. I almost hated my mom for being English.
7. People would also mimic my dad's accent, there was lots of mockery.
8. It felt like being shunned.
9. On the other side my mother's mother also doesn't see us as really Scottish but as English children living in Scotland and she indicates we're putting on our accents.
10. I've ended up in quite a marginal position, not English or Scottish and accused by each of pretending to be the other.
11. It just felt like I came from another planet.

And you stayed a long time in that difficult position

1. There was this attraction, and a sense of fear of the outside.
2. It was daring to let go of the world I knew and trying to make my way in a world I knew little about.
3. Could I leave this city that I have a problematic relationship with, but that I at least know, I understand how it works. (a dynamic of sameness and difference and known and unknown, where the known and same is valued).
4. It was a comfortable trap to be in, to not be going anywhere but in a familiar environment.
5. It was also an excuse for not achieving because one could just say there aren't any opportunities.

6. Also, to stay near the family because we gave each other a sort of meaning that isn't easily attainable outside the family.
7. But there was also resentment of being given this heritage and I didn't want to replicate my parent's way of life.
8. But it was hard to move away from the family unit because I just didn't make sense in any other context, I would dissolve without that.
9. The unknown is frightening because it's unpredictable and being alone with it.
10. On the other hand I also found it exciting to be able to recreate myself because I am unknown and there would be unknown opportunities.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. To see what would happen in a neutral environment. To give myself space to see how I would emerge.
2. To get away from all the conflicting, debilitating sets of pressures about identity.
3. I wanted a sense of freedom from feeling that I wanted to fit in but couldn't.
4. I needed to free myself from the pressures to move along with my friend, marriage, babies, I couldn't function with those pressures.
5. I couldn't keep up with what my friends were doing or with trying to be properly Scottish.
6. There's some truth that escaping to London meant I could keep things the same and wouldn't have to change or keep up.
7. It was becoming obvious that I wasn't moving on and was underachieving in my career.
8. I felt less judgmental of myself when I left, less comparison with my friends.

What's it like to be compared and judged?

1. I think it was internal and I projected it onto others, so I felt others were asking what was I doing with my life.
2. That felt really painful (is emotional) the feeling of not doing as well as others.
3. Not living up to my own expectations of what life should be at this age. It was linked with age.
4. Those feeling have lessened a bit. Maybe it's partly diversion of all the new stimulation here, and the sense of more possibility here.
5. Here it's not the same intense depression bearing down and an inability to see how things could change. It might be illusion or a sense that now change is possible.

What's the last 13 months been like?

1. Intense, and enlivening, I feel more alive than for many years.
2. I like novelty and change, I don't like the process of diving into it but I like it once I've let go into it.
3. I like investigating new places and meeting new people, it's exciting.
4. It's also been incredibly unsettling. I've lived in 3 flats, the first two were horrible experiences and I kind of lost confidence in my ability to find a household.
5. My present flatmate is Scottish and has a distant link to my brother and it's working well.

6. We get on really well but it was unsettling until now with all the moving but still better than the increasingly oppressive feeling of being a failure back home.

#### **I feel less oppressed here**

1. It's partly that there's so much going on it doesn't prey on me so much.
2. It feels more positive that there are more men around and a relationship seems more possible.
3. There's more scope for work and training.
4. Having taken the risk to move here helps me take more risks, I've survived this, I can tackle other intimidating prospects.
5. It's strengthening, counters the internal judge.
6. I've got a bit of pride from going into the unknown here and that was lacking before (emotional).
7. There was shame to not being Scottish enough and shame about being 30 and single, and shame of giving up the PhD, and shame from doing just secretarial work. And surviving and coping with it all has given me pride, which is a new emotion for me.

#### **Will you ever return?**

1. Maybe I have a sense now that my mixed heritage gave me a kind of world citizenship.
2. Maybe I could make homes in other places because my parents had to make a home in a new place and maybe I have that ability also.
3. I don't expect to stay in London, this is more a launching pad, the obvious first step.
4. When I've gone back to visit I've felt strange, I found it easier to be sentimental, and affectionate visitor.
5. I didn't feel any of the authenticity/inauthenticity stuff about my Scottish-ness because I don't live there, so I'm perfectly entitled to visit my family.
6. I could imagine moving back to Scotland but not to Glasgow.
7. It feels more like home now, without all that fraught stuff, I feel more legitimate there now.

#### **And you might move out into the world more?**

1. Yes, but the idea of living in a culture with a different language is intimidating.
2. It's freeing not to have a close defined national identity.
3. Or now I feel quite fluid about my identity, like it's easier to fit into completely different cultures.
4. That reminds me of my dad's move from the other side of the world to live here, and I think of my mother's struggle against adversity to make a place to feel at home in a culture where she's been cruelly treated. They are an encouraging example.
5. It makes me feel you don't need to be liked to be at home, the being liked theme was central to me.
6. In Scotland I didn't feel as welcomed as I needed in order to feel at home.

#### **At home in oneself**

1. To be at home in myself is my goal now. That connects to the world citizenship and freedom, I could be at home anywhere then.
2. That's difficult to achieve because it means looking at these feelings of not belonging and not being authentic and working them through, childhood feelings.
3. Seeing oneself in different contexts makes it easier to see the elements of continuity and find out who you are. It's easier to spot what stays the same across different contexts to piece together who you are.
4. There was so much trying to be things in Glasgow that removing myself from there I felt less jumbled, more clear about what is essentially me and what it just the environment.
5. They have such a victim identity that they need the English oppressor to maintain their identity.
6. I mistakenly thought that external approval would make me feel Ok about myself, that's all I needed to fit in. All my negative feelings toward myself were because I didn't fit in, if the group accepted me I'd feel Ok about myself.
7. If I could be accepted by these hard Scots then I fulfilled a high exacting criteria and must be OK.

### Relationship to mother

1. I wanted to belong to that group partly because they didn't like my mother and I was quite resentful of her for bringing us up there. I blamed her for that, thought she was responsible.
2. I could justify my resentment of her because as a nation they were bad, my bitterness was justified.

### What if no one accepted you, you didn't belong?

1. I can't function without feeling I'm in a network of people, I need connection with others.
2. I couldn't sustain being an outcast. I would be incredibly sad, I couldn't be happy and alone. To choose to be alone temporarily is one thing, but being exiled permanently is not sustainable for me
3. Being with others takes me away from my internal critic, that judge that comes when I'm alone.
4. Other people are the best diversion from those internal messages of having failed.
5. Connecting makes me feel like a little success, gives me a release from low self-esteem.
6. I felt quite alone as a child in Glasgow and in my position in the family, there was an age gap and I'm the only girl.
7. I didn't belong since childhood any my not belonging made belonging more important (different from other Ps who found it easier to go, or imperative to go, if they didn't belong anyway).
8. It's like I was battering at a window, seeing other people in there and trying to get in, I'd do whatever was necessary to get in.
9. I compromised myself, adopted an appearance and views that didn't feel right, to fit in. It was so vitally important.

10. But then there was a loss of myself, so when I got closer to being let in, there was internal disintegration, I lost a sense of internal home in order to belong externally.
11. The feeling was stronger than inauthenticity, I felt fraudulent.
12. The closer to being accepted by them the more incompatible I was with myself.

In your environment, being at home in the culture wasn't compatible with being at home with yourself?

1. Yes. The hybrid of London and the openness here is a pivotal difference.
2. Back home the criteria was defined and immovable, here there is such variety.
3. Here the thing that defines most people is that they've moved, that they didn't feel sufficiently at home to stay there, so we have that similarity and comradeship that bridges the difference.

The feeling of the interview?

1. Strangely emotional, sad and tearful, and confusing.
2. Realising how confusing it is is illuminating, and it's a relief to think about that little girl that didn't belong (emotional).
3. It feels better, like an unblocking of something that was blocked.
4. I need time for it all to unravel and clarify but there's a growing nice feeling of having moved on from being able to talk like this.
5. Now I feel I can be compassionate towards the person that was so blocked and thwarted, very valuable experience.
6. I realise I was also in a victim role regarding my national identity, putting myself in that situation of being shunned by a culture and wanting more of it, that's interesting.

## **“Camille” Meaning Clusters**

### **Pre-conditions for leaving**

1. Eventually, after some years, I got enough courage, I was offered a job, I knew enough people in London, I was unhappy and stuck at home, my father’s death liberated me.
2. I still felt it was a risky decision to leave.

### **What was dissatisfying about being at home?**

1. Lack of opportunity and going nowhere since giving up my PhD and doing admin. work.
2. Peers were moving into new phases, marriage, kids, and this highlighted my lack of change. I was being left behind.
3. I never felt at home at home, never like I had a right to belong or be there.

### **What was risky about moving and what was easier?**

1. Fear of the unknown, of being isolated, not connected to a group of people.
2. Not fitting into the dominant culture was familiar and not a problem, but being alone would have been.
3. I still felt a fraud saying I was a Scot and would often qualify it.
4. The easier things are, I would be sharing the sense of being an outsider with many others, I could be more Scottish here and it wouldn’t be questioned.
5. Maybe I could claim my Scottish-ness as my identity easier outside Scotland.
6. It was also exciting to be able to re-create myself because I am unknown and there would be unknown and new opportunities.

### **Never belonging at home:**

1. My mother is English, my father was Australian, neither sounded Scottish and I had to acquire a Scottish accent quickly when I went to school. There was a lot of mockery and mimicry of my parents’ accents.
2. Our family was seen as different, we socialised with the international academic community, not Scots. That was our only sense of home, inclusion. This non-assimilation impacted on us children, especially me.
3. The Scottish hate the English, so I hated my mom for being English, it was easier to identify with my father’s Australian-ness because it was not so negative.
4. I wanted to belong to the Scottish partly because they didn’t like my mother and I was also resentful of her for bringing us up there, I blamed her for that, thought she was responsible. I could justify my resentment of my mother because as a nation they were bad, my bitterness was justified. I resented being given this heritage and I didn’t want my life to replicate my parent’s way of life (but it has, and it is now seen as positive, she no longer identifies with the oppressor (Scottish) of the oppressor (the English mother)).
5. I always felt like a phoney, fraudulent, not authentic, not Scottish enough.
6. My friends had a way of relating to each other, a banter, that I’ve wanted but aren’t able to have, their families were all interconnected and they have an aloofness, a hard bitterness mixed with humour and lightness and I’d like to belong to that.
7. I didn’t feel I had a right to be there and being shunned added to that.
8. My grandmother saw us as English putting on Scottish accents, so we were in a marginal position, not English or Scottish and accused of each of pretending to be the other. I felt I was from another planet.

### **Reasons for staying in that difficult position:**

1. The feeling of not being at home was matched by a longing to be accepted there.
2. I rejected my families identity and wanted the standard Scottish experience, to have a firm Scottish identity, to be accepted, feel safe, feel confident, not feel like a freak.
3. There was attraction and pride in Scottish-ness and also a fear of the outside. It felt risky to let go of the world I knew and try to make my way out in a world I knew little about.
4. I had only known the academic world and was terrified of the outside world so when I gave up my PhD I had a breakdown, I wasn't equipped to function out there.
5. I understood how the city worked, it was problematic for me but known, could I give that up? (sameness and known valued more highly). I was comfortable to be trapped, not going anywhere, but in a familiar environment.
6. I had an excuse for underachieving because there were few opportunities.
7. Hard to move away from my family because we were our only source of meaning for each other, I didn't make sense in any other context, I would dissolve without that.
8. The unknown is frightening because it is unpredictable and more frightening if one is alone.

### **Emerging reasons for leaving home:**

1. To see what would happen in a neutral environment, away from the conflicting, debilitating pressures about identity, to have space to see how I would emerge.
2. I wanted freedom from feeling I wanted to fit in but couldn't, freedom from pressures to keep up with my friends' life changes, marriage, kids, to be Scottish.
3. It was becoming obvious I wasn't moving on, was underachieving, I couldn't cope with the pressures and moving to London was an escape that meant I didn't have to change and keep up.
4. There would be less comparison with friends, so less judgment of myself.

### **Painful feelings from comparison with others**

1. I think the comparison comes from an internal judging that I project onto others so I felt others were questioning me about the lack of progress in my life.
2. The feeling of not doing as well as others was very painful (emotional).
3. It was partly age related, I was not living up to my own expectations of what life should be like at this age.
4. I had shame of not being Scottish enough and shame about being 30 and single, and shame of giving up the PhD, and shame from doing just secretarial work. And surviving and coping with it all has given me pride, which is a new emotion for me
5. After moving it was less intense, less depressing, it seems like now change is possible, and there are also many diversions, new stimulation as well as new possibilities.

### **What's it been like since moving?**

1. I feel more alive than for many years. I find I like novelty and change, it's just the diving into the process of it that feels difficult.
2. It's exciting to investigate new places and meet new people.

3. It's also been very unsettling, moving 3 times already and questioning my ability to find a house to live in. But this is still better than the oppressive feeling of being a failure back home.
4. I feel good about living with another Scottish girl, with a distant link to my brother.
5. I feel less oppressed here, partly because there's so much going on I can't concentrate on it as much.
6. A relationship seems more possible as there are more single men, and there's more scope for work and training.
7. Taking this risk to move helps me take more risks, I've survived this so I have more confidence to tackle other projects, it's strengthening and counters the internal judge, finally gives me some pride that I've leapt into the unknown and that's new (emotional).
8. Before I moved, the price of being at home in the culture was to not be at home in myself. They were incompatible, but here the heterogeneity and openness is a pivotal difference.
9. At home the criteria for belonging was defined and immovable, here there is such variety and what defines most people is they didn't feel sufficiently at home to stay there, so they moved here, so we have that similarity and comradeship that bridges our differences.

#### **A new sense of identity:**

1. I don't expect to stay in London, it's an obvious first step, a launch pad.
2. I have a sense now that my mixed heritage gave me a kind of world citizenship, maybe I could live in other places, like my parents made a home in a new place and maybe I have that ability also, but living in a culture with a different language feels intimidating.
3. I see my parents' struggles as an encouraging example now, how they made a place to feel at home in a culture that treated them cruelly. And now I feel quite fluid about my identity, like it's easier to fit not completely different cultures, and it's freeing not to have a closed defined national identity.
4. It feels strange to visit home now, it's easier to be an affectionate visitor, without all the authenticity/inauthenticity stuff about my Scottish-ness because I don't live there now and I perfectly entitled to visit my family. (the right to visit is the best one can have?)
5. It makes me feel you don't need to be liked to be at home, the being liked was a central theme for me and in Scotland I never felt welcomed enough to feel at home there.
6. It feels more like home now, without all the fraught stuff, I feel more legitimate there now (the right to feel welcomed as a visitor/exile?).
7. I could imagine moving back to Scotland but not Glasgow.

#### **At home in oneself:**

1. Being at home in myself is the goal now, then I could be at home anywhere and that connects to being a world citizen and to freedom.
2. That's difficult to achieve because it means looking at these childhood feelings of not belonging and not being authentic and working them through.
3. Seeing oneself in different contexts makes it easier to see the elements of continuity and find out who you are. It's easier to spot what stays the same across different contexts to piece together who you are. In Glasgow there was so much trying to be things that removing myself from there I felt less jumbled, more clear about what is essentially me and what is just the environment



4. I mistakenly thought that external approval would make me feel Ok about myself, that's all I needed to fit in. All my negative feelings toward myself were because I didn't fit in, if the group accepted me I'd feel Ok about myself, if I could be accepted by these hard Scots then I fulfilled a high exacting criteria and must be OK.

**What would it be to not belong, to not be accepted?**

1. I can't function without connection to a network of people. I couldn't sustain being an outcast, I would be incredibly sad, I couldn't be happy and alone. To choose to be alone temporarily is one thing, but being exiled permanently is not sustainable. Being with others takes me away from the internal critic that comes when I'm alone and judges me. (being alone is a failure?)
2. Connecting with others makes me feel like a little success, a release from my low self-esteem.
3. I didn't belong since childhood, I felt alone, I was older and the only girl, and not belonging made belonging more important (contrast with other Ps whose not belonging fuelled the desire to leave).
4. It's like I was battering at a window, seeing people in there and doing anything to get in, compromise myself, adopt an appearance and views that didn't feel right, it was so important to fit in.
5. Resulted in a loss of myself so by the time I got close to being let in there was an internal disintegration, I lost my internal home in order to belong externally.
6. The closer to being accepted by them, the more incompatible I was with myself and it left me feeling fraudulent.

**Feelings of the interview:**

7. Strangely emotional, sad and tearful, realising how confusing it is feels illuminating, and it's a relief to think about that little girl that didn't belong (emotional). Now I feel I can be compassionate towards the person that was so blocked and thwarted, very valuable experience.
8. It feels better, like an unblocking of something that was blocked. I need time for it all to unravel and clarify but there's a growing nice feeling of having moved on from being able to talk like this.
9. I realise I was also in a victim role regarding my national identity, putting myself in that situation of being shunned by a culture and wanting more of it, that's interesting.

## **“Camille” Themes**

### **1. Accumulating reasons to outweigh the risks of leaving:**

- It took years for the right conditions to come together to allow P to leave home. The prospects of moving had to be positive and supportive enough and the prospects of staying had to be increasingly negative or difficult.
- Sometimes changing relationships in the home environment can be the impetus to leave home. The death of a parent can free a person to leave home, as can feeling left behind by developments in the lives of friends.
- Not feeling at home or accepted by the home culture can generate increasing need to belong and be accepted and this demand must be let go of in order to leave the home environment, yet the paradox is it seems it cannot be let go of until one has left.
- The home environment can entail comparison with peers and leaving can be an escape from the judgement of falling short as well as a search for better opportunities and to fulfil one's potential.
- A foreign environment can be experienced as more neutral, providing space for a clearer identity to emerge as well as freedom from pressures to fit in, achieve, move on in culturally expected ways at certain ages, and thus freedom from the self-judging that comes from not meeting these expectations.
- Leaving brought P face to face with her fear of the unknown and especially her fear of being isolated, alone, and disconnected from any group of people. Being unknown also presented new opportunities to re-create herself and pursue new opportunities and this was exciting.
- Leaving the home environment presented the possibility that P would finally be accepted as a true Scot outside Scotland, that it would not be questioned in the more diverse environment of London, and there was also the possibility that P would meet others with whom she could share her sense of being an outsider.
- P presents a very different set of concerns and experience to other participants in the study – her reaction to not belonging, for example was to try harder to belong, not to make leaving easier. Also her fear of change and difference and leaving home, is not characteristic of other participants.

### **2. Feeling rejected by the home culture:**

- P felt she had to belong somewhere, being in a marginal position in the family, she looked to the wider culture but the homogeneity of that culture was problematic for someone who obviously was not the same. In order to belong there, she had to disown aspects of her families' and her parent's identities.
- Sounding the same as others is an important dimension in belonging to the dominant culture, accents are an indication of belonging and difference.

- Parental decisions about whether to assimilate the family to the dominant culture or to place the family in a subgroups of diverse internationalists impacts their children's struggles to belong, and to clarify their own identity.
- Having to manage one's identity in a way that is not natural in order to mimic the sameness of a homogenous culture can result in uncomfortable feelings of being inauthentic, a phoney, fraudulent, of betraying oneself while never living up to the expectations of the group one is trying to gain acceptance from. This can leave one without a sense of self-identity or a sense of belonging anywhere.
- In the dominant culture, P found an excuse to justify her negative feelings toward her mother and to reject her because of her nationality. P could pass on the rejection she felt from the environment onto her mother, while identifying more with her father. P blamed her mother for landing her in this difficult situation in which she could not win.
- P felt she had no right to be living in the place she was born as she did not belong to the culture in the same way as others whose families were all interconnected and who could relate to each other in culturally expected ways. P's family was isolated from the cultural networks of belonging.
- P felt she was shunned by the culture she was trying desperately to be accepted by. This resulting in feeling she had no home in the world at all and didn't even belong on the planet.

### 3. Complex need to belong maintains a difficult position:

- If feeling not at home is responded to with a greater longing to be accepted, the person can feel trapped in a position that makes leaving more difficult. P imagined that a firm, accepted identity, would bring feelings of being safe and confident, whereas without this she felt invalid.
- If the unknown is experienced as unpredictable and thus frightening, it may reinforce attempts to be accepted by the known and familiar world, no matter how incompatible it may be. P felt a pride and attraction to her culture but also a fear of the outside world. She did not feel she knew how to function out there so being trapped was more comfortable because it was at least familiar.
- Sameness, the known, and being connected with others, are highly valued features for P. This made her departure much more difficult. She was afraid of being alone, and moving away from her family, the only context where she felt she made sense, presented the threat of just dissolving into nothing.
- It seems that P experiences being alone as a failure, rejection, or not being adequate for relationship. She could not function as an outcast without connection to a network of people. P feels she could not be happy alone as this presents her with her internal critical voice, while connecting with others allows her to feel a success. P had to be assured that leaving would not mean being alone before she could make the move to London.

- P felt she did not belong since childhood, being older than her siblings, and the only girl contributed to this.
- P would do anything to be on the inside, with others, including compromise herself by adopting views or dressing in ways that were not consistent with her own feelings. This resulted in P losing herself so that the closer she was to being accepted by the culture, the more incompatible she was with herself. She had to sacrifice her 'internal home' in order to belong externally.

#### 4. The pain of comparison with others:

- Comparison can be related to an internal critical judging projected onto others.
- The feeling of not living up to one's own expectations and not doing as well as others (being left behind) can be very painful emotionally. These expectations are age-related.
- P had many sources of shame, not feeling Scottish enough, not being in a relationship, giving up her academic career, underachieving at work. But surviving and coping with these sources of shame has allowed P to feel pride, which is very new. Moving has lessened the intensity of these feelings since change now seems possible and along with hope is new stimulation.

#### 5. The experience of having moved:

- Moving has given P clarity that it's the deciding and diving in that's difficult for her, she actually likes novelty, change, new people and places, and feels less oppressed and more alive than for many years. She feels there are new possibilities for work, training, and relationships.
- P has had to deal with unsettled living situations, moving 3 times, but feels good about now living with another Scottish girl with connections to her family.
- Surviving this risk encourages P that she can take other risks. She feels a strength and confidence that counters her own internal critic. Leaping into the unknown and coping with it, can be instrumental in developing the self-esteem to take further risks.
- P now realises that the homogenous home culture had sedimented criteria for belonging which are incompatible with herself. The new culture is more heterogeneous and openly diverse, allowing a sense of belonging without having to adapt oneself to a fixed culture. Belonging in this new sense is based on the shared similar experience of not belonging.

#### 6. Developing a new identity:

- There is a sense now that the mixed heritage that P had rejected as an obstacle to belonging now presents a different possibility of belonging, as a kind of world citizen. The possibility emerges that maybe P is

capable of living in other places and making a home as her parents did. Her parents now form an encouraging example, offering P a more fluid identity of not fitting in but feeling the freedom of not identifying with a fixed national identity. From this new identity, London is seen now as a first step, a launch pad for further exploration.

- The experience of visiting home has changed as P's self-identity has shifted. Not living there has allowed her to discard the concerns about the authenticity of her Scottish-ness.
- P recognises one does not need to be liked to be at home or to belong, and that she had felt so concerned about being liked that she never felt welcome enough to feel at home there. She feels more legitimate now, like she has a right to visit her family there and to feel at home there. She could now imagine moving back to Scotland at some point, though not Glasgow.

#### 7. At home in oneself:

- Being at home in oneself is difficult to achieve as it necessitates exploring and working through deep and longstanding issues and feelings. P sees this as her goal since it would allow her to feel at home anywhere and therefore to be free.
- Reflecting upon herself in different contexts now allows P to see more clearly who she is as distinct from who she was trying to be under the influence of the surrounding environment. She can ascertain what is consistent and what is context-specific, thus unravelling what is essentially herself.
- Having moved and experienced a new context has allowed P to see her strategies more clearly. She mistakenly thought that external approval would give her self- acceptance, that the group's acceptance, especially a group of hard exacting working class Scots, would address her own negative feelings about herself and reassure her that she was OK. This put so much pressure on being accepted that it became impossible and the strategy failed.

#### 8. Feelings of the interview:

- Strangely emotional, sad and tearful, realising how confusing this all is feels illuminating, and it's a relief for P to think about that little girl that didn't belong (emotional). The interview has allowed P to feel compassionate towards the person that was so blocked and thwarted, which feels very valuable.
- P needs time for it all to unravel and clarify but there's a growing positive feeling of having moved on from being able to talk like this.
- One thing that P found interesting from the interview is the way that she was in a victim role regarding her national identity, putting herself in the situation of being shunned by a culture and yet trapped into wanting more of it.

“Carl”

GM1 - The first question is could you begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - Relating the circumstances? OK, that's tricky enough for a start, the circumstance to finally leave home was quite a conscious choice I would say. It was when I came to England about 4 years ago and literally cut off everything I was doing and with home ....., something I'm always very intrigued with when I do actually call it home and sometimes I do not call it home. Sometimes I say home about ... Germany. Anyway, I left Germany about 4 years ago, and there was then a quite conscious choice and I was doing a variety of things, I had flat, I had a job, and I was in the middle of degree over there, however I decided to stop that all and come over here and start a degree all over.

I had been out of the country twice before for quite a period, literally reflecting I would say I started leaving home when I was 19, which was 7 years ago, I initially went to Kenya, which looking back I do think actually that I wanted to get as far away as possible, and stayed there for about 6 months, came back, went to the States for a while, came back and tried to resettle in Germany for 1 and a half years, but then finally left.

The circumstances, I would actually say that I experienced the environment or the context that used to represent home, as in a safe enough environment or something where I feel I could live, and that had changed when I was 17 or 18 and due to various circumstances in my life really. Literally, I'll probably just explain it, coming from a very strong religious family, my dad is a fundamentalist practice minister, and I came out of, when I was 17 I think, as homosexual, and although things did not turn as evil as it can turn in some cases, I just never actually felt, I would actually say I felt I lost my voice in the context that I was in. Yes, that's literally when I started trying to get away, and I came back twice and I made a final decision about 4 years ago..... so it was coming.

GM2 - So, around the age of 17, 18, you came out, and at the age of 19 you went to Kenya?

P2 - Yes, that's literally as far as I could and I'd finished school and just being 18 a few months and I had to do either social service or army which is compulsory in Germany in some areas, so I did this straight after school and literally the month I finished that I had arranged to go to Africa for a while. Yes, literally actually as early as I could.

GM3 - As soon as you could you left then you came back and you went to America, then you came back for a year and a half, tried to settle, couldn't settle, came here 4 years ago?

P3 - Yes.

GM4 - I wonder why you chose Kenya.....?

P4 - One of my suspicions is because it's actually far enough to be out of reach for anyone. Another conscious choice in there was wanting to be in a completely, because I lived quite rural with the Masai, it was a conscious choice wanting to live in a non material environment, in a non capitalist environment for a while, and these days

wanting to explore culture, and being very naïve about it, thought, I'll just be fine coming from Germany and going to a rural life in Africa, which wasn't, (laughs) I wouldn't say a mistake, but quite a learning experience and actually then finding out how much what I believed was myself or was actually home as in culture and what has been my home .....life, it was quite painful to find out how much actually was, what I believed was me was just really the things that had come along in a certain context or having been in a certain context.

GM5 - Can I just ask about that, you mean being in such a foreign place?

P5 - Yes, I would say what I'd experienced, I would just literally say I became more and more aware of the actual tremendous impact of context as in culture when I grew up, and things that I then being quite young, would have referred to within my context, the ultimate truth which came, which literally fell down as being conceived as contextual and completely useless in another environment, in another context.

Sorry, I've left out your original question, oh, why I chose Africa, that's it. I believe as well because as I was going against a variety of conventions it was something that the majority of people around me considered a useless exercise, with me not gaining any qualifications or anything that would provide for life in Germany in a working context. Yes, I think I then already felt, which wasn't necessarily made felt, I just felt that I experienced myself in quite a minority and quite in an underdog position, I think I wanted to identify with something that I perceived alike, and that's why I think I went for this experience.

GM6 – So, when I say you went for something that, if I understood you, you thought you had some sort of similarity with? So you were looking for a sameness of some kind, thinking that you might find it in a place that was so incredibly different and foreign to what you had experienced? (agreeing) It strikes me as quite interesting that you go to something, I mean not that it's unusual, but you go to something so incredibly different in the hope of finding a place almost where you..

P6 - I think what might have consciously or unconsciously happened was that because I grew up in a completely extreme family, being actually a very extreme believer when I was young, having a concept of home and of parenting that was actually Godly, and when I was young and I was perceived as OK as being like quite a good Christian, whatever these words mean, and actually I have to watch myself because I'm very cynical about all this today. I think because I had grown up in a completely sacred space and just through me coming out as homosexual it all overnight fell apart, which was, I found it quite traumatic, and I think what I really liked was that actually the absolute and literally of, it's really hard to organise in my brain, I confuse it, literally seeing all these visual things that do exude a sense of home, a sense of security, a sense of life. I experienced that with just some little change they all became completely as made of paper, and textual lies, and they didn't function anymore. And I think that's in a way why I wanted to go to something reduced where literally this whole thing would function completely differently, as if like finding a sort of balance or whichever you want to put it. A meaning. Something to engage with.

GM7 - So, up until when you came out to your family your experience of being in your family environment was actually an experience of being at home?

P7 – Absolutely yes. It was I would almost say more than being at home, because where I grew up and within my family, actually it is, when I look back I find it actually very compulsive, it's way too close and way too much anxiety driven in a way, absolutely close and too much emphasis on keeping everything all right all the time. And my parents actually quite fantastically managed to provide, like in the initial 15, 16 years of my life, literally everything was all right, there was nothing to worry about, there was no conflict, there was a complete safety I would say, in that sense, it was quite a strong home.

Sorry, I've lost it again now (Laughs.). What was the original question?

GM8 - Well I'm just wondering about that experience of home?

P8 - That experience, what home was, complete trust and big time feeling mirrored, feeling valued, feeling being someone actually, being appreciated. Which created quite a, I always had quite a strong sense of myself and actually in coming here or in going away I think, the mission was, and I very often still experience this, was of regaining that situation that I lost when I came out. Because although my parents reacted OK I was all of a sudden a second class person in the all this sense of being appreciated, being OK, or being actually very special, which was how they always viewed me, fell apart and it was for me coming here was like gaining a voice in a way I would say. And home used to provide that and all of a sudden it didn't anymore.

GM9 - So were you saying part of coming here was trying to find that again in some way?

P9 - There's two sides to this, I think part of coming here again, is as well, being out of reach as in it's not far away, though my parents don't speak a word of English, so to them it's a big foreign world, it's for them, I mean it's like Cologne is a 45 minute flight, 400 and something miles if you draw a line, so it's not far away, it's just Berlin or Munich within Germany, but for them it's a far away world that they thought of, they cannot engage with it, they can call me and ask me the odd question, but they don't have the concept, and that concept of which actually I would say to form any control, this is one side of it, and the other side of it was for me coming here and actually introducing myself as the person that I was then. I'm learning, I'm training in psychology, and yes, if you're interested, if you come to know me, I might be homosexual, but I start off on this basis, so the way people come to appreciate me so they don't have this change that I experienced at home, if that makes sense at all? And yes, I think that was the mission really, not quite consciously, but the more I reflect on it and the more, because what happened, just to give an example, what happens when I go back home I experience what I, in my therapy refer to as contextual inferiority, I'm completely all right about myself here, here I do feel home I would say, I'm living in Hackney which is feel very at home, I used to live in Putney and I had quite a struggle with identifying with the population there, and I moved to Hackney, and the beautiful variety of people there, just a mixture and not like one thing which actually defines this area. I actually feel very at home, I feel I can blend in, but when I go back, although I should feel OK about myself because in one sense you carry this everywhere it's actually not like that for me, when I go back I now experience what I refer to as contextual inferiority. I don't feel home there. I don't feel I have a voice there. I'm personally very intrigued with this all the time because I would say oh, give yourself a



sort of a sort of CBT treatment to do this and oh, it's just this environment and you're OK, but it actually doesn't work like this.

GM10 - So, you don't feel at home when you go home?

P10 - No, I don't actually.

GM11 - And what sense do you make of that when you go home and you feel so..?

P11 - There's a sense, it's more a sensation really that I do find it extremely painful actually, going back there and not feeling home. And it becomes quite a problem because my parents have said they're very, I've still got a very strong attachment although there's load of conflict, because the attachment was so strong in the beginning, and they completely exhaust themselves for the family they've created, so for them me going away is a major trauma and me saying I'm not coming back is even worse.

GM12 - Is that what you say?

P12 - Yes. I that's what I say, I started doing that a year ago because they always thought oh yes, he's going to graduate then he's coming back and stuff, but the more I was seeing, and I used to travel back initially almost every month, because my parents wanted to see me and they paid for the flights, they paid for the flights there and back no problem, sorry, I'm losing the, oh yeah, but it's about a year ago that I have actually proactively made a point that I'm not coming back and that home for me is, and literally I say to my parents, it's the truth I don't think..... home is where I feel OK and home is where I can feel I can be myself. Yes, it's very painful to be home and not be able to feel that, and it's fairly difficult, I find it difficult because I have very strong connections with friends of mine from when I was younger who were not solely in the Christian context, but they grew up and like mates from school, the very early intimate relationships, and when I say to them that I do actually not feel OK when I'm there I think it's quite difficult for them to actually enter my world and experience the depths that I experience as a whole issue, that I find very difficult. But I know that to an extent I am disappointing them, they are OK with it, but that I find painful because I can only to an extent try to point out to them or try to demonstrate how I actually feel when I'm there. And that I find quite difficult. And I think what I found difficult as well is the realisation that there is in a way, you could argue that there is no such place as home, it is a contextual thing. I think, I've been saying about it lately, I've been reading a book and this is when I initially saw your poster when I got very intrigued. I was reading a book called 'Emigrants' by a German guy who lectures at East Anglia, I don't actually know his name, but he writes down stories of people,... he writes down stories of people that he used to know and what literally the information he gets as he gets it he puts it into a novel and he describes how they leave their home places, why they leave their home places, and this, due to his generation, in this book it's mainly Jewish people immigrating, or emigrating literally, and the sad thing, what strikes me about the book is these are all real figures, I think he writes about four people and three of them commit suicide because the way he portrays it as the end of their lives, they find in the place where they are they have no roots in a way. Anyway, but when I was actually reading that I found it quite affecting because loads of what I feel I am to an extent due to early childhood experiences, I can not be here, or lets say, let's put it the other way, like of loads of my teenager years there is no shared experience with people over here, like the odd song, the TV programme or anything like that, these are the sort of things, like I

exercise in my room when I'm on my own, the song you listened to when you were 13 and were absolutely happy about life. These things they are stuck in this context unless you meet people who've had a similar experience and also came to live here anyway, anywhere, and that I found a very painful realisation.

GM13 - I don't know how much you want to talk about that, but I was just wondering what's..

P13 - I'm quite happy to talk about it.

GM14 - I'm wondering what's so painful about that?

P14 - Painful I think for me it is very much, because as I said earlier I was, I feel I was quite successfully brainwashed by Christian fundamental approaches to life and that whole network that you can grow up in where everyone makes you feel OK and stuff, and that I had an absolutely happy childhood, because we were financially well off, I had everything you could have, literally materialistically, I could play tennis, I was doing skiing, I did the piano, I did riding, I went on plenty of holidays, and as in emotional support, there was a complete functioning social network and I think you could quite frankly say it's been too easy, or it's maybe an overprotected childhood and I think for me the biggest pain factor in there is the absolute shift of it, I think had my childhood been much rougher it would have actually been easier, but to come from a position where you are absolutely happy and feel safe, and everybody loves you and you just think you've got life sorted, sort of thing, or that was how I felt, I felt absolutely safe, happy and secure with everything. They had a vision for things, and then like the extreme change of it, I think that was the worst thing about it, and when I was in Africa I entered a proper depression for 3 months which was, I would just really say it was quite traumatic and there were stages there where I was actually hallucinating, fainting, because I didn't go on medication and because I was living with native people and there was a major struggle having depression there because that is not recognised, like the phenomenon of depression neither was men crying appropriate. It was quite rough and I had literally daydreams and hallucinations where in dreams I saw people from my home environment as my parents, and people that I loved very much, these friends of mine, they visited me in dreams and hallucinations and literally indicated the loss, that there was a cut coming along.

Yes, so I think my pain is mainly related to the absolute shift. Because as I said, when I was young everything was perfect, which was a lie, but as long as it functions you don't look outside if you can keep it up.

GM15 - So are you saying that the pain is partly due to the loss of that perfect world?

P15 - Yes, yes.

GM16 - The experience of that loss?

P16 - Yes, yes. Loss of that world, and within that world quite clearly of not being responsible as well, because at the same time, I've always been very wary of loss and looking back, but that was the time when you go from the transition of leaving your parental home and all of a sudden having responsibility for yourself financially, and loads of other things, and I've always been very wary in the last years of school I

always, I was probably quite dramatic or melancholic or whatever, but I very early started experiencing and becoming aware of this absolute loss of childhood and that loss of not having responsibility and the loss of actually knowing there's something about me, as ..... for example, whom I can largely trust and yes, I think that is how it relates mainly.

GM17 - Yes, when you were talking about it I was starting to think well, it sounds like quite an idyllic childhood, but some of the loss you were describing I as thinking that's part of growing up isn't it?

P17 - Yes, definitely.

GM18 - Partly?

P18 - Oh yes, it is absolutely within this development, but I think I wasn't as much aware of it, again because everything had been so idyllic, and my family had always tried to keep it up and yet they are, my sister she's four years older than me and she literally left home, she married a perfect Christian husband, and my father bought them a house and literally she's living very happily, she's never had to work, and she's got people around her taking the responsibility, and ideally they would like to do the same thing for me, they would like to maintain it. Which very much relates to their childhood experiences which for both of them are completely the opposite. So it's really interesting in the context, how they were producing the absolute other side of it, the absolute safety and love and whatever you need it's going to be provided for you. And in that context I wasn't as much aware of the so-called developmental stage or some developmental stages of life ....

GM19 - So, at this point in your life, I just want to ask one more thing. As you were growing up, before you realised about your sexuality and came out with it.

*Tape interrupts with Greg talking directly into the machine these comments put at the end of transcript.*

*Interview continues:*

P19 - I first came to England when I was 14, not speaking very much English, and I'd already been to loads of places and then I very often very often experienced something, and I had this when I was young, I actually don't know if whether there's an English word for this, there's a German word which is (fanvig?) which is the opposite of (heimvig?) which is homesickness, but there's a German word which is actually called farsickness or far away sickness, which is the actually the craving to go somewhere out there not being in your environment, and I had this very early and I very early had the drive. So when I went to Africa for example, no one in my family was actually surprised, and still very often I have this experience of wanting to go out there somewhere, although I think that relates in a way that internally I did actually realise loads of the pain that was going on or that had originally cause and my parents had produced this network, was my father, my father was not working anymore, he's suffering from clinical depression, he first started doing so when I was 3 years old and he'd be a year ill or two years working and a year ill, and I did in very many ways, although not overtly, experience a hell of a lot of painful things and compulsions within the family. And I think there was always one side of me that always just wanted to get

away. And literally it very often feels like going to a space where I can breathe, if that makes sense at all?

GM20 - Yes. So, it was just you and your sister?

P20 - Yes.

GM21 - So your sister's different than you?

P21 - Yes.

GM22 - For some reason you had this longing to go out into the wide open world for as long as you can remember? (yes) Why do you think that is? What about you..?

P22 - I actually think (Laughs.), it's a very interesting question, it was actually related to the family dynamics, my sister's pretty much like my mother. My mother is a woman of 55 years, who can't operate a cash machine, who gets her household money everyday and who has done nothing since she married my father other than, I'm not saying it to minimise it, but she's done nothing for herself, she's always lived for the family and she is someone who likes to be told, she never actively reasons, she literally hasn't got an opinion to be perfectly frank. My sister is completely alike. And I do actually believe that's something she got off my mother, may it be genetic, it may have transferred, whatever. A very high level of anxiety, that has been the same for my sister.

I very often experience her as a duplicate of my mother, and I think my sister is not like that because of that environment. Whereas on the other hand my father always wanted to travel, always wanted to break away and as such never got this chance because he was so anxious about life, or that's how I experienced him, and that's causing a bit of an internal conflict, because it sounds not nice, but it's just the way it is... he always wanted to get away and he always wanted to do a hell of a lot of things he couldn't do when he was young for financial reasons, and then at 19 formed a family, bought a house, and literally built a classic German security life, twenty seven life insurances, everything. When he turned ill he was retired at full income which is quite, and he was on a very good income, even he's a priest but he was working as business journalist, and professional, and yes, he built all this security and he is very scared and he would never actually, although he would love to he wouldn't have the guts to go out and actually take that risk. And I think this wanting to go away is something pretty much that I took from my father.

Again, something there, my sister and me were different, I very, very early made very very strong connections with other people, which is probably due, I think it's due to having had a very, very strong bonding with my mother initially, because, and it's the way she would actually put it, very often I replaced my father for her when he wasn't there, she was a very, very strong attachment from very early, and I knew way too much about the internal life of my mother, way too early. I mean, there's no way too early, but it wasn't very productive. It wasn't helpful, let's put it this way. And because I had this capacity to actually make very strong connections with people quite early, and I started having my first girlfriend at the age of 10 and 11, these were actually like deep, meaningful, painful experiences, it wasn't like flirting or a quick shag or whatever, actually long term emotional bonding. And that very early caused within my family a

variety of conflicts as some of them were non Christian, or not Christian enough for my family, so they would actually be banned by my family, they would not be accepted in the house, they would not be valued as friends while they were people I loved. And this is when I think initially I started having major conflicts. So one side of me was going that way with having the need for protection following this philosophy, but there was none of that, at a very early period, actually led to active identification with 'the unacceptable' if that makes sense, and I think in that sense this is where the split was between me and my sister, and this was within me very early, resulted in identifying with other things outside that family context and outside this home context because I had quite strong internal conflict with that.

GM23 - So, there was kind of process that, I mean what we were calling almost an idyllic childhood, it wasn't completely, there were tensions there?

P23 - No, yes, it can be portrayed as both ways partly.

GM24 - But it sounds like quite early on you, for some reason, you were open to difference, you were open to what didn't fit neatly within the family? Why do you think that was? Sounds like perhaps uniquely so in your family? For some reason..

P24 - Say that again?

GM25 - Uniquely? That you were unique in the family in that you were quite open to difference, you weren't, they didn't just fit into the acceptable picture? What was it about that difference?

P25 - I wish I would know. I think one thing that might have been a mirroring exercise to be quite frank, because although I fitted within my family perfectly as in being a pupil, a high achiever and school, high achiever in sport, high achiever in church, various things ..... I was very, very early not mirrored within school and within my male context as not being very male, because I was very emotional, I think most of the time I identified with females. I think the first, I would say the first male relationship actually of friendship, proper friendship, I managed to establish was when I was 16 and that was an active thing because I'd met up with a friend of mine, a social worker who's homosexual as well, and he said to me, and I remember this, if you actually want to survive in this world make active friends now with males, learn to deal with it. So very early I did experience within a wider context, as in society, I experienced myself as very different. Whereas I thought I was completely OK, but I had some discrimination, not huge, but I was made felt very different and I think this is actually where it might stem from, because I knew how it felt and I think I had sort of denial, and that there's always a reason why things are different, and there's always a story to a person and that things have to be understood like that.

I did actually, when I studied in Germany I studied in pedagogic, which is sort of related or whatever, because I did it as a sort of research degree in hermeneutics and stuff like that. And I had actually this interest in psychology, making sense of things fairly early, this was the set idea when I was 13 and 14, like this is what I was going to do, and I think I can only relate it because there was an awareness coming from somewhere, I think it is probably due to me realising myself different already by then. Yes. And I think something contributed was that I from very early experienced a lot of unanswered questions that I was personally unhappy with. And very early had fights

with my parents and I would have a take on something and it was too painful for my parents to engage with it, that they would silence me, my father would silence me, and that experience was tremendously painful, being silenced as in not being able to verbally articulate my ultimate truth of something, which I feel, what I experienced and as an ultimate truth of something. So I might have been consciously or unconsciously at that stage aware that there is a whole different side to it, and that there is, that this world that I did experience as safe and was then still very much engaged with, I might have seen the other side in some way, but had not been very open to it. Am I making sense?

GM26 - (Laughs.). I think you are.

P26 - (Laughs.)

GM27 - I mean, what I'm thinking from what you're saying is that you started to become aware that you didn't exactly fit in?

P27 - Yes, yes. I fitted in but I did not fit in in my main context. My manhood, you know what I mean? I could not mirror myself with the same age males around me, neither could I mirror myself, I could mirror myself in my father very much as being emotional which he is, I mean, he gets depressed, but he does not engage with it, whereas I always did because this is what I got off my mother really I think.

GM28 - OK. I want to ask just one more question. I want to ask a general thing. So, you went to Kenya, came back, you went to America and you came back and you decided, if I got you correctly, you decided that you were going to see about settling in Germany for a while, at least to finish your degree?

P28 - Yes, I tried to settle in Germany. I enrolled for a degree which over there would have taken six or seven years to complete it. And the idea was to do that, quite clearly. Although interestingly, when I started it, this is quite a strong picture, when I started the degree I lived in Cologne on my own, and moved out from my parents which was tremendously painful to them. And what happened was, what my father tried to do with me, he was wanting to buy me a flat, which any normal 19 year old in a big city like Cologne, it's a good city to live in, to own property, and would have said, yes, hallelujah, buy me a flat! But I actually said then, no, I don't want you to buy me a flat, I actually don't want to own a flat, I don't want to be fixed. And I was at the beginning at my degree which I had planned to finish, but it seems that there was either an awareness or an anxiety about actually being fixed in a certain place by, for example, owning a flat. And I knew had my father bought me a flat that I would have felt guilty enough to want to stay there. So, although I planned that, I didn't want that flat, and went to work and paid rent, which I think indicated the value of that home thing for me. Yes, but I had planned to finish it all, and I tried it for three semesters, it just never felt right.

GM29 - What I'm wondering is why you tried that?

P29 - Something I'm still trying today, to please my parents to an extent. Because I'm quite, I feel very often, because they have given so much, at least financially when I was younger, I do feel quite guilty, and they make me feel guilty, or I take it on board, whichever way you want to see it. And yes, that was definitely something I always experience when I reflect about myself. And I'm still trying to please them out there,

for 26 years now. Rationally, I think I shouldn't, but I know that I am still trying to please them. I think that might have been one of the main reasons really. Another reason is definitely to some extent of an existential anxiety that I did have a wish to get round it, to get stable, to have safety, because that was, it was in my family, that's the thing we do, and anyone else who finished school with me, by the time I started studying, like ..... social service and to Africa, was already earning money or was in the middle of their law or medical or whatever degree, that would bring along some sort of nice career, and literally said to me, like what are you doing with your life? And I always, I've always said, I always felt like ..... work for the rest of my life, I didn't want to experience it, I don't want to do that.

But yes, there was, I think one reason is that I wanted to please my parents, another reason is the connections I had there then were still very fresh, very strong and there was a huge anxiety, particularly after having been prone to depression in Africa, of losing some people, which actually gave me lots of stability as unaccepting as I was in comparison to my family. Yes, that's the main reasons I reckon. I know that it wasn't wanting to be at home, because again I chose to move out from my parents, although there was plenty of space in the house, and it would have been cheaper in a rational sense, or any rational person would have just stayed there. It was the most economic thing to do. But I didn't want to do that dance.

GM30 - No, if I understood you correctly, home had changed or your experience of home had changed to the point that that was no longer the place for you?

P30 - Yes, I couldn't live there anymore.

GM31 - But there was still this attraction to as you say stability and security, so a next stage was to try to settle in a somewhat familiar environment that that might give you? But after three semesters something happened that you, another pull that was..?

P31 - Yes, there's something else which comes in, which was immediate study crises which definitely again put something in there, because doing that degree was never what I wanted to do, because I wanted to do psychology and due to my grades, although I got very good grades, in Germany psychology is almost, it is actually at the moment almost the hardest degree to get into gradewise, which is hideous but it is. And I would have never made it in, or I could have taken it sideways, which you can do with pedagogic for example, or just wait so long, because the grades ... But I did find what I was studying there completely meaningless, I have to say the course at university was just trite, I mean university was just trash, (I was mixed in with a thousand students and one lecturer?) and you learned fuck all, and the lecturer literally said, I can't review one hundred essays, whoever wants to pass shall raise their hand and that's it. That was my degree in Germany, so I obviously passed everything very easily, but I didn't feel I learned anything.

And I think the other reason was what I experienced over 1 and a half years of being there is that I did not feel that I could allow myself to sexually engage with men because my parents were too close and had too much of an influence. And that again was thought of mirrored by loads of my friends, the majority of my closest friends are female friends of mine, which I either was very close or actually had been former partners, and for them obviously there was a huge extent of pain involved when I came

out as being homosexual, although they stayed very close friends. It was very painful for them to see me like with a male partner, which is completely proper and understandable. So, when I initially moved into my flat I remember thinking this is the only way that I can actually allow myself to sexually engage with men because my parents would never allow a homosexual man in the house, that's just a no no. Not a question, full stop. So yes, this was there as well.

GM32 – OK. So, when you think back over all those years, what do you think is the real reason that you left home?

P32 - The real reason? Are you looking for one or, the real reason I would say is, if you like one sort of answer, is that I could not exist in the context anymore, or at least I felt that I could not exist in this context.

GM33 - So what would have happened if you couldn't have left?

P33 - I don't know. I've done an undergraduate degree, I've done phenomenological research on homosexual Christians in England, and I've interviewed six males of which three were suffering from depression and one was diagnosed as (fratola?) and though this might sound mad, I could completely see it because they were in this context and they were, they just didn't get it together. And actually I took two of them, I said, because I did follow-ons, it was just appropriate to do it, and actually I advised two of them just to go somewhere else, for a time of thinking, or establishing themselves somewhere else. Because their contexts hadn't changed but they had changed, and as long as I felt they were reliant on their context nothing would come out of it. And I think that would have happened to me. I think I would be a terribly sad person, and I would actually suffer huge inferiority, because I do it even if I go for a week, I feel a piece of shit when I'm there. No matter how much I can think about myself, I've done that, I've done that, I've done a very good undergraduate and now I'm a postgraduate, whatever, I'm ....., but when I'm there I feel I can't exist, and I think this is what would have happened.

GM34 - So when you're at home you actually feel you can't exist?

P34 - Yes. I do not exist because part of what I am, and I'm not, I wouldn't say that I'm in that sense a gay person, I view my sexuality as part of me, but I don't have a gay identity, I wouldn't claim that, but I actually don't think I do. But yes, because there is a part of me that is completely not, it's just completely ignored by my parents. I do not exist for them as such, and in that way I feel I can't exist. Because the message which they give to me is that they're praying for healing and blah, blah, blah, and when I originally came out they had performed two sort of, exorcisms by the church, which obviously won't do very much other than being dramatically painful, but yes, there was just no acceptance of that, and as such I feel because, it's not the most important part of me, but it's a part of me and I'm OK about it,..... part of me and I'm actually quite happy to be what I am. I feel I can't exist, yes. And my parents say we do accept that, but they do not, when they say this they always try to make a distinction between acceptance and toleration, which are two different things. So, in the best case they do tolerate it, which is just not for me, not enough to exist, I feel.

GM35 - OK. So the next kind of general thing, we spent quite a lot of time on it, but part of this, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, another very general



question, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home what's it been like for you?

P35 - Are we talking finally leaving home, or first leaving home?

GM36 - .....

P36 - Whichever way I want. For me it was almost reinventing myself I have to say. It was a process which I'm still going through of, I would actually say as getting over myself as being German, and that being my culture, or of reducing myself to things that I actually feel they are within me rather than due to the context that I grew up in. And

*[tape changes over]*

P36 cont. - It's been very often a scary process, I mean when I came over here I didn't know anyone over here, and as I said early on, I am actually a person that forms very intimate relationships, and I like that, that's how I mainly sourced myself, not through .... relationships or sexual relationships, but I would say in some sense full of transpersonal relations really, so there was the experience a) of building a complete new network, which in the beginning was very scary, particularly being, coming from an under graduate degree in England when I was 22 and I would say actually lived for 30 years at least as in emotional experience, and then sort of being in halls with 18 year olds coming straight from school wanting to have the fun life, party, drinking, shagging, living outside their parent's house, whatever, so I felt I completely didn't fit at all, so I couldn't have a conversation, we were living in completely different worlds. So that was one experience, literally almost collecting a new family, and that very often, when my parents say we are actually my family, yes you are my family, but I do actually have family over here as well. I personally view family as something actually that I can construct, or something that we always have problems with when I was very young, to accept some people in our family are just a relative, which I actually find quite horrendous people, they're not in the Christian side, my parents wouldn't like them either, but still we had to meet them all the time and had to be very polite and there were two occasions when I said no, this person is a complete asshole and there was completely annoying you and I don't see why I should be nice just because they're family. I just found it completely odd, so I very early had a different concept of family, and one thing was for me re-establishing family.

Another thing, I think the most important thing was, actually what I was saying earlier on, reinventing myself really and finding, mostly learning about culture I think, learning about society and how it functions for people within and people without. And something which I always experienced over the years is that the majority of times I seem to relate to, without any choice, it just ever so happens, with non English people and non British people, which to me indicates that it's either a sense of being a foreigner or there's a shared experience of being a foreigner which leads to a connection. And, yes, what was the question, right, I've never thought about it in this way, a lot of it was giving up home securities that had been established over quite a while and was letting go of for example, what I was referring to earlier on, experiences, value and experience from childhood, not as in completely letting go of them, but having no context anymore to share them and thus reinventing this vision, keeping them alive, or whatever. Um, can you just repeat the question exactly again.

GM37 - When you reflect upon the time since leaving home what's it's been like for you?

P37 - A growth experience. I would say on the whole a learning curve. On the whole very positive, but it was a process of detachment that is still quite strongly going on in the sense that I'm not only here for work life and not coming back and this is my new home. This is where I will be. I usually say I'm going to be around for a few .. because people are interested, they always ask you this question, why are you here? How long are you going to stay? Which is actually something that I actively don't engage with, probably because I don't want or I don't feel I need to, whereas the question is always posed.

GM38 - Do you see yourself as studying in London for the foreseeable future?

P38 – Yes. I had visions of being in other places, and very often I think or very often I say England isn't home, which sounds very sad but it's the truth. When I say home I refer to Germany obviously. But I think now actually I am thinking of settling in London because having been here for 4 years I have actually established quite a network of people again. (Laughs.) I have this slight paranoia of thinking if I do this thing too often I'd be somewhere for 10 years, re-establish, and then go completely loopy in the end and being quite rootless in a sense, which I do believe for myself it's quite good to be flexible, to literally adapt, but the idea of having some sense of home I think is quite valuable and it is quite essential because I do, I'm a person who actually creates a home environment in my personal space. I do go out, and I'm in a relationship for example, at the moment, it's been a relationship for 4 months, but for me it's essential to every week spend a few hours completely with myself in my room. It's very sacred time, it's more important than spending time with a lover or friend or whatever, ...and in that sense I need sort of, a home, or literally a space where I can feel I can be with myself and make some sense that I like in this space and condition, and at first it was an experience of re-establishing that over here. It's something that I feel that I need.

GM39 - Can I just ask what is that feeling of home, the feeling of being at home? What allows that to happen?

P39 – Um, I feel that I can be metaphorically naked. Where I can be myself, where I can make myself vulnerable, but in a safe enough context where it is OK to make myself vulnerable, I think. Also for myself there is a lot of positive things in the Earth, lots of hopes, there's lots of excitement, but there is a hell of lot of pain in me, from the past, I do find life very often very painful, as much as I find it beautiful I suppose, with these two sides and yes, home is space for me where I can actually allow myself to be that within a safe enough environment, where it is OK. So, I mean that limits it pretty much down to, it limits it down for me, as in living with people, living with my best friend over here, and I've lived with her since I came here, I met her in college and we just clicked. We probably clicked because she experiences herself as different as can be from where she is from, she's from up north, a very stereotypically Northern working class mentality, and I think when she came to London to study, she just completely didn't fit in at all,..... didn't fit, but the same refers to her with being female actually. She doesn't feel very female, although she's a very beautiful woman, she just doesn't feel it, and she felt always different so we had this sort of shared experience of feeling as being outside, as being different. And living with her allows me to actually to

engage with all that pain, because she does that, but then you can only do this with so many people, or so many people wouldn't do that. We have another flatmate, she's going to move out because I think she finds us too painful, and I would say she's a classic ..... very high on what I would nastily call her defence, not engaging with herself or anything really at all, she's completely always rushing, whereas we most of the time, like me and my best friend, set down and wondering about life, the meaning and meaninglessness of it, the contextual, the whole, because I do find life utterly contextual, happiness or whatever, as being whatever for me, just always happens in a context. For me home is actually something that I can allow that sort of view or take on life to be there, and that's why again why I would have never been able to do that at home, with obviously my parents believing there's a next life ahead, and that it's all, God is going to do it all for us, we don't have to do anything, blah, blah, blah. I used to believe this, but obviously when I was sort of picked out of heaven, literally, that fell apart for me, and, so yes, I need the space. It's most peculiar actually as we were thinking back on it, and this just came into my head, because my father actually named me after Kierkegaard not having the slightest idea what he wrote about. He just thought he was a priest so he named me after him, it's quite funny actually, quite embarrassing. But yes, that's what I say, for me it's home, a place where I can drop my pants and be myself and allow myself to be there.

GM40 - Has it been, if I understood you correctly, sounds as if it's been your experience that other people like you who in some way feel you don't quite belong to the mainstream or something, or feel that you're different in some way, either because you are in a different country, you're best friend's from a different part of the country is, has your experience been that these other foreigners, as you said a while ago, that there is, that they do share something, some kind of an experience that..?

P40 - Yes.

GM41 - Defines them as somehow kind of, I don't know?

P41 - Yes. I would say that it's people that have been opened for life's betrayals. That's how I used to portray them.

GM42 - People who have been?

P42 - Opened by life's betrayals.

GM43 - Open to what?

P43 - Open to being in a context where they didn't fit or that fell apart. Have been opened by experiencing initially a sense of themselves or security, whatever you want to say, and that it changed. Or they have from the very start not fit in.

GM44 - So either when that thing changes, or when they ....., what does that open them up to?

P44 - I would say life (Laughs.). That's what it opens them up to, it opens them up to looking at things, and it manifests within themselves, like my flatmate, she's training to be a psychotherapist, my other best friend, or very good friend is a 50 year old Dutch lady who's a social worker in mental health, she ..... lived in (Poona?) for years

and she's been all over the place. Another good friend of ours, an ex-partner, is an anthropologist who's friend's Italian, whatever it is it all makes them engage either in happy relationships or in wondering about what it is all about and how things come to be, how our meaning goes along with it, although ..... that is what it looked to me like to do with these people, and I do seem to experience it in micro and macro systems I would say I do have a few, that sounds awful doesn't it, I'm just telling it the way it is. I do have a few English friends, I'm not saying I don't want English friends, it just ever so happens. But the ones that are my friends again have experienced some sort of similar conflict within a micro system, so they just moved on to another life, for example, for her coming down from up north to London, she dreads London, she dreads anything that sounds of posh or snobby, or whatever, but yet, she has to be here. Then I've got another very good friend from a very middle class family, who initially started, did a degree in Oxford, not in Oxford, in Cambridge, did very well, again strong Christian family but just felt he didn't fit and then trained as a social worker and just moved here, and everything seemed to change for him then, and that's the sort of sense I get off people. I don't think I can pin it down any better. Something has opened in them about something, or closed in them, you could equally say closed in them about something, closed as in taking part in society as in the sort of, identifying through looks, clothes, music, having a mobile, all the sort of things that I totally dread, I simply detest, sort of things I dread. So that's what I'm saying, you could say closed off, but yes, there's just something which I would say has impaired them or made them incongruent with society in a micro macro system, whatever way you want to put it.

GM45 - So in a way I think I understand exactly what you're talking about, I don't think I could put in any better than you have. But I do know about that you're referring to. I just wanted to ask one last thing, unless, you want to add anything else, I'm just wondering what it feels like for you to talk about these things?

P45 - There was time earlier on actually what you asked me, but I was trying to say something and all that was actually coming up was emotion, it was quite powerful in a sense. Yes, it's painful, that's the best way to put it. There are times actually when, and I do think about these things loads, because I do on the other hand for instance, love my parents from the bottom of my heart, because I know everything that's happened it's totally interlinked to anxiety to be honest, and to their very own story and to their very own struggles of life, so it's very painful to see all this only happened because you had to create this life for you to actually survive within your context, and very often I wish I could just explain that to them, because something I always say to them, for example, is I do not adapt your belief system any more, but I can completely see you within your subjectivity, and I would completely like you to see me within my subjectivity. But because they have signed up for literally a higher order and given away responsibility in that sense they don't do that, and it doesn't function, but yes, I find it awfully painful and there's times when I do actually, actively make myself cry about it, which is very easy, you just have to listen to my very classic music that attacks any thought, make it racism, classism, whatever, anything, any sort of music that cries out for a better life as people just understand each other, and yes, it very often leads me to tears, and I find it very painful now. It's OK, I think, or it's not OK because I've personally worked on that loads, at the moment I'm very much working on that in my personal therapy. But yes, it's painful because very often it feels as if it's unnecessary, if that makes sense?

GM46 - Yes, and you feel it physically, do you?

P46 - Yes. Yes I do experience it physically.

GM47 – Where do you feel it? Oh, in your chest (yes).

P47 - Yes, yes, in the worst case I lose my voice actually, it's not as bad at the moment, but the need is pressing though I have talked about it so much recently, and I'm more in control of it, I've probably integrated it.

GM48 - Can I just ask what does that feel in there, in your chest?

P48 - It's difficult to say, like pulled together, locked, like what is an open space where you live, sound and energy can go through it, but it's a small channel and it's suffocating.

GM49 - Yes, suffocating, it's almost like a clamp?

P49 - Yes, right.

GM50 -I'm wondering if you were to stay with that feeling just for a moment, just for a moment, if you want to, I'm wondering if there would be, kind of let your attention go right down to where you feel it there, kind of suffocating, that clamp feeling, you might get some sense of kind of what that part of you in there is feeling right now, almost like there's kind of a different person in there?

P50 - It feels very often as if there's actually other people in there, that there is actually not just me, there is parts in there which are my family, making a collective unconscious or whatever, and there's parts in there which feel like moving, when I actually close my eyes and try to focus on it I can actually see parts, mainly of my mother actually moving in there in quite some pain.

GM51 - And all this means there's a part of you holding her, or holding them?

P51 - It feels to me, I would say it's part of her holding me, and it's something that, this is why it's not as bad, it's always been like that, my mother and me, and I indicated earlier, I have such a strong bonding that we do either, or whichever way you want to put it, we do communicate very, very strongly. Like say, my mother for example picks up on when I have sex, she will actually call me and ask me, or when I'm seeing somebody she will call me and ask me. When I'm depressed, when I'm utterly happy she's on the phone, she knows it, and it's also vice versa and I used to love it, I used to think what a fantastic thing, but I've come to really hate it over the years, and we are, again, I shouldn't be saying it, but in the year I, now I've had the guts to verbalise that I've gone for good, I'm not coming back, at least not for the next decade. That there is quite some letting go process, by the tossing and turning, it's something which seems to be quite merged I feel, there's a movement. And my mother's equally aware of that because she ever so often on the telephone will indicate your leaving me in one way or the other, or something.

GM52 - Anything else you want say about that?

P52 - No, next there would be tears.

GM53 - OK. Is there anything else you'd like to add to the whole picture?

P53 - No, not at the moment. I'm quite emotional.

*In the discussion afterwards he spoke about, I talked about the tension between belonging and kind of being suffocated in belonging too much and he confirmed that, he said, yes, please add that, that's very much the case in a relationship, if the person starts to feed off him or something and he just can't stand that, so there's that feeling as well.*

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## **“Carl” Meaning Units**

**The circumstances of leaving home:**

1. That's a tricky enough question, it was quite a conscious choice.
2. 4 years ago I came to the UK and cut off everything to do with home.
3. I'm intrigued with when I call it home and when I don't.
4. I had a flat, a job, doing a degree, and I decided to stop all that and start over again here.
5. I guess I started leaving home when I was 19 when I went to Kenya for 6 months.
6. I wanted to get as far away as possible, then came back, then went to the USA, came back and tried to resettle at home for 1 ½ years then finally left.
7. I used to feel home was a safe environment where I could live, until I was 17. My father is a fundamentalist preacher and I came out as gay.
8. Things were not absolutely horrible, but I felt I lost my voice in that context.
9. That's when I started to try to get away, I came back twice and then made the final decision 4 years ago.
10. I decided to go to Africa as soon as I could after finishing school, to be out of reach of anyone.
11. I also made a conscious choice to live in non-materialistic, non-capitalistic environment, with the rural Masai.
12. I wanted to explore culture and was quite naïve about it. I thought I'd be fine coming from Germany to rural Africa so it was quite a learning experience.
13. I found out how much of what I believed was me was actually just the influence of my home and culture and the influence of a certain context. This was quite painful.
14. I became very aware of the tremendous impact of context, culture, when I was growing up. At that age, I began to realise that things that I would have referred to as the ultimate truth were contextual and useless in such a different environment.
15. I partly chose Africa because I was going against conventions and most people thought it was useless since it wouldn't gain me qualifications or anything career-wise.
16. I already experienced myself as a minority and in quite an underdog position and I think I wanted to identify with something similar to my position, that's why I went for this experience.
17. I was thinking I might be able to identify with people who were so foreign but maybe also more similar.

**You went to something so different in order to find a place you belonged?**

1. I grew up in an extreme family and was really a believer when young, the concept of home and parent were based upon God and I was perceived as a good Christian then, but all this sacredness fell apart overnight when I came out.
2. I am cynical about all this now but it was very traumatic then.

3. All the things that exude a sense of home, security, life, were like lies that wouldn't function anymore because of just this small change.
4. So I wanted to do to somewhere that this all functioned completely differently in order to find a kind of balance, a meaning, something to engage with.

You were at home until then, with your family?

1. Absolutely yes. I would say it was more than being at home, it was compulsive, too close, anxiety-driven, too much emphasis on keeping everything all right all the time.
2. My parents, unbelievably, provided a completely safe environment, everything was all right, nothing to worry about, no conflict, a very strong home for the first 15-6 years of my life.
3. My experience of home was complete trust, feeling mirrored and valued, being appreciated.
4. This created a strong sense of myself, and my experience of going away was that I was able to regain that situation, which I had lost when I came out.
5. Although my parents reacted OK when I came out, I was suddenly a second class person in the sense of being appreciated, being OK, I was no longer very special, like they'd always viewed me.
6. Coming here was like gaining a voice again in a way, as home used to provide but suddenly it didn't anymore.

Coming here was an attempt to find that voice or home again?

1. There's two sides to coming here – being out of reach of my parents, because they don't speak a word of English and to them it's a big foreign world and they don't have enough understanding of it to have any control.
2. The other side is that it gives me the opportunity to introduce myself to new people, from the beginning, as homosexual, so I don't experience that change that I had when I came out at home.
3. Those were the parts of the mission, though I wasn't really conscious of it.
4. When I visit home I experience what I call 'contextual inferiority' – I don't feel at home there, I don't feel I have a voice, and I'm intrigued by that.
5. Here I feel completely OK about myself, I do feel at home in Hackney, with the beautiful variety of people, it's a mix with no one thing defining the area. I feel I can blend in.
6. I tell my self to give myself a CBT treatment to recognise it's just the environment, you're OK, you should be able to carry that everywhere, but it doesn't work like that.

You don't feel at home at home?

1. No. I find it extremely painful going back and not feeling at home, it's an actual sensation.



2. It's a problem because there remains a strong attachment to my parents, although there's conflict, they are committed to their family, so it's a major trauma when I left and even worse when I say I won't come back.

You won't go back?

1. I started saying I wasn't coming back about a year ago because they assumed I would after I graduated.
2. They used to pay for my flights home every month because they wanted to see me.
3. I tell them that home for me is where I feel Ok and I can be myself, so this is where I feel at home.
4. It's painful to be at home and not be able to feel that.
5. It's also difficult because I have very intimate friends from school and they can't understand what it's like for me when I say I don't actually feel OK when I'm there.
6. I know that I am disappointing them, although they are OK with it.
7. You could argue that there is no such place as home, it's a contextual thing.
8. I've been reading a biographical book about the stories of emigrants, how and why they leave, and some commit suicide in the end of their lives they find they have no roots in the place they live.
9. I was really affected by that because I find that a lot of who I am is from my childhood and there is no shared experience of that with people here, like songs or TV from adolescence.
10. Those things, and the shared memories, are stuck in the original context unless I meet someone else from there over here, and that I found a very painful realisation.

What's so painful about that?

1. I was successfully brainwashed by Christian fundamentalism and it created a whole network in which everyone made me feel OK, and I had an absolutely happy childhood.
2. Materialistically we were well off, I had everything, played tennis, skiing, played piano, riding, plenty of holidays.
3. There was a complete functioning social network that provided emotional support and it's just been too easy.
4. The pain is the shift from that overprotected world. If my childhood had been tough it would have been easier later.
5. To go from absolutely safe, happy, secure, where everyone loves me, to the extreme change of that, to lose that vision, was difficult, it was a lie.
6. In Africa I had a depression for 3 months, which was very traumatic, I was hallucinating, fainting, not on medication, with native people who don't recognise depression and men crying wasn't appropriate.
7. In the daydreams and hallucinations, my parents and friends, all the people I loved very much, visited me and indicated the loss of this cut.

## Loss of the perfect world

1. Yes, The loss of that world, and not having responsibility.
2. It happened at the time when one goes through the transition of leaving home and having financial responsibility and other things.
3. I've always been aware in the last years of school, I was a bit melancholic, of this absolute loss of childhood, free from responsibility, and also knowing there's something about me.
4. This is part of everyone's development, but I think I wasn't as aware of it because everything had been so idyllic and my parents tried to keep that up.
5. My sister is 4 years older than me and she married a perfect Christian husband, my father bought them a house, she's happy, never had to work, she has people around her taking the responsibility.
6. They would like to do the same for me, to maintain that.
7. This relates to their own childhoods, which were very opposite from this.

## The drive to leave

1. I first came to the UK when I was 14, not speaking much English, and I'd already been to loads of places.
2. When I was young I very often experienced the opposite of homesickness, in German it's far-sickness, which is the craving to go somewhere out there, not your own environment, and I had this from very early on.
3. No one was surprised when I went to Africa.
4. Often I still have this experience of wanting to go out there somewhere.
5. I think there's some relation to my family because my father had bouts of depression when he couldn't work since I was 3, there were compulsions in the family and it was painful for me, one side of me always just wanted to get away.
6. Getting away feels like going to a space where I can breathe.
7. My sister is different from me.

## Why do you think you've always had this longing to go out into the world?

1. That's an interesting question for me.
2. I think it's related to the family dynamics in that my sister is very like my mother.
3. My mother has never done anything for herself, only for the family. She likes to be told, not to actively reason, she has no opinions and isn't very capable out in the world.
4. My sister is a duplicate of her, maybe it's genetic, I don't think it's just that environment, a very high level of anxiety.
5. My father, on the other hand, always wanted to travel, to break away, but was too anxious to take the chance.
6. He built a classic German life full of security, he retired on a good income when he was ill because he was a business journalist as well as priest.
7. I think my wanting to go away is something I took from my father.

1. We were also different in that I very early made very strong connections with other people.
2. I think it's because I had a very strong bonding with my mother, I replaced my father for her when he was away.
3. I knew way too much about the internal life of my mother way too early, it wasn't very productive.
4. Because I could make strong connections from an early age, I had deep meaningful attachments, like with girlfriends at 10, painful long-term bonding.
5. That caused some family conflicts since some of them were not Christian enough so they'd be banned, not allowed in the house. These people I loved would not be valued as my friends by my family.
6. One side of me was following my family teaching for protection, and another part became identified with the unacceptable and there were major conflicts.
7. This is where the split was between me and my sister, because in me early on was an identification with things outside the family context, outside the home, because of my internal conflict with it.

What do you think made you more open to difference than anyone else in your family?

1. I wish I knew.
2. Although I fitted into my family as a high achiever in all ways, I was also different – I was not mirrored in my male context because I was very emotional.
3. Mostly I identified with females, the first friendship with a male was when I was 16 and a gay social worker suggested I actively do that so I learned to cope with men in order to survive in the world.
4. So very early, in the wider context, I did experience myself as very different.
5. I had some discrimination and was made to feel different so this is where it maybe comes from, I knew how it felt and there's always a story to a person, a reason why things are different.
6. I did a research degree in Germany in pedagogy and hermeneutics and always had an interest in psychology, making sense of things. This was my plan from 13, there was some kind of awareness and I think I was realising already that I was different.
7. Something that contributed was that I had unanswered questions about things and would fight with my parents, they would silence me because it was too painful for them to consider these questions.
8. Being silenced, not being able to articulate my ultimate truth of something, was terribly painful.
9. I think at some level I was aware that there are different sides to things and I saw the other side to the safe world I was still engaged with, but I wasn't very open to it.
10. So I both fitted in and didn't, I didn't fit in within the main context of my same age males, but I could mirror myself in my father because he is very emotional, he gets depressed but does not engage with it whereas I did, I got that from my mother.

## Tried to re-settle back home

1. I enrolled for my degree there but moved out from my parents and lived in Cologne on my own. This was painful for my parents.
2. My father wanted to buy me a flat, which any normal 19 year old would love, but I actually said no.
3. I didn't want to own a flat, I didn't want to be fixed in a certain place my owning a flat even though I planned to finish this 6-7 year degree.
4. If my father bought me a flat I would have felt guilty enough to want to stay there.
5. So I went to work and paid rent, which indicated the value of that home thing for me.
6. After 3 semesters it just didn't feel right.
7. I tried it to please my parents to some extent, which I still try to do.
8. They gave so much, at least financially when I was younger, I feel guilty and they make me feel guilty and I take it on.
9. Rationally I think I shouldn't but I am still trying to please them and that was one reason I returned.
10. Another reason was an existential anxiety to get stable, have safety, because in our family that's the thing to do.
11. Anyone else I was at school with by that time was already earning money or in the middle of a law or medical degree that leads to a good career and they would ask 'what are you doing with your life?'
12. I've always said I didn't want to just work for the rest of my life.
13. Also the connections I had at home were still strong and after my depression in Africa there was a huge anxiety of losing people.
14. Other people gave me stability compared to my unacceptability in my family.
15. I didn't want to be at home, it would have made rational sense to stay at my parents, economically, but I didn't want that, I couldn't live there anymore.

## Other influences at that time

1. I wasn't studying psychology, which I wanted to, because I couldn't get in and what I was studying was rubbish.
2. For the 1 ½ years I was living there I did not feel I could have a sex life with men because my parents were too close and had too much influence.
3. A number of my friends found my sexuality painful as some of them were former partners. It was painful for them to see me with a male partner.
4. Having my own flat was preparing a way to sexually engage with men since my parents would never allow a homosexual man in the house, full stop.

## So, what do you think is the real reason you left home?

1. If you want one answer, it's that I could not exist in that context anymore.
2. I don't know what would have happened if I couldn't leave.

3. I researched gay Christians in the UK and they had various diagnoses including depression, and I could completely see it because they didn't get it together to leave that context.
4. I suggested to two of them to go somewhere else and get some time and space to think. Their contexts hadn't changed but they had and as long as they were reliant on their contexts nothing could happen.
5. That could have happened to me and I would have been terribly sad and suffered huge inferiority because that's how I feel if I go for even a week, I feel a piece of shit when I'm there.
6. No matter how much I remind myself about what I've done, when I'm there I feel I can't exist and that's what would have happened I think.
7. When I'm there I don't exist because part of what I am is completely ignored by my parents.
8. I view my sexuality as a part of me, not my whole identity, I'm not in that sense a gay person.
9. They pray for my healing and when I originally came out they performed two exorcisms, no acceptance, so although it's not the most important part of me, it is a part of me that I'm OK about, I'm quite happy to be what I am.
10. My parents say they accept but they only tolerate and that's not enough for me to feel I can exist there.

How has it been since leaving home?

1. For me it was almost reinventing myself.
2. I'm still going through this process, of getting over myself as German and that culture. (sounds like a purification)
3. I am reducing myself to who I feel I am within, rather than what has come from the culture I grew up in.
4. It's been a scary process. I didn't know anyone when I came here and I source myself through intimate relationships, rather than sexual ones.
5. I had the experience of building a completely new network which was scary at first, particularly finding a way to fit into dorm life at university.
6. I was almost collecting a new family, I have family over here now as well I feel.
7. I view family as something I can construct. We had relatives in our family who were horrendous and I couldn't see why I should be nice to them just because they are family.
8. So, early on I had a different concept of family, so re-establishing a sense of family here was important.
9. The most important thing was to re-invent myself and to learn about how society functions for people within and without.
10. I find that I usually relate to other foreigners, either because I feel foreign or because we share that experience and it leads to a connection.
11. I've never thought about this in this way.
12. A lot of my experience was of giving up home security that had been long established, like from childhood, having no context to share them here, learning to keep them alive.
13. It's been a growth experience, a learning curve, on the whole very positive.
14. A process of detachment that's still going on in the sense that is my new home, not just work or study. This is where I will be.

15. People always ask why are you here, how long will you be here, which I don't feel I need to engage with.
16. I had visions of moving to other places and often I say England is not my home which is true but sounds sad.
17. Now I am thinking of settling in London because after 4 years I have a network of people again.
18. I sometimes think if I do this too often, I may end up loopy without roots.
19. I think it's important to be flexible, to adapt, but it's also valuable to have some sense of home.
20. I am a person who creates a home environment in my personal space.
21. It's essential for me to every week spend a few hours completely alone in my room, it's a sacred time, more important than being with a love or friend.
22. So I need a home as a space where I can be with myself and I needed to create that over here because I need it.

What allows you to have that feeling of being at home?

1. It's where I can be metaphorically naked, by myself, where I can be safe enough to be vulnerable.
2. I find there is a lot of positive excitement and hope in the Earth but also a lot of pain in me from the past.
3. I find life as painful as it is beautiful, both sides, and home is a space where I can allow myself to be all of that. So it limits who I can live with, to feel this.
4. I live with my best friend, we are very similar in our experiences of being different from where we come from. She also has trouble feeling female as I do feeling male.
5. Living with her allows me to engage with all that pain, because she does it but not many people do.
6. I find life utterly contextual, everything always happens in a context.
7. For me home is a place that allows that sort of view, so my parents' house can never be that, they think God will do everything for us.
8. When I was kicked out of heaven all that belief fell apart for me, so I need the space.
9. It's peculiar because it just came into my head that my father named me after Kierkegaard, with no idea what he wrote about, just that he was a priest, quite embarrassing.

What makes us different?

1. Those of us who are different have been opened by life's betrayals.
2. We're open to being in a context where we don't fit, where things fell apart.
3. Opened by experiencing initially a sense of themselves and security and then having it changed. Or from the start they didn't fit in.
4. They are opened up to life, to looking at things, and it manifests within themselves.
5. It makes them engage in wondering what it's all about and how things come to be, how our meaning comes with it.

6. I do have some English friends, but they have also experienced some sort of similar conflict between the micro and macro systems.
7. It's hard to pinpoint more, but either something has opened or you could equally say something has closed in them, they can't just take part in superficial conventional society, something has impaired them or made them incongruent with society.

### The feelings of the interview/

1. Earlier on I was trying to say something but all that was coming was emotion. It was powerful and painful.
2. I think about these things a lot, I love my parents completely, everything that's happened is linked to their anxiety and their own life struggles.
3. Often I wish I could explain how they created their life to survive in their context.
4. I explain to them that I do not adopt their belief system any more but see them as their subjectivities and want them to see me the same.
5. Sometimes I make myself cry about it, which is easy, sometimes listening to music that cries out for a better life, it leads me to tears and I find it painful now.
6. Part of the pain is feeling that so much of this pain is unnecessary.
7. I feel it physically in my chest and in the worst cases I lose my voice.
8. It's not so bad right now, the need is pressing in there but I've spoken about it so much recently that it's more in control and more integrated.
9. The feeling is liked pulled together, locked, like a small channel suffocating.
10. It feels like there are other people in there, including my family, making a collective unconscious. Some parts feel like moving, I can actually see them, mainly connected to my mother and in quite a lot of pain.
11. It feels like a part of her holding onto me. We have such a strong bonding that we communicate strongly.
12. My mother picks up on when I have sex, or seeing someone, she will call and ask about it.
13. When I feel depressed or unhappy she's on the phone, or it's vice versa, I used to love it and think it's fantastic, but now I hate it.
14. Now that I've said I'm not coming back, there is a real letting go process, there's a movement I can feel in that merging.
15. My mother is equally aware of it and when she calls indicates that I'm leaving her.
16. I would cry if I continued to talk.

### Belonging and feeling suffocated

1. There is a tension between wanting belonging and feeling suffocated by it.
2. Feeling suffocated is a kind of belonging too much, not having individual space any more.
3. This often happens in a relationship and I need to structure in my own time so I don't feel suffocated.
4. I can't stand feeling that someone is feeding off me, like in a too close relationship.

**I consciously chose to leave home:**

1. 4 years ago I moved here and chose to cut off everything to do with home.
2. I'm intrigued about when I call it home and when I don't.
3. I gave up everything I had there and decided to start over again here.
4. Leaving was related to coming out as gay.
5. When I came out I felt I lost my voice in the fundamentalist Christian home environment, so I began to try to get away.
6. I went to Africa when I was 19, right out of school, to get as far away as possible, and to the USA before returning for 1 ½ years and then finally leaving.
7. In Africa for 6 months I wanted to explore non-materialistic, non-capitalist culture and I naively thought I'd be fine in such a different environment.
8. I had experienced myself as a minority at home so thought I might identify with others in an underdog position, I thought I might have more in common with these foreign people.
9. I wanted to go against conventions while others were gaining qualifications and starting careers.

**Realising the impact of context:**

1. Exposure to other cultures showed me how much of my identity was only the influence of my home, culture, context, and that was a painful realisation.
2. I began to realise that what I'd taken as ultimate truth was contextual and useless in different environments, context has a tremendous impact.
3. When I visit home I experience 'context inferiority', I don't feel at home or that I have a voice there and I'm intrigued by that.
4. I feel at home in Hackney, where there is a beautiful mix of people, the variety means that there's no one definition, so I can blend in.
5. I try to give myself a CBT treatment to recognise it's just the environment and I should be able to carry my feeling of being OK anywhere, but it doesn't work like that.
6. You could argue there's no such place as home, it's a contextual thing.
7. My context hadn't changed but I had when I came out as gay, so I needed to leave that context, to get space and time and not be reliant on that context.
8. If I didn't leave that context I would have been very sad and felt hugely inferior, I feel that awful when I visit for only a week.
9. I find life utterly contextual, everything always happens in a context.

**The home environment:**

1. I grew up in an extreme family, the concept of home and parent were based upon God and I was also a believer and perceived as a good Christian.
2. Home was a compulsive environment, too close, anxiety-driven, too much emphasis on keeping everything all right all the time.



3. My parents provided a completely safe environment, nothing to worry about, no conflict, a very strong home for my first 16 years.
4. I felt complete trust, feeling mirrored and valued, being appreciated, creating a strong sense of myself.
5. I was brainwashed by religion and it created a social network in which everyone provided emotional support and it was a happy childhood, but too easy.
6. Materialistically we were well off, I was able to play all sports, have lots of holidays, I had everything.
7. My parents were trying to create for us the opposite of what they endured in their own childhoods.
8. There were also compulsions in the family, some pain, and my father had bouts of depression when he couldn't work since I was 3, one side of me always just wanted to get away.

### **Coming out and the loss of paradise:**

1. I was aware as school was ending, that I was losing childhood and the freedom from responsibility, I was melancholic and also feeling there was something different about me.
2. I used to feel home was safe and sacred until I was 17 and all this fell apart when I came out as gay.
3. Everything that exudes a sense of home and security were like lies that wouldn't function anymore because of this small change.
4. I feel cynical about all this now but it was completely traumatic then.
5. My parents reacted OK but I was suddenly a second class person, I was no longer special or even appreciated.
6. Although OK, P's parents also performed 2 exorcisms on him, to cure this part of him that he was happy with – is that OK??
7. It was very painful to shift from that overprotected safe happy secure world to the other extreme. It would have been much easier if my childhood had been difficult.
8. So I wanted to go where everything functioned differently in order to find balance, meaning, something to engage with.
9. I went to Africa and fell into a traumatic depression where I had hallucinations of my parents and friends visiting me and indicating the loss of that world to me.

### **Responsibility and independence:**

1. I came out at the same time as people go through the transition of leaving home and having financial responsibility etc.
2. I wasn't aware of how this is a part of everyone's development because my parents tried to keep everything idyllic.
3. They bought a house for my sister when she married and she has never had to work or take responsibility, they would like to do the same for me, maintain that early world.
4. When I returned to Germany I moved out although it made economic sense to stay at my parents and they wanted that, but I couldn't live there any more.

5. My father wanted to buy me a flat but I said no, because I didn't want to own a flat and be tied down and also I would have felt guilty about leaving.
6. So I worked and paid rent, which indicates how important having a home space where I'm comfortable is to me.

### **Trying to re-settle in the home country:**

1. I returned to Germany after my travels partly to please my parents. I feel guilty about how much they gave me when I was young, indebted, and they play on that.
2. I also felt an existential anxiety to get stable, have safety, because our family was based upon that.
3. My peers were already earning money or progressing towards good careers and asking me what was I doing with my life.
4. My friendships were still strong there and after being depressed in Africa I had a huge anxiety of being without people.
5. My friends offered some of the stability I used to get from my family.
6. Sexuality remained an issue with my friends and family and I didn't feel I could have a sex life because my parents were too close.
7. After 3 semesters it just didn't feel right.

### **Not feeling at home at home:**

1. I have a physical sensation of pain when I go home and don't feel at home anymore.
2. I have strong attachments to my parents, though there is conflict, and it was a major trauma for them when I left and worse when I said I won't be coming back.
3. I started telling them I won't come back about a year ago because they assumed I would after I graduated.
4. It's painful to be at home and not feel I can be myself.
5. My intimate school friends also can't understand what it's like for me when I say I don't' feel OK when I'm home.

### **Making UK home:**

1. Going away was a chance to regain the strong sense of self I had as a child but then lost when I came out. I regained my voice again.
2. I also wanted to study psychology and that wasn't possible at home.
3. There were two sides to coming here though I wasn't conscious of it at the time.
4. I needed to be out of reach of my parents and they don't understand English or the big foreign world enough to have any control here.
5. I needed the opportunity to introduce myself as gay from the outset to new people, so I wouldn't experience that change I got when I came out at home.
6. I know I am disappointing my parents by staying here, they used to pay for my flights home every month because they wanted to see me.

7. It is also difficult because a lot of who I am is from my childhood and that context is not shared with anyone here and that was a painful realisation, that I don't have roots here.
8. Home is where I can feel OK about myself so the UK is where I feel at home.

### **Always wanting to leave:**

8. When I was young I very often experienced the opposite of homesickness, in German it's far-sickness, which is the craving to go somewhere out there, not your own environment, and I had this from very early on.
9. No one was surprised when I went to Africa.
10. Often I still have the experience of wanting to go out there somewhere, finding a space where I can breathe.

### **Leaving and family dynamics:**

1. It's an interesting question why I've always had the longing to go out into the world and I think it's related to my family dynamics.
2. My sister is very different from me, she is like my mother and I am more like my father.
3. My mother puts the family first, she isn't capable coping in the world, she likes to be told what to do rather than actively reason or form her own opinions and my sister is the same, very anxious.
4. I bonded strongly with my mother, replacing my father for her when he was away, and I knew too much about her internal life, it wasn't productive when I was so young, I needed to get away from that.
5. My father built a classic German life of security as a business journalist but he always wanted to travel, to break away, but he was too anxious to do it.
6. I think I took this instinct from my father.

### **Openness to difference:**

1. I made strong meaningful connections at an early age with friends outside the home and this caused some conflict because some of them were not Christian enough so these people I loved were banned from the home.
2. I was split, one part following my family for security, and another identifying with those who were unacceptable and outside the closed home environment.
3. I was always different than other males, more emotional.
4. I identified more with girls and my first male friend was at 16, to teach myself to cope with men in order to survive.
5. I was discriminated against a bit, increasing my difference, so maybe it's that I knew what it felt like and was sensitive to the person and the reasons for difference.
6. My interest in psychology was already an awareness that I was different.
7. I was aware there are different sides to things, different than the safe world I was engaged in, but I wasn't very open to it yet.

8. I had unanswered questions and this caused fights with my parents who would try to silence me rather than consider my questions, that was painful.
9. As a male I fit my father's image as he's very emotional too and gets depressed, but I didn't fit into the larger same age male context.
10. My father didn't engage with his feelings but I learned from my mother to do that.

### **The real reason for leaving:**

1. In one reason it's that I couldn't exist in that context any more, I don't know what would have happened if I couldn't leave.
2. When I go back to visit I feel I can't exist, all I've accomplished disappears, but it doesn't matter because part of what I am is completely ignored by my parents.
3. I view my sexuality as part of me, not my total identity, so in that sense I'm not a 'gay person' but I'm happy as I am.
4. My parents continue to pray for my healing, they don't accept me they tolerate me and that's not enough for me to feel I can exist there.

### **The experience since leaving:**

1. I am going through a process of reinventing myself, getting over my German culture to reduce down to who I feel I am within, rather than what has come from the culture I grew up in.
2. I was a scary process of building a new network of intimate friendships, not knowing anyone, collecting a new family as a source for myself.
3. Early on I had a different concept of family, as something we can construct and choose, not people you are obliged to be nice to.
4. I needed to learn how society functions for those on the inside and those on the outside and I found that I usually relate more to other foreigners because our shared experience leads to a connection.
5. I've had to learn to give up on sharing childhood experiences of a secure home because there's no context to do that here but it's been a growth experience, learning that has mostly been very positive.
6. It has been a process of detachment in order to let this be my new home, with a new network of friends. Although I also have visions of moving on because England isn't my home, true but sad.
7. It's important to be flexible enough to adapt but also to have some sense of home and I worry that if I move too often I may end up without any roots.
8. My home environment is very important and I need a home space where I can spend a few hours each week completely alone. This is sacred time and more important than my relationships.
9. I've never thought about these things in this way before.

### **The feeling of being at home:**

1. Home is where I can be metaphorically naked, safe enough to be vulnerable.

2. Life is as painful and it is beautiful and home is a place where I can allow all of that in.
3. It is important who I can live with to have this. I live with a best friend and we have much in common, this allows me to engage with pain because she also does this.
4. Home is a place that allows that sort of view, so my parent's house will never be that since they think God will do everything for us.
5. When I was kicked out of heaven I lost all that belief, so now I need space.

### **Belonging and suffocation:**

5. There is a tension between wanting belonging and feeling suffocated by it.
6. Feeling suffocated is a kind of belonging too much, not having individual space any more.
7. This often happens in a relationship and I need to structure in my own time so I don't feel suffocated.
8. I can't stand feeling that someone is feeding off me, like in a too close relationship.

### **Being opened by life makes you different:**

8. Those of us who are different have been opened by life's betrayals, open to being in a context where we don't fit, where things fell apart.
9. Opened by experiencing initially a sense of self and security and then having it changed. Or from the start they didn't fit in.
10. They are opened up to life, to looking at things, and it manifests within themselves by making them engage in wondering what it's all about and how things come to be, how our meaning comes with it.
11. Even the English friends I have also have experienced some sort of similar conflict between the micro and macro systems.
12. It's hard to pinpoint more, but either something has opened or you could equally say something has closed in them, they can't just take part in superficial conventional society, something has impaired them or made them incongruent with society.

### **The feelings of the interview:**

17. Earlier on I was trying to say something but all that was coming was emotion. It was powerful and painful.
18. I think about these things a lot, I love my parents completely, everything that's happened is linked to their anxiety and their own life struggles and often I wish I could explain to them how they created their life to survive in their context.
19. I explain to them that I do not adopt their belief system any more but see them as their subjectivities and want them to see me the same.

20. Sometimes I make myself cry about it, which is easy, sometimes listening to music that cries out for a better life, it leads me to tears, like now.
21. Part of the pain is feeling that so much of this pain is unnecessary and I feel it physically in my chest and in the worst cases I lose my voice.
22. It's not so bad right now, the need is pressing in there but I've spoken about it so much recently that it's more in control and more integrated.
23. The feeling is liked pulled together, locked, like a small channel suffocating and it feels like there are other people in there, including my family, making a collective unconscious. Some parts feel like moving, I can actually see them, mainly connected to my mother and in quite a lot of pain.
24. It feels like a part of her holding onto me. We have such a strong bonding that we communicate strongly, for example, my mother picks up on when I have sex, or seeing someone, she will call and ask about it, or when I feel depressed or unhappy she's on the phone, or it's vice versa, I used to love it and think its fantastic, but now I hate it.
25. Now that I've said I'm not coming back, there is a real letting go process, there's a movement I can feel in that merging and my mother is equally aware of it and when she calls indicates that I'm leaving her.
26. I would cry if I continued to talk.

## 2. Sexual identity and the loss of home

- Leaving home can be related to the changes caused by coming out as gay in a family not open to this identity. P suddenly felt he couldn't speak up for himself when he came out in his fundamentalist family, and this led to the need to leave in order to regain the positive experience of home life before they knew he was gay.
- When the person changes but the context doesn't, it can create feelings of not being accepted, inferiority and unhappiness. P no longer believed the sense of home as safe and sacred, these no longer functioned for him as a gay son. This was a painful and sudden shift from a secure world to a homeless insecure one.
- On the one hand, P describes his parents as being OK about his sexuality, but he also recalls feeling like a second-class citizen, no longer special or appreciated. He also recounts being put through two painful exorcisms in order to heal something about himself with which he was happy. These accounts seem inconsistent or at least unclear.
- Sometimes it seems as though a difficult childhood would make it easier to cope with change. To lose an idyllic childhood through normal development is difficult enough but to acquire a second-class status at the same time can be traumatic. P's response was to try to find somewhere that everything functioned differently in order to regain a sense of balance, meaning and belonging.

## 3. A conscious choice to seek a replacement home

- P is curious about when he refers to his original home as 'home' and when he doesn't. Four years ago he moved and severed his feeling for that previous home, deciding he'd start over again and never return. He needed to get far away from his parent's influence in order to re-establish his strong sense of self he had as a child until he came out.
- P also needed a home where he could live as a gay man and introduce himself as gay to others from the beginning so he wouldn't have to cope with the change he'd experienced when his family were told. He couldn't have a sex life in his home country as he felt his family were too close.
- P felt indebted to his parents and tried to please them by settling back in his home country. He also felt the need for stability, safety, and to pursue his interests as his peers were. After 3 semesters P was unable to establish a feeling of home or pursue his chosen studies and decided to leave the country to try to recapture a sense of home and pursue less conventional choices.
- P finds it difficult to make a home in the UK because a lot of who he is comes from childhood and that context is not shared with anyone here. It is painful to realise he does not have those deep roots here but he can feel OK about himself here and so this is now home.

- P left because he felt he couldn't exist in that context anymore and he feels this each time he returns to visit home. Everything P has accomplished falls away when a part of him, his sexuality, is totally ignored by his parents. His parents tolerate rather than accept his sexuality and that's not enough for P to feel he can exist there, so he can't stay and feel at home.

#### 4. Realisation of the impact of different contexts and relativity

- Before experiencing another culture it is easy to underestimate how challenging the difference can be. The exposure to rural Africa revealed to P how much of identity was only the influence of family and culture. Ultimate truths became only contextual truths and useless in different environments.
- P is intrigued by the fact that he now experiences inferiority in the context of his original home. He feels more at home in a multicultural area of London where there is no one identity or definition and he can just blend in. This is very different than his homogenous upbringing and may allow a sense of freedom from having to conform and lose parts of his identity.
- P feels life is so utterly contextual that it could be argued there's no such place as home, it's just context. Although in practice P has found it's not possible to just feel OK anywhere, there is more to it.

#### 5. The original home environment

- The family home was too safe, close, anxiety-driven, with an emphasis on keeping everything OK, no conflict, paradise for P's first 16 years. In retrospect P felt he was brainwashed by this extreme form of home and family based upon fundamentalist Christian principles, it was too easy.
- The parents were trying to create a much better environment than they had when young. They offered every material opportunity, as well as complete trust and appreciation to their children who consequently created a strong sense of self.
- However, there were also difficulties in the family, quite a compulsive environment with the father suffering from depression, and despite the safety, P recalls always wanting to get away. When he finally arrived in Africa his strong sense of self disintegrated and he suffered a traumatic depression in that unfamiliar context with no relationships.

#### 6. Independence

- Parents can interfere with the development of personal responsibility and independence that usually begins in adolescence. P's parents tried to protect them from the transition of leaving home and taking their own personal responsibility.
- P's sister was bought a house and P knows his parents would also like to maintain him in that safe early world, however he cannot agree to this. P



feels that accepting a flat from his father would tie him down and indebt him so that he would feel guilty leaving.

- Although it made economic sense to stay with his parents while at home, P could no longer live in that context so he became financially self-sufficient and set up his own home, which indicates how important it is for P to feel comfortable and have his own space.
- P realises it disappoints his parents when he stays away and maintains his independence. They originally paid for him to fly home each month because they wanted to see him.

## 7. Importance of relationships

- Friendships can offer stability when family relationships change. P has always had very strong and intimate relationships with friends outside the family environment. P found these relationships sustaining when his family position became unstable. In Africa P had hallucinations of friends and parents coming to visit him and this indicated to him the importance of that world and those relationships.
- Early in his life P developed a concept of family as something constructed and chosen, not defined just by relatives. But it can be a scary process of building a new network of intimate friendships, collecting a new family in order to secure oneself in the world.

## 8. The pain of not feeling at home at home

- There is a physical feeling of pain for P when he returns home for a visit and again feels it's no longer home for him. He maintains strong attachments to his parents, though there is conflict, and it was a major trauma for them and P when he originally left and then worse for his parents when he explained he won't return.
- P finds it very difficult to be at home, a context he used to feel completely safe and accepted in, and not feel he can be himself. Even his peers can't fully understand when he tries to explain that he doesn't feel OK at home.
- Even when P was much younger, he always wanted to go away. He often experienced the opposite of homesickness, in German 'far-sickness', a craving to go somewhere far away, away from the home environment. No one was surprised when P announced he'd go to Africa, and he still now sometimes has this need to go, to find a space he can breathe.

## 9. The relation of leaving to family dynamics

- P finds it interesting to wonder why he's always had this longing to go out into the world and he thinks it is related to the early family dynamics. When young, P bonded strongly with his mother, in fact taking his father's place when he was away. He feels this was not beneficial for him, to know so much about his mother's internal life at such a young

age, and he finally needed to get away from that degree of closeness with his mother.

- Although P is very close to his mother, he identifies more with his father's longstanding desire to travel. Although P's father was too anxious about security to break away, P feels he at least inherited this instinct from his father.
- P's mother was always living for the family, never going out into the wider world. She could not function well coping on her own and preferred to be told what to do rather than form her own opinions. P's sister is like his mother so P found himself in a family where he was already in a role of being different from both parents, taking a supportive role with one, and also different from this sister.

#### 10. Openness makes you different

- P made strong meaningful connections with friends outside the home at an early age. When some of these friends were not approved of by his parents, and banned from visiting, P experienced conflict between loved parents and loved friends. Part of him valued the security of his idyllic family life but another part of him identified with those who were unacceptable and outside the closed home world.
- P's openness to his own emotions also made him different from other males his own age, although his father was also emotional. He identified more with girls as companions and only had his first close male friend at 16 in order to learn how to cope with men as a survival mechanism.
- P's experiences of discrimination were enough to sensitize him further to difference and to the underdog. His interests in psychology are an expression of this. He was aware there are different ways of viewing life other than presented in his safe family world before he was ready to open to this otherness. When he began to question things his parents tried to silence this emerging voice and open questioning and P found that very painful to cope with. This further emphasised his experience of being in a minority at home, increasing his openness to others who are different or foreign
- P hypothesises that people who are different have been opened by life's betrayals, open to being in a context where they don't belong and feeling the threat of things falling apart. According to P either such people never fit in or they had a sudden loss of their initial sense of self and initial security. P is trying to find a way of thinking about his own experience and how it connects to others who he finds it easy to relate to.
- This openness to life manifests by making a person question basic issues in life, what's it all about, how our meanings are formed. It is not easy to formulate more about this openness and P suggests it may equally be seen as a closing down to the possibility of taking part in superficial conventional society. A kind of impaired ability to be congruent with one's context, with society.

#### 11. The experience of being at home here since leaving

- As a part of the process of re-creating his sense of home, P is engaged in a process of reinvention by discerning what is him and what is carried on from his culture. He has been in a process of detachment in order to let his new place be his new home, including a new network of social support.
- P finds he relates more readily to other foreigners because they share a common experience that connects them. Like others from other places he's had to put effort into learning how society functions for those on the inside and those on the margins.
- P imagines perhaps moving on from England because although he's sad about it, he says this isn't his home. For example, he has given up on sharing childhood experiences that are context-specific and that others from another place can't relate to.
- For P the meaning of home is a place where he can be metaphorically naked, vulnerable, a place that allows both the beauty and the pain of life. This is why for P his parents home cannot be home for him now as their religious views do not admit pain as something to engage with.
- For P his home environment is very important and must include a space where he can be in solitude a few hours each week. This is experienced as sacred time, more important than relationships. This space has replaced his previous religious belief. However, relationships are also important and it is crucial for P that he live with people he shares certain values and experiences in common, especially the experience of being different.
- Leaving home has been a growth experience and the learning has been mostly positive. P has discovered that for him it is important to be flexible enough to adapt but also to have some sense of home and he is concerned that if he moves too much he might lose this and end up without any roots.

## 12. Belonging and suffocation

- There is a tension between belonging and feeling suffocated in belonging. For P feeling suffocated is like belonging too much, not having the individual space he needs any more. This experience often happens in a relationship that is too close, where P can feel like someone is feeding off him and he needs to protect his individual space. This account seems reminiscent of P's relationship with his mother.

## 13. Feelings of the interview

- P reveals that in an earlier part of the interview he had the experience of trying to say something but powerful emotion stopped him. He says that it is easy to make himself cry sometimes by listening to meaningful music. Part of his emotional pain is the feeling that so much of the pain is unnecessary. He feels this in his chest area and when it's most pronounced he loses his voice. It was not so difficult at the end of the interview since he has been speaking about it enough that it's more integrated and therefore controlled.

- P thinks about these issues a lot though some of the interview allowed him to think about things differently. He loves his parents and feels that their own anxiety and life struggles have made their relationship difficult. P wishes real communication with his parents was possible so he could explain how he sees their lives as fitting a specific context and how he can view them as individual people without adopting their beliefs and he wants his parents to be able to view him the same way.
- P's physical feeling is like being pulled together and locked, like a small channel suffocating. It feels like there are other people in that space, including his family, making a collective unconscious. He can see some parts clearly and they feel like moving inside. This is mainly connected to his mother and it feels like she is holding onto him. P talks about how strong their bond is to each other, how they know how the other is feeling and that he used to love this closeness but now he hates it. There is a real letting go process for P and his mother is also aware of it. He can feel their merging loosening and she indicates that she feels he is leaving her. At this point P feels he would cry if he continued.

“Christine”

GM1 - The first thing I'd like to ask is if you could just relate some of the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - OK. It was when I was 17, and I actually decided, I come from Luxembourg originally, and so I decided to study at university in England, I was in Lancaster. And so the decision came probably through different factors, one of them being I didn't feel very at home at school, I didn't like the environment so I didn't want to do what the majority of people were doing, which was to go over to France or Belgium to University. I wanted to go somewhere different. My dad's Scottish, and we often came on holidays to England and I really liked it, and so I came to Lancaster University, came to Luxembourg and came back obviously, it was the ... courses and we had the perfect match in the .....

GM2 - So around the age of 17, something was going on that you didn't quite feel at home?

P2 - At school, yes. I maybe, I'm thinking maybe it had to do with, I don't know, being far away from home as well, I don't know, I mean I had mixed feelings about it. Because my mum was pregnant at the time and I felt I was going to miss out on a lot by being away and maybe I shouldn't be away, but I don't know. It wasn't a conscious decision to get away from my family, but now it feels like it was a good decision in the end. .... And being away from the school environment where I was lacking in self confidence, enabled me at University to be whoever I wanted to be and to feel very free in that, and to be different as well, be different and being accepted as being different, and it sort of, I looked interesting, I wasn't English, and so suddenly I was interesting.

GM3 - So in your school environment you somehow didn't feel that you kind of belonged in some way?

P3 - Yes, yes. I felt different, but I felt judged, my classmates could be very critical, and it was kind of, the environment, I wasn't the only person who was being criticised, but it was kind of, that environment, being critical towards each other, and I just felt very restricted, and unable to be myself really, and I just felt everyone was always looking at me and I was very uncomfortable.

GM4 - So when you were at school during the time you were just describing, were you living at home at that time?

P4 - Yes, yes. You know, I'm really wondering how far to go over (Laughs), trying to establish what is safe enough, I mean it's not, because I mean, you probably just want me to talk about, as to whether it was a big factor in my deciding to go away, but I don't think it was that conscious at the time. My parents were divorced and my mum suffered from depression and was in the hospital, a psychiatric hospital back out of hospital, and so this went on when I was kind of, 13, 14, and it wasn't talked about, we didn't communicate very much. It was kind of messy, my mum was very ..... So I think part of that was part of me going away, maybe going away from the responsibility of feeling that maybe if that was took on to myself then she would always have to be OK or I'd have to sort it out. And it's something that I keep doing and staying away for that reason, and I went travelling also for ten months, I kind of ran around the world, literally. And to connect with me in what I want and what I need, and not what people's expectations from me are.

GM5 - So you felt that you had to leave in order to find what you wanted, or something?

P5 - Yes, be out of the environment of, I don't know. I mean, it's different now because I have an insight of how I am now when I go back into that environment, and I can tell the difference, and so it's, I can tell that I'm different when I'm back at home. And so, I mean focusing that now, and this is why, and I didn't know it at the time, not consciously at the time, that I needed, well eventually I did find myself and connected with what I wanted and who I was, I felt free, I don't know if that's consciously what I did at the time.

GM6 - So, it sounds like you didn't feel that you could be free in this whole environment, at home or at school, and there was something about that whole setting that restricted you, and you had to leave to find yourself... ?

P6 - Yes, so I did.

GM7 - I'm wondering what it was about leaving, I mean you could have just moved to another city or something?

P7 - Not really, because there's no university in Luxembourg, at the time there was no, you know it's like you have to go to France or Belgium, but it could have not been that far, I mean, you know, France is more like half-an-hour away and Belgium's about an hour away. It probably also relates to not feeling at home in France, ..... I really didn't want to go to France, and that relates to my mum's family and not getting on with them, and how that affects my image of France, whereas England is, the way

I've always felt, and it was the place when we came on holiday, and I spent my holidays, it felt like home.

GM8 - So you were looking for a place where you could feel at home?

P8 - Yes, I guess. Even though that's not happened, and that's part of the, that's why i'm intersted in your study as well, becuase i kind of actually feel that i don't actually belong anywhere, like I don't feel I belong at home anymore, I don't feel I belong in England, so .....

GM9 - Let's explore that, it sounds interesting.

P9 - It's interesting and it's also very sad for me, because I mean, it was quite prominent, the timing of your study, because it came after Christmas when I was away and I had such a difficult time at Christmas, because I went home for two weeks, which is the longest I've been at home for a while, and had a big problem coming back, and staying there. I mean, it was really, I was ready to come home, i say 'to come home', to come back to England, because I don't feel that I would fit in in Luxembourg anymore, to me Luxembourg represents, a lot of different things, it represents a career in banking and in an institutional, financial institute, that kind of career, which is not what I want to go into. It's also a very rich place, very wealthy place, comfortable standard of living for my friends, high incomes, both of my closest friends are now married with children, well one's trying, and it's very different from my situation, I'm only 32 so I can't afford to buy a place in London, I'm not financially you know, independent, I'm single, and I go home and I'm faced with that. So Luxembourg represents a lot of things that don't match with my life any more. So when I go home, I go home to relax and be kind of looked after and i'm not really looked after, just to kind of, to recuperate, and I find it hard to accept that this is where I am, and it doesn't mean I'm inadequate because I don't have, I mean, it's the silliest, and you need to see my friend's car, she's just bought a hatchback, you know, my God, she's just bought a hatchback car and I don't have any car, that's what it represents to me. Luxembourg is kind of, material possessions, security, placeness (?), I guess. But it's not ...., or I don't feel at home there any more. So when I come back to England and feel like, I look like everyone else, but I'm not English, because I was thinking maybe i'm french, french is what my mother is, my mother's family, so I'm walking in the street thinking i'm french and no one knows I'm different, I feel like, like England is not my home either. I mean, now I feel more at ease just because of my choice I'm doing a counselling course which is why I'm here, which is what I want to do, you know, I'm building up my hours, I've got a job I need to

have at the moment, that gives me flexibility, and I am doing what I want, and it's hard to reconnect with that, because I really question myself when I'm faced with my friends having money and having a family and i don't.

GM10 - I'd like to ask what's it like to go back, and to see other people's lives having gone in sound like that sort of predictable way, and your life has moved on in a different direction? So when you come back and you see that divergence? What's that like for you?

P10 – Well, I feel, my initial reaction is I feel very insecure, it's like I feel I haven't achieved anything. We had a school reunion and at one point there were babies all around me, and I thought, 'Oh, my Gawd!' It's that kind of clash, they were most of them married, and I feel, yes, like I feel I don't have anything to show for what I'm doing, even though deep inside when I can really reconnect with how I feel, I know I'm doing what I want. But, I get a sense of myself as well as what I want and need, and that's what I do, when I'm away from all that, my family unit, I know what I want and what I need, and what I believe in, and I go back there and I question myself and what I have achieved and whether it's good enough.

GM11 - So it sounds almost like there's something about being away from Luxembourg that allows you, and I wonder why, but there's something that allows you to tune in to what you want. And when you go back there it sounds almost like you start to feel others' expectations that you should feel or something?

P11 - I can put it on myself.

GM12 - That you put on yourself? Did you say?

P12 - Yes, I wonder if there's kind of, two things, that internalised voices, like you know, the critical, I think I can separate the two. The first can be lead from my family and the expectation would be from my mum's family, from my aunt and my grandmother actually verbally saying to me, you should look after your mum, you should be responsible for her, and that can include financially, I mean I had a comment from my aunt saying you're not even able to get a proper job to give money to your mum. So I've really internalised that, and instead of saying OK, no, my choices are what I want, I don't have to look after my mother, I have kept it in, and my brother's great at the moment, like I don't feel responsible for my mum, but there's an expectation that I should be. I should feel responsible. When I'm away from all that, all those people as well, I keep thinking then 'no' I don't need to feel responsible and be OK about that. So I guess, partially it's that, when I'm back home and I'm back in the family, and



maybe there's expectations from my dad in a way also, to have a proper job, a job that pays well, and what am I doing, the counselling course I find it's hard work, and it's not something that I feel I could just do and finish and be qualified, it takes time and study and for him it's really hard to understand for him, that it can be hard and it's OK that it's hard..... in business eventually. So maybe over here I can ignore those voices that I carry with me, when I'm there they're very present, I don't know.

GM13 - Why do you think it is that you have taken such a different course? It sounds like you stand out in other people's minds, and maybe a little bit in your own as having made different, quite different choices? Why do you think that is?

P13 - I don't know, trusting myself as well, I mean even going travelling, because I was living with someone at the time, I had a job, a permanent job, but I just, I needed to go travelling, it was something I really wanted to do, and it's very, there's no one from the course who's done that, and it is very different, even at University no one had done it, and it's from all my friends, but it's not why I did it, it's more because I needed to do that, and it's more like listening to that and trusting that voice. even with the course, when I feel quite low in energy I really question what I'm doing. When I feel well and happy I know I'm doing what I want to do, and that's why I'm doing it.

GM14 - So you can feel when you're on track?

P14 - Yes.

GM15 - How about that need to travel? What was that? It sounds like you gave up a lot to do that?

P15 - Well, I gave up a lot and also I didn't because I wasn't happy in my job and I wasn't happy in my relationship. So, it was kind of a need to be free, I felt very trapped actually, in a nine-to-five job, in a relationship I wasn't happy with, I was bored at weekends and hated myself for being bored, how can I be bored, and I kind of just felt really trapped. I was actually very dependent upon my partner for entertainment, I mean, when he went out, it was like, oh, what can I do, and it's incredible to think back now, but when I was travelling it was really about me being able to fend for myself and look after myself and entertain myself. I don't know, and be free. I just really wanted to connect to that feeling of having experiences, new experiences, just be challenged by things that were different. Which I was, like just, different people and different sights and smells, ..... That was the best time of my life at the moment, that feeling of complete freedom that I steered myself. Because I was on my own, I chose, and all the experiences I had, amazing experiences, were my own doing. It was very

empowering.(pause) And also, it was a lot about self discovery as well, because I went on my own because I had a self-concept that I am independent and I don't need anyone. But I realised that after a long periods of time if I was on my own and wasn't meeting anyone I felt very lonely, and I needed people, and it's something can't evaluate it by myself, it's an ideal self I have, I need time on my own and I need time with people. So it was like finding myself again. And coming back was very hard, because I came back to Luxembourg, feeling very low.

GM16 - Was it coming back that made you feel very low?

P16 - Yes, I mean, what I did, I didn't give myself any space, so I went to a temping agency straight away and went into a job that was in an insurance company, which I hated doing. I don't know why I did that, as quickly. I was promptly trapped again and left again, for London. So now we're back over here (Laughs).

GM17 - So, what was it like when you got to London?

P17 - It was quite hard at first. I felt very lonely. And no one, because I had got friends from the University who were in England, so I got in touch with them and they were strong friendships, and this is probably the longest I've been in one place for a while. I've been here two years now, but I can see, I'm getting itchy feet, it's like, when my course will finish in November and passed and everything, qualified, then it'll be like, I'm going to have ..... and I'm not sure I'm going to stay in England, and I really don't know what I'm going to do . And I think actually, that being single has it's .....(moments?), I think it does have an influence, I think where do I want to live, and then I think something where if I have a family, and I think that's with me as well, because when I was with my partner at the time, about four years ago now, I didn't feel as homesick as I can sometimes be now I'm ..... I don't remember missing home, whereas now, or last year, I remember at times missing home, I'll just walk around... .

GM18 - So something about being on your own you began to feel that call for going home?

P18 - Yes, at times, when I feel really lonely, I mean, I haven't felt it particularly this year, possibly because I've been there, because I was home two weeks, it was kind of, enough. And that's the clash, that's why I find it so hard to return. Like sometimes I need to go home, I feel the need to go home, and also I don't belong there, I don't want to live, I don't think I can live there anymore.

GM19 - So what's that need to go home, would you say? So that you feel this need, or something bringing you back there, but when you get there it's like you feel that I can't stay and I don't quite fit in or something?

P19 - I guess, when I see it, being at home at my dad's house, which is kind of a nice house, it's a nice environment and it's peaceful, and I don't have to, I don't have to do everything. .... but it's like here I have to do everything myself. Though it's actually not like that anymore, really. Because, it's like what's coming to my mind is that because I'm not a little girl anymore, my dad's got a partner and their relationship's kind of, I can see that my dad's focus is on her, and not on me and my brother as much. I mean, we're there but we're not children. So I think the need is to be looked after, that's the call, that's what the call is, and if I was looked after here, maybe the call wouldn't be as strong. But when I'm home I'm not looked after because I'm feeling responsible...

GM20 - So the thing that brings you back there, when you get there you find it isn't there?

P20 - Yes, it is in the not so looking after way, but it is the comfortable, I can get nourishment from it just because it's nice, I mean at Christmas, and it was also my birthday and my dad kind of, we had a nice table set up?, silly things like that, but it means a lot to me ..... it's important to me, and so even say with mother, say with my best friend, it's important to me, and I got lot's of mileage, reconnecting with something.

GM21 - And you were saying a while ago that it was difficult to come back?

P21 - Yes, I don't know. Because it takes me a while to feel that I belong here, in this life.

GM22 - You belong in this life in London?

P22 - Yes. I had a few days, I came back and then I went back, straight back, three days and I was back on my course, and I went straight into that, and it was really difficult, and the thing is ..... I hadn't seen my friends. After I'd seen my friends I felt rooted again, ..... and I enjoy being with, you can share things with, I can do things with the mates I have, I don't know, a connection maybe. But in those three days at the course I felt very different from the group, it was a nightmare unit, it was really hard work, just that not belonging, the best way to describe it is I feel like I'm floating and not being grounded.

GM23 - So belonging is feeling grounded?

P23 - Yes.

GM24 - But if I've understood you right it sounds almost as though there are places that would welcome you, and say, you belong here, but in those situations you start to feel trapped? Is that right?

P24 - Yes, I guess it is ....

GM25 - So on the one hand, there's this really understandable desire to belong, and yet something about that that can also feel like a need to escape from it?

P25 - Yes, (pause, laughs)....

GM26 - Is that right or wrong?

P26 - Yes, it's true, I don't know. I don't know. what that's, I mean it's more about me than the situation, more about, I can't quite untangle it, but it is true, (long pause) I don't know. I don't know.

GM27 -Can I ask what is so important about belonging?

P27 - I guess, belonging is being seen or being understood, ..... so if I belong I can be accepted, whatever's going on for me, I guess I'm thinking about the group on the course, I wasn't in a very kind of, well place, but felt that no one noticed and .....feel accepted..... I guess it's also when people are interested in me or whats happened to me, or like if I'm not well I don't need to say,..... .

GM28 - But if that's understood then, belonging is being in a place where people care, and to know me well enough that they can see how I really am and accept that, no matter what?

P28 - I think that's it. I think the belonging is they can see me and accept and leave me space to be and not put any expectations on me. I know that's it, because in fact, when I'm home there's expectations straight away. Like with Chris, it's like, it's like, I was doing the course at the time, and I was volunteering somewhere, and he was like, I never see you and (moaning) and it was like, no, don't put demands on me, that where I guess is where the entrapment comes from, when I'm expected to be, what everyone else thinks .

GM29 - How does that feel to you? What's your reaction to that?

P29 - It's like, I want to get out, you know, it's trapped, it's about feeling trapped, ties that bind, I actually just want to get away. Yes.

GM30 - And what would happen if you didn't get away from situations that you need to get away so badly? What's the fear if you stayed behind, what would happen?

P30 - The immediate thing that came was there would be conflict, and then the second thing was I would just wither and die (Laughs). But that would be only if I accepted the expectations, but I could, because what I'm trying to do is, like my contact with my brother, and the way I'm saying how I feel more rather than ignoring it, but it causes conflict, I get a strong reaction back, and this is what I expect, that I face, ..... for me it's like, no, you're selfish, ..... so I'd just rather not have it.

GM31 - So, I mean we've touched on a lot of these things already, but I'll ask them anyway just in case there's something else you'd like to add. As you reflect back on the time you left home, something we talked about quite a bit, why do you think you really left your home?

P31 - 'Really' (laughs) Many reasons (Laughs). I can't know, at the time, my interpretation now, is maybe I needed to kind of, find myself, and just be free of those expectations and pressure. And not feeling comfortable, not feeling. But I don't know, I guess I don't know what I was feeling consciously, I'd like to go back to, how I was and that's my interpretation, that's what I needed to do, and that's something I've always done. I always done what's felt right, somehow.

GM32 - So sitting here now looking back at that 13 year old and that 17 year old, you're thinking that she really needed to get some space to find herself?

P32 - Yes. And I had the courage to do it, because I was the only one who went away that far, and I didn't realise at the time that's quite a big thing to do, but it didn't seem daunting, didn't seem like a big thing. Yes

GM33 - Sounds as if it seemed necessary?

P33 -Really important. Yes.

GM34 - Can I just ask when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you? Anything kind of unexpected, or what's it generally been like?

P34 - Cause it's nearly ten years now, I don't know, I guess it's been quite a rough ride, people wanting me to be more there, my grandma and my aunt... on my own ... It's been hard, but it's been very free to be away, it's been hard to be away because I felt, well, at one point there was quite a crisis, I felt like giving it all up and moving back which would be much easier, and knowing actually I can't do that, it's not who I am. So it's hard being away, and also it's like, OK, I am away, this is what I need, I need to be away from the situation . And I don't know there will be a time when I'm going to be ready to go back, whether I can do that, whether I want to.

GM35 - That's the next thing I wanted to ask you, do you ever think of returning home?

P35 - I have done. I did last year for a little bit, but actually I think I prefer..... to Luxembourg, and after Christmas I don't think I could I don't think I could live there. Because, in fact maybe I could create the space for myself within the environment..... be quite an effort. So I don't quite know where my future lies at all. and that's quite unsettling ... .

GM36 - Yes, I was going to ask that, I mean, you said you didn't really feel at home here, and you don't really feel at home back home, what's it like to live with that?

P36 - Not easy, and now it's OK, and now I feel more at home here, but it's not my own, it's a home, but I don't want to raise children in England, I mean it's harder when I've been in Luxembourg and then I come back, and there's this contrast between the two, that's when it's the hardest. I kind of, have a mini crisis, and then I get over it, and then I just get on with what I need to do. I have a real kind of, identity crisis where I think, I'm not ... And I'm not ... And other things, and my mum's French, and people think I know a lot about France, and I don't, I've never lived in France, I don't even like France ..... Luxembourg. All sorts of things, it's quite confused, complicated. Because my dad's Scottish and my mum's French and we grew up in Luxembourg.

GM37 - It sounds like there's something about that brief time where you've just come back and you have this comparison between the two places, there something unsettling about that?

P37 - Yes. Even more than unsettling, I don't know what it is. Really, really it's unsettling, and then I settle down.

GM38 - What makes it like that?

P38 - Being unsettling?

GM39 - Yes, the really, really unsettling?

P39 - I make it like that, because I question, when I go home I question my life, I question what I'm doing. The settling down is doing it, is living my life, being with friends whom I value, doing the course which is hard but what I want to do, and getting a sense of achievement from it. But it's that, when it's really, really unsettling, I can't connect with myself, with who I am, my whole being, kind of being in different bits and I can't put it together, I feel like .....

GM40 - Until you commit yourself to one life?

P40 - Yes. I guess that's it, yes. I guess that's it. It's committing myself to one or the other. And when I hold both, yes, that's when. (deep breath, pause) I'm learning here. (we laugh) It's very useful actually. Yes, it's true..

GM41 - So do you, I don't know if it happens in that unsettled time or some other time, but do you ever kind of regret leaving, or wonder what would happen... you don't regret?

P41 - Never.

GM42 - Do you ever wonder what your life would be like if you hadn't gone?

P42 - No, there's no way I would have stayed, it really is clear.

GM43 - So what do you think of the people who do stay? (Laughs).

P43 - We're all different. That's probably quite interesting in itself. I'm very very critical actually, and for a long time I was, what actually happened, it's not about, it's probably not being critical of them staying, because most people went to (?) but what happened is that most people actually came back to Luxembourg and settled down there, and there I was really critical. It was like, it's so safe and an easy life and you know, so boring, and there's nothing to do in Luxembourg except have your 2.4 children, and your husband and your car, and moving from that point of being very critical to maybe being envious. And when, this had been brewing up, or wanting to have a family, then feeling, God, they have it, and I don't, but also knowing very well that it's not my path, I wouldn't be happy, so it's really hard, it is hard to consider it, it's the, the envy and the knowing I'm not like that, I don't, it's not what I want and it's hard to be different.

GM44 - So you're realistic that you couldn't have taken that path, but you also are envious of some of the things there is from there? Some things you want too?

P44 - Yes. And Also knowing that I couldn't sacrifice what I believe in, I couldn't do a job that I wasn't happy with. I mean, that's very important to me and it's sort of, very different from a lot of people, people say, oh, as long as it's paid well. It's OK, but I can't do that.

GM45 - what would that be like for you, not just that job that you wouldn't want, but this kind of foreign life that you escaped. What would that have done to you?

P45 - yuck... I don't know (Laughs). Yes, it's like physical values, it's like that feeling trapped, yes, it's like being expected to be here and not wanting to be here, like having to be contained, .....having to behave a certain way, I guess, which I'm not. The image I have of myself is kind of being kind of, out there and ... in my own standing, and there's lots of bits coming out, and I would have to take all this and tuck it into a little box, and I sacrifice a lot of myself, even though I do feel trapped here sometimes,

because of my commitment to the course and supervision and counselling and the demands on me as well.

GM46 - So it's something about commitment, or of maybe time commitment or something that feels like your trapped? What is it that's trapped?

P46 - Like there's no magic, kind of, no spontaneous joy or, space to have fun, (pause) which is what I had when I was travelling, I so much like the feeling of just experiencing something magical or refined.

GM47 - Is there anything else you'd like to add to what we've been talking about?

P47 - It's pretty comprehensive kind of view of my life (we laugh). My other, probably, I mean, its possible this has come up but its, what I'm really going to take away is the kind of holding of two places at one time and also feeling trapped in a place where I can be welcome because of the expectations, so there's two things that have really unblocked something and I'll work on further.

GM48 - The last thing I'd like to ask is just, what does it feel like to be talking about these things?

P48 - Very difficult, I feel like I'm (?) it's like, I feel reinforced in my choice, because the more I think its the right thing for me and I get strength from that, but also it's like, it's an issue that's uncomfortable, a bit uncomfortable for me in a way, which is why I wanted to do this study, I feel like I really have to untangle it.

GM49 - So there's some strength and some kind of, uncomfortable feeling?

P49 - I guess, feeling quite raw. I feel like I could say some things and be in therapy now for an hour, you know, that kind of feeling.

GM50 - .....?

P50 - Yes, it is yes. But also (tape changes side).....

GM51 - And that word 'raw,' does that, is that the best description for that feeling there?

P51 - Yes, and 'confused' comes to mind and a bit tangled...

GM52 - OK, and is it OK for it to be like that just for now?

P52 - Ya, it's OK, it's fine. It's good actually.

GM53 - Is there anything else?

P53 - No.

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The circumstances of leaving home:

1. At 17 I didn't feel at home at school, didn't like the environment, so didn't want to just follow what the majority were doing and next go to the university in France.
2. I wanted to go somewhere different.
3. My father is Scottish and we often went there on holiday and I liked it so I went there.
4. Not feeling at home at school might have also been that I was far away from home, my feelings were mixed.
5. My mother was pregnant and I felt I was going to miss a lot and maybe I shouldn't be away at this time.
6. It wasn't a conscious decision to get away from my family, but it was a good decision in the end to go away to University.
7. I was lacking self-confidence at school but going to university allowed me to re-invent myself, to feel free, to be accepted as different. Suddenly I was interesting because I looked non-English.
8. I felt different and judged at school. It was a critical environment and I felt unable to be myself, restricted, uncomfortable, scrutinized.
9. I'm wondering how much to tell you, what it safe to say.
10. My parents were divorced and my mother was in and out of psychiatric hospital with depression when I was 13-14 and it was kind of messy. It wasn't talked about, we didn't communicate.
11. It wasn't conscious at the time, but I think part of going away was to leave the responsibility of trying to keep my mom OK. I have a tendency to do that.
12. I went travelling for 10 months, ran around the world literally. I wanted to connect to what I wanted and what I need and not what other people expected of me.
13. I felt I had to be out of that environment. I have an insight now of how I change when I go back into that environment.
14. I wasn't consciously aware at the time that I needed to find myself and connect to what I wanted and who I was, I felt free.
15. I didn't have to go so far away to university, France in half an hour away and Belgium an hour but I didn't feel at home in France, it relates to my mother's family and not getting on with them and that affects my image of France. Whereas England always felt like home and we had holidays here.

So you were looking for a place you could feel at home?

1. Yes, I wanted to feel at home but that's not what happened, and that's why I'm interested in your study. I feel I don't actually belong anywhere, I don't feel I belong at home anymore and I don't belong in England.
2. It's interesting but also very sad.

3. The timing of your study was prominent, it came right after my holiday back home at Christmas. I was there for 2 weeks, the longest I've been at home for a while.
4. I had a big problem coming back, I felt like staying there.
5. I was ready to come 'home' back to England because I don't fit into the country and what it represents, a financial career which is not what I want. It's also a very wealthy place and my closest friends are married with children and its very different from my situation.
6. I go home and I faced with being single, can't afford to buy a place in London, so home represents a lot of things that don't match my life anymore.
7. When I go home I want to relax and be looked after, recuperate and that doesn't happen. It's hard to accept that this is my situation, not that I'm inadequate because I don't have a car and my friend just bought a hatchback. My home country represents material possessions, security, but I don't feel at home there anymore.
8. I look like everyone else when I come back to England but I'm not English, England is not my home. I was thinking maybe I'm French like my mother's family.
9. I feel more a ease now doing a counselling course which is why I'm here, working to support that, building my hours. It's hard to reconnect with the fact that I'm doing what I want because I really question myself when I'm faced with friends having money and a family and I don't.

What's it like to see that divergence in how your life has gone compared to your friends?

1. My initial reaction is that I feel very insecure. I feel I haven't achieved anything.
2. At a school reunion I felt the kind of clash, surrounded by babies and most of them married, its like I don't have anything to show for what I'm doing even though deep inside when I can reconnect with my feelings, I know I'm doing what I want.
3. When I'm away from all that, my family unit, I know what I want, need, believe in, and when I go back there I question myself and whether what I've achieved is good enough.
4. It's like there's internalised critical voices. Partly from my mother's family telling me I should be responsible for my mother, have a proper job to look after her financially.
5. Instead of saying 'no' I'll choose what I want, I don't have to look after my mother, I've internalised it. There's an expectation that I should feel responsible for her.
6. When I'm away from those people I'm OK about not feeling that responsibility.
7. And expectations from my father as well to have a proper well-paying job, and it's hard for him to understand wanting to do a hard counselling course.
8. Over here maybe I can ignore those voices that I carry in me, when I'm there they are very present.

Why do you think you've chosen such a different course in life?

1. I don't know but it's partly about trusting myself.
2. Like the voice that said I needed to go travelling, I gave up a permanent job, my relationship to go. No one from my university or my course has don't that but I really wanted to.
3. I didn't do it because it was different, but because I really needed to and I listen and trust that voice.
4. When I feel low in energy I question what I'm doing, like the course, and when I feel well I know I'm doing what I want to do.
5. When I went travelling, I needed to be free, I felt trapped, bored and hating myself for being bored, the job and relationship weren't what I wanted, I was dependent on my partner for entertainment.
6. Travelling was about fending for myself, looking after myself and entertaining myself, and being free.
7. I wanted to have new experiences and be challenged by things that were different, people, sights and smells.
8. That was the best time in my life, that complete self-directed freedom. I was on my own and all my experiences were my own doing. It was very empowering.
9. It was also a lot about self-discovery. I had a self-concept of being independent and not needing anyone but if I was alone for too long I felt very lonely and I needed people.
10. I need time on my own and time with people. It was like finding myself again.
11. When I returned home I felt low and immediately got a job and felt trapped again so I left again, for London.

What was it like in London?

1. Difficult and lonely at first.
2. I made strong friendships and this is the longest I've been in one place for a while, 2 years, but I can feel that when I finish my course I'm not sure I'll stay longer.
3. I don't know what I'm going to do . It connects to being single, when I was with my partner I didn't feel as homesick as now.
4. When I'm really lonely I feel homesick.
5. Sometimes I feel the need to go home but I also feel I can't and don't want to live there – that's the clash.

What's the need to go home?

1. When I imagine it, it's about being in a nice peaceful comfortable environment where I don't have to do everything for myself, like in London.
2. The call back home is the need to be looked after, which doesn't really happen anymore as we're not children. But if I was looked after here maybe the call wouldn't be as strong.
3. Although I don't get looked after at home, I get nourishment just because it's nice, the silly little things of having the table set and celebrating my birthday. It means a lot to me. I reconnect with something.
4. It's difficult to come back because it takes a while to feel I belong in this life again.

5. I feel rooted again once I see my friends, it's a connection for me. When I feel I don't belong I feel like I'm floating and not grounded.

### Belonging and feeling trapped

1. There's an important desire to belong but also a need to escape at the same time. It's more about me than the situation but I can't quite untangle it, I don't know or understand it.
2. Belonging is about being seen or understood. If I belong, I can be accepted for whatever is going on for me, people will notice and be interested in me and what's happening for me, to care enough to see how I really am and accept that.
3. Belonging is they can see me and accept me and give me space to be without expectations.
4. When I go home there's expectation right away.
5. In my relationship he started putting demands on me and that's where the entrapment comes from, when I'm expected to be what others want.
6. It makes me feel I want to get out it's about feeling trapped, I just want to get away.

### What would happen if you couldn't get away?

1. The first thing that comes to me is that there would be conflict.
2. The second thing that comes is that I'd wither and die. But only if I accepted their expectations for me.
3. But I can say how I feel more, like with my brother, and it causes conflict. I have to face the strong reaction I get but I'd rather not have it.

### Why do you think you really left home?

1. I can't know at the time but my interpretation now is that maybe I needed to find myself, to be free of expectations and pressure.
2. And not feeling comfortable. But it's difficult to know what I was feeling consciously, but I've always done what I needed to do, what's felt right, somehow.
3. I needed some space to find myself and I had the courage to do it. I was the only one who went away that far and I didn't realise at the time what a big thing that is, but it didn't seem daunting then. It was just really important I do it.

### What's it been like since leaving home?

1. It's been rough, hard, people wanting me to be there more, being on my own.
2. It's also been free to be away.
3. At one point there was a crisis and I felt like giving it all up and moving back, which would be easier but knowing I can't do that, it's not who I am.
4. It's hard being away and it's what I need, to be away from the situation.

Ever think of returning home?

1. I don't know if I'll ever be ready to go back, if I will want to.
2. I did think about returning home last year for a bit.
3. After being home at Christmas I don't think I could live there again.
4. Maybe I could create a space for myself in that environment but it would be an effort.
5. I don't know where my future lies at all and that's quite unsettling.

What's it like to live with that unsettled future?

1. Not easy but now I feel more like I have A home here, not my own, I don't want to raise children here.
2. It's harder when I've been home and then come back, to see the contrast, that's when it's the hardest.
3. I don't know why that is just so very unsettling. I can't connect with myself, with who I am, my whole being, I can't put together the different bits.
4. It's partly that I make it like that by questioning my life here when I go home.
5. I have a mini-crisis at that point, a kind of identity crisis, where I think I'm not French or English, or... then I get over it and get on with things.
6. I settle down again just by living life, being with valued friends, doing the course which is demanding and getting a sense of achievement from that.
7. It settles when I commit myself to one life or the other. When I try to hold both that's when it doesn't work. This is very useful learning here (deep breath).
8. It's quite confused and complicated, my Dad's Scottish and my Mom's French and we grew up in Luxembourg.
9. I never regret leaving. There's no way I would have stayed, that's clear.

What do you think of people who have stayed?

1. I'm very critical, not so much of them staying, because most went away at least some distance to university, but of them returning and settling down there again.
2. It's so safe and easy and boring. There's nothing to do except the expected things.
3. I've also moved from being critical to being envious. They have some things I want but I know it's not my path, I wouldn't have been happy.
4. It's hard to consider both, the envy and the knowing I'm not like that.
5. It's not what I want and it's hard to be different.
6. I couldn't sacrifice what I believe in to do a job I didn't like, even if its well paid, it's very important to me.
7. That life would have been very difficult for me, like being trapped, contained, having to behave in a way that I'm not.
8. I would have to deny a lot of myself, sacrifice a lot.
9. I also feel trapped here sometimes, with the course commitments and various demands.

10. That trapped feeling is like there's no magic, no spontaneity, no joy or space to have fun, like it was when travelling. I love that magical experience.

What's the interview been like?

1. A comprehensive review of my life.
2. I'm really going to remember that holding of two places at one time and also feeling trapped in a place where I could feel welcome, because of the expectations. Those two things really unblocked something and I'll work on them.
3. The interview has been very difficult.
4. I feel reinforced that my choice is the right thing for me and that gives me strength.
5. But there's something uncomfortable, feeling raw, that I want to untangle. Feeling like I could go to a therapy session now and that feels OK, good actually.

**Feeling different, not fitting in at school**

1. I didn't fit in with others at school and I didn't like the critical environment where it was restricted and scrutinized.
2. I felt different and judged at school and didn't want to follow them to the usual universities.
3. I didn't feel I could be myself and lacked self-confidence.
4. I went far away to England to university and this allowed me to reinvent myself, feel free, and be accepted as different. Suddenly I was interesting because I wasn't English.

**Family circumstances and leaving**

1. I'm making a decision about how much I should tell you, how much feels safe.
2. I didn't consciously go away to university to get away from my family but it was a good decision in the end. I think it was partly to escape the responsibility of looking after my mother.
3. My parents were divorced and when I was 13 my mother was in and out of psychiatric hospital with depression. It was difficult and it was not talked about.
4. My mother's family is French, I didn't get along with them and that affected my image of France, I never felt at home there. My father is Scottish and the UK always felt like home, we holidayed there, so that's where I went to university.
5. I also went travelling for 10 months to find myself, connect to what I needed rather than other's expectations. I needed to get out of the family environment it changes me when I'm there.
6. My interpretation now is that I left home because I needed space to find myself and be free and I had the courage to do that.
7. I've always found a way to do what I needed to, what's felt right to me.
8. I was the only one who went so far away and I didn't realise what an important thing it was I just knew I had to do it.

**Searching for belonging/feeling at home**

1. I'm interested in your study because I wanted to feel at home but that's not what happened. Now I feel I don't belong at home anymore and I don't belong in the UK and that's very sad.
2. I feel I don't actually belong anywhere.
3. Sometimes I feel homesick like I need to go home but I also feel I can't live there – it's a clash.
4. I look like I fit in when I'm in England but I'm not English, this is not my home. I was thinking maybe I'm French like my mother's family?
5. When I feel I don't belong I feel like I'm floating, not grounded. I feel rooted here once I see my friends again, that lets me feel connected.

## **The difficult feelings of travelling back and forth**

1. I was just home for 2 weeks at Christmas, the longest in a while, and I didn't want to come back here.
2. But I also didn't want to stay because I don't fit into the way of life there, its wealthy and my friends are married with children, very different from me.
3. In London I'm faced with being single and unable to afford my own place, so home represents a life that doesn't match my own anymore.
4. It's difficult to come back here because it takes a while to feel I belong in this life again.
5. I don't know where my future lies and that's unsettling but I do feel like I have A home here, but not my own, I don't want to raise children here.
6. Its hardest when I've been home and then come back and I see the contrast in lives.

## **Comparisons with home and the difficulty of maintaining value in own choices**

1. Its hard to accept my situation in London and not feel inadequate because I don't have material things, like a car.
2. I really question myself when faced with friends back home with money, families, all I don't have.
3. Its hard to stay connected to my feelings that I'm here doing what I want to do. My initial reaction is to feel insecure like I haven't achieved anything, have nothing to show for my life.
4. When I'm here I know what I want and believe in, but when I return home, around my family unit, there is a clash and I question whether what I want is good enough.
5. There are expectations from my mother's family to be responsible for her and from my father to have a proper job and these become internalised self-critical voices.
6. These voices I carry in me are easier to ignore when I'm here, out of that environment.

## **The attraction of visiting home**

1. When I go home I want to relax and recuperate but that doesn't happen. I imagine it as being peaceful and comfortable where I don't have to do everything for myself like in London.
2. The call home is the need to be looked after, which doesn't happen anymore since we are not children. But if I was looked after here maybe the call home would be less strong.
3. I do feel nourished at home from all the little things of having the table set and celebrating my birthday. It means a lot to me, like reconnecting with something.



## **Trusting my own voice and travelling**

1. Trusting myself has allowed me to choose a different course in life.
2. I trusted the voice that said I needed to go travelling and gave up a job and relationship to go. No one from my course or university did that and I didn't do it to be different but because I listened to and trusted the part of me that really needed to go.
3. Travelling was about being free, fending for myself, looking after myself, having new experiences, being challenged by difference.
4. It was very empowering to be directing my own experiences and it was the best time in my life.
5. Travelling was also a time of self-discovery where I realised I was not totally independent, that I needed time on my own but also I needed other people.

## **Belonging and feeling trapped**

1. There's an important desire to belong but also a need to escape at the same time. I don't understand it but it's more about me than about the situation.
2. Belonging would mean feeling seen, understood, accepted, given space to be without expectations but people would notice me, be interested in me, care enough to see how I really am.
3. When I go home there's expectations immediately, and in my relationship there were demands and then I feel trapped by the expectations to be what others want.
4. When I feel bored, trapped, dependent, I need to escape. I felt that with my boyfriend so I travelled and I felt it when I returned home from travelling so I left for London.
5. I also feel trapped in London sometimes with my commitments and various demands.
6. Feeling trapped is like there's no magic or spontaneity, no joy or space to have fun. Travelling was such a magical experience.
7. If I couldn't get away there would be conflict and if I accepted their expectations I'd just wither and die.
8. I can say more now about how I feel and I have to be prepared for the reaction but I'd rather avoid that situation.

## **What's it been like since leaving home?**

1. Difficult, lonely, rough, hard, people at home wanting me to be there more.
2. It's been free to be away from the situation at home but also hard, but I know it's what I need.
3. When I'm really lonely I feel homesick. I felt less homesick when I was with my partner.
4. I don't know what I'm going to do and this is connected to being single.
5. There was a crisis and I felt like giving it all up and moving back which would be easier but I know I can't, it's not who I am.

6. I've been in London 2 years, the longest I've been anywhere and I have strong friendships here but I can feel that when I finish my course I'll probably leave again.
7. I never regret leaving, there's no way I would have stayed, that's clear.

### **Ever think of returning home?**

1. I don't know if I'll ever want to or be ready to go back.
2. After being back at Christmas I don't think I could live there again.
3. I did think about returning home last year for a bit and maybe I could create a space for myself in that environment but it would be an effort.
4. I don't know where my future lies at all and that's quite unsettling.

### **Feeling unsettled**

1. Its like I don't know where to be or who I am and it is just so unsettling and I don't know why. I can't put together the different pieces, can't connect with myself, who I am, with my whole being.
2. I partly make it like that by questioning my life here when I go back home and that causes a mini-crisis, an identity crisis, then I settle down again just by living life, being with friends, doing this demanding course and getting a sense of achievement from that.
3. I feel more settled when I commit myself to one life or the other. When I try to hold both it doesn't work. I've learned this during the interview and it's useful.
4. The confusion and complication is related to my dad being Scottish, my mom French, and growing up in Luxembourg.

### **I feel critical and envious of people who have returned**

1. I feel critical of those who have returned and settled down there again because it's so safe and boring and easy, there's nothing to do but live the expected life.
2. Other times I move from feeling critical to feeling envious because they have things that I would like but I know it's not my path and I wouldn't have been happy, I would have felt trapped, contained, sacrificed being true to myself.
3. It's hard to consider both, the envy and knowing I'm not like that, it's not what I want and it's hard to be different.
4. But I couldn't do a job I didn't like even if its well paid.

### **Feelings of the interview**

1. It has been a difficult and comprehensive review of my life.
2. I feel something raw and uncomfortable, something I want to untangle, like I could go to a therapy session now and that feels OK, it feels good actually.
3. I feel reinforced that my choice is right for me and that gives me strength (as opposed to the home environment where she doubts herself?).

4. I'm really going to remember the holding of two places at one time and also feeling trapped in a place where I could feel welcome, because of the expectations. Those two things really unblocked something and I'll work on them

## **“Christine” Themes**

- 1. Rejection by peers can encourage the desire to leave home**
  - Not fitting into the majority social environment during school can support individualised and non-conventional choices.
  - Feeling judged by one’s social group can impinge upon an individual’s self-confidence and ability to be oneself and enhance the possibility of leaving in order to develop more fully.
  - Leaving for a foreign place can provide the opportunity to reinvent oneself and feel freed from a constraining self-image.
  - Being a foreigner in a foreign place can be a positive difference, while the experience of difference in the familiar home environment can be negative.
- 2. The impact of family circumstances on deciding to leave home**
  - It can feel unsafe talking about one’s family of origin and decisions are made about what is safe to speak about in the interview.
  - Leaving home can be an escape from caring for a depressed parent though it may not be a conscious reason at the time.
  - Reasons for leaving may be presented differently at different times, and underlying reasons may emerge later in life.
  - Parental divorce and mental problems are more difficult to deal with for an adolescent if they are not talked about freely and needing to escape the effect of this environment can make leaving one’s country more likely.
  - Not liking relatives of a given nationality can impact the image of that nation as a whole and impact whether it is seen as a possible destination.
  - Leaving home requires courage and can be necessary in order to get the space to find oneself even if no one else in the family has modelled this choice.
- 3. Unforeseen paradoxes of leaving home**
  - It is not clear when one decides to leave one’s home country what an important decision this is.
  - A motivation for leaving home is to find a place where it is possible to feel at home but it can result in feeling even less at home, not belonging anywhere and that can feel sad.
  - It is possible to feel homesick even when it is clear one could never return to live there.
  - When one does not belong or feel at home anywhere, it can lead to questions of one’s national identity, who does one belong to?
  - One can feel caught between two countries generating conflicting feelings when travelling between the two, not feeling either is right.
  - When visiting home, it is possible to not want to stay and not want to leave and there is a transition time required to re-enter one’s life in the chosen country.
  - Being between countries generates difficult comparisons of what each has to offer and not being able to have it altogether in one place is difficult, especially difficult is the contrast between a better lifestyle at home and a more deprived one in the chosen country and the feelings of inadequacy this can generate.

- The lives of friends who have stayed move on in many ways including financially, leaving one even more different from the home environment as time passes and leading one to question the choice to stay away.
  - There can be a tendency to compare the life in the chosen country with what one would have had staying at home and to feel insecure that one has achieved less by leaving and the valued aspects of the foreign life are hard to sustain while in the home environment.
  - Family expectations for 'responsible' choices can be internalised as critical voices that are easier to ignore in the foreign environment.
  - It can feel unsettling to not know where one's future lies, but it is possible in the interim to create a home, rather than one's home.
4. Paradoxes in the feelings towards people who settled back home
- It is possible to feel both critical and envious of the lives of peers who settled at home.
  - There can be feelings of superiority towards those who appear to have settled for the safe, easy and boring life that was expected of them at home.
  - Critical feelings can mutate into envy of the comfort of those lives even though it is clear one could never have lived that.
  - The settled home life would have been experienced as too containing, trapped, and a sacrifice of one's true self though it is hard to be different and not be able to have this life.
5. Visiting home and the need to be looked after (other pole of No.6)
- Home can be imagined as a place where it is possible to really relax and recuperate from looking after oneself, even if home can't live up to that image.
  - The feeling of wanting to visit home is a need to be looked after and this feeling might lessen if one was looked after a bit in the chosen country.
  - It can feel nourishing to experience all the little niceties and routines of the settled home and can reconnect to something deeply important.
6. Travelling and the excitement of self-reliance
- Living in a foreign place and giving up a settled life for travelling alone requires trusting one's own 'voice'.
  - It is possible to hear and trust a real need to travel even when no one around is modelling this as a choice.
  - Travelling can be an experience of being free, fending for oneself, looking after oneself, being challenged by the differences in the world.
  - It can feel very empowering to direct one's own experiences and be a highlight of one's life.
  - Travelling can teach about the limits of one's independence, how we need solitude and companionship.
7. Belonging and feeling trapped (other pole of No.8)
- Regardless of the situation, an individual can embody the incompatible needs to belong and to escape the type of belonging offered because it feels entrapping.
  - Belonging can mean feeling seen, understood, accepted, given space to be without others expectations, cared about, and the lack of this belonging can feel like floating, ungrounded.
  - Positive human relationships can ground one and give a sense of belonging.

- Other's expectations, life commitments, boredom, dependence, can all generate a feeling of being trapped and a need to escape.
- Travelling can be an effective escape from feeling trapped, offering magical experiences in place of the lack of spontaneity, joy, and loss of magic experienced in a trapping place.
- If there is a need to escape but travel is not possible, conflict would ensue and a fear is that acceptance of others expectations could cause one to just wither up and die. Travel is preferable to either of these possibilities.

#### 8. Crisis of identity

- It can feel very unsettling and confusing not to know where to be, where one's future lies, and the associated feeling of not knowing who one is.
- Being unable to piece together a self that feels contiguous and whole can lead to a crisis of identity, exacerbated by constant questioning of which life one should be leading.
- Grounding activities like meeting friends and committing to daily routines can make one feel more settled and appreciate one's achievements.
- Trying to hold two possible lives is unsettling and committing oneself to living one life has a settling effect. P learned this about herself during the interview.
- These identity crises can be related to confusion arising from the mix of parental nationalities while living in a third culture which is no one's home.

#### 9. The experience since leaving home/thoughts of returning

- The experience of leaving home can be rough, and lonely, while also freeing from a difficult home situation.
- Homesickness and thoughts of returning home can be linked to times of loneliness and being single.
- P feels she will likely leave her current place after being there 2 years, her longest stay in any place since leaving home.
- In a crisis there can be thoughts of moving back home and trying to create a liveable space there despite knowledge that it would be an effort and likely not work out.
- It is not clear to P at the moment whether she would ever want to return to live at home.
- It is possible to be certain that one could not have stayed and to have no regrets at all about leaving despite the unexpected paradoxes and difficulties experienced since leaving.

#### 10. Feelings of the interview

- The interview was experienced as a difficult and comprehensive life review leaving P feeling strengthened in her choices as opposed to the self-doubt that she can experience when in her home environment.
- It can feel good and positive to feel something raw and uncomfortable at the end of the interview as it presents an opportunity to understand more about oneself with the help of therapy.
- P feels she has learned two things: the difficulty of holding onto two places at one time and also feeling trapped by expectations in a place where she could feel welcomed. Those two insights unblocked something that P wants to explore further.

GM1 - So, I'll start by asking very general questions.

R1 - OK.

GM2 - The first thing I'm interested in is if you could just begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving.

R2 - Right, I'd have to say that the circumstances seem to have been prepared over a period of a couple of years at least. One year before graduating from the University, in '80, '81, the idea of leaving the country, I got the idea at least a year before I really actually left the country, and I was in the third year and I spent my holiday in the UK, met other people, and really felt very resistant at that point to come back to my country, but I knew I had one more year to complete, so I did come back to finish my final year of studies. And I spent the whole year planning and getting ready emotionally to leave the country. So, it's not something that happened overnight. It was planned and fully expected, and I just couldn't wait to leave the country for various reasons, and the actual circumstances were, as soon as I graduated there were no jobs for me, so the prospects of getting employment, a job, it really wasn't very good, and although I was in a relationship I decided, well, it's getting very difficult to find (?), and also there were difficulties at home. So it was a way of getting away from all the difficulties related to living and in the family.

I left the country on 7 July, which was a very memorable day, 1981, and I just didn't care about anything, what I was leaving behind, so, yes, that's all I can say for the moment.

GM3 - So there was something going on at home that, whilst you were still at University, made you feel like, why don't I go some place else?

R3 - Yes, yes.

GM4 - It sounds like it wasn't just leaving your family and home or those circumstances, but that you felt you had to leave the whole country?

R4 - I had to get away as far as possible, so I think distance was quite significant. The kind of distance I had to take as well. So that's more than go to a different part of the country, that wouldn't have been good enough. It had to be really, really far. I'm glad I didn't go as far as America, because then it would have been very difficult for me to visit anybody, but it had to be, yes, distant enough a place.

GM5 - Distant enough, but also near enough that you could maintain some kind of contact?

R5 - Yes. yes.

GM6 - And, I don't know if you want to say more about that, but do you understand why that was?

R6 - Well, I tried to distance myself, there was a need for emotional distance, but it was so strong, that need, I had to somehow realise it in a physical way. Re-locate myself in such a way that I could feel it physically as well as emotionally.

GM7 - So you had to almost make that emotional distance visible or actual?

R7 - Physically felt, yes, it had to be felt physically almost. And that gave me a sense of insecurity, security, safety from all that emotional mess I was in, you have to face this drama, all that emotional mess that I was in, related to my family.

GM8 - So, you would identify family circumstances, that was the main..

R8 - Family circumstances and, I have to admit that it was economical reasons as well, because of the general situation in the country. It was very bad, and we had culminated in introducing the Martial Law, I left the country literally five months before the Martial Law was introduced, and then the borders were closed down so nobody could leave.

GM9 - So until that time when you came to England, where you first came on holiday?

R9 - I came on holiday the year before, and then I spent the whole year planning to leave the country to go there.

GM10 - So you had this holiday and something happened there that you went back and for a whole year you thought, I can't wait to come back?

R10 -Yes. Yes.

GM11 - What was it in England that was?

R11 - Partly what was going on was that when I was studying, when I still lived in Poland, I learned English, that was the language that I really put a lot of energy into, I invested a lot of time and emotion because what it meant for me was that learning a foreign language, especially English which was such an international language, would open the doors for me. So that need to get out, from whatever, strong whatever, especially in the place I was in, so it was kind of, yes, it meant escape was going to be possible.

So, I think I kind of went off a little, you asked me?

GM12 - What was..

R12- ..What it was, yes, during my holidays that happened? I think I may have made some connection between the kind of country I imagined England to be when learning the language, when reading books, I then used to like Dickens, and other authors, and



the image that I put together of that country, which also came from the cinema and films, when I came over here some kind of connection happened and I saw this country as a place of possibility, of having maybe, of powerful experiences that watching the films, reading the books and learning the language suggested that might be possible. So, I made that kind of connection on a different level, not really thinking about it, yes, that's what's going on, it can be, I can have the kind of life I saw people having in films and books. I can't be more precise at this stage.

GM13 - Let me see if I've understood that, that in studying English, seeing English films, English culture, that you had at home, that all of that lead you to believe that there was some kind of possibility, you thought there was a possibility, possibilities in life ..

R13 - ..Yes, yes. The possibility of expanding myself, not just intellectually but also economically. A better condition of life, that mattered as well. That in those definitions perhaps I could do other things, like laying a foundation for that kind of life, whatever...

GM14 – So it was almost like England, as you imagined it, That all of that led you to believe that there was some kind of, greater possibility for living...

R14 - Greater possibilities for living, yes. But at that stage I wasn't quite aware enough then, I never thought I would go into this field and ..... in that sense.

GM15 - OK. So you came here after that visit and it sound like your experience of being here during that time did connect to what you imagined it might be like?

R15 - It did, yes. Yes.

GM16 - You actually had the experience when you were here of like, my God, this could be..

R16 - Oh, my God, yes, it's (Laughs) milk and honey, flowing everywhere. (We laugh).

GM17 - What was it like for you?

R17 - Very exciting. Very promising. And I remember having that feeling that everything was possible. I could move mountains, and there was this great kind of life waiting for me, only if I had the courage, which I did have, to settle down here, just make a choice. But the initial choice was to stay here a month or so, and whist I made that choice I thought everything is just open and I can sink into... without too much effort even, initially.

GM18 - So you came with very great hopes?

R18 - Yes, yes.

GM19 - And the other thing that I was wondering about, you said that you started to feel this, or you came just before your last year at University for this visit, and you obviously had been thinking about coming as you'd planned for such a long time, and you even before that you'd been thinking about leaving enough that you were studying English, you were kind of preparing yourself?

R19 - Yes.

GM20 - So, had you always thought, or how early had you thought that, you know, 'I'm not going to stay here, I'm going to go someplace else'?

R20 - When did I start thinking about the possibility of not staying in my country? Or about leaving my country, just leaving my country?

GM21 - Just leaving.

R21 - Just leaving.

GM22 - Just feeling that, I'm not going to stay here my whole life.

R22 - Right. When I was in my early teens, I have to say, that came up and what I was always considering ways of somehow making it possible, and one route, one possible route was to go into the kind of studies that would make it even more possible. I was considering studying foreign trade, FOREIGN trade (laughs) because again I thought, well, I might be able to go on trips, business trips, and on one of those, if I went on one of those trips I might make a decision not to come back. So, getting away, leaving the country and not coming back. That was it...

GM23 - So in your early teens, as young as that, you were thinking what choices can I make in my life that make it more likely that I can leave and be out there somewhere?

R23- Yes, yes.

GM24 - Why do you think that was?

R24- Why do I think that was? A lack of something, I think, it's because there was something lacking. I'm not quite sure what it is, or it was, I think one of the major factors is that Poland is kind of a deprived country, people suffered a lot of deprivation in terms of what they could get, gain in that material sense. And at the same time I had access to those images and pictures of a better kind of life, so it wasn't very difficult to make a comparison of what it is that they have over there and we felt that we have. I think that stimulated or triggered a need to have a little bit of what others had, or what we imagined they had, what we are told they have, but in reality they do not have it at all. At that age it was so easy to be influenced by those images, and I think that was one

of the things. Has that answered the question? I've answered a question, but I can't remember what the question was (Laughs).

GM25 - It was why do you think that..?

R25 - ..Oh yes, having foreign training, yes, a lack of something.

GM26 - And it sounds like you feel that a part of that was a lack of kind of, a standard of living or something?

R26 - Yes, that was the initial thing.

GM27 - Do you think it was more than that, or...?

R27 - It may have been more than that. Maybe on that unarticulated level there was something, again about the possibilities of having a better life, in a broader sense, that there was a better life. The initial focus I have to say, it was on having all those things, I can have this, I can have that, I can have, I just feel comfortable, comfortable, that kind of, comfort that comes from having material things. I think at that age it's not unusual a lot of youngsters think, that's what's going to make my life beautiful, fulfilling.

GM28 - In your family, do you have brothers and sisters?

R28 - I have one brother, but, because he was born when I was 14, nearly 15, so when I started dreaming or considering that going away... I was still an only child.

GM29 - And the reason I asked is I was just wondering if other people around you, I mean your family, or in this case any other friends, if they were the same, they were all thinking lets get out of Poland..

R29 - ..I need to get out..

GM30 - thinking I want to leave Poland...

R30 - Right.

GM31 - Were they the same?

R31 - No. There was a lot of admiration for whatever was foreign, so there was a big attraction there, but I definitely was talking more specifically about that possibility of a wish to leave the country. But what happened, what I think was the deciding factor really, and influenced my thinking, was the fact that my mother's sister in the late '60s, she left the country with her family to go to what used to be West Germany because my uncle, her husband, he was working in the Polish Embassy, as the First Secretary, the assistant to the Ambassador, the Polish Ambassador in West Germany, and I was really, that was when I began to be bombarded with all the stuff that came from West Germany, and it was the first time I could touch them and see them and feel them and

smell them, and I think that it intensified my need and wish. And it almost changed in a kind of determination, I am going to leave the country as well, just like they had done, if its possible for them then it's possible for me. But because it was a very close family, it was a powerful experience for me.

GM32 - So, it was at that point this foreign world came into your life?

R32 - It came into my life.

GM33 - It sounds like they really kind of solidified your desire with that, for that foreignness?

R33 - Yes.

GM34 - But the thing that I'm wondering about is that it sounds like your friends also have this attraction to foreignness?

R34 - Yes.

GM35 - But they didn't have, as far as you know, this strong desire that, I'm going to go out there, instead there was maybe a possibility of staying at home and having access to some of these places. But for you it seems like even when these things came into your life through your aunt it was almost like that's, I want to go out to where these things come from?

R35 - Yes.

GM36 - Is that right?

R36 - Yes, I think it's maybe something to do with my need for control, to make sure that it was going to happen, rather than wait for something to come to me for a long time, at the mercy of someone else... So the things came into my life, into my house, about once a year and they came when I used to come on holidays, and bring very basic things, even soap, the lux soap, actually it has no impact on me any more, when I think of it, but in those days, even the lux soap, it was just, it had a huge impact.

GM37 - Can you say more about that impact?

R37 - Very inspiring. I would look at the soap and there was something shifting inside me, like my God, it's got to happen, it's got to happen.

GM38 - What did it inspire you to?

R38 - The Lux soap signified again a lot of meaning, in a bar of soap, because I had all these associations, um, . OK, the soap was in the middle and then there were all those smaller images of the kind of life that was connected to that bit of soap, the kind of house I would have in which I would find that kind of soap, and the kind of lifestyle I

could have. I can't be more precise at this moment, but there was a lot of meaning about a bar of soap.

GM39 - It sounds almost as if it really for you opened a world, a possible world?

R39 - Yes, yes. It was possible, if I could have it here, I can go out there and have it in a bigger way, the kind of life that people have who use Lux soap. A very, very small point I have say, in those days, but we didn't have it, .....(long pause)

GM40 - Yes. I want to just ask, another thing, you've been touching on it a lot and I'll ask it again, sort of specifically, to see if there's anything else you want to add. As you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you really left home?

R40 - Well, it may have been a kind of intellectual answer, but ah, but there was something going on, as I said, on this less articulated level, that as I think about it now and knowing myself the way I do now, knowing something about myself that I didn't know then, I think it was a way of compensating, well it's not the only reason, it's one of the reasons, a way of compensating for the lack, lack of something. I'm not really sure what that something is, but I felt deficient in some ways, very separate from the world of others, disconnected, and there was a lack in the emotional sense, in the emotional sphere of my life, there was a lack of something. That connection that would make my being with other people meaningful to me, and maybe by getting all that kind of stuff that was so attractive to other people to myself, it was a way of filling myself with something more tangible, to compensate for the lack of the things that I felt I wasn't able to have. Because if I had had, let's say, as I said, fulfilling connections with others that would make me feel solid enough, fulfilled enough and happy enough than I was, maybe I wouldn't have had that desperate need to go out there and look and search for something else, if that makes sense? So that could be part of it.

GM41 - So are you saying that one thing that might have been going on is that you never really felt connected in your home environment, you never really felt a part of it in some way?

R41 - Yes, and that applies to my being with my family as well, and to that wider social world, that lack of connection.

GM42 - So almost a sense of, correct me if I've got this wrong, almost a sense that you never really belonged there, in your origins, .....

R42 - Yes, no. Well, yes and no. I spoke the same language, I was born there and knew all the faces and everything was familiar, but at the same time paradoxically, I just

found that it was almost impossible to connect with, say, the human component, within my world.

GM43 – Yes, and do you understand that?

R43 – understand which bit?

GM44 – that part of not really connecting or not belonging to the social, or the feeling world you were born into, do you understand why that was?

R44 – Yes, yes. Having a better understanding of myself now and my personal difficulties, I think it's, to go back to the origins of this, which is my intellectual way of dealing with it, that I just had this basic difficulty and inability to connect, which is because of all kinds of feelings perhaps, being with other people, and that lack was painful, there was a lot of pain, so maybe as a way of dealing with this pain, making it somehow less, ya, I wanted to buy a kind of pacifying, something that would be soothing enough, it was like, getting hold of objects that would soothe me and comfort me, the way I'm looking at it now...

GM45 - And that makes me wonder if, your example of the Lux soap, is that, it seems like that soap, the meaning of that soap was that it brought with it a whole world, an imagined world, because the soap existed it means that that world existed?

R45 - Sure, yes.

GM46 - That was inspiring and hopeful.

R46 – Yes, yes.

GM47 - And I'm wondering if part of your, the way that you saw that world that was connected to that bar of soap if it was a world where you imagined that maybe you would connect?

R47 - Yes. Yes, everything was possible. Everything was possible in that world. A connection as well. Even if that connection was to happen, through the material things. Better conditions of life, more of everything, more connection.

GM48 - The foreign place was a place where whatever was lacking might be filled?

R48 - Yes, yes. Milk and honey.

GM49 - Milk and honey (Laughs).

R49 - Not just the milk, the honey as well (Laughs). What I associate with honey is, is something soothing, you know, comforting, sweet and nice and relating a bit more to the emotional, and milk and food, that's more a place to live, more to do with that. Feeding babies, you know, they have to have milk, but not all of them need the honey. Comfort, emotional comfort, you know. Ya.

GM50 - Can I ask you one more kind of general thing?

R50 - Yes.

GM51 - So when you reflect upon the times since leaving home, what has it been like for you?

R51 - When in the initial stage of my being here it was still exciting, a lot was possible. But at the same time I was gradually becoming disillusioned, seeing that it wasn't going to be easy, there were all kinds of obstacles, including my accent, and its strange because initially my life was really very hard. Much harder than it is now. It's quite paradoxical, but um, I could describe this whole, this whole period of nearly 20 years now, nearly 20 years, of growing disillusioned, yes, and coming up against all kinds of things that made me confront the reality I suppose. That's such a big question, 'how was it'.

GM52 – (pause) You were talking about all the hopes and such that you left with, (?)...

R52 - Well, I never got what I wanted. I became quite ill. In the first year of being here I got very depressed, there were no possibilities, no future, when I gradually got out of it, it was just normal life, the glitter of being, there wasn't much glitter left. I just focused on finding a job and having something to do, settling down. I made a choice which I am still regretting but which affecting the next, well the rest of my life, that made a lot of things impossible. I never had the kind of money that I hoped I would have. So, it wasn't the kind of life I was expecting to have at all. On the one hand I felt disillusioned, but on the other hand, I was very much aware of a lot of things became possible and that wouldn't have been possible in my country. The simple things, the initial things that mattered to me, having a car, and I got a car, and I was quite pleased with it. It may have been a small thing but I was pleased with it. Because I thought well, I couldn't have had it in my country. And in general life was a little bit easier, I didn't have to queue up for things, and so the basic daily reality was much easier, than they would have been in my country, but in terms of my emotional, the difficulties in my country, I brought them with me to this country, so um, very little change in that sphere until I started looking at myself, came to the field of psychotherapy, to understand what makes it difficult, and then my values shifted gradually to what mattered in the past doesn't matter any more. I may have other things that come into my head, but in some ways I experienced my life as easier, but in some ways unchanged emotionally, I still had emotional difficulties, relocating didn't change that, and in some ways, it was .....so it was a mixture of things.

GM53 - Can I ask, during that time it sounds like some of your desires and hopes were met, the simple day to day things were easier, but it sounds like you felt that there was also quite a few disappointments?

R53 - Yes.

GM54 - And I'm wondering if during that time you had ever considered moving again, either back home or onto someplace else that might be the land of milk and honey?

R54 - Yes, yes. I considered, ten or eleven years ago, when, because I had a flat at that time, and I thought I had lots of money, I could go back home, buy a huge villa, (Laughs) and put all the things, transfer some of the things from here into that villa back in Poland, and maybe create my own universe, that would be ideal, if I can't have it here, because there are certain things I can't reach, for whatever reasons. And maybe I can go back and re-create or create these things, the kind of world I was hoping to find here, but I haven't found it here, that I maybe should go back with the money that I've managed to make here, because it would have been a lot of money in Poland, and the possibilities would be quite many. So I could have transferred that bar of soap back into my (laughs) Polish residence, yes, and create and a small, it would have been a small universe. Just holding on to that hope that was still possible.

GM55 - Why didn't you do that?

R55 - Why didn't I do that?

GM56 - It sounds quite attractive in the way you describe.....

R56 - It's quite attractive, but the economic situation in Poland wasn't that good, and I felt even more isolated and separate from people, I felt a little bit more like an outsider at that stage. The people I used to know they moved on, and were in different places, were not in the same places anymore, and I still had conflicts related to my family and the prospect of going back wasn't attractive. In one way it was attractive, but, and I knew the possibilities back in Poland were very limited, much more limited than they were here. There was a part of me that was still hoping that something might change here. Some things would be possible, and it was... (?) but it was very tempting to go back, but not knowing whether I would be able to reconnect, because I did feel like an outsider. At that point, I often described this way of being as a feeling of being suspended between two different countries. I had no sense of belonging here, but I had no sense of belonging there, so it didn't really matter that much anymore where I am.

GM57 - So you left home originally because you felt a little bit like an outsider?

R57 - Yes.



GM58 - You came here where you were an outsider?

R58 - Yes.

GM59 - You considered going home, but you'd been away long enough that you were even more of an outsider?

R59 - Yes, that's right. That's what I am. Wherever I go, I'm an outsider. It's quite alienating. I was hoping for a long time that there was a way of somehow reconciling myself to this, and becoming less of an outsider, but I got to the point, not long ago, where I decided that's it, I'm just an outsider, this is my status. This is how it's going to be, it's not going to change, so it's, so I accepted this, that it's part of my identity, being an outsider, it's almost an identity now ...

GM60 - It's part of who I am...

R60 - It's part of who I am. So it's no use hiding, or rebelling against it, quarrelling with it.

GM61 - So it's almost like, since this is part of who I am, it's really like there's no place where I won't feel this?

R61 - There's no place where I won't feel this. I would like to feel it, it's like coming to terms, it's like this is how it is, if I hadn't been able to change it for the last 20 years, it's not going to happen, I'm not going to be able to change it, better just to get used to it.

GM62 - So, if I've understood you correctly, you're saying that there's really no place in the world where I won't feel this way?

R62 - No.

GM63 - No place where I'm going to feel I belong?

R63 - No. I mean now I'm almost ...(?) in that kind of space, so.

GM64 - So what do you think is the difference between you or people like you, because my suspicion is that you're not the only one, and between people like you and people who do feel that they belong some where, what do you think the difference is?

R64 - Gosh. To feel they belong to, it's not the same kind of intensity for everybody, I'm not saying that there is a group of people who can be described as having a sense of belonging, they're still going to have some difficulties, but maybe they are not that desperate, something about desperation. About desperate, I, the extent to which I felt I didn't belong it made me desperate to do something about it, so drastic as to go as far as to leave the country in search of whatever... (long pause) I don't think that all those people who never considered the possibility of leaving the country, that they all had a

sense of belonging or feel comfortable with their surroundings because I have quite a lot of Polish clients who come from Poland over here just for few months and then they want to go back, and they feel very alienated and separate from others, and they are not considering that possibility of staying here even, it's not an option, I'm not sure what their experience is, are they, what the difference is, you know, maybe there is more fear in them about, maybe they are less desperate, who knows, something I need to speculate on.

GM65 - It's a difficult question, but this is the whole question, or an aspect of the whole question that I'm interested in, I don't understand it either...

R65 - Because I don't believe that all the people who stay behind that they have a sense of belonging to their group or whatever, but maybe they found a different way of coping with it.

GM66 - So maybe some of them don't feel that they belong either, but they didn't leave, they found another way...

R66 - Exactly.

GM67 - But they didn't leave, they .....

R67 - I think it's just one way of dealing with, leaving the country, and for me it's something to do with desperation, and it maybe that in one area of their lives they had a little bit more sense of belonging and in a different area they have less sense of belonging and so it's a kind of balancing the two. If I feel more connection with family than I feel connected to my peers, my colleagues, my friends, then there is a good enough reason for me to stay in the country, that there is someone, at least one or two people I feel connected to, even if I don't feel connection to the rest of the people that I know, there is something, a little bit that keeps me, you know, there, but for me there was nothing.

GM68 - There was nothing. So, if I've understood you correctly you had this desperate need to belong, a desperate search to belong in some way?

R68 - Yes.

GM69 - And that led you to leave the country, and it sounds almost like one, perhaps accidental, side effect about this desperate search to belong was that you ended up in a situation where you will never belong anywhere?

R69 - Uhuh, ya, ya. That's the discovery I made not long ago. That it was nearly impossible. But I accept, I've developed some kind of acceptance of where I am... In one's life. Yes, because for me it was so extreme, there was not a single, not a single

soul that I could feel connected to, that it didn't really matter to me when I left. Well, it was painless, it wasn't a dilemma when I left home, and as I said, for people who feel partly connected to others, just a little bit, one place, that I feel connected to the one person, that if you can feel sufficiently connected to then at least, then they may find it a dilemma, but I didn't, it was quite easy, it was quick. Like an amputation. Ya, severed.

GM 70- So, now at this point in life, have you ever considered returning home?

R70 - It's something that crossed my mind very, very quickly, that it may be possible when I get very very old. And that's something I don't quite understand, and I know...

*[Tape change over interrupts us]*

R70 (cont'd) – Even from working at the hospital, I noticed that people who are very old and they have lived here for ages, when the possibility of their life coming to an end, they want that end to happen in their own country. And still they want... (?) the mother, the country...(?)

GM71- Is that how it's like for you (?)

R71 – Yes, it's a possibility, yes, it may become a dilemma, having lived here for several years, and then going back to the country that, but I do get sometimes nostalgic about it occasionally, but it might be exaggerated, it's such a long time, I have mixed feelings about it. Some inclination to go back, and so I'd like to be there at the end, as if it mattered where I died, but that need, that wish, it's not very clearly felt yet, hovering in and out of this very grasp that needs to go back to the womb, I think. The womb of my country and my mother, everything that's connected with, the very original birth place when you begin to exist.

GM72 - What do you think about it now, the draw back to the origin, in every sense of the word...

R72 – To become united, re-united with the sense of belonging that's total, ultimate, belonging with everything, the ground of everything. It makes sense, ya.

GM73 - That can be what really feels like the existential level of what we've been talking about.

R73 - Yes, yes. Right.

GM74 – The search for really, for being one with...

R74 – Yes, being one with everything, in this eternity, yes, if you can realise it, it's very attractive, very promising, and you don't have to tackle with anything connected with or caused by from others, yes. Getting back into that warm comforting womb (Laughs), soothing, and healing (laughs) and give me a break from this human condition,

desperation and, isolation, existential isolation (Laughs). Yes, interesting. And what I notice is that the older you get, then the bigger the need to re-connect, to re-unite and now being separated from my mother, it's a very difficult relationship with my mother and it was a huge relief that I could get away from her. She was the one I was getting away from, and I had to go that far. So, as I get older I am beginning to feel increasingly, a growing need to re-connect with my mother, there is that need to re-connect. That movement towards everything to do with, that very primary original experience, even if it was just hope and promise, an expectation that whatever is connected to the mother figure, mother in a very broad sense, I see my country as a kind of mother figure as well, there is that, yes, I haven't found it, I haven't been able to do it on my own. I haven't been able to, I haven't been able to mother myself, to be for myself the kind of mothering that I can get from a real mother, so that makes me quite, all my efforts have been fruitless, and tired. So I'm beginning to look again towards that kind of ... re-union, in what ever way.

GM75 - Some kind of pull back.

R75 - Yes. Yes.

GM76 – That's all my questions. Is there anything you'd like to add, anything that's occurred to you while talking?

R76 – Hmmm. Well the only thing that puzzles me is that for many, many years I've suffered from, I've had no need to go back to, to go back to the country, when I did go back on holiday it more out of a sense of duty, and what happened a few months ago, was that, there's a slight shift, when I went back on holiday there was a slight shift in how I feel. It wasn't so much a duty, there was a little bit of pleasure in it there as well. There was a time when I did go back without feeling guilty at all, I did go back for 5 weeks, and I felt wow, that's it, I don't need all that, I'm OK now to stay here, and I don't, I probably will never have to go back again, I won't feel the need to go back, because that's how it felt at that time, and that is a shift, which made me realise how unexpectedly these things can change. And maybe something to do with my major reorientation in life and shift in priorities and attitudes and kind of quite puzzled by it, why now, why, what's changed, for 20 years it was OK, everything could have been (?) you didn't have to exist like now, maybe I'll have to go back there, hoping for that kind of symbolic re-union...

GM77 - How do you feel about that change, apart from being puzzled by it?

R77 - It's quite pleasant, like because again it means my opening up to the possibility of reconnecting with whoever is left, because some people have died while I was here, re-connecting with whoever is left and having a different kind of relationship with them, including my mother and father. And that's another thing, is that while I was here, three significant figures, three members of my family died, and I wasn't there, so for some time, it didn't seem very real it was something that happened 'out there', almost as if they died theoretically, and it's not until I went back and saw that person's not here, anyway that's a whole separate area of exploration, how you lose the connection, even if they were bad, you lose even that kind of connection, and then those people die, so you lose them ultimately, and then how that changes, how it affects your inner sense of connection with them, because you do have feelings, even with people who have died, you still continue to have connections with them, but how it affects them is slightly different, yes...

GM78 – But it sounds as though a part of your experience has been to go home, which in some ways is such a familiar place, but when these people are gone, has this kind of strangeness to it you only feel once you're there. It's not real when you're here. Although you also feel their absence.

R78 – The uncanny, (we laugh) yes. It makes sense. And disbelief...

GM79 – can I ask just what it feels like to talk about all of this?

R79 – Um, well it's quite inspiring. It's um, it definitely I feel is initiating something. And it wasn't until I started talking and reflecting on my reasons for leaving that it's come together for me. So, I felt excited, not very emotional, more excited because I realised one thing or two, and its quite something for me, also it might be more emotional and I don't know if it's because I've closed myself off, or decided I'm not going to go into that now, so it's yes, more excited than sad or whatever. Nothing special, nothing traumatic, nothing special. I feel comfortable. I feel very very comfortable. Humm. I feel that in the middle. Just comfortable. No tension. A kind of vibrating in a very gentle way, like the sea on a hot day, yes. No big waves. That feels OK.

Closing thank you.

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## **“Eva” Meaning Units**

**The circumstances of leaving home:**

1. I prepared to leave over at least a couple years.
2. I got the idea at least a year before actually leaving, in my second last year of study.
3. I had spent a holiday in the UK and met people but had to return for my final year at university.
4. I spent the last year planning to leave as soon as I graduated, I couldn't wait.
5. Leaving was a way of getting away from a lot of difficulties at home.
6. I still remember the day I left, the date and I didn't care about anything I was leaving behind.
7. I had to get as far away as possible, distance was important, it had to be really far. A different part of the country wouldn't have been good enough.
8. I'm glad I didn't go to America as it would have been difficult to visit anyone from there.
9. There was a need for emotional distance and it was so strong I had to make it a physical distance. Feel it physically as well as emotionally. It gave me a sense of safety from all the emotional mess my family was in.
10. Family circumstances and economical factors were the main motivation for me.

**What happened on holiday in the UK that you wanted to return?**

1. I had put a lot of energy and emotion into learning English at university because it would open doors for me. It was my need to get out, to escape.
2. I had read English authors and seen English films and put together an image of the country and I saw this place as a place of possibilities. I felt I could have the kind of life I saw people having in books and films.
3. It meant the possibility of expanding myself intellectually and economically. Better living conditions mattered as well. Milk and honey flowing everywhere.
4. It was very exciting and promising. I felt everything was possible.
5. I had the courage to choose to settle down here and take advantage of that life that was waiting for me. I had great hopes.

**When did you first begin to feel you wouldn't stay in your home country?**

1. Even by my early teens I was always considering ways of somehow making leaving possible. It even influenced the studies I was interested in, I thought of taking foreign trade because I thought I might be able to travel and not come back!
2. Getting away, leaving the country, and not coming back, that was the important thing from early on.

**Why do you think you felt so strongly about leaving?**

1. Something was lacking, I'm not sure what.
2. My country was deprived in a material sense and I could compare what we had to the images from a better life. That triggered a need to have a little of what others had.
3. At that age it was so easy to be influenced by those images of what we thought others had. Wanting the comfort that comes from having material things.
4. On an unarticulated level there was something more about having a better life that I wanted.
5. I was an only child as I was dreaming these things. My only brother was born when I was 14.

6. There was a general admiration for anything foreign but I was more specifically talking about actually wanting to leave.
7. Seeing products from foreign places brought back by my aunt, touching and smelling them, intensified my determination that I was going to leave the country just like they had done.
8. If its possible for them to leave then its possible for me. This was a very powerful experience, having the foreign world come into my life.

You were determined to go to the world where these products come from?

1. I was taking control, making sure it was going to happen, not waiting for it to maybe happen.
2. These products came into my life about once a year, basic things like foreign soap had an inspiring impact, something would shift inside like 'its got to happen'.
3. A bar of soap had so much meaning because it conjures up many associations of the kind of life where it belonged, the kind of house and lifestyle I would have where you find that kind of soap.
4. It opened up a possible world for me.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. On a less articulated level I think I can now say, knowing myself as I do now, that there was a kind of compensating for the lack of something.
2. I felt deficient somehow, very separate from the world of others, disconnected, a kind of lack in the emotional sphere of my life, in meaningful connections to others.
3. The attraction of material possessions might have been a way of filling myself, making me more tangible.
4. If I'd had fulfilling relationships I would have felt solid enough as I was and maybe wouldn't have needed to go out there and search for something else so desperately.
5. There was this lack of connection to my family and to the wider social world also.
6. It is paradoxical that this human connection was almost impossible for me in this place where I was born, where I spoke the language, knew all the faces, and everything was familiar.
7. My basic inability to connect to others was very painful, getting hold of objects was soothing, comforting that pain.
8. The foreign product's existence meant that the foreign world existed where everything, even human connection, was possible. Whatever was lacking might be provided, the land of milk and honey.
9. Not just the milk, the basics of life, but also the honey, something soothing, comforting, sweet and nice and more emotional, not all babies need the honey but they all need the milk.

What has it been like since leaving home?

1. I went from initial excitement to gradual disillusionment, seeing that it was not going to be easy, there were many obstacles, including my accent.
2. I got very depressed in the first year, there were no possibilities, no future, eventually just normal life, no glitter.
3. I focused on settling down, and I made a choice I regret which affects the rest of my life, making a lot of things impossible.

4. It wasn't the kind of life I was expecting but I was also aware that a lot of things were possible here that would not have been back home, like buying a little car.
5. In general life was easier here than home, no queuing, but emotionally it was the same, I brought my difficulties with me, relocating didn't change that.
6. I came to therapy and things from the past shifted. In some ways life got easier, and in some ways unchanged, so it was a mixture.

Did you ever consider moving back home?

1. Yes. 10 or 11 years ago I thought I could sell my flat and buy a huge villa back home and create my own universe.
2. If I can't create my own universe here because there are certain things I can't reach, maybe I can go back and create the kind of world I was hoping to find here, with the money I've made.
3. I was holding onto the hope that I could have been possible to transfer that bar of soap back to my Polish residence and create a small universe there.
4. But the economy wasn't good enough and by then I was even more an outsider and isolated from people. Friends had moved on and my family difficulties were still there.
5. There was a part of me that still hoped that things might change here, though it was tempting to go back.
6. I felt suspended between two countries, I had no sense of belonging here, and I had no sense of belonging there, so it didn't matter much anymore where I am.

You were an outsider when you left, also when you arrived, and then even more when you considered returning?

1. Yes. That's what I am, wherever I go I'm an outsider. It's quite alienating.
2. I hoped there was a way of reconciling myself to this and becoming less of an outsider but now I've decided it's just my status, I'm an outsider.
3. It's not going to change so I've accepted it as part of my identity. There's no use hiding, rebelling, or quarrelling with it. There's no place where I won't feel it.
4. It hasn't changed for the last 20 years, so it's not going to now.

What is the difference between you and people who feel they belong somewhere?

1. Belonging is not felt the same for everyone, there are always difficulties, but maybe the difference is something about desperation.
2. The extent to which I felt I didn't belong made me desperate to do something drastic like leaving the country.
3. The people who stay don't all have that sense of belonging, I know quite a few Polish people who come over here briefly and want to go back but they also feel alienated and separate from others.
4. I wonder what the difference is, why they don't consider the option of staying here, maybe they have more fear or maybe they are less desperate.
5. The people who stay behind maybe find a different way of coping with their alienation and lack of belonging, leaving the country is only one way.
6. For me leaving the country may be linked with desperation, like there isn't any area where you feel belonging, family, peers, colleagues, friends. If I feel connection anywhere then there is good enough reason to stay in the country but for me there was nothing.
7. It was a desperate search to belong somewhere and now finding I'll not belong anywhere, that it's impossible, but I feel some acceptance of that.
8. Because for me it was extreme, there was not a single soul I was connected to, so leaving was not a dilemma, it was quick and easy like an amputation.



Do you ever consider returning home now?

1. I don't quite understand it but it has very quickly crossed my mind that it might be possible when I get very very old.
2. I've noticed when people get very old and life is coming to an end, even if they have lived here a long time, they want that end to happen in their own country, they still want the mother country.
3. It might be like that for me and that would be a dilemma, going back after several years, but I do get nostalgic occasionally, I have mixed feelings.
4. I have some inclination to go back at the end, as if it matters where I die, but its not a clearly felt wish yet, but a hovering need to return to the womb of my country and my mother, everything connected to the original birthplace.
5. This draw back is like wanting to become reunited with the sense of total belonging, ultimate, belonging with everything, the ground of everything, it makes sense to me.

That sounds like an existential level of this

1. Yes, it's very attractive to feel one with everything, eternity, if you can realise it, it is very promising, and you don't have to tackle anything caused by others.
2. Its like getting back to that warm comforting womb, soothing and healing, a break from the desperate and isolated human condition.
3. As I get older the need to reconnect, reunite, is greater.
4. I had a difficult relationship with my mother, she was the one I was getting away from when I left the country, it was a huge relief. Now being separated from my mother I am feeling an increasing need to reconnect with her.
5. There is a movement towards everything to do with that primary original experience, the hope and promise of that.
6. The need for the mother figure in the broad sense, my country is a kind of mother figure, I haven't been able to provide this for myself, to mother myself.
7. The efforts to be for myself what I need from a real mother have been fruitless. So I look for that kind of reunion in some way.

Going back on visits

1. For many years I only went back out of duty, I didn't feel the need to visit.
2. Recently there was a slight shift in how I feel when I returned on holiday, it wasn't all duty, there was a bit of pleasure in there as well.
3. I realise how unexpectedly these things can change. There was a time I thought I really don't need to go back, I can just stay here now.
4. I'm puzzled by what has changed now, is it connected to my new priorities and attitudes, my major reorientation in life? Why after 20 years should it feel different now? Maybe I will have to return hoping for that symbolic reunion.

How do you feel about that change?

1. It feels like a pleasant opening up to reconnecting with whoever is left, because some people have died while I was here.
2. A possibility of a different kind of relationship with my mother and father.
3. Three significant family members have died while I was here and it didn't seem real until I went back and saw their absence.
4. You lose connection, even if they were bad connections you lose even them and people dying affects your inner sense of connection with them, you continue to have feelings about them after they die.
5. It doesn't feel real when I'm here but when I go back it feels uncanny and there's a disbelief.

**How does the interview feel?**

- 1. It feels inspiring, like it's initiating something.**
- 2. Reflecting on my reasons for leaving has brought something together for me.**
- 3. I feel excited because I've realised a couple things, more excited than emotional, though it might just be that I'm not going into that emotion here right now.**
- 4. There wasn't anything special or traumatic, I feel very comfortable, here in the middle, no tension, a gentle vibrating, like the sea on a hot day, no big waves.**

## **“Eva” Meaning Clusters**

### **Preparation for leaving**

1. I prepared over a couple years to leave for England as soon as I graduated.
2. I read English authors and watched English films and put a lot of energy into learning English in order to have possibilities for leaving.
3. I imagined what England would be like and the kind of life I could have there.
4. Even in my early teens I was making study choices that would support my leaving. Leaving the country, getting out and not coming back, was the important thing from early on.
5. I was taking control of making it happen, not waiting to see if it might happen.
6. I spent a holiday in the UK the year before I planned to move there.

### **Motivations for leaving – needing distance from family life**

1. Leaving was a way of escaping difficulties at home.
2. I needed emotional distance from my family so much that I had to make it physical, to feel it physically and emotionally. I had to feel safe from the emotional mess in my family.
3. Physically I had to have enough distance, another part of the country wasn't enough, but America was too far, I couldn't visit anyone.
4. I had a difficult relationship with my mother, she was the one I was getting away from when I left the country, it was a huge relief.

### **Motivations for leaving – lack of connection and belonging, being an outsider**

1. There was a lack of connection from my family and the wider social world also.
2. The extent to which I felt I didn't belong made me desperate to do something drastic like leaving the country.
3. There wasn't any area where I felt belonging, family, peers, colleagues, friends. If I felt connection anywhere then there is good enough reason to stay in the country but for me there was nothing.
4. Because for me it was extreme, there was not a single soul I was connected to, so leaving was not a dilemma, it was quick and easy like an amputation.
5. I still remember the day I left, the date and I didn't care about anything I was leaving behind.
6. It was a desperate search to belong somewhere and now finding I'll not belong anywhere, that it's impossible, but I feel some acceptance of that now.
7. Now I'm an outsider wherever I go and it's alienating but it's not going to change after 20 years, and there's no place I won't feel it, it's part of my identity.

### **Motivations for leaving – imagining a better life style**

1. Family life and economic factors were the main motivations for leaving.
2. Better living conditions in the UK and the possibility of expanding myself intellectually and economically were important factors.
3. I had the necessary courage to take advantage of the life that was waiting for me here, I had great hopes when I came and settled here.
4. When I compared my country, I could see we were deprived and I wanted some of what others had. I was easily influenced by images of material things and the comfort they could offer.
5. On an unarticulated level there was something more than material things that I wanted from a better life. Like I was compensating for something.

6. Seeing foreign products powerfully intensified my desire to leave as others had done (aunt).
7. These western products conjured up a whole possible world and lifestyle and shifted something inside and I felt 'its got to happen'.

#### **Deeper personal reasons for leaving home**

1. I was an only child as I was dreaming of leaving – my only brother was born when I was 14.
2. Something was lacking emotionally but I don't know what. I felt deficient, separate from others, disconnected from meaningful relationships.
3. Fulfilling relationships would have made me feel solid enough so maybe I wouldn't have needed to search out there so desperately.
4. Material possessions might have been a way of filling myself so I was more tangible. My inability to connect was very painful and having things was soothing, comforting that pain.
5. For me it is a paradox that this human connection was almost impossible in the place I was born, where I knew the language, the faces, and everything was familiar.
6. A foreign product meant there was a foreign world somewhere where everything, even human connection might be possible. Whatever was lacking might be there.
7. I needed not only the basic milk of life that all babies need, but also the honey, soothing, comforting, sweet and emotional, not all babies need the honey.

#### **Disappointment in foreign place**

1. Although initially exciting, I became disillusioned with how difficult it would be and that there were obstacles, including my foreign accent.
2. The lack of possibilities, future, glitter, made me depressed and I settled into just normal life and made a choice which I deeply regret and which limits the rest of my life choices.
3. It wasn't the life I expected though materially it was better than at home, but emotionally it was unchanged. I brought my difficulties with me until in therapy they shifted a bit and some things got a little easier.

#### **Early consideration of returning home (10-11 years ago)**

1. If I couldn't create the world I wanted in the UK maybe I could go back with what I'd accumulated and create that world back home.
2. I considered selling my flat and trying to buy a villa back home but the economy wasn't good enough and I found myself more of an outsider and isolated as friends had moved on and my family difficulties were the same.
3. I both hoped things would still improve here and was tempted to return, so I felt suspended between two countries with no sense of belonging in either place so it didn't matter much where I decided to be.

#### **Staying at home does not necessarily mean belonging**

1. People who stay at home or return home don't necessarily feel they belong. Some of them also feel separate and alienated but maybe they are less desperate or more afraid so they don't consider the option of staying away. They maybe find a different way of coping with alienation and lack of belonging rather than leaving the country – that is only one way.

#### **Returning home to die has a deeper meaning**

1. In old age, when life is ending, people want to die in their own country, the mother country, and I don't understand it but it has crossed my mind that I might want that.
2. I have mixed feelings, it would be a dilemma to return after so long but I have some inclination, unclear, to return to die at my original birthplace.
3. It's like a wanting to be reunited with total belonging, ultimate belonging with the ground of everything, to return to the womb of mother holds out some promise and country makes some sense to me.
4. This need for reunion is greater as I get older. It is an attractive idea to feel at one with everything, like returning to the comforting womb, a soothing and healing break from the desperate isolated human condition.
5. Its like a need for mothering in the broadest sense of mother country since I have not been able to provide mothering for myself to replace a real mother.

#### **The changing feeling of visiting home**

1. I used to visit home only out of duty but recently I noticed it wasn't all duty, I felt some pleasure.
2. I'm puzzled by why it should change now after 20 years – it might be connected to new priorities and reorientation in my life.
3. This opening up to reconnecting to whoever still lives there feels pleasant. It feels like a possibility for a different kind of relationship with my parents.
4. I only feel the reality of family member's deaths when I return and see they aren't there and I notice how connections get lost, even bad ones, though I still have feelings for family who have died. There is a sense of unreality, disbelief, an uncanny sense to these losses.

#### **Feelings of the interview**

1. It feels like something has been initiated during the interview and that's inspiring.
2. Reflecting on reasons for leaving home has made some connections and that feels excited more than emotional, though I might be resisting that emotion right now.
3. It didn't feel traumatic – it feels comfortable in the middle of my body, a gentle vibrating calm, no tension.

## **“Eva” Themes**

### **1. Preparing oneself to leave home for a foreign country**

- Learning a language, reading books about a foreign place, seeing films, can all help prepare in imagination what the foreign experience will be like.
- Wanting to leave can influence early study choices and take a lot of energy and commitment. A holiday abroad can also support leaving preparations.
- Leaving the country can seem so important that nothing is left to chance, one must take control of making it happen.

### **2. Leaving as an escape from family situation**

- Creating enough physical distance from difficult family relationships can help one gain emotional distance and feel safe.
- It was a huge relief to escape from Ps mother – this required finding a place far enough away but not so far that visits were not possible.

### **3. Not feeling connected or belonging in the home environment**

- Not belonging in any way, to family, social world, peers, friends, can feel so desperate that leaving the country feels crucial, like a necessary amputation. Missing this human connection in the place where one is born and everything is familiar is especially painful.
- People who stay home or return do not necessarily feel a sense of belonging but presumably are more afraid or less desperate and so are able to find a different way of coping with their lack of belonging rather than leaving.
- Even the slightest connection could be reason enough to stay in the country but without that there is no choice and no dilemma.
- Fulfilling relationships might add a solidity to the home environment that would pre-empt the desperation to search for belonging elsewhere.
- Leaving was a desperate search to find a place to belong and it now seems that's impossible, that one is destined to be an outsider everywhere. It becomes a part of one's identity and it's possible to feel some acceptance of this.

### **4. Promise of a better life**

- Along with a difficult family situation, economic factors can be a main motivation for leaving home but these motivations may be intimately interwoven.

- The hope of fulfilling one's potential, economically and intellectually, combined with a certain amount of courage and desire, can help one settle in a foreign place.
- Images of a more comfortable life can generate material desires but also symbolise a whole imagined world full of promise and potentialities that can't be realised at home.
- These economic desires might also be compensations for feelings of deficiency, separation from meaningful relationships, an emotional lack that's difficult to articulate.
- Accumulating material possessions can make one feel more tangible while simultaneously comforting the pain of not belonging.
- Leaving home can be instilled with great hope, great longing, and deep pain all at once.

## 5. Disillusionment with the new place

- Unexpected obstacles, including one's foreignness and not belonging, can seem insurmountable and quash the initial excitement of new possibilities.
- When the hoped-for new life does not materialise it can lead to depression and regrettable choices as well as thoughts of returning home.
- Difficulties in the new life can generate considerations of new possibilities back home but home has changed, so one can end up between two worlds, suspended between countries with no sense of belonging in either.
- Relocating can make it easier to improve one's material situation but emotional difficulties tend to follow from home, re-emerge in the new place, and are difficult to change.

## 6. Aging and returning home

- After many years when visiting home felt like a duty, it can suddenly begin to feel more pleasurable and this seems connected to the different priorities and life reorientations of aging.
- This change presents new possibilities for improved relationships with parents and may also be connected to experiences of relationships lost through death during the years away and the uncanny sense when returning home and feeling the reality of these absent connections.
- Although P does not understand it, she is beginning to feel, like many people as they get older, that she might want to end life in her home country.
- It creates mixed feelings and a difficult dilemma when feelings emerge of wanting to return in old age after being away so long.
- This desire for return has a deep existential or mystical element to it. It holds the promise of deep reunion and total belonging by returning to one's origins, like to the mother's womb, the mother country. This need grows as one ages and can be imagined as having a healing quality for the difficulties of being human.

- This growing desire to return home is experienced as a need for real mothering that one cannot provide for oneself, mothering in the broadest sense, being mothered by one's home country.

## 7. Feelings of the interview

- It's inspiring to feel that the interview process has initiated some new connections. P feels more excited than emotional but wonders if the emotion of being kept at bay at the moment. She is left feeling calm, comfortable and without tension.



"Fiona"

GM1 - So, the first question is could you begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 – Um, OK, I left home in about, I'm a bit hazy about dates, but about 1964 I think it was, that would be at the age of 20-ish, as a way of removing myself from a family situation that was, you know, very difficult, and it was a kind of pattern in the situation I was in, I was in Glasgow, I was in Scotland, I was born and brought up in Scotland, and moved around within Scotland, always of course with the family, I was at university but living with the family. I had tried to leave home in that sense and go and live elsewhere, but still be in Glasgow, and that hadn't been allowed, wasn't in a position to do so. So, in any case my whole life was in difficulty and one way of addressing those was to leave and come down to London. And I did it kind of, carefully, I failed everything at university. I failed everything that I was doing so I had to do something else, and I applied for jobs, and I got a job, you know, ..... and but it has to be said there was another factor to it, and that was something that allowed me, that gave me a kind of mind to connect to, and that was that I formed a fantasy relationship, you the un reciprocated, unrequited love thing with someone on telly, and so my plan was to kind of, follow him. He was kind of, you know, part of the goal and that was a way of you know, saying this is what I'm going to do, I'm going to go to London and something will happen. So there was that, you know, there were two different things going on.

GM2 - And you've been here ever since?

P2 - I lived and worked in London on and off. I had breakdowns, so I didn't work for a while, I was an in patient at a psychiatric hospital, voluntary, ..... so quite a long period of struggle, you know, recovery and struggle and that kind of thing. Culminating in about 19, this was down in the suburbs of London, Surrey, till about 1971-2 when I went to work for an engineering company who were doing work out in Africa, and only short term work, so when that finished again there was a kind of period of rather aimless, not quite knowing what to do, and then I left the country and headed for Africa. Got rid of all my possessions and, the only ticket I could buy was a return ticket, but in actual fact if I had been able to buy a single ticket, I would have bought a single ticket. I ended up in, it was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and kind of ended up staying out there, being joined by the person that I'd formed a relationship with in this engineering company, who went kind of back and forth between London and Africa, Southern Africa, and in the end he took up a job in South Africa and I joined him in South Africa, and our relationship went on from there. South Africa, Botswana, back to London, for a period and then out again to the Middle East. Until about 1985 when I decided that I had to come back. The coming back is still going on I think, but I came back to complete my education which I did and continued with further training, I had some therapy you know, for about a year and decided to do the training. That was, if you like, coming back to London. I had not been in favour of coming back and living in London so I went elsewhere. I was kind of, up in Gloucestershire, which was really wanting to be further North, wanting to be in Scotland, but not having any real connection there. That kind of, making compromises of being away from London but not. My daughter was in school, so my daughter was in school in that area my stepmother, who was still living was also in that area, so, ... and then came back to London again to do the training and to live, and subsequently made the move. I don't

have any year for that, but a number of years had passed obviously, and moved back to Scotland, which was the general direction I was moving in all of that time, from about 1985.

GM3 – Quite a history (Laughs) So you grew up in Glasgow with your family?

P3 - No, grew up in Scotland, moving around.

GM4 - Moving around, OK.

P4 - Moving around.

GM5 - Something about your family life was difficult?

P5 - Yes.

GM6 - And you, if I got you correctly, you'd made some kind of attempt to move out and live on your own, at least made some noises to see if you could do that. At the age of 20 you planned an exit, it wasn't just fleeing, you planned it?

P6 - A lot of it was not conscious planning I have to say, with hindsight, I understand it to be that way.

GM7 - So, up until that point, up until the point of, around university time, had you thought that perhaps you would stay in Scotland to stay near your family, or to stay in that general area?

P7 - I find it difficult to remember what, if you like was, in my mind about planning ahead and about what my life would be, I think I did have concerns about being trapped in a kind of a way of life that I felt to be very unfulfilling. The kind of life that was a bourgeois Scottish lifestyle, and the set of possibilities I felt were very limiting, so I had made efforts to kind of, get out of that, but very tentative and not very successful I guess, and I'd only been out of Scotland I think once, by that point, and that was hitchhiking, didn't quite make it as far as London. So I wanted out but I don't know that I knew much more than that.

GM8 - So you didn't have that much experience really of another kind of culture or anything like that?

P8 - None at all.

GM9 - But for some reason, there was something about that place that you felt was kind of restrictive, or not enough in some ways?

P9 - Let me say that it was cultural pattern, the cultural pattern exists that, or had existed and still does, that certainly at that time in Scotland, it was the case of the sense of there being a limited set of possibilities. People routinely left and particularly came down to London to work or to study further, or whatever it might be. But just to get away from that small place, so it was, I was by no means alone in that, and but at the same time for me particularly, there was a sense of being trapped in my familial situation, and what the expectations were of me as a person, that it came to that, and I was unhappy about it,

and it has to be said that that was really the situation. And it also has to be said something about reading. You know, I read, and you know in the life of the imagination there was great deal more out there than I was able to or had been able to get at.

GM10 - So what attracted to about out there, that world that you hadn't discovered yet that but you had a sense of existing?

P10 - A richer, more intense palate of colour experience as it were, you know, wanting more, wanting different, feeling dissatisfied with the now, the here and now of my life I guess.

GM11 - Did you have brothers and sisters?

P11 - Yes, I did.

GM12 - Did you share this with them?

P12 - No, I need to say a little about the family context I think, to explain that. Overall, the family in time became six, including halves and steps. First of all, three siblings, our mother died, I was very young, four or five, my father married again. He was a priest, by the way, this is part of it. My father married again and there were another two children, two half brothers, with me, youngest of the first three, elder sister, elder brother, myself, younger half brother, younger half sister, she also died after about five years, and so my father married a third time and she had a daughter, so then we have..... six, but in all of this we were not a close family so there's very little warmth, very little overt affection demonstration exactly, my father was one of this kind of, intellectual, idealistic characters, much better at doing the work of being a priest than he was at being a father, although it has to be said, at a practical level he you know, did a fantastic job. He was a lovely person in many ways. But, so we didn't have a tradition of talking to each other. We were not close at all. We had secret lives from each other, we didn't, we didn't share. But one of ways in which the situation had become intolerable for me was that I was, due to the timing of it, I at a certain point in between my first and second step mother, as it were, I became the kind of housewife, housekeeper and general, my elder sister was away from home by that point so I had to cook and care for my younger brother, my half brother, who was suffering from learning difficulties, you know, he spent some time in an, we'll call it an institution shall we, and I became the kind of buffer between him and the new step mother, his step mother, and the father, and that situation proved you know, very, very difficult and by the time I actually left it had reached the point of being practically intolerable.

GM13 - So when you said earlier, that kind of sense of being trapped in family life, this is where that comes from?

P13 - Yes, and there was also, there was a heck of a lot of stuff around, but secrets and lies, because this whole picture and history of death and remarriages was kind of hidden, because of who my father was, people were allowed to believe that no such events had occurred, so that then my second step mother, people were supposed to understand that she was my mother and this whole kind of, policy, quite deliberate policy in a way, of you know, the 'Queen is dead, Long Live the Queen,' your mother is dead, but this is your mother. So there was kind of, a

real dissonance there, a kind of lie that could not be aired, could not be exposed but needed to be. Needed to be looked at.

GM14 - So when you talked about leaving home, originally you were talking about the attraction to this television personality in London, and that was part of the pull?

P14 - Yes.

GM15 - And there was another thing, you said there were two kind of aspects to that original leaving?

P15 - In a way, that sense of richness, the sense that there's something out there that I wanted to access. And in a way, I mean, your point about this television personality, really that was an encapsulation of it.

GM16 - OK.

P16 - It was all....he's no longer alive in fact, ... a minor case of stalking is going on here which I think is a lot more common than we'd like to understand, but it was what this man represented for me that was you know, intellectual achievement, it was a kind of applied morality. He was actually a reporter for Panorama at the time, and on other things, a political commentator, and what I got from him was something very moral driven, if you like, moral drive or something, that I enjoyed as well finding him physically attractive and so on. And the politics as well, so there was all of that. He kind of encapsulated a life, a dream, if you like.

GM17 - What was it about that moral... that you found attractive?

P17 - Well, I guess I inherited, unwillingly probably, but I inherited it and am very conscious of it still this kind of agenda that was about morality and justice and all of that. And my father was very, you know, very concerned with [clearing] and perhaps there was something very personal about it as well, something about justice, for me. But it's kind of, always been a kind of, radical agenda, left.

GM18 - OK. So, when you talked about this whole kind of, living in and growing up, I'm wondering, I mean, there's clearly the magnetism of the outside world, and there something that was very attractive about that, and if I got you right, there's also something to escape?

P18 - Oh yes. A real need to escape.

GM19 - I'm wondering was there concern about what might happen to you if you didn't leave?

P19 - [Pause] I don't know that I can articulate anything like that, all I can say, and I know that what I'm saying is so much informed by who I am now, and my work now, and so on, but what comes to mind is that I suppose about my younger brother having severe difficulties, emotional difficulties, I guess I'd had my own by that point, I had had visits to psychiatrists, I had also, while I was at university I was aware, I think I was aware of how depressed I was. I was desperately depressed and desperately non functional, and I had tried to do something about that, the services of course just weren't

there, the health ..... just wasn't there at that time, but I don't think I ever articulated what I might fear.....

GM20 - So you did manage to leave. You had some difficult years, but then what transpired was quite an international lifestyle. There was a lot of going back and forth between London and other countries, and being exposed to a lot of different cultures. Did that, does it surprise you that your life unfolded in that way?

P20 - There was some surprise, but maybe not a lot because I did have that sense of wanting to have some of those kind of experiences, of not being someone who could be satisfied by staying at home and following through on a kind of, given path, predictable path. So it doesn't surprise me. Again, what I'm left with now is I'm kind of in a way disappointed that it was that set of experience and not a different set of experiences, for example, my experiences overseas abroad, were in those places though I don't regret those at all, but I would have liked, you know, the European experience of life that I hadn't had, or you know, perhaps having something southern European. So, you know, I had some opportunities and not others, and I would eagerly accept the experiences I had, you know, I'm glad I had them, I'm glad that I've been there.

GM21 - But it sounds almost as though in a way it's not surprising your life took this kind of route, ..... there was already this kind of weighing up of the kind of predictable and something that may be more exciting and unknown?

P21 - Absolutely.

GM22 - And you found you were attracted to the other, not to the predictable path I wonder what that is that attracts you to it?

P22 - Well again, I do myself link it to the experience that I had which was a continuing pattern, very clear, of spending four or five years in one place and then moving to another, completely unknown. And then another, you know. I reflected recently that the longest I've ever been in one place, of living in one house, was actually I think I only made nine years, not quite ten years, I made nine years in one house, I mean, that is the record, otherwise it's been four, five, six years, and so you notice a kind of need to move on and need or a passion at the very least of, I've been here you know, the required amount of time, I must go somewhere else. So there was always something, and it was always unknown, I mean it looks now from a kind of international perspective, it may look as though, you know, yes you moved I don't know, 70 miles away, but actually that was a very different place and these were a completely new set of people, and new situations. So there's a pattern of meeting the other, meeting the unknown, first of all willy nilly, I had no part in that, and latterly with a kind of compulsion to keep on the move.....[traffic noise]

GM23 - I'm assuming when I hear that, and it's something I can relate to, when I hear that I'm assuming that you come to a new place and there's an attraction, and excitement, or whatever you experience of being in a new place, a newness, sense of something different and after a certain amount of time, usually around five or six years, you need that experience again?

P23 - I actually don't, that sounds quite attractive in a way, even if I'm addictive, compulsive. It also sounds quite attractive, I guess the only time I really thought I'm

going to do this was when I left for Africa, I actually thought I was going to go to Ethiopia and do some good, you know, but you get there, that I'd deliberately cast off everything, giving stuff away, giving clothes away, getting rid of all my possessions..... and that was good, that was OK, and I even thought of it as being, as an adventure and so forth. But almost beyond that, I'm not sure, I'm not sure I felt so good about it, and then I rather feel there's a kind of a negative thing, of having to put myself back to square one, you know, not being able to allow myself to consolidate connections, attachments to people or place. And that's been something that I think has got stronger more recently.

GM24 - So, if that is the case, I wonder, in a sense of, what would be so wrong about really sinking in to a place, and consolidating? What gets in the way?

P24 - Well, I guess a fear I think of, a fear of making strong attachments, and ... in attachments, simply because my experience of attachments has in fact not been very permanent, kind of, almost a fear of the unknown, I mean I have to balance that statement by saying that I really have just one partnership in my life really, one certainly major one, and that's all, and that's lasted on and off for I don't know, 27, 28 years, so there's been a kind of, a corollary of not having permanent attachments, there's been perhaps a kind of cling to one, a kind of fear of actually changing that, never either or, it's .... but I do see it in that way, I do see it as being quite a challenge there somewhere for me.

GM25 - OK. So, when you reflect back to when you were at home, why do you think you really left home?

P25 - (Laughs).

GM26 - I know we've talking about these things, but in case you want to add anything else?

P26 - It still feels like getting out of a trap, you know, it still feels like having to kind of blast my way out of some place, and I needed some help and I kind of, I kind of did that thing of kind of throwing out a line that kind of, somehow I got it back and was able to sort of [retract] myself out, as it were, something like that as it were, I feel, that's how I think about it still.

GM27 - So, when you reflect past over the time since leaving home, how has it been for you?

P27 - I've had a great time. I've just had such a great time, in many, many ways, I think of it as being a struggle and kind of, battle in some quite subterranean way, but again, in a sense, for myself I feel it as progress through the years. But at the same time there are a lots of regrets, and a sense of loss about not having done things, achieved things easily or in a more pain free fashion.

GM28 - I'm just wondering when you left London and went to Africa and went back and forth did you feel that that kind of exposed you to quite a different culture and way of live in Africa, or in the Middle East, did that change your experience of London when you came back?

P28 - Certainly in London, in the sense of in the sense of the question of lack of space, being in those kind of wide open spaces, almost unnecessary additional perspective if you like. Being in Scotland, I see being in Scotland as being a limited set of circumstances, that was very much the social sphere, and I was paying no attention to the aesthetic, my aesthetic awareness of my surroundings, and certainly I became, I ..... moving back as I said, when I came back, I went to the Midlands of England rather than London, even if the base was London, my husband, you know, commuted to London. But I never felt particularly attached again to a place, and I felt very kind of, limited and cramped by the kind of, city, the whole city thing, and began to want out. I'm not sure if that quite led my response.

GM29 - Yes, I'm just wondering if there was a sense for you of being exposed to such different cultures, it had some effect on you?

P29 - I think unquestionably, I think unquestionably. But one of my regrets that I mentioned earlier, one of my regrets was that to some extent in Africa, I was, well I don't know, fortunate I think, we chose this way, and I'm uncomfortable in Southern Africa, extremely uncomfortable in South Africa, apartheid was in full flood, swing at the time, and it was a great deal more comfortable in Botswana, which was self governing you know, long tradition of democracy in fact, and that was fine, but there wasn't a heck of a lot of exchange because of how I was living, how we were living in a mining community, so it was very much a kind of ex-patriot situation, and the same ex-patriot situation existed in the Middle East, so there was an even greater kind of separation of culture. So that was one of my big dissatisfactions, and one of the reasons I actually decided that I'd had enough, that I really felt was something so unreal about the situation and I wanted this act of some kind of engagement with the wider social context if you like, so I gained a different perspective I think, but at the same time it was about where I was in it, in the kind of wider engagement, social engagement that concerned me. I wanted to become, I've always being some kind of an activist, and my scope for activism was quite limited, in different ways, and it's not worth going into, but there was something about that, I wanted to be active in my social context, and a kind of, mover. And that's something maybe that refers back to that what I wanted to be doing initially when I left Scotland, because I wanted to be a mover and shaker, and I couldn't see that, I couldn't see the way that was going to happen, you know.

GM30 - I'm wondering if there is a pattern here, and it may be hardly worth saying, but the impression I'm getting is that when you get into a situation that either feels quite entrapping or even too limited, you've really got to go?

P30 - Yup. Yes.

GM31 - Something about that, either in ex-pat communities, or your original home, or even the city of London, that's the signal to move on?

P31 - Yes, that's fair.

GM32 - So what is it about that, these kinds of situations...?

P32 - I guess there's something about can I change the limitations. Can I shift the boundaries. Can I expand or broaden the parameters. And I think I'll battle, I think I'll battle. I was battling in the family initially, I was trying to change things, and realised I

couldn't. Couldn't any further if you will. I didn't change things. So I guess there is something about can I change things, and once I think that I'm not going to change things or the way that I think we ought to go, then that's something like a signal to move on.

GM33 - Now this next question is really the last kind of general thing I want to ask you, more or less. I ....., and the wording of it isn't quite accurate, but do you think about returning home?

P33 - Well, whether it's relevant to your study or not, I have been, as I said, since 1985, this is now 15, 17 years, it's taken me, to the overall direction of projection has been returning home, and I haven't quite got there yet. Whether I ever will is still moot I think, but you know, it has been a conscious intention for some time, and I have gone about it, you know, not in a straightforward fashion, and that's still going on, and clearly I think, some of the hesitation, that has to be a word that comes to mind, is what do I do if I find myself in an [entrappe] what I describe as a trapping situation, and I find that, you know, I'm not going to be able to shift the boundaries. And that's actually quite interesting because, I think it's already happened in a way, and I, my metaphor for how I looked at them, for making the move from London, say to Glasgow, that's not necessarily the last move, but if I can put it that way, but it's near enough, and my metaphor was a kind of, rock climbing thing, not that I do that, it just happens to be what came to mind, and still does, of really stretching, really having to stretch out a sort of, finger hold, and really got to stretch out, big stretch to get the foot, or whatever is, on this rock, and it's a kind of wobbly rock, and you test it and you test it and you hesitate, and you say I think I've got the right angle, I think I've got the right, you know, load on it, and just take the other foot off. And what actually happened was this rock gave way. I had set up a situation, I worked quite hard at the situation and it just kind of evaporated. So I recognised, I think that I had to kind of get back to the previous solution and start again.

GM34 - Yes.

P34 - So it's quite interesting, just thinking about it myself, but all felt very dangerous. It all felt very extreme. Trying to achieve that move. Something about the move this time was very ambivalent and terribly cautious, everything, you know, a kind of excess of general development or consciousness about what I was doing, about the pattern, the more present the kind of awareness clearly the more difficult the context, the more extreme I feel.

GM35 - Which makes me wonder why you plan to return home?

P36 - I need, I guess I feel, I have at times felt like the Flying Dutchman, you know, and I don't know if that's a common feeling, there is no place, there is no place that I can call home. And home became for me, the word 'home' began to mean for me Scotland, the place, the country, my cultural heritage if you like. A nationalistic thing. And I began to feel uncomfortable with that, that home was somewhere else than I was, and I began to feel as though I had to test this, I had to, for this to be really home, I had to be there, to find a way of being able to be there, so I just felt that I had to go back and I had to find my way in order to test the homeness of home and trying to find out what that means to me.



GM37 - How will you know that home is home?

P37 - I will never know (Laughs). I will never know.

GM38 - (Laughs)

P38 - I'm kind of reconciled to that, just that this is the best I can do to test the concept of home. (pause) I have chosen my life, you may not want to use this, I have chosen my last resting place, in a sense, I don't mean a plot on the ground, I don't mean I, I kind of have that sense I'm going somewhere and I have to continue with this journey in kind of physical, geographical terms, and I went looking for a place, and I kind of had an experience of finding a place. I shall be very, very interested if whether that's something that continues to play itself out as it were, or whether it just remains a figment of my, you know, a kind of slot for my mental map, my space on my mental map, rather than my physical map.

GM39 - So, I'm trying to understand, it sounds almost as though the journey you made at 20 you're making in reverse now, but in a very, very conscious way, and I'm wondering if some of the things that kind of informed your leaving, are also still in there. When you talk about, I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, I want to understand this, you talk about that it takes a long time to move that second foot and see how solid that is, for some reason, home for you that culture or even countryside, something, that place you grew up, that has some sense of home, that calls you back in some way, doesn't it?

P39 - It's not the one place or the one culture, or the one, it's my sense of connection with it.

GM40 - Yes.

P40 - That's the key thing. My sense of connection with back home is problematic, or clearly was problematic at the age of 20 and it's still problematic. The thing that still I want to be a mover and a shaker, but what I can I do, can I change what I find unsatisfactory. I have to work out how I can, if I can, in whatever way I can be active in that, and somehow be satisfied with it. And somehow, because I'm tired, I'm tired of this movement.

GM41 - Yes.

P41 - But I don't know where I can be at rest, if you like, in terms of place, in terms ... There are after all, things that I have to do. That I have to revisit some stuff, like those developmental stages, I have to go back there to do this piece of work again, or to do it properly, so it wasn't done properly before. I've already noticed that, I've gone back the death of my own mother, and done some stuff around that quite specifically, connected with the place clearly. So there is that continuing life's work as it were of going back through the earlier points of the cycle and looking at that and doing some work about that. But it's kind of connected as well with my relationship with the place in this culture.

GM42 - When you say that, there's something more than the psychological that's made a mark on you about Scotland, that means your connections about ....something about that stands out so much so that you felt this motivation to go back and see if you can

make it home in a sense that it wasn't home, and when I listen to you talk about that I'm reminded again of your experiences, your previous experience, of almost like, and correct me if I'm wrong, can I go home to a place that on the one hand is a place where I can feel that, and on the other hand, is a place where I can realise those potentials, you know, being able to fight for something I believe, in having that kind of passionate push forward. And I somehow make home alter those things and to what extent are you satisfied with a compromise?

P42 - There's something as well, that's there but perhaps that's clearly formed talking about it, is that it's got something to do with walking the walk, you know, and talking the talk, and feeling the kind of thing you get that ex-patriots got particularly ex-Scots and this whole thing about the green hills of home and all that, there's something about not wanting just to be that way, but coming to terms with whatever connection. And there's something also about consciously choosing to go back and address the situation that I left. There's really a feeling about that.

GM43 - When you talk about the ex-pat community, the Scottish ex-pat community, I mean it sounded almost as though people, Scotch people who weren't living in Scotland kind of create a real strong idealism almost of the place in a deeper sense, and I'm wondering if that, I guess I'm thinking, I'm thinking about my own experience where I can feel deeply passionate and really, almost being in love with, the place when I'm not there, and when I get there it's actually very, different. In fact, when I get there I can have that kind of feeling of ... It's not like that?

P43 - I don't think it is, Greg, bear in mind and you may not realise, and you may not realise, I mean, there a Scottish Diaspora there was, the Highland clearances, and my family in fact, one of the aspects of my own experience of you, know being exploring, that my family was to some extent involved in that, and so the Scots world-wide to have that sense of feeling ejected from their home and there's that involved in the thing, but I have found I have to say, that part of my, that I mentioned, my going looking for that last resting place, to find, you know, my place in this, I do feel a very strong connection to the place, and if you like a feel of the landscape, whatever, whatever, and that's really part of it, because I find that is now.... and there isn't anywhere, even when I consider anywhere else. I mean, even when I consider some of the wonderful transcendental moments I had in the middle of the desert or, on the top of a mountain, or whatever, being in this very different landscape, for example, it doesn't, there's no way it's on the scale, it's never on the scale, but it does feel congruent.

GM44 - Yes. Does that mean, what you said made me think, but I'd just like to ask, I still, I still haven't quite understood what it is about the place you grew up in, I mean I do think, you know, there's a family dynamic that is a part of it, but even without this family dynamic you may be here saying this, or someone without that dynamic may be here, and I'm just wondering what it is about the place where you kind of, appear on the Earth, it seems to be kind of get into us, so beautifully, almost like you know, the salmon going back, do you understand what that is?

P44 - I don't understand it in any scientific sense. But I don't discount the possibility that, it's a bit like homeopathic medicines, you know, the dilution, the process of dilution, and yet some kind of ghost, as it were, of the entity, it somehow has presence and an effect. And I certainly wouldn't like to think that there's a gene for you know, Scottish-ness or anything of that kind, but feeling again it was a very emotional moment

for me when I found a place, you know, and I had no, there's no personal connection to this area, area, yes you go to the local churchyards and you'll find gravestones with my family name on them, you know, there is, and I wouldn't to discount the possibility that there's some sense of attachment that remains when, blood line if you like, that's gone somewhere else, that perhaps I'm finding my way back to something very much older than my own immediate family situation. And it's rather a romantic you know, notion. I can only say this is my experience, and I experience a sense of some kind of completion, some kind of recognition, either in that place or knowing that I'm near that place, if you like.

But it is also to do with, I think it's also something to do with, if you like, the natural world and you know, our time in history, being humans if you like, and people in the first world, city dwellers, whatever, and of looking for something that is different from that. There's a whole kind of idea of quality of life, and that's part of, certainly part of my agenda as well.

GM45 - Yes. I mean, when you talked about the place you found, the word that comes to me is that there's a match almost like a natural kind of feeling?

P45 - It's like you have a jigsaw and one piece, i.e., one piece of jigsaw, and yet, you know, I find in this particular context, the landscape and that sense of the city is my, the reality is so much more complex. I know that, and that is the kind of connection between what I left, the kind of awareness of the limitations that I left, and a number of those are in terms of different aspects that will hit me and I know this is not going to be easy, so that sits there on top of that sense of fitting is also the sense of not fitting, that I get from the reason, probably that I originally left. What my experience has been and what I have been and am, because of having left and been elsewhere, in the way that I'm coming back, so that's work, compromise often.

GM46 - Feeling of not being, not fitting in?

P46 - Fitting in, but not fitting in.

GM47 - Almost like being at home at some deep, foundational way, and also the coming back as a stranger in some way?

P47 - And home is never, going home you know, you can't go home, so it will always feel different. It won't feel like home. There is one place, there's a kind of coda to that in a way, there is one place, and I referred again earlier to doing a piece of work with regards to my own mother's death, that place, that feels like a place of origin, it is my place of origin in a very real sense. The church (Laughs). The place, the home kind of somehow, is irrelevant to the church, but it is the place that encapsulates that sense of place of origin. But I do feel as though a piece of work has almost been done, and in that place, it's not a going back to my place of origin, and that may be something that's quite important. It's going back further maybe.

GM48 - Yes.

P48 - And so I also have very kind of, psycho dynamic notions of you know, inter-generational, or of going back through a generation to where people worked, it hasn't been done through the generations. I mean how grandiose or kind of mythical does this

get, but you think you're kind of going back and doing not only your own work, or your parents work, and how your parents..., my God you know, a mission or what (Laughs) but, you know, I can only say that I'm kind of, following my nose in a way as well.

GM49 – It occurs to me that there is something here, and it could even be that that's partly the natural reconciliation of home and still having kind of, the battle?

P49 - The battle, yes, the moving part, wanting to change, yes.

GM50 - The moving forward?

P50 - Yes.

GM51 - Anyway, the last thing I'd like to ask is just how it feels for you to talk about these things?

P51 - I have clearly done a great deal thinking about this, as I say, all of this in, not all of what I've said, but certainly all of this set of experiences is something I've been working over quite intensively, so it feels, and there's not a lot that is new, but in a way the sort of encapsulation I've been hearing a clearer articulation of themes and patterns that are understood to be to some extent to my mother, and I think it's been very helpful and very useful to elucidate that further. I felt, I felt very comfortable with it and I wanted to do it because I knew it would be helpful to me as well, I hope as being useful to you.

GM52 – Very useful. I mean useful in terms of my interest here, but also useful in that you are engaged in the process I see for myself, so it's almost like either seeing the future a little differently, but in some ways, you know, I very much anticipate some of things you've been talking about.

P52 - Let me say that I'm quite struck by this, because here in this place, so many of us are a stranger in a strange land in one way or another, but very kind of, obviously if I can put it that way. And what I'm struck with about my going back to Scotland to try to do the same thing there that I'm doing here, is that first of all on the surface it looks as though so many people are not, you know, are at home, and have never left home, and that feels quite an important difference that has to be looked at and worked with, and yet having said that, and I think it's true, I think it's true and I think it is something that could well be quite a difficulty in trying to match this and trying to look at the resistencies that there might be to you know, we've always been here and you've been away, you know, you know, we must find our own way, which actually articulated, are articulated in this field of therapy and training. But equally with one client in particular, I have to say, but actually I think about it with other clients, probably with all my clients if I think about it carefully enough, I've heard quite clearly I've particularly noted a similar sense of homelessness, lost, a feeling of homelessness. Not being possessed of a sense of home, and even in the small way of moving around within Scotland, let's say, people have the same set of experiences, or similar set of experiences. So it's you know, there are questions of scale maybe, but the fundamental kind of, pattern of movement, there is some kind of ...

GM53 - So really we're talking about something that's actually quite fundamental maybe to every person that's a way of expressing more explicitly, but it may be expressed differently by most people....?

P53 - Yes, it may be expressed in different ways, some of us have done it on a global scale, others have done it on a local scale, and yet it deals with the experience, the inner experience I would say .....

GM54 - I wonder if some people do it through perhaps study, or watching films, or some people do it through re-modelling their house every three years?

P54 - Yes.

GM55 - I mean, I don't know, but I'm wondering if there are....?

P55 - Yes, it would be useful to do that to kind of, formulate a way of looking at that and then finding out about this. Perhaps even a timetable, I mean, I don't know, I was struck when I noticed that most of my moves had been five or six years ... there was kind of one exception which was .....(Laughs)

GM56 - (Laughs)

P56 - I don't know, I don't know. (Laughs) There's so much work still to do on the way home. I actually have to say that I was struck by, I don't know, some programme or other, it's not one that I watch, it was just kind of, it was almost a phrase, 'the way home' and it just kind of really resonated. I think it was when I was doing that piece of work with my mother in the place, and I thought, yes there's something to be said about, in a sense about what you might be doing about leaving home and the whole, you know, battle about ideas, a sense of something for me to do about the way home, the process of going home or returning, I mean, are never, can never truly happen. No way back.

GM57 - Unfortunately that part seems true. But, at this point I find you no longer even make a distinction leaving and returning because I think the motivation is usually the same. I'm not sure about that, but a lot of people I've spoken to, a large part of the motivation for you is to find home. And some people get to the point where they realise that well, for me the home I left is the only place that can ever be home, although it maybe it can't be either, it's the place where I have to give it a go.

P57 - Yes.

GM58 - So, the returning home is almost exactly same motivation as the leaving home.

P58 - They choose a different life to try to do that.

GM59 - There are people who have said they'll never go back home, that would never be right, in fact they're in the process of building a home in this foreign place.

P59 - I had the problem, and it's interesting you say that, because when I think about that I can see some with a really serious problem, existential problem if you will in certain parts of Africa I could have envisaged putting down roots myself, at the time anyway. But what I increasingly came up against was the sense of not being at home,

of having no right to think of this as home. Not that it was alien, but that I had no place and I had no right to have a place, so I had to come back and find a place I do have a kind of, a right to, a claim on. And it's quite interesting, because I resurrected my maiden name and one can do this in Scotland, and I haven't quite resolved it, it's a question of how to do it in England, and if you really have to sort of, you know sign a form, or affidavit kind of document, but in Scotland you can just decide, because of the legal system, it's something I've always wanted to do, but was held back from because it's too much of a mouthful actually to have the two names, but I decided to do it in any case. It's kind of, making public my claim in a way.

GM60 - Yes.

P60 – We'll see. The story continues (Laughs)

GM61 - Yes, absolutely. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

P61 – It's been really full, bits of it, but I think probably the bits that needed to be said have been said.

GM62 - So I'd like to make a request that if, I'll get sheet for you, and if anything occurs to you over the next few days, the next few weeks, even just one sentence, that you think might be of interest, I would love to get it that. And everything you've said here is absolutely confidential, you can refer to it, but I won't. If it's referred to in anything that's written that comes out of this.....

P62 - You might have trouble with the Scottish bit (Laughs).

GM63 – Well I could change it to Irish or something!

P63 - No, I'm sorry, you can't have that.(Laughs)

GM64 - (Laughs)

P64 - I think we might have to agree, you have to have the Scottish bit.

GM65 - OK.

P65 - Have to make a decision about that, but I actually wouldn't like that (Laughs)  
..... it's interesting that, isn't it.

GM66 - It is interesting..... because I'm sort of Irish, because I lived in Dublin, I've heard the Irish kind of experiences that sounded similar.....

P66 - I'm sure it is, I'm sure it is, but it's interesting that I should object.

GM67 - It makes perfect sense to me, based on what you said..... but it does remind me that what I plan to do as my study develops, hopefully .. is that I will post my ideas to this discussion list so that when I start thinking and playing around with things, theories or whatever, other people can read and think, yes, that makes sense, or no, it doesn't make sense.

P67 - That would be excellent, that would be excellent.

GM68 - And including.....

P68 - (Laughs) fascinating.

End

## **“Fiona” Meaning Units**

### **Circumstances of leaving home**

1. I left home around 20 as a way of removing myself from a difficult family situation.
2. I was born in Scotland and moved around there with my family. I was at university but living with the family.
3. I had tried to leave home to live elsewhere in Glasgow but it wasn't allowed.
4. My whole life was in difficulty and one way of addressing that was to leave for London.
5. I did it carefully, after failing everything I was taking at university. I failed everything so had to do something else and got a job in London.
6. The second thing was that I formed a fantasy relationship with someone on TV and my plan was to follow him.
7. He became part of the goal, so I was going to London and at least something was going to happen.
8. I lived in London on and off after that and had breakdowns that required hospitalisation.
9. A long period of recovery and struggle till I went to work for a company doing work in Africa. When that finished I was aimless and headed back for Africa.
10. I sold everything and wanted a single ticket to Zimbabwe, and was joined there by someone I was in a relationship with.
11. We ended up together in South Africa, then back to London and off to the Middle East till 1985 when I decided I had to come back.
12. The coming back is still going on I think.
13. I came back for my education and ended up doing a therapy training.
14. I didn't want to live in London so ended up in Gloucestershire but wanted to be in Scotland, but I didn't have any real connection there.
15. I was kind of just being away from London, but not really. My daughter was at school in that area and my step mother lived there.
16. I finally moved back to Scotland which was my goal but I was moving during all that time.

### **You planned to leave?**

1. A lot of it was not conscious planning but with hindsight I see it that way.
2. It's difficult to remember what I was thinking then or planning but I was concerned about being trapped in a way of life that was unfulfilling.
3. It was a kind of bourgeois Scottish lifestyle with limited possibilities so I made tentative and unsuccessful efforts to get out.
4. I'd only been out of Scotland once at that point, hitchhiking, but not as far as London.
5. All I really knew was that I wanted out. No experience of another culture.

### **It felt restrictive there?**

1. There were very limited possibilities in Scotland.
2. People routinely left for London to work or study.
3. I wasn't alone in wanting to get away from that small place.
4. And there was a sense of being trapped in my family and their expectations of me as a person.
5. I was really unhappy about it and that was the real situation.
6. Also I read a lot and in the life of imagination there was a lot more out there than I was able to get at.



7. There was a richer more intense palate of experience out there and I wanted more, something different, I was unsatisfied with the here and now of my life.

#### The family situation

1. My mother died when I was 5 and my father remarried, he was a priest.
2. He had more children then she died and he married a third time and had another child.
3. There were 6 children all together but we were not close, there was little warmth or affection, my father was an intellectual idealist, better at being a priest than a father.
4. Practically he did a good job and was a lovely person but no tradition of talking to each other.
5. We had secret lives from each other, we didn't share anything.
6. Between mothers I ended up as the housewife, housekeeper, cooking and caring for my younger siblings one of whom had learning difficulties.
7. I became the buffer between him and the new step mother and my father.
8. That proved to be very difficult and when I finally left it was intolerable.
9. There were so many secrets and lies.
10. The whole reality of the deaths and marriages were hidden because of my father being a priest.
11. People were allowed to believe all that never occurred and this deliberate policy of letting people believe my step mother was my mother created a real dissonance a lie that could not be spoken but needed to be.
12. So I wanted to access the richness that was out there and that TV personality encapsulated all that.
13. It was a minor case of stalking in fact, but he represented intellectual achievement, an applied morality.
14. He was a political commentator and what I got from him was a moral drive and I also found him physically attractive.
15. He encapsulated a life, a dream.

#### What was the pull of that moral drive?

1. I inherited a kind of leftwing agenda of morality and justice and still very conscious of it.
2. My father was very concerned with these things but there was also something personal about justice for me, too.

#### A real need to escape

1. What I'm saying now is very informed by who I am now and my training but I'd had my own difficulties by that point, visits to psychiatrists and I was very depressed at university.
2. I was desperately depressed and non-functioning and I tried to address that but there were no services.

#### Did it surprise you that your life unfolded in the way it did, so much living in other places?

1. Some surprise but not a lot because I had a sense of wanting those kind of experiences and not staying at home and following a predictable path.
2. Now I feel some disappointment that it ended up being those specific experiences, though I don't regret them, but I would have liked the European experience of life, like living in Southern Europe.
3. I had some opportunities and not others and I'm glad I've been where I've been.

4. There was an attraction to the exciting and unknown as opposed to the predictable.

What made you attracted to the otherness?

1. I link it to the experience of that pattern of moving every 4-5 years to an unknown place.
2. The longest I've ever lived in one house was 9 years.
3. I notice a need to move, or a passion that after the required amount of time I must go somewhere else.
4. There was always something unknown there, always very different places if only 70 miles away.
5. There's a pattern of meeting the other, the unknown, first of all in a way that I had no choice and then with a kind of compulsion to keep on the move.
6. The only time I consciously thought this is what I'll do was when I felt for Africa and I cast off everything, put myself back to square one.
7. In a way that felt good, an adventure, but there was a kind of negative putting myself back, not being able to allow myself to consolidate connections, attachments to people or places.
8. That's got stronger lately.
9. I think it's a fear of making strong attachments because my experience of attachments has not been very permanent.
10. Almost a fear of the unknown. I have had only one major partnership in my life which has lasted on and off for 28 years.
11. So I have been able to cling to one relationship at least, a fear of changing that, there's a real challenge there for me somewhere.

Why did you really leave?

1. Laughs. It still feels like getting out of a trap.
2. I had to blast my way out of some place.
3. I needed help so I threw out a line and it stuck and I pulled myself out.

How has it been since leaving?

1. I've had a great time in many ways.
2. It's also been a subterranean struggle but it feels like progress.
3. Also lots of regrets and a sense of loss about not doing things or achieving things in a more pain free way.

Returning to London

1. When I returned from my travels I noticed the lack of space. I was used to the additional perspective of wide open spaces.
2. In Scotland I was limited by the social sphere but I was not noticing the aesthetics like I did after returning.
3. After returning I never really attached again to a place and I felt cramped by the city life, I wanted out.
4. I had experienced apartheid in South Africa and because of the way we were living there wasn't much exchange with the local culture there.
5. We ended up in a lot of ex-pat situations in Africa and the Middle East and that meant a real separation of culture.
6. I found that really dissatisfying and decided I'd had enough.
7. The situation was so unreal. I wanted engagement with the larger social context, I wanted exposure to that different perspective.
8. I've always been an activist and my scope for activism was limited there.

9. I wanted to be active in my social context, a mover. This was something I'd left Scotland for and I couldn't do it there.

Feeling trapped is the signal to leave

1. When something is limiting or entrapping, that's the signal to move on.
2. It's related to the question of whether I can change the situation or not, change the limitations.
3. Can I shift the boundaries, expand the parameters and I'll battle to do that.
4. I was battling in my family until I realised I couldn't change things.
5. If I can't change things in the way I think they should, then there's a signal to move on.

Do you think of returning home?

1. The overall direction has always been returning home and I haven't quite got there yet.
2. It has been a conscious intention for some time though I have not gone about it in a straightforward fashion.
3. But there is also some hesitation, is what do I do if I find myself in an entrapping situation and I'm not going to be able to shift the boundaries?
4. And I think it's already happened in a way. My move from London to Glasgow is not necessarily the last move.
5. It's like rock climbing, having to really stretch to get a finger hold and a foot hold and its to a wobbly rock, and you test it and hesitate and then take the other foot off.
6. But the rock gave way. I'd set up a situation and it evaporated so I had to return to the previous stable situation and start again.
7. It felt extreme and dangerous trying to achieve that move.
8. Something about the move was ambivalent and cautious, an excess of consciousness about the pattern, because of the difficult context and the extreme feelings.

Why do you plan to return?

1. I feel there's no place I can call home and home began to mean for me Scotland, the place, the country, my cultural heritage, a nationalistic thing.
2. I began to feel uncomfortable with home being somewhere other than where I was and I felt I had to test it.
3. For it to be really home I had to be there, to find a way of being able to be there, so I had to go back.
4. I had to test the homeness of home and find out what that means to me.
5. I'm reconciled to never really knowing that home is home and the best I can do is test the concept of home.
6. I have chosen my last resting place, I have to continue with this journey, it has a direction, physical, geographical, and I've had an experience of finding a place.
7. I'm interested to see if it becomes a reality or remains just a figment, somewhere on my mental map only, not on the physical map.

My sense of connection

1. The key thing is that it's my connection, rather than the place itself that's important.
2. And my sense of connection with back home is problematic.
3. I still want to be a mover and shaker and can I do that, change what is unsatisfactory there?

4. I'm tired of this movement so I have to see how I can be active and satisfied there.
5. I don't know where I can be at rest in terms of place.
6. I have to revisit those developmental stages, to go back to work through things that weren't worked through properly before.
7. I've already returned to the place to work through the death of my mother.
8. There is the continuing life's work of going back through earlier parts of the cycle and its connected to my place in the culture.
9. I don't want to be like an ex-pat Scot nostalgic about the green hills, I want to walk the walk, I want to come to terms with my connection with the place.
10. I also am consciously choosing to go back and address the situation that I left.

#### Historical influences

1. My family was affected by the highland clearances, and so there's this Scottish feeling of being ejected from their own homeland.
2. That is involved in some aspect of my own experience, of going out exploring.
3. Part of my looking for my last resting place is to find my place in all of that.
4. I feel a strong connection to the place and the feeling of the landscape.
5. Even when I consider some of the wonderful moments in the desert or on top of a mountain, it doesn't compare to what I feel at home.
6. It's like a process of dilution, where some ghost of the entity has a presence or effect, like in homeopathy.
7. It's not genetic, but I have strong emotion from finding a place, where I have no personal history, but my family name is on gravestones and I don't discount the possibility that there's some sense of attachment that remains in a bloodline.
8. Perhaps I'm finding my way back to something much older than my family situation.
9. It's a romantic notion, but I do experience a sense of completion and recognition from this.
10. I think it also relates to us city dwellers looking for a natural world, something different, a better quality of life, I want that.

#### The feeling of finding a place

1. It's like having a jigsaw puzzle and that one piece.
2. I know the reality is much more complex, that's the reason I left, the awareness of the limitations.
3. Different aspects will hit me and it's not going to be easy and that sits on top of the feeling of fitting.
4. What I am from having left and lived elsewhere, will be in the way that I come back so that will be work and compromise, fitting in but not fitting in.
5. You can't go home, it will always feel different. It won't feel like home.
6. There is one place that actually does feel like my place of origin and it's connected to my mother's death, and the church.
7. It is a place that encapsulates that sense of place of actual origin, not my origin but further back.
8. There are notions of inter-generational healing, returning to do one's own psychological work, and my parents and further, a kind of intuitive mission.
9. It's a way of having the sense of home and also the sense of moving forward, of forward change.

#### Feelings of the interview

1. I've been thinking about these experiences intensively for a while but there is a clearer articulation of themes here now.
2. It's been helpful to elucidate that further, especially the connections to my mother.
3. I wanted to do this and felt comfortable doing it.
4. There is an important difference going back to Scotland because so many people there are at home and have never left, so that has to be dealt with, it could be difficult.
5. There might be resistances there, a resentment because they've always been there and I've been away.
6. They might feel they must find their own way but this sense of lostness, not being connected to a sense of home, might be quite common, in our work it is.
7. This issue might be expressed in different ways, some of us have done it on a global scale, others on a local scale, and yet it deals with the same inner experience I think.
8. I was also struck to realise most of my moves have been every 5 or 6 years, like there's a timetable.
9. That phrase 'the way home' really resonates for me, it's as if it can never truly happen, there is no way back.
10. At a time I could have imagined putting down roots in Africa, but I came up against this feeling of not being at home and not having a right to think of it as home.
11. Not that it was alien but that I had no right to a place so I had to come back to a place where I do have a right to make a claim.
12. I've resurrected my Maiden name because you can do that in Scotland. I've always wanted to do that.
13. Changing my name makes public my claim.
14. Don't change the Scottish bit to disguise the information, I wouldn't like that.

## **“Fiona” Clusters**

### **Getting away**

1. I left home at 20 to remove myself from a difficult family situation.
2. I was very unhappy about being trapped in my family and their expectations of me as a person. I had to blast my way out of some place. I threw out a line and pulled myself out with some help.
3. I had tried to live away from family in the same city while at university but it wasn't allowed.
4. My whole life was in difficulty and one way of addressing that was to leave for London.
5. I was concerned about being trapped in a bourgeois way of life that was unfulfilling, had limited possibilities, so I tried unsuccessfully to get out.
6. All I knew was that I wanted out, I had no experience of another culture and had only been out of Scotland once, not far.
7. I see the planning process more clearly with hindsight than consciously at the time.
8. I wasn't alone in wanting to get away from that small place, people routinely left for London for work or study.

### **Family situation**

1. My father was a priest, he remarried twice and there were 6 children, from all the mothers.
2. My mother died when I was 5 and the family was not close. There was little affection or warmth. My father did not talk to us, he was lovely, but intellectual and not a good father.
3. The atmosphere was secretive, many lies, the reality of all the deaths and marriages were hidden from others.
4. The policy of pretending my step-mother was my mother created dissonance for me, it was a lie that needed to be exposed.
5. Between mothers I ended up as housekeeper and housewife, caring for siblings and especially being a buffer between my learning disabled brother, the new stepmother, and father.
6. That was too difficult, when I finally left it was intolerable.

### **The allure of the outside world**

1. I formed a fantasy relationship with a celebrity and meeting him in London was part of the goal. He encapsulated a life, a dream.
2. That person really encapsulated the richness I felt was out there and I wanted that.
3. He also encapsulated an intellectual achievement, an applied morality, and I got that moral drive from him, as well as being attracted to him.

4. I also read a lot and in the imaginary life there was so much that I couldn't get at where I was living.
5. There was so much more experience out there and I was unsatisfied with my life in comparison, I wanted something different.
6. I had a sense of wanting those foreign experiences, not staying at home having a predictable life. A definite attraction to the exciting and the unknown.

### **The leaving process**

1. I planned it carefully. I had failed everything at university due to depression so got a job in London.
2. I lived there on and off but was desperately depressed and had a breakdown and a long period of recovery before working temporarily for a company in Africa.
3. After that job I sold everything and returned to Africa, joined by a partner.
4. We were together and lived in various parts of Africa and the Middle East till I decided to come back to complete my education and training.
5. The process of coming back is still going on in a way.
6. I ended up part way between London and Scotland but wanted to be in Scotland again, but had no connection or way to achieve that until recently.

### **The attraction to otherness and fear of attachments**

12. I think it comes from my early experiences of moving every 4-5 years to an unknown different place. My own moves have been about 5-6 years, like there's a timetable.
13. There's a pattern of meeting the other, the unknown, first of all in a way that I had no choice and then with a kind of compulsion to keep on the move.
14. The longest I've stayed in a house is 9 years and I notice when I need to move, then I have a passion to go somewhere else.
15. The only time I consciously did this was when I felt for Africa and I cast off everything, put myself back to square one, which felt good, like an adventure.
16. There is also a kind of negative putting myself back to square one, not being able to allow myself to consolidate connections, attachments to people or places and I've been feeling that more lately.
17. I think it's a fear of making strong attachments because my experience of attachments has not been very permanent.
18. I have had only one major partnership in my life which has lasted on and off for 28 years, so I have been able to cling to one relationship at least, and there's a fear of changing that, there's a real challenge there for me somewhere. Almost a fear of the unknown.

### **The experience since leaving**

1. I've had a great time in many ways but it's also been a subterranean struggle to make progress.

2. There are also regrets and a sense of loss that I was not able to achieve things in a less painful way.
3. I feel some disappointment that I didn't have the experience of living in Southern Europe, though I don't regret living in the places I did.
4. I've had some opportunities and not others and I'm glad I've been where I've been.
5. My travels have given me a different perspective on space, a different appreciation of aesthetics and landscape. City life was too cramped and I have never really attached to a place again.

### **Limited in the foreign environment**

1. There wasn't enough exchange with the local culture, I was always in the ex-pat culture, separate from the rest of life experience.
2. That situation was unreal, dissatisfying and the reason I had enough.
3. I wanted to engage with the larger social context, to be exposed to different perspectives.
4. I've always wanted to be active in my social context, an activist, a mover. I'd left Scotland to fulfil this and here I was in another limited situation to realise this.

### **Challenging the limits**

1. If I'm in a limiting or entrapping situation that can't be changed, then that's the signal to move on.
2. First I will fight to shift the boundaries and expand the parameters, like I tried to do in my family but couldn't.
3. I need to express the agenda of morality and justice I inherited partly from my father, but it's also a very personal sense of justice for me.

### **Heading for home**

9. The overall direction has always been returning home, and it's been a conscious intention for some time, though it's been an indirect route and I haven't quite got there yet.
10. But there is also some hesitation, what do I do if I find myself in an entrapping situation and I'm not going to be able to shift the boundaries?
11. It's like rock climbing, taking cautious steps and testing them to see if they hold. I'd set up a situation and it evaporated so I had to return to the previous stable situation and start again.
12. It felt extreme and dangerous trying to achieve that move, but it was also ambivalent and cautious.
13. There is an excess of consciousness about the pattern here, because of the difficult context and the extreme feelings, and this move from London to Glasgow is not necessarily the last move.



## **The reasons for returning**

1. I once imagined putting down roots in Africa but I felt I wasn't at home and I didn't have a right to think of it as home, I didn't have a right of place there so I had to return to the place where I do have a right to make a claim.
2. I was uncomfortable with home being elsewhere than where I was, so I had to test whether Scotland can be home, the place, the country, the culture, a nationalistic thing.
3. For it to be home I had to be there, so I had to go back to see if that was possible, to test the homeness of home for me.
4. I don't want to be like an ex-pat Scot nostalgic about the green hills, I want to walk the walk, I want to come to terms with my connection with the place.
5. I'm reconciled to never really knowing that home is home and the best I can do is test the concept of home.
6. I have to follow the geographical direction of this journey, to see if it can become a physical reality or if it remains just a mental map, a figment.
7. I've found a place that I've chosen to be my final resting stop.
8. The key thing is that it's my connection, rather than the place itself, that's important, and my sense of connection with back home is problematic.
9. I'm tired of movement so I have to see how I can be a mover and shaker there, to change what is unsatisfactory and be satisfied.
10. I have to return developmentally and work through stages that weren't addressed before, like my mother's death.
11. I am consciously choosing to go back and address the situation I left, the continuing life's work of going back through earlier parts of the cycle and it's connected to my place in the culture.

## **A historical place**

1. There is a common feeling for us of being ejected from our homeland and that's in some aspect of my experience of leaving and exploring.
2. Part of my journey is to find my place in that history by going home.
3. My connection to the feeling of the place, the landscape, is stronger than anywhere else I've been in the world.
4. There remains something emotional of the place in us and maybe it's some sense of attachment that passes down the bloodline, more homeopathic than genetic.
5. It's a romantic notion that I'm finding my way back to something older than my immediate family, but I do experience a sense of completion and recognition from finding a place where my ancestors were. It's like finding that one piece to a puzzle.
6. The place that actually does feel like my place of origin is connected to my mother's death, and the church, and encapsulates that sense of place of actual origin, not my origin but further back.
7. There are notions of inter-generational healing, returning to do one's own psychological work, and my parents and further, a kind of intuitive mission.
8. I think there is also the influence of us city dwellers looking for a natural world.

## **Needing home and change**

10. The reality is much more complex, for example awareness of the limitations.  
That's the reason I left.
11. Different aspects will hit me and it's not going to be easy and that sits on top of the feeling of fitting in there.
12. What I am from having left and lived elsewhere, will be part of the way that I come back so that will be work and compromise, fitting in but not fitting in, and knowing it will always feel different, it won't feel like the same home.
13. Having psychological growth from returning is a way of having the sense of home along with the sense of moving forward, forward change.
14. There is an important difference going back to Scotland because so many people there are at home and have never left, so that has to be dealt with, it could be difficult and there might be resistances there, a resentment because they've always been there and I've been away. They might feel they must find their own way.

### **Feelings of the interview**

15. I wanted to do this and it felt comfortable.
16. I've been thinking about these experiences intensively for a while but there is a clearer articulation of themes here now, further elucidation, especially the connections to my mother.
17. This issue might be expressed in different ways, some of us have done it on a global scale, others on a local scale, and yet it deals with the same inner experience I think, the sense of lost-ness, not being connected to a sense of home, we see it in our work.
18. That phrase 'the way home' really resonates for me, it's as if it can never truly happen, there is no way back.
19. I've finally resurrected my Maiden name because it makes public my claim to be there.
20. Don't change the Scottish bit to disguise the information, I wouldn't like that.

## **‘Fiona’ Themes**

### **1. Entrapment and escape**

- P rescued herself from being trapped in a family role that was unfulfilling. It took some effort for her to finally escape, and at some cost to her mental health, but getting out was her primary goal.
- One way of addressing personal difficulties and intolerable environments is to escape geographically. Even without any exposure to other cultures or places, P saw leaving as her route to fulfilling her possibilities and escaping a way of life that did not match her being.
- It can be easier with hindsight, to see one’s process of planning and taking positive steps to rescue oneself. At the time the experience is not as conscious, there is not the distance required to see it clearly, it is too important as it is being lived. P was not alone in wanting to escape the limitations of her home environment, though her own reasons may have been different than many of her peers.

### **2. Secretive family environment**

- The combination of P’s father’s position, frequent family moves, and the history of death and remarriage, allowed the creation of family secrets. The family lived with lies and a public perception that denied previous mothers and the true family relationships.
- P’s mother died when she was 5 and she had to pretend that subsequent step-mothers were her mothers. P felt the truth needed to be exposed and found it difficult to live with the atmosphere of family secrets.
- The family relationships were confused and not close, with little truth, communication, warmth or affection. P’s father was distant, a good provider but not a demonstrative father. P filled in the role of housekeeper and mother, taking care of father and siblings in-between mothers. The situation grew to be intolerable and P had to leave in order to exist.

### **3. Fantasy and imagination as preparation for the outside world**

- P developed a fantasy relationship with a celebrity she admired and part of her leaving was to pursue this person. He encapsulated the richness of a cosmopolitan world, a kind of life, a dream of what could be for P. He also combined P’s values of morality and intellect applied directly in one’s way of life.
- P enjoyed an active imaginary life nourished from her love of reading. This opened her to a world she could not access in her own stifling home culture and environment. She was desperate to experience what that world might have to offer as it contrasted sharply with her own unsatisfactory experiences. P was attracted to the unknown, to

excitement, and could not be happy with the predictable life options she saw available at home.

#### 4. The steps of leaving complicated by personal difficulty

- P planned the steps of her leaving, first of all accepting a job in London. Her mental health was an issue at university and more-so after arriving in London. She outlined her breakdown and gradual recovery but did not elaborate on the underlying issues, whether they were exacerbated by being in an unfamiliar environment or whether this was a positive influence.
- After recovery, P sold everything and began a new life, spending years living in Africa and the Middle East with a partner before returning to complete her education. The process of returning has also been gradual, and though P lived in various places, her goal has always been to return home.

#### 5. Meanings of moving related to early experiences

- P's attraction to otherness seems to stem from her childhood experiences of encountering an unknown place and people every 4-5 years. In her adult life, P notices that she often moves every 5-6 years so that she now chooses a transience that was originally not of her choosing.
- P notices that when she needs to move it comes as a passion or a compulsion and the longest she's stayed in any house is 9 years. The process has a limiting side, where P feels she repeatedly puts herself back to square one, preventing strong attachments from developing anywhere. She also relates this to her history of not having permanent attachments. There is a question of whether it is a way of ensuring she will not make a home anywhere other than the home she is trying to return to.
- P has maintained one long-term relationship in her life and she acknowledges there is a challenge for her in this fact, that she fears changing this situation, a fear of the unknown. So on one hand there is an attraction to the unknown but in terms of relationships the familiar is more valued.

#### 6. Overview of the experience since leaving

- P has enjoyed her adventures since leaving but seems to have experienced two processes, one geographical and one psychological. She feels regrets, and a sense of loss that she was not able to achieve goals in a less painful way.
- In terms of geography, P is disappointed she did not have the opportunity to experience living in Southern Europe but she values the experiences she did have. Her travels have altered her perspective on space, aesthetics, and landscape. She now experiences city life as too cramped and she has not felt attached to a place since returning to the UK.

## 7. Engagement with limitations

- P found living in an ex-pat environment unreal, frustrating, and dissatisfying because there wasn't enough encounter with the local culture, it remained distant from difference. P had left home in order to engage in the larger cultural context, to express her desire to be active socially, and she now found herself in a similar limiting situation and had to leave again.
- When in a limiting or entrapping situation, P's first response is to become active and struggle to change the parameters, expand the boundaries. If the limits cannot be changed, then she moves on. This was her experience in her own family and also in the ex-pat community. Part of P's need is to express her moral agenda of justice which she inherited from her father but which also has deep personal significance.

## 8. To return home and be there for the first time

- P's overall direction has always been towards home, this intention been a conscious for the last years though the route has turned out to be indirect and there's also a hesitation that it might be a return to a situation that's still entrapping and not open to change.
- P compares the process to rock climbing, where one makes deliberate and cautious steps and then tests to see if they will hold. P attempted and then aborted one move back and felt the danger and ambivalence of that. Returning has become a highly conscious and analysed event due to the deep feelings and felt importance of it.
- P considered settling in Africa but it did not feel like it could ever be home, partly because she did not feel she had a right to claim it as such. She could only make that claim in her home of origin so had to return there to test whether that could feel like home, in every way, now.
- For P to call a place home she has to be there. She did not want a nostalgic ex-pat relation to her home but needed to feel her connection to the place, to really test the concept of home, more even than the experience of it.
- P is exploring whether home can be both a geographical and a psychological reality. It is the sense of connection, the interaction between self and place more than the place itself. This requires retuning developmentally and working through stages that were not addressed earlier, especially her mother's death.
- Gaining psychological growth from returning is a way of having both a sense of home and a sense of moving forward, of change. P needs to combine these two sensitivities, to be a mover and shaker, to feel she can change what is not satisfactory, in order to settle.
- P is aware the reality will be complex and that there will be limitations and that's what lead her to leave in the first place. Also, her life experiences will make her different now, necessitating a kind of fitting in an not fitting in, not the sense of original home. She will be returning to a

community where many people have never left and there could be resentment and resistance to her return and to her need for engagement.

## 9. Connection to place and ancestry

- Some aspect of P's leaving and exploring is also connected to the common cultural experience of being ejected from that homeland. Part of P's journey is to find her place in that historical story. Her connection to her aesthetic experience of her homeland remains stronger than the connection to any other landscape in the world.
- The actual place in her homeland that feels like a place of origin for P has strong connections to her mother and ancestral generations rather than her own biography. P experiences a sense of recognition and completion and finding this place is like finding the piece to a puzzle.
- The experience of returning has opened P to speculations about cross-generational healing, returning to address psychological difficulties not only of ones' own, but also of parents and further back. This feels like an intuitive mission for P and she wonders whether there is an emotional memory of attachment to place that is transmitted through generations in an almost homeopathic way.

## 10. Feelings of the interview

- P has been contemplating these experiences for some time and talking about them provided further elucidation, clearer articulation, especially regarding the theme of the importance of her mother's death in her return. She wanted to do the interview and it felt comfortable.
- It may be that this issue can be expressed in different ways, some of us have done it on a global scale, others on a local scale, and yet it deals with the same inner experience, the sense of lost-ness, not being connected to a sense of home, and P sees this in her work as a therapist.
- The phrase 'on the way home' really resonates for P, as if we can only ever be on the way, never really getting there, that there is no way back.
- The public declaration of P's claim to her nationality is significant. She has resurrected her maiden name and requests that the interview information is not disguised by changing her national identity from Scottish.

GM1 - So, the first question is could you just begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - To go abroad?

GM2 - Well however you want to define that.

P2 - I think there might have been two steps involved. When I went to university I went further away than anyone else in my High School did to university. I went from the East Coast, 2000 miles away to Colorado, and I was there for 3 years before I decided to do a year abroad in England, and I guess when I was 21 I did my Senior year abroad, 4<sup>th</sup> year. That's when I officially came abroad, but I kind of think that first step of going so far away from home was kind of, the same seed that brought me over here in a sense. So, it was initially for a year abroad, even though I had some conception that I wasn't going to come back, and I didn't really go back after that, I went back for holidays, but I was pretty much settled in Europe after 21, after I graduated.

GM3 - OK. So, let's see if I got that straight. Before you graduated you had one year, your Senior year, in Europe?

P3 - Yes.

GM4 - And was that studying?

P4 - Yes, well (Laughs) ostensibly it was studying, it was supposed to be study. It was a pass/fail year, so I passed (Laughs).

GM5 - (Laughs). They're wise to make it a pass/fail year?

P5 - I think so, yes.

GM6 - OK. So then you went back and then left for the other side of the country, for university?

P6 - No, that was previous.

GM7 - That was previous?

P7 - I grew up, went to High School, graduated, went across the country for my first 3 years, then went further away for my final year.

GM8 - OK, right.

P8 - And didn't really come back, I came back for the Summer, but I had already made arrangements to go and live in France after that.

GM9 - Right. So you grew up and did your High School stuff all in one place?

P9 - Yes, 18 years in the same house, same town.

GM10 - Same house, same town. OK. And then you went across the country further than most of your friends?

P10 - Yes.

GM11 - And you mentioned that that going across the country and that going to Europe thing, that it was kind of part of the same seed?

P11 - I think so, when I look back on it I probably wouldn't have said so then, but there was a kind of innate sense to get far away from home. I think there was some adventure thrown in there, and new stuff, and starting afresh and all that kind of thing.

GM12 - So there was something in you that was going to go way out there somewhere?

P12 - Yes.

GM13 - And some of that you think was for the adventure?

P13 - I think so, yes. But when I look back on it now, I come from a family of immigrants as well, and I wonder if there's something in the genes, you know, my paternal grandparents were foreigners, and my father was a first generation American, and my maternal grandmother's parents were foreigners as well. So there's a kind of moving about in the family history.

GM14 - And your parents, had they moved around a lot?

P14 - No, my mother lives about 45 miles away from the house where I grew up, no, not even that far, about an hours drive away. Grew up there, went to university there, married there, and stayed there. And my grandmother as well.

GM15 - And do you have brothers and sisters?

P15 - I have a sister, yes.

GM16 - She did the same thing?

P16 - She went to university, the local State university, and then she travelled quite a lot around the States, and she lives in California now, so she does live on the other side of the country from where we grew up. She doesn't live abroad.

GM17 - So, what do you think it was about you that made you go so far away?

P17 - (pause) I don't know. I think there is something in there about excitement really, to be somewhere new and to start over again. And it's something I still struggle with now, because now my life is static, and I've got a partner and I've got a mortgage, and I've got a job and all that kind of stuff, and part of me still wants to go away, you know, it's not enough to be here, it needs to be a country where they speak a foreign language, I need to do that, and where the food is different and the culture is sufficiently different. There's something about being in a place, it gives me joy, even going on holiday to places where the culture is pretty different. The more different it is, the better it feels to be there.

GM18 - What's that about, do you know?

P18 - I'm not sure exactly, I think I probably like to challenge myself, you know, when I finished my year in England, I went and lived in France for 5 months, I was doing an immersion course, language course, and then came back again and got my TEFL certificate, then I moved to Poland for about another 6 months to go live there, and there was just something about, I mean, the Poland thing wasn't terribly wonderful, (Laughs) it was Winter time and it's a much more difficult language than French, and I wasn't making much money, so it kind of had worn off I think by then, but there was still a pull to go to a place, to go to a place and not be a tourist there, but to go live there, and meet people in their own context, and that kind of thing.

GM19 - So, for some reason there's this pull towards quite foreign, in some ways it has to be foreign enough to have that pull?

P19 - Yes.

GM20 - And you don't quite know what that is? What is it about foreigners that's so exciting?

P20 - It's a tough one, that's a good question. I know I get frustrated. I've lived abroad now, but I get frustrated with the Americanisation of Britain, and I'm very pro-Europe and I get frustrated how Britain continues to look West rather than looking East. Because where I'm coming from, for God's sake, France and Germany are so much better than America, you know, pick up that kind of stuff, and I love language as well I guess, and just different ways of being. I don't know, I guess it's a challenge to your own concepts about the kind of being that you grew up with, and it can be, you know, I love that in France you have a 2.5 hour meal at dinner time, and that it can be full of fat and red meat and loads of wine, and you don't have to feel badly about it, and it's actually a really wonderful, life-giving kind of experience, you know. The time I spent there was probably the best, one of the best times I had in my life. I don't know, I guess I'm a glutton and I was indulging the whole time I was there (Laughs), it was quite fun, but it was an indulgent society and it wasn't the kind of, puritanical society that I came from, especially living in Boulder Colorado, where I was feeling guilty for eating a cheeseburger. You know, I was going and having a great big fat steak and chips with garlic butter all over it, and it was allowed, I don't know (Laughs)

GM21 - (Laughs)



P21 - I love that.

GM22 - Something about those different values in different places? [yes] Something about that challenges the values that you grew up with?

P22 - It might be that some of those values are just more in line with what were in a sense, my values. That somehow didn't match where I was living.

GM23 - OK. So, for some reason, there's a better match for you in places that are very different from the place you grew up in?

P23 - I think so, yes. I've sometimes felt that I'm much more French than, I'm not living in France, but that's for a variety of other reasons, but that's always been the pinnacle place where I would want to end up, because there's something about that culture that matches me. I don't know whether it would have matched me if I'd grown up there. You know, I'd probably be a real American-phile and want to live over there, you know, who knows.

GM24 - So it could be there's something about the French culture that's so far the best match for you? Or it could be that there's something about difference, that if you grew in France you'd be attracted to difference, like maybe America?

P24 - Yes, I think difference is a really big one. Even, I mean, the real bonus about living in a place like London is when I have a group of friends together, it's very rarely a house full of English people, you know, they're from all around the world, and I really like having friends from all around the world, because they all have different perspectives and different ways of being in the world. Really different, and it contradicts where I grew up where in order to prevent discrimination you were taught that everybody's essentially the same. And the older I get the more I realise that everybody's not essentially the same, they're actually very, very different, and that that's great. I really like that. And I don't want to be around the same kind of people, I guess. I want to be around different kinds of people.

GM25 - And what is it about that difference in people that you like so much?

P25 - I think a big part of it is that I like being different among them too, which I guess I haven't mentioned before, I get tired of the baggage that's put on my back by being an American these days living in Europe. I don't like to be identified as that, and you're quite fortunate that you come from north of the border and don't have to carry around as much (Laughs), you can be just ...

GM26 - People often think I'm an American.

P26 - I'm sure they do yes, but you can say, I'm Canadian, and that alleviates everything, I imagine.

But my partner is English and when we go back to America, you know, he's the special one because he's got the accent and all that kind of stuff, and everyone thinks he's really charming, and English, and all that kind of stuff. I kind of miss the fact that I'm not the one who's different, you know, I sound like everybody else and he's the one, so I think I like being different.

GM27 - So you like being around difference?

P27 - Yes.

GM28 - And you also like it when you're in a situation where you stand out as being different? What do you like about that?

P28 - I guess because I stand out.

GM29 - Yes, I'm wondering what that gives you?

P29 - Yes, well I think I'm kind of a narcissist I guess, in a sense (Laughs), so I kind of naturally like attention from others, so in a sense I get that automatically, it's not always good attention, but I guess there's a point where it gets a bit tiring too, you know, you meet new people and you open your mouth and you have to go through these same questions again, which gets a bit tiresome, and that's really tiresome, and unfortunately

it's even worse in France at the moment, where you have to endure a tirade of anti-Americanism and then you have to sort of prove your politics before you can be accepted in any kind of a way. And I don't really like that. So that's somehow, that's not the real difference, that's just an assumed difference. But the real difference, just makes it interesting I guess.

GM30 - So, there's two things here, there's liking to stand out as different, liking the attention of that, but also wanting to be accepted?

P30 - Yes, I don't want to be stereotypically different, so I don't want to be 'a yank,' if you see what I mean. And I went through a long period of being very, very anti-American and very vocal about being anti-American, as my way of being accepted. And I'm well over that now, even though it's much easier to be anti-American now than it was when I first came over here, it was a Clinton administration. So yes, I like the difference when it's acknowledged and real, if you see what I mean, and not some idea of how I'm different.

GM31 - So if there's a real difference, not some imposed difference based on stereotype?

P31 - Yes.

GM32 - But if it's a real difference, does it matter to you whether that difference is accepted or rejected?

P32 - I'm sure it does, yes. I'm sure I prefer it to be an accepted difference. I don't think I'd like it if I went around having a non-accepted difference all the time, I think that would really get me down.

GM33 - That reminds me of what you were saying about your friends, it sounded like you have quite a few international friends, and that in that kind of company, I'm assuming that there might be some kind of balance of being able to be different, and since everyone's different there's some acceptance in that?

P33 - Yes, I think so. It's funny because you find a community for yourself, don't you, so there's difference, there's national difference, but none of my friends are Tories, you know what I mean. So it's like I don't have politically raw, quite liberal and quite tolerant, and you know, that seems to be a fundamental thing. There's a fundamental sameness I guess, or similarity that the other differences don't matter that much. So if the differences were that, if someone was an intolerant racist bastard, I wouldn't care whether they were from Brazil or England or wherever, I probably wouldn't get on with them very well (Laughs). Yes.

GM34 - OK. So it's a little bit more complicated this difference is kind of grounded in some kind of similarity?

P34 - Yes, I suppose.

GM35 - Is that right?

P35 - Yes, there has to be some basic, basic needs have to be met (Laughs), if that grouping is going to be OK, so it doesn't matter where you're from, but it does matter if you, your perspective of the world is very different from mine, in a sense that we couldn't get on with each other any more. Which, I keep thinking it's political, which would be the same if I were in America, you know, I wouldn't be hanging around with Christian Fundamentalists, it wouldn't happen.

GM36 - When you were growing up were you aware of this sensitivity to difference? That didn't come out in any way?

P36 - No, (Laughs). I grew up in a real middle class, suburban thing. I don't know, I went to State schools, so the difference was there, I'm really pleased about it, I grew up with black friends and Hispanic friends, and white friends, so there was a lot of colour difference if not so much ethnic difference. Everybody was American. But I remember, because I went somewhere in my sophomore year, so I must have been 19, I

went to New York University for a Summer film programme, and this attracts people from all over the world, mostly from Europe, so actually about a third of us were Americans and the rest of the people on this course were European, and there was a German guy I made really good friends with, then a French woman whom I'm still in touch with today. And the guy who had just come back, there was an American guy who had just come back from a year abroad, from the place where I was going to end up going the following year. And I remember sitting at lunch with this French woman and the German guy, and it was the first time, it's sad you know, it's a sad American condition, you know, you're 19 years old and you meet your first real French person (Laughs). I thought it was fantastic, and there was something about these two people that I loved, it was that Summer where I had decided I was going to go to Europe, and it was something about Europe too, I'd been to Australia, it didn't happen in Australia, in a sense, I wouldn't have gone to Australia. I probably wouldn't have gone to Canada, but Europe.

GM37 - I'm wondering what that was? You met these two people and there was something to connect with?

P37 - Yes. I think one of the things, I'm not sure if it was about these two, but about Europe, is that it's all these different countries' difference that are clustered near each other, so you can actually drive across borders. You can actually go from one town to the next and one will be speaking French and the next one speaking German, and they're like 25 miles apart. And I love that. I think that's fantastic. And I had a friend who is Swiss, and he's Romench Swiss, which is the fourth language, and he grew up in the Romench village, I think it's a language speaking community of 50,000, and he took me around the villages round there and each village speaks a different Romench, and then there's a river and on the other side of the valley they speak a completely different dialect. And then there's a point where you get to the next town and they speak Swiss-German, because he's kind of right where they all meet, and then there's Italian a few towns up. And this is all part of going into, you know, driving down the road and going into a shop and trying to choose which language you're going to use to communicate with the shopkeeper, this fascinated me, I thought that was brilliant, I loved that.

So it's not just the single difference, but all these differences. You can go to Barcelona where they speak different than they do in Spain, and has a different culture. Go to the South of France, or Luxembourg or whatever.

GM38 - You seem excited by that?

P38 - Yes, (Laughs) I still am excited by that yes.

GM39 - I'm still wondering, you know, I've asked this about five times, but what is it (laughing)?

P39 - What is it? (laughing)

GM40 - What is it about that that really excites you, really attracts you?

P40 - That's a really good question, I really don't know. I'm sorry, I know you need an answer to that.

GM41 - It's OK if you don't have an answer. I'm happy with that.

P41 - Are you sure? (laughing) Maybe it'll be one of those things I'll have to think about. I don't know, all I can think of is examples, you know. I'd taken the train from Poland to Paris, where on the same train journey they're speaking Polish and then they speak in German, and then it stops in Brussels, so they're speaking Flemish, and then they speak in French, and that was enough, to be on that train and know that you're crossing a national boundary and then having the language change. Or taking the Eurostar and when you get to the tunnel they speak in English first and then they speak in French, and you get to the other side and they're speaking French first and then they speak in English. And it's just that transition, so near each other, I guess it's magical,

there's something magical about it for me. And maybe it's because I grew up in such a monochromatic country in a sense. But there's a lot of difference you know, the South is different from the North, and the West is different from the East, but it's still Wal-Mart and the same television networks and the same television shows, and themes rush across the country so everybody's talking about the same sort of thing, whereas, it's just not the case in Europe.

GM42 - So when you were growing up, did you think that you would leave home, your home area, either to go abroad to a different country? Was that always in your mind as something...?

P42 - I don't think so.

GM43 - So you could just as easily have gone to the local university and kind of stayed?

P43 - No, no, no, OK, yes. It's not for me, no, I knew I wasn't going to go to the local university. I applied there because you needed to apply for a back up and they were probably going to take me, there was no way in the world I was going to go to the local university. So yes, I guess it started to happen when I was, I don't know, I'm trying to think now. I think as soon as there was a sense of agency, that when hit 18 I was not dependent upon anymore, I was really going to get the fuck out of there (Laughs). Yes, and I went really far and was really pleased to do that. And there was some family I had in Colorado and that left me with a sense of disappointment, because I wanted to make it on my own completely.

GM44 - So maybe, I don't want to put words into your mouth here, so correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounded almost like maybe there was something there that as long as you didn't have the choice, it wasn't in your awareness, as soon as you turned 18 you had the choice, and you thought this is my chance?

P44 - Yes, I'm out of here.

GM45 - I'm out of here. So at the age of 18 that was your response, which makes me think that before you were 18 something must have been there just looking for its chance?

P45 - Yes, it's hard to know. I mean we used to go to Colorado to visit some family when I was younger, and I remember feeling very disappointed when I came back because I couldn't understand why anybody would want to live in Delaware (Laughs).

GM46 - (Laughs).

P46 - Because there was just so much, it was unequivocally, objectively better in Colorado. There were mountains there and it's beautiful, and the air is clean and the people are fit and healthy, and I remember coming home and being disappointed. And I also remember going to New York City a couple of times, it was only a couple of hours away, and having a real sense of excitement being there, and not understanding why. I mean, maybe if I grew up in Colorado or New York City I would have felt a little bit differently, I mean I did grow up in an exceptionally boring place. That might have something to do with it. Yes, I wanted to get away for sure.

GM47 - What was so boring about where you grew up? I imagine some people must grow up there and not find it boring, so what did you find boring about it?

P47 - When I go back now, my conception is that there's no consciousness there, which is a weird thing to say, but my experience there is that people are self involved and probably a quite unhealthy self involved kind of a way, in a sense. But they go to school and they go to work, or they do what they do, and they earn their money, and then they go home and then they watch television, and that's what they do. That's what life is about. That is why, before I was 18 I don't even think about, you know, I'm 19 and I meet the French girl and suddenly my life changes. But I was doing the same thing, I went to school and I had to survive Junior High, as much as most Junior High School kids do, and got on a bit better in High School, but that was it. I did that and

then I knew I'd go to college and I knew I'd get a job, and then when I went out to Colorado, everybody was a vegetarian, and everybody was really interested in World peace, and multiculturalism, and you had to think and you had to have some ideas about things. And I didn't have any. I got stoned for the first time and it was like, wow, and heard music for the first time that wasn't Chicago or REO Speedwagon (Laughs), I didn't even know that they made music like that, you know, it was amazing, I completely woke up I think. I think that's it. I completely woke up. And now in order for me to keep waking up as I get older, I need to go to places away from what's normal.

GM48 - Right.

P48 - I think that's kind of, maybe a little bit about it.

GM49 - OK. Something in you really woke up when you went to Colorado?

P49 - Yes.

GM50 - And you had the sense that you wanted to keep that awakening?

P50 - Yes.

GM51 - And in order to do that you had to keep finding difference?

P51 - Yes, I had to fly away again.

GM52 - Fly away again?

P52 - Yes, that's makes a lot of sense, that fits. Because I regret it just a little bit, because Boulder, Colorado, was fantastic, and I only spent 3 years there, and I probably could have spent 6 years there before I got bored and needed to go, but that was my opportunity, it popped up, to go to England. But then I was in England for a year and did all my Interailing and really enjoyed that, and then it was France. That was next step. And if I hadn't settled down with my partner at that stage, it's not inconceivable that I either would have settled in France or moved to one more zone, more different, if you see what I mean. But England was a step, but the language was the same, and France was another step, but that still felt very Western, very European, so it could have been China next.

GM53 - Yes, so you were stepping towards increasing foreignness?

P53 - Yes. It's like drugs (Laughs), and Colorado was my gateway drug and then I left there taking stronger things. It's not that way, I guess I'm approaching middle age, so I've kind of pulled back, but you know, like I said there's still a part of me that would be doing that in a sense if I weren't where I am now, I think.

GM54 - So what's that like, that thing, to recognise that there's a part of you that might be doing that, and yet there's another part of you that to some extent is settled?

P54 - Yes, it's a conflict that I live with I think, it abates in the Summer time and increases in the winter time. But there are bonuses of my career prospects increasing and developing a sense of safety and security in what I've got, and having some money saved, and you know, the things I guess older people enjoy, that you can kind give up when you're younger. But I do sometimes think I should just give it all up and fly off in a sense. It's mostly being in a relationship, I think that stops me from doing that, because it's quite a good relationship, it would be foolish to give it up for some fanciful notion of running off around the world. That's where I'm with it now. So I settle for holidays, and that sort of thing.

GM55 - So it's kind of a compromise?

P55 - Yes, definitely.

GM56 - Something good about it, and a slight loss about it?

P56 - Yes. I'm pleased to have, I'm settled in an international city that has gateways to parts of the world that I wouldn't have as easy access to in most places in the world, so I frequently take the Eurostar and stay with my friend in Paris and get my thrill, and frequently take city breaks around Europe, but it's not really enough in a sense, but it's

kind of just about enough that it keeps me not giving everything up and start over again somewhere else.

GM57 - Something about those little snapshots of the world out there enable you to stay in one place?

P57 - Well, enable me to stay in this place I guess, yes.

GM58 - What do you think, it would have been like, what would it have been like for you if at the age of 18 you didn't have that choice, and you had to go to the local university and you had to stay in the place you grew up in?

P58 - It's really hard to speculate, I've wondered about it a lot because I know that things like my politics have changed an awful lot, simply by living here. I say that, but at the same time the people that I'm still in touch with back home still have similar politics that I do, so they're not awful consuming, right wing Americans, you know, so in a sense I wonder, oh my God, would I have no consciousness at all and drive round in an SUV and support the war, you know, probably not, but I do feel like I'd be stunted in some way, I guess. If I stayed in my home state, yes, I think that would be dreadful. I think I would have been dreadfully unhappy. And I think one thing I haven't mentioned is, I was gay growing up too, and I think I needed to get far away from home to come out. I think that was part of it, but there wasn't really an option to do that around everything I knew growing up, so I put myself in a position where I could start over again around that kind of thing.

GM59 - Yes. Did growing up and knowing that you were gay have any impact on your sensitivity towards difference?

P59 - It must have done, I guess. (pause) I don't know. Can you re-frame the question?

GM60 - I'm just wondering, I'm trying to imagine you growing up in this place that sounds quite homogenous in a way, and then growing up knowing that you were different, and feeling you couldn't express that difference in this environment where you grew up, I'm wondering what, on the one hand, how it might have influenced your attraction to other places, and on the other hand, how it might have influenced your feeling of how much you fit in and how much at home you really were?

P60 - Yes, I think I wasn't really at home at all, I don't think. I'm not sure if it sensitised me to difference, it doesn't feel like it did as much as meeting those people in New York, and I don't know what it was about them, but it was a real 'wow' factor, you grew up in Paris, how amazing! I mean I know that there's certainly a gay urban thing going, there's just little choice, it seems, there's little choice for gay men but to be in urban centres. It's too much of a struggle elsewhere in a sense. So I didn't actually, I went to a less urban centre when I went to university. I went to a town of 100,000 people, but a very liberal town. But like in this country, London is pretty much the only option for me. I don't know if that answers your question?

GM61 - Yes, it does. I'm just wondering, is there anything else you can say about what it was like in terms of how at home you felt in your home?

P61 - I think by the time I was about 15, I think up until that point I was not at home, probably at all, it was probably pretty dreadful I think. And from 15 to about 18 I think I managed to find a way to adapt, enough that I believed it myself, I did a pretty good job in a sense, like when I got to High School and I had enough friends and I wasn't a social outcast like I had been in Junior High. So I didn't feel un-positive about my High School years in a sense. I went the Prom and I was funny, and you know, it was OK. Cut class and was driving around in my 83 Volvo and ate at Pacobell and pretty much enjoyed myself, and was in the marching band (Laughs). It was fine, I guess, but yes, I knew I wasn't going to university with the vast majority of my colleagues who went to the University of Delaware, and the other ones who went to Pen or Westchester, but most of them went within about a 60 mile radius. I think the furthest people went was

about Virginia, and I just high tailed it out of there so quick and transformed you know, both the clothes I wore, my belief systems, and everything transformed in a year. Which I guess happens to a lot of people when they go away to college, but mine was pretty extreme.

GM62 - Yes, so a dramatic time of change for you?

P62 - Yes. I was a good kid, didn't really drink, didn't really do anything, and getting stoned and taking acid and colouring my hair (Laughs), you know, really went for it, I don't really regret any of it. It was a brilliant time.

GM63 - And I'm wondering if you are implying that something about leaving behind all of your colleagues helped that to be possible?

P63 - It freed me up.

GM64 - It freed you up?

P64 - Yes, and I think that's still what was happening when I came to England in a sense. I didn't have any kind of, you know, I mention the kind of transformation into High School, but people still knew me from when I was like the stunted, tiny little nerdy kid, you know, so I had to overcome that in a pretty big way. So we had changed schools and there were mostly new people, so it was easier. So when I went to Colorado it was great because there was nothing, you know, there was nothing. And I came over here and yes, I could do whatever I wanted to.

GM65 - So there was something about going someplace where nobody knows you, to get free from your own past or something?

P65 - Yes, and I think, there's a challenge in that I think that I like to expose myself to. It's almost like I was seeing if I could survive it in a sense, to throw yourself into this kind of, you know like I did in Poland, which was just weird, threw myself into this thing, didn't know anything about it. I did survive it, but it wasn't brilliant.

GM66 - What does that mean to you, kind of, surviving that kind of experience of culture shock, or whatever?

P66 - Yes, (pause) I'm not sure exactly. There's something about, [pause] God, (laughs) I'm thinking about it as like a threshold in a sense, that you have a threshold so, you know, when I was growing up and living in America, so the threshold was over my head in a sense, I'm so in a comfortable space that there is just nothing. So then you go to Colorado and you come up over the threshold, and there's fresh air up there, and it's like oh wow, it's different, and the longer you stay there the threshold climbs back up again, so that it begins to feel a little bit stale again. So then you go away again, so you're constantly pushing yourself over the threshold, so it feels different. So it's like training, as you put the weights up a little bit more each time. And there's something pleasing about, it's character building, and I know that sounds really cliché, but for me that was my way of knowing I was character building. And it was always framed, I kept journals copiously throughout the whole and still do about what my experience was like, and it's just like it wasn't good enough to be in my comfort zone, I always had to be outside my comfort zone.

GM67 - Yes, I want to see if I've got that. It sounds like a comfort zone kind of creeps up on you if you stay put in one place [yes] and in order to get your head above that, back into fresh air, you have to go to increasingly challenging situations?

P67 - That's what it feels like, yes.

GM68 - There's something about going into those challenging situations that feels like fresh air?

P68 - Yes.

GM69 - Can you say any more about that?

P69 - I feel like it's good for me, like fresh air is good for me, even though it might not always feel good, it feels like I'm widening, my person is widening, I have more capacity, somehow.

GM70 - There's a sense of when you're in that fresh air, even if it's difficult, that something in you kind of grows?

P70 - Yes, definitely. Yes, I guess you could look at it as this individuation kind of a thing, that my individuation for me was about doing that. Physically removing myself to other places. And the funny thing is when I go home now it feels like I'm doing that, because I'm so, you know, my threshold is so high here that going back to the States is very much like going to a foreign country and it completely freaks me out sometimes. Like God, this is a really, really weird place. With this kind of, I don't mind that, it means that when I go home now it's kind of almost as fun as going abroad, and I get to eat other foods and you know, stand in the queue at Starbucks and have the person in front of you just turn around and start talking to you, which is really weird, like why are you talking to me? I've become really Anglicised.

GM71 - How long have you been here now?

P71 - Nine years.

GM72 - Nine years?

P72 - Yes.

GM73 - I want to ask, now that we've kind of talked about this a bit, about leaving home and dealing with that, can I ask as you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you really left home?

P73 - It's an interesting question, because I frame that differently now. It's something I've thought about, and I don't know if it's because I'm a psychotherapist or what, but I think it was to get away from my mother (Laughs). There was some, there was just kind of, too much in retrospect, too much merging with my mother going on, at a very young age. My father died when I was 15 also, so I think I just needed to get away and see what it was like to be a grown up. To see what it was like to be on my own, and I knew I couldn't do that anywhere within driving distance of home. So I had to go.

GM74 - To get far enough away?

P74 - Yes, it had to feel far away to me, and it had to feel far away to her.

GM75 - And if you were far enough away then you had this chance to find out who you were?

P75 - Yes, and like I said, I did, it happened really quickly. I just needed to get away from that weird place.

GM76 - And I know I've asked this in a way already, but what would have happened if you couldn't have done that?

P76 - I expect, I don't know, I guess I think I probably would have emerged eventually, but it probably would have taken a much longer time. And that I would have had to look much harder to find the things that would feed me. And actually when I look back, I mean I'm not into it anymore, but when I went to Boulder there was a lot of it around, a lot of esoteric stuff like Shamanism and Tarot cards and spiritual, I was really into that, and when I look back to when I was living in Wilmington, Delaware, there were two places and both of them were out of somebody's living room where they had a little book store set up in the living room and they had a channeller there and as soon as I was 16 there was another threshold where I had an automobile. I started going to those places all the time, and I was the only kid there, it was always like 50 year old hippies hanging around there, it was a bit funny that a 16 year old kid was getting in there, but there was some expression of that going on, and all the books I bought were, you know, I was really into Alastair Crawley and stuff like that, weird stuff. So yes, it would have happened, but it would have happened a lot more slowly, like if you go to a place where



they had a library full of everything I wanted to read somewhere else, I could stay at home and I could look under ... to find a leaflet that I might be interested in, you know, so the availability of stuff just wasn't there. There was no consciousness there.

GM77 - It sounds like you found your, a little kind of, almost hidden away pocket somewhere?

P77 - Yes, I looked very hard for it I think.

GM78 - So what made you look for that, back then?

P78 - God, it feels really innate, it feels like an innate compulsion. Because it wasn't what people were into.

GM79 - Yes, it wasn't something you learned from people around you?

P79 - No, I picked it up completely, completely on my own. My mother was kind of interested in that stuff and, but not ostensibly, I was much more interested and kind of pulled her along and took her to those places. And that was the difference, I could get in Wilmington, Delaware I guess as well, these people were pretty different, they're psychics and stuff (laughs).

GM80 - And it sounds like, if I understood you, something almost innate, something in you needed something like that?

P80 - Yes, it was compelled.

GM81 - Compelled?

P81 - Yes.

GM82 - I wonder what does that mean, what did it mean for you, reading about those psychics and stuff.....?

P82 - I don't know, I certainly fed something, it felt like it was feeding something that everything else wasn't quite feeding, which later as I grew up, I was able to get out of philosophy and psychology. Which is why I pretty seriously moved into that, both of those realms. So the psychic doesn't do it for me any more at all, but I can see now it's a similar, it's the same, it's like what I'm doing now is a more developed urge that I was experiencing then.

GM83 - Yes, very similar and it sounds like almost to this process of going to more and more foreign countries, kind of like the psychic thing doesn't do it anymore, and psychotherapy and philosophy maybe does? You feel that fresh air in..?

P83 - Yes, yes, I think I need to know [tape changes over] I need to know what's going on in this world, I guess, I really need to know, I'm not satisfied with the given answers. Some answers really satisfy me and I think, ah, but you go around and you find the new ones, I guess.

GM84 - There's something in you that needs answers?

P84 - Yes, desperately I think, yes.

GM85 - That isn't perhaps easily satisfied in some of the answers where it's just given?

P85 - No. No, very much not satisfied with those kind of answers, and I tend to be quite a problem child (Laughs) in psychotherapy trainings and that sort of thing because I don't buy it very easily. I really do need to be convinced about things. But on the other hand I can be really gullible, and if I read something that's well written I kind of buy it pretty quickly, and then I have to renege on it in a sense. So like I really, like Freud, I love reading Freud, he's just a brilliant writer and actually read it and then I buy it, because he writes so well, and then I put it down and then I have to remember that that was complete rubbish (Laughs). And I go for lots of Freudian stuff, but certainly not the whole thing, but I can be convinced very easily. I can be seduced by things, I think. But I'm kind of contradictory there, but...

GM86 - Yes, the seduction sounds temporary?

P86 - Yes.

GM87 - The finding an answer sounds kind of more, more long-term ...?

P87 - Yes. Yes and it feels like that's elevating too, I guess I'm in this conflict about whether I stay or whether I go, and I think if I went now the Western is not good enough any more, so I'm looking East, that would be the thing I think.

GM88 - Can I just go on to another general question, are you OK with that? [yeah, I'm enjoying it] So, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P88 - Kind of up and down, I think. That first year was euphoric because I was 21 and had lots of young friends about me living in the University accommodation, and going out and getting drunk a lot, and taking all these holidays and taking trains all over Europe, it was just great fun, great fun. And then the five months I had in France were just the pinnacle, it was fantastic, I loved it. And then I started thinking that I needed to take responsibility for myself and grow up, and I shouldn't be clowning around Europe for the rest of my life, and I didn't know what I wanted to do. So I did a TEFL course and went to Poland and, like I said, it was like I tried to do it again in a sense, but something had shifted, I guess. OK here I am in a foreign land with a completely different language, and I'd had all of those exciting things, but something dropped out of the bottom, it was like enough, the focus needs to be different now. And maybe that was kind of my superego, and maybe I should have got over it and enjoyed it a bit longer, but whatever it was that was kind of, so it kind of went a bit downhill from there actually. Then I came back to the UK and I couldn't sort out visas or permits or any of that kind of thing, so I became a student for another year and did a Masters degree, which was kind of OK, and it was dreadful, well, I don't know, it was kind of OK, and then when I applied for citizenship it all became bureaucratic and I couldn't work, and then I couldn't travel for 18 months because they had my passport, and that was the worst because I was stuck in the United Kingdom for 18 months and I couldn't even go to Paris. So actually, I had cut off my primary joy, which was travel. That was a big sacrifice. So it went kind of way down then, and when I got my Permit of Residence things started to look up again, but it wasn't, now it was my home, do you know what I mean? So it didn't have that difference any more. My cousin used this expression, and I don't remember what it is, but I think it was something like, 'the exciting in the mundane,' and it was about living in France and it was about that when you go do your grocery shopping at least your doing your grocery shopping in France, so even though it was a really mundane activity, the food was still different and generally better, and the choice was different and generally better. So you had this general buzz of excitement because you still had to speak French at the till and you had to be in a different mind set the whole time you were there, so even if it was mundane it was exciting. So by the time I'd done all that, England was not the exciting in the mundane at all, and it very rarely is for me in England. Every once in a while I get a little sniff of it and I think, oh yes, it's kind of nice not to be home, but now that it's more home than where I grew up, it doesn't feel terribly different, so I guess I'm kind of back down to the sort of regular guy living in his regular city rather than being a foreigner in a foreign land, and part of my pride in a sense is that I can go my local pub and be a local, so I'm not an American, and everybody knows who I am, rather than, in my neighbourhood everybody knows who I am, I'm just the bloke down the street, which is kind of nice I guess, but it doesn't have any of that excitement that it used to.

GM89 - It sounds as though there's actually an attraction to very different things here, an attraction to, if I've got you right, I mean, when you're talking about England as being home, the mundane actually becoming mundane, [yes, laughs] I expected you to say that you were becoming uneasy and unsettled at that and wanting to move on, to find the excitement again, to lessen the mundane or something, but instead you were

saying there's something nice about that, something nice about being settled and people knowing you, and fitting in somewhere and actually being a part of the mundane?

P89 - Yes, I guess there is, yes. Which kind of surprises me I think, because I'm not always sure if that's what I want, but there is, that is a very positive thing about it, and I think what I forget and what I romanticise is being on a train in Hungary or something and feeling quite lonely, and having the excitement of staying in a Youth Hostel and meeting new people, but then you all go your own way and then you're lonely again. And I quite like being on my own, but it's a lonely, it HAS TO BE a lonely experience, it's why you do it in a sense, you go on your own somewhere, you don't go with someone, that ruins it, it ruined it for me.

GM90 - So the excitement, the adventure is a solitary thing?

P90 - Yes.

GM91 - The kind of mundane, settling thing is more of a community thing?

P91 - Yes, I guess it was. I mean, for some people travelling was a community thing. I remember when I was at UEA, and all the Americans were getting ready, were buying their Interail cards and that sort of thing, and getting groups together, I was really different, because I was like, I don't want to go with you, (Laughs), I really like you, but I don't want to go with you, I don't want to have to be in a group of four and decide which museum to go to, it was really clear that I wanted it to be on my own. I don't think I felt lonely in France, but I think by the time Poland came around I was feeling pretty lonely and thinking that I needed something a little bit more. So maybe that's a bit where I'm at now.

GM92 - I'm wondering if you're saying, and there's a lot of thoughts going through my head now, I'm wondering if you're saying then, there's a ... side to these choices?

P92 - Yes. I think very much.

GM93 - And I'm wondering if you're also saying that neither one is sustainable without the other? [Hmmm] At this time, you can't continue to be wandering around on your own out there in the wide open world, there's a time when you've done that and then you have to kind of go back to ... ?

P93 - I guess yes, and it kind of feels like an age thing now, you know, I've just turned 30 and I'm beginning to feel like I'm not who I was then anyway, so there's a lot of that going on. That's what younger people do. I don't think it's necessarily that has to be the case, but I believe that in any situation any behaviour can be unhealthy or healthy, or pathological and unpathological. So in a sense you can travel around for ages and it's a completely healthy thing to do, or you can travel around and it's because you're frightened of settling down and you're frightened of forging relationships and actually a kind of unhealthy thing to do. Or you can not travel and stay somewhere really stable, and it's because you're kind of pathologically frightened of change and widening yourself, and all that exciting stuff I was talking about before. It's possible that might have been pathological for me to continue travelling after a certain point in that I was frightened of growing up and dealing with things that grown ups do. Taking on a certain sense of responsibility. That's definitely a trade off, because I definitely still fantasize about giving it all up and doing that. But I can put I can a realistic hat on that and think would I actually really be happy if I were backpacking in China at the moment. It doesn't charm me as much as it used to.

GM94 - There's something shifting, maybe primarily age related?

P94 - It feels like that. But my goals, my career goals are really clear, my career goals are about being in a job where I travel to foreign countries for work. So I can kind of ground it, you know, I think I want to be a trainer of some sort, or run workshops, that sort of thing, it's all very responsible and age appropriate, but somebody else can foot the bill and fly me out to Brazil and run a three day workshop, and you know, then I can

tag another four days on the end of it and be in Brazil, and actually now that feels good enough for me. I don't feel like I have to, it's not so black and white, I don't have to give everything up, throw on a backpack and do that for six months.

GM95 - It's a way of having both? Are you able to do that?

P95 - Not yet, no, I'm still sort of, it's a goal, but it's not really what I'm doing just yet.

GM96 - So related to that, I'm wondering do you ever think of returning home...?

P96 - Yes, I went to Boulder in October and thought, I could live here, and I've been to San Francisco, I've some really close friends who live there and I thought, I can live here. Eighteen months ago my partner was offered a job in San Francisco and I wasn't going to go, it was a real tough one, and it turned out that they couldn't sort out the visas and stuff, so he didn't actually go for it in the end. He really wanted to go, he the English one, he really wanted to go, and I wasn't prepared to go live in America. I think it's America, I'm not sure if it's about going home, but I'm utterly freaked out about the state of that country at the moment, and I feel it would be unhealthy for me to live there. If things were to change in a big way, then it would become more of a possibility, but I certainly couldn't go over there while George Bush is President, and I don't know if it's just that, but the media and the food and automobiles, there's all sorts of really basic stuff that I loathe about the culture. In a big way, and I go places like San Francisco and Boulder where it's full of right thinking, liberal minded people who don't drive around in SUVs and that feels OK, but on a wide scale there seems to be a similar lack of consciousness that there was in the town that I grew up in, so I'd have to look harder again to find the things that I wanted to find there.

GM97 - So the thought is that .....at least at the moment it doesn't appeal to you at all because of the state of the nation in some ways?

P97 - Yes. Yes, when I think about retiring, well, you didn't ask me be about retiring did you?

GM98 - No, that's a good question.

P98 - (Laughs) When I think about retiring, I'm retiring to a cottage in France and that's always been there. That's been a really constant and consistent fantasy. No, I don't really think about going back to the States. When I'm there, you know, when I was in Colorado and it was so physically beautiful there, and quiet, I thought, yes, I could do that, but when I come back it's OK to be back and I don't need that any more, and a lot of that was nostalgia anyway.

GM99 - You don't want to go back to Delaware?

P99 - Well, there's just no way in the world, there is no way in the world the day I left Delaware, I mean no way in the world, I'd rather move to Birmingham (Laughs).

GM100 - (Laughs)

P100 - Don't put that in your... (Laughs).

GM101 - OK. I don't think I have any more questions. Is there anything I missed that I should have asked? Anything else you'd like to add?

P101- (pause) No, I mean, it was really interesting and I'm sure it'll percolate for a while actually, but I can't think of anything that needs to be said.

GM102 - Can I ask just one final thing, can I ask what it felt like to be talking about this?

P102 - I enjoyed it, a lot, yes. I think I thought it was going to be different somehow, I actually hadn't put words to a lot of those thoughts before. I've thought about the thing about wanting to get away from my mother and stuff like that, but the thing about the thresholds and the character building, and the fact that there were these seeds when I was 15 going to those funny little, those people's living room bookshops, I hadn't equated those things, but that feels like it's the same thread. Yes, it feels really positive.

END

## “Francois/Ben” Meaning Units

### Circumstances of leaving home

1. First step was to go further away to university than anyone in my high school.
2. Then, as part of my last year I did a year abroad in the UK.
3. But when I came here first I had a conception that I wasn't going back after that. I was pretty well settled in Europe from 21, going back for holidays.
4. I had grown up in the same house and town for the first 18 years.
5. I had an innate sense that I needed to get far away from home.
6. I think it was partly for the adventure and finding new things and starting fresh.
7. But I also wonder if there's something in the genes, I come from a family of immigrants. There's movement in the family history.
8. (But his parents and grandparents did not move at all, and his sister didn't travel outside the US).

### What was it about you that made you go so far?

1. I don't know. Excitement, starting over again somewhere new.
2. I struggle with this still, I am settled with commitments but still want to go away, it's not enough being here.
3. I need to be in a country where they speak a foreign language and the food and culture are sufficiently different.
4. It gives me joy to be in a really different place. The more different, the better it feels.
5. I like to challenge myself.
6. I lived in France doing an emersion course, then moved in Poland, which I didn't really enjoy.
7. That language is more difficult and I wasn't making much money and it was winter.
8. But there was still this pull to go live in a place, not be a tourist there, meet people in their own context.

### What is it about foreignness that's so attractive to you?

1. That's a good question, difficult to answer.
2. I get frustrated with the Americanisation of Britain, how it's influenced by the US instead of Europe.
3. I love languages and different ways of being and I see that in Europe.
4. I love the challenge to one's own concepts about the kind of being that you grew up with.
5. I love that in France there is such a long dinner and the diet is so different and you don't have to feel bad about it.
6. It's wonderful and life-giving.
7. My time in France was one of the best times in my life.
8. It wasn't puritanical like where I come from, it's more indulgent, it's allowed.

9. Something about the different values in different places. Some of them seem more in line with my own values, that didn't match where I grew up.

### A better fit in foreign places

1. I've sometimes felt more French. I would like to end up there.
2. There's something about that culture that matches me.
3. I don't know if it would have matched me if I'd grown up there. I might love America and want to live there.
4. I think it's a lot to do with difference.
5. Here I have so many foreign friends, from all around the world and I like that because they all have different perspectives and really different ways of being.
6. It contradicts where I grew up, where we were taught everyone's the same.
7. The older I get the more I realise that everybody's not essentially the same, we're very different and that's great.
8. I guess I don't want to be around the same kind of people.
9. An important aspect is that I like being different among them too.
10. I get tired of the baggage that comes from being American in Europe these days.
11. I don't like to be identified as that. You're fortunate you don't have that.

### I like being different

1. My partner is English so he's special when we go back home to the US, he's got an accent, and I miss not being different.
2. I sound like everyone else there and I like being different.
3. I like to stand out, I like the attention from others, though it's not always good.
4. But it gets tiring too, having to answer all the same questions and undergo the tirade of anti-Americanism, especially in France at the moment.
5. You have to prove your politics before you can be accepted at all and I don't like that. That's just an assumed difference, not real difference.
6. I prefer it to be an accepted difference, not a basis for rejection.

### Finding a place to belong

1. In my group of friends it's like I've found a community for myself, lot of national differences, but no Tories.
2. There is a fundamental thing of tolerance and quite liberal.
3. So there's a fundamental sameness I guess, or similarity so the other differences don't matter much.
4. The difference is grounded in some similarity, I wouldn't like a racist whether they came from Brazil or America.
5. It doesn't matter where you're from but some basic needs need to be met if the group is going to be OK.
6. But the perspective of the world needs to be similar.

### Growing up

1. I grew up in a middle class suburban place. There was a lot of colour difference in school, which I am glad about.
2. I went to a film programme at 19 in New York and was exposed to people from around the world, especially Europe and it's sad I was that age before I met someone European.
3. I loved it, thought it was fantastic. There was something about these people I loved.
4. That summer I decided I'd go to Europe. I'd been to Australia and I didn't get that feeling there.
5. I didn't really consciously always know I'd leave, but I also knew I wasn't going to stay.
6. I would never have gone to the local university.
7. I started thinking about it as soon as I had a sense of agency, at 18, when I could get out of there.
8. I went really far and was really pleased to do that. I went to Colorado, but there was some family there which disappointed me because I wanted to make it on my own completely.
9. When I was younger, whenever we'd go across country to visit someone I remember always feeling disappointed to return, I couldn't understand why anyone would live where we did.
10. I felt excited visiting other cities and the mountains and they were just objectively better than where I grew up. It was so boring there.

## Europe

1. The attractive thing about Europe is that there is so much difference clustered together.
2. You can drive across borders and hear a different language. I love that.
3. I love that idea of going down the road to a shop and trying to decide which language you'll choose to communicate, this fascinated me. I loved it.
4. I am still so excited by all this (excited in the interview).
5. I really don't know what it is about this that really excites me so much, it's a really good question.
6. I don't know why it is, but I can think of many examples. Gives examples of being on a train and crossing borders and the language in the train changing.
7. There's something magical about that transition so near to each other.
8. Maybe it's magical for me because I grew up in such a monochromatic culture.
9. There's difference in America, but it's all still the same shops and TV, and themes.

## Home town

1. When I go back there now, my conception is that there is no consciousness there.
2. People seem self-involved in an unhealthy way.

3. They go to school or work, earn money, go home and watch TV and that's what life is about.
4. I just survived junior high school and high school was a bit better. But I knew I'd go to college, get a job...
5. That's why at 19 when I met that French girl my life changed.
6. In Colorado it was different, people thought about things and you had to have ideas about things and I didn't have any.
7. I got stoned for the first time heard new music, it was amazing. I woke up.
8. Now in order for me to keep waking up as I get older, I need to go places away from what's normal.
9. I had to keep flying away again.

### Flying away

1. Yes, that idea really fits, it makes a lot of sense to me.
2. I regret leaving Colorado so early, I could have spent longer before I got bored but the chance to come here came up.
3. So then I was in the UK and travelled Europe and then lived in France, and if I hadn't settled down with my partner I might have kept on.
4. England was a step, but the same language, then France was the next step but still very western, so it might have been China next.
5. I was stepping towards increasing foreignness.
6. I've pulled back a bit because I'm getting older, but there's a part of me that would still be doing that if I wasn't in my situation now.

### A conflict

1. I think I live with this conflict between parts of me more in the winter and less in the summer.
2. The bonus to staying is better career prospects and safety and security in what I have, money saved.
3. I have more of the things I think older people enjoy that were less important when younger.
4. I still sometimes think I should give it all up and fly away.
5. My relationship is the main thing that stops me.
6. It would be foolish to loose that for a fanciful notion of running off around the world.
7. So, for now I settle for holidays.
8. It's a compromise but I'm in an international city with easy travel access.
9. I often visit Europe and its' a thrill but not really enough but just about to keep me from giving up everything and starting again in a new place.

### What would it have been like to have stayed at home?

1. I've wondered a lot.
2. Things like my politics have changed a lot from living here.



3. I don't think I would be so different but I would have been stunted a lot.
4. It would have been dreadful to stay in my home state, very unhappy.
5. One reason I left I think is that I am gay and I needed to get far away from home to come out.
6. I couldn't do that around everything I knew while growing up.
7. I had to put myself in a position where I could start over again around that kind of thing.

### The gay impact and feeling at home generally

1. I wasn't really at home there at all, where I grew up.
2. I think meeting those people in NY sensitised me to difference more than being gay did.
3. There's little choice if you're gay, but to live in urban centres. It's too much of a struggle elsewhere.
4. In this country London is pretty much the only option for me.
5. It was dreadful growing up till about age 15.
6. From 15-18 I found a way to adapt, I had enough friends finally and wasn't a social outcast like in junior high school.
7. High School was fine but I knew I wasn't going to the local university with the vast majoring of my classmates, within about a 60 mile radius.
8. I flew out of there fast and transformed my clothes, my beliefs, and everything in a year. It was an extreme change.
9. I was a good kid and I finally began to try things, drinking, drugs, hair styles...
10. Leaving behind everyone I knew really freed me up.
11. That was still happening when I came to the UK.
12. In HS some people still knew me as the nerdy unpopular kid from JHS so I had to overcome that in a big way. In Colorado and moreso here there was nothing I had to overcome, I could do what I wanted.

### Survival in a new place

1. It was about facing the challenge, to see if I could survive.
2. Throw myself into the unknown, like Poland, which was weird, I survived but it wasn't brilliant.
3. I don't know really what that means to me to survive that kind of experience.
4. I'm thinking about it like a threshold.
5. America was too comfortable, there was nothing to challenge me. In Colorado I came up over the threshold and there was fresh air, it's different, but eventually the threshold come back up and it's stale again. So then you have to go again.
6. Constantly pushing over the threshold so it feels different.
7. It's pleasing, character-building, it was my way of knowing I was doing that.
8. It wasn't good enough to be in my comfort zone, I always had to be outside it.
9. Something about the challenge of going to new places feels like fresh air.
10. It feels like fresh air is good for me, though it might not always feel good, it feels like I'm widening, I have more capacity. I grow there.
11. My individuation was about doing that, physically removing myself to other places.

12. My threshold is so high here that going back to America is like going to a foreign place now and it completely freaks me out sometimes, its such a weird place.
13. Going home now is almost as fun as going abroad. I've become anglicised.

So, why do you think you really left home?

1. It's interesting, I frame that differently now.
2. I've thought about it and I think it was to get away from my mother.
3. There was too much merging with my mother, at a very young age.
4. My father died when I was 15, I needed to get away and see what it was like to be grown up, on my own, and I couldn't do that anywhere within driving distance of home.
5. It had to feel far away for both me and her for me to find out who I was.
6. I think it would have taken much longer for me to emerge if I'd stayed there.
7. When I was 16 I had a car, which was another threshold and I used to go to psychic places and I was into weird stuff when possible.
8. So I would have searched and found nourishment but it would be slow, there just wasn't much available, no consciousness.
9. The reason I looked for that feels really innate. Like an innate compulsion. Other people weren't into it.
10. No one I knew was interested in this stuff. But that was the kind of difference I could get there. I was compelled to find it.

The compulsion for difference, spirituality

1. The attraction to psychic stuff fed something in me that others didn't seem to be feeding. Later I got it from philosophy and psychology.
2. What I do now is a more developed urge but the same as I was experiencing then.
3. It's similar to that threshold. I think I need to know what's going on in the world, I'm not satisfied with given answers. Something in me needs answers.
4. I'm not easily convinced by answers but also I can be gullible.
5. I can be seduced by things, but the seduction can be temporary.
6. If I went looking for answers now I'd go East, no more West.

What's it been like since leaving.

1. Up and down. The first year euphoric because it was about being young and having fun.
2. The 5 months in France were the pinnacle, fantastic.
3. I then felt I had to get serious and take responsibility for myself but I didn't know what I wanted to do.
4. I did the TEFL course and went to Poland but something had shifted and it didn't work that time. It was enough, the focus had to change.

5. I came back to the UK and studied in order to stay, then applied for citizenship and had to stay here while they had my passport.
6. That was horrible, being stuck here, couldn't even go to Paris. I had cut off my primary joy, which was travel, a big sacrifice.
7. It went downhill till I got my residency. But by then it was my home and no longer had that difference.
8. Something about the exciting in the mundane, even grocery shopping in France is exciting because at least it's in France, things were different, had to speak French... A different mind-set.
9. The UK was no longer the exciting in the mundane and it rarely is for me here.
10. It's more like a regular guy living in his city not the foreigner in a foreign land anymore.
11. I get some pride from being able to go to my local pub and be treated as a local, not an American.
12. In my neighborhood everyone knows who I am, which is kind of nice I guess, but it doesn't have the excitement it used to.
13. There is something nice about the mundane here, and that surprises me.
14. I'm not always sure that's what I want though.
15. But I forget how lonely it can be travelling on one's own and I romanticise it.
16. I like being on my own but it's a lonely experience, it's part of why you do it. Going with someone else ruins it, it's a solitary adventure.

### Solitary travel and settling as community

1. At university I wouldn't go travelling with everyone else, I wanted to go on my own.
2. I wanted the travelling to be on my own. But now maybe I need something different.
3. But I feel at this age that I'm not who I was then anymore. That's what younger people do.
4. Anything can be healthy or pathological and for me to continue travelling might have been that I was frightened of growing up and dealing with adult things, responsibility.
5. There's a trade off, because I still fantasise about giving it all up but I can think realistically and imagine backpacking in China and it doesn't charm me as much as before.
6. I have clear career goals, to be in a job where I travel to foreign countries for work.
7. So I can ground my travel, be a trainer, responsible and age-appropriate.
8. To travel as part of my career feels good enough for me.
9. It's not like I have to give up everything then, not so black and white.

### Thoughts of returning home?

1. I went to Boulder and thought I could live there, or San Francisco.
2. There are differences with my partner, he'd like to work in America but I wasn't ready to go back.

3. I'm freaked out by America at the moment and think it would be unhealthy to live there, its not so much about home.
4. There are a lot of things I loathe about the culture there.
5. I can go to liberal pockets and that feels OK but on a wide scale there seems to be a similar lack of consciousness as in my hometown, so I'd have to look hard to find things like I did there.
6. I've always thought about retiring to France, a consistent fantasy for me.
7. I don't really consider America. When I'm there in the mountains I think yes, but then I return here and it's OK to be back and I don't need that anymore, a lot of it seems like nostalgia.
8. I would never consider going back to my home town or state. Never.

#### Feelings of the interview

1. It was very interesting and I'm sure it will percolate.
2. I enjoyed it a lot. I hadn't put into words many of these thoughts before.
3. The thing about the thresholds and character-building and the seeds when I was 15 going to those psychics was new.
4. It feels like the thread goes that far back and it feels positive.

## **“Francois/Ben” Meaning Clusters**

### **Leaving as a step-by-step process**

1. As soon as I was 18 and able to leave I began to think about it.
2. First step was to go across the country to university, while everyone else chose a university closer to home.
3. Second step was to spend a year in Europe as part of my university course.
4. Then lived in France doing an emersion course, then moved to Poland and didn't enjoy that.
5. England was a step but the same language, then France was the next step but still Western, so it might have been China next.
6. I was stepping toward increasing foreignness.
7. If I hadn't settled down with my partner I might have kept on, but I've also pulled back because I'm getting older, though there's part of me that is still attracted to that.
8. When I first came here I felt I'd never go back and was settled here from 21.

### **Reasons for travelling**

1. I had an innate sense that I needed to get far away from home.
2. I didn't consciously always know I'd leave but I did know I wouldn't stay.
3. I was partly looking for adventure, new experiences, and starting fresh.
4. I wonder if there is also something in the genes, there's movement and immigration in the family history. But P's parents did not move and his sister stayed in their native country.
5. I like to challenge myself by living in a place that is foreign, foreign language and culture. It gives me joy and the more different the better it feels.
6. The pull was to live in a place, not be a tourist, but be with people in their own context.
7. At 19 I was first exposed to Europeans and I loved it, something about those people I loved. It changed my life.
8. That made me want to go to Europe. I didn't get that feeling from being in Australia.
9. One reason I left is that I'm gay and I couldn't come out at home, I had to get far away to do that, I couldn't do it around the familiarity of where I grew up.
10. I had to get into a position where I could start over again around that kind of thing.

### **Growing up background**

1. I had grown up in the same house and town for the first 18 years.
2. It was a middle class suburban place with a lot of colour difference in school, which I was glad about.
3. I barely survived JHS but HS was better, I had a group of friends, but I could see it laid out: college, job...

4. I wasn't really at home there at all where I grew up.
5. It was dreadful growing up till 15, when I found a way to adapt and wasn't a social outcast anymore.
6. HS was fine but I knew I wouldn't go to the local university with everyone else.
7. When I was younger, whenever we'd go across country to visit someone I remember always feeling disappointed to return, I couldn't understand why anyone would live where we did.
8. I felt excited visiting other cities and the mountains and they were just objectively better than where I grew up. It was so boring there.
9. I went across country to university and was really pleased to do that. But there was some family there which disappointed me because I wanted to make it on my own completely.

### **The attraction of foreignness/difference/diversity**

1. Good question, difficult to answer.
2. I think meeting those foreigners in NY sensitised me to difference more than minority sexuality did.
3. I became different as soon as I left, transformed my appearance, beliefs, experiences, it was extreme.
4. Leaving behind everyone I knew freed me up to be different, I didn't have to overcome anyone else's preconceptions of me, I could do what I wanted.
5. I love languages and different ways of being and different values, and I see that in Europe.
6. Difference challenges one's own concepts and the kind of being you assume from growing up and I like that.
7. I found France wonderful and life-giving, one of the best times in my life, partly because it wasn't puritanical like where I come from, it allows indulgence.
8. Paradoxically, something about the different values in different places, some of them seem more in line with my own values, that didn't match where I grew up. (in a sense this is both a difference and an attraction to similarity). There's something about the French culture that matches me, I would like to end up there.
9. But if I grew up there perhaps I'd be drawn to America, the attraction is definitely partly to do with difference.
10. I like being different, I like to stand out and to get the attention, though it's not always positive.
11. I miss not being different when I go home with my partner, he is more foreign so more special.
12. I like having foreign friends because we all have different ways of being and it contradicts when I was taught back home that everyone's the same, but we're all different and it's positive.
13. I get frustrated with the Americanisation of Britain, how it gets more like the US instead of Europe.

### **Difference in Europe, especially linguistic**

10. The attractive thing about Europe is that there is so much difference clustered together. You can drive across borders and hear a different language. I love that.
11. I love that idea of going down the road to a shop and trying to decide which language you'll choose to communicate, this fascinated me. I loved it.
12. I am still so excited by all this (excited in the interview).
13. I really don't know what it is about this that really excites me so much, it's a really good question.
14. I don't know why it is, but I can think of many examples. (Gives examples of being on a train and crossing borders and the language in the train changing).
15. There's something magical about that transition so near to each other.
16. Maybe it's magical for me because I grew up in such a monochromatic culture.
17. There's difference in America, but it's all still the same shops and TV, and themes.

### **Fitting into a group**

1. My group of friends provides a community full of difference, but also with similarities, shared values, there is a fundamental shared tolerance and being liberal.
2. Perhaps the similarities mean the differences don't matter, but the group is grounded in its similarity, I wouldn't like a racist even from Brazil.
3. Where you are from doesn't matter, but there needs to be basic requirements met for the group to be OK, the perspective of the world needs to be similar.
4. I guess I don't want to be around people who are all the same.
5. Difference is preferred if it's an accepted difference, not a basis for rejection.
6. I get tired of the baggage that comes from being American, I don't like to be identified as that, having to prove that basic similarity, political, before you can be accepted at all.
7. That difference is just an assumed one, not a real one, assumed because I'm American.
8. Being gay it's too much of a struggle to live anywhere but London, urban centres are really the only option.

### **The value of awareness**

1. At home I now see how there is no consciousness there, people are just self-involved in an unhealthy way.
2. Life seems a meaningless circle of school or work to earn money, home, TV.
3. In Colorado people thought about things, you were expected to have opinions.
4. I experienced many things for the first time, got stoned, heard new music, woke up.
5. Now in order for me to keep waking up as I get older, I need to go places away from what's normal, I need to keep flying away again.
6. That idea of flying away really fits for me, makes a lot of sense.
7. I struggle with this still, I am settled with commitments but still want to go away, it's not enough being here.
8. I regret leaving Colorado so early, I could have spent longer before I got bored but the chance to come here came up.

9. I wonder a lot about what it would have been like to have stayed and I don't think I would have been so different but I would have been stunted a lot. My politics have changed from living here.
10. I would have been dreadfully unhappy to have stayed living in my home state.

### **Conflict between parts related to aging**

1. I feel the conflict in me of staying or flying more in the winter than summer. I still sometimes think I should give it all up and fly away.
2. But I would be foolish to loose my relationship for that fanciful notion of running off around the world.
3. The bonus of staying is that I have more of the things I think older people enjoy, better career prospects, security, money saved, it changes with age.
4. I can compromise and settle for holidays since I live in an international city with easy travel access. I often visit Europe and it's a thrill but not really enough, but just about to keep me from giving up everything and starting again in a new place.
5. I used to want to travel alone always but now maybe I need something different than solitary travel adventures, that was a younger me.
6. Anything can be healthy or pathological and for me to continue travelling might have been that I was frightened of growing up and dealing with adult things, responsibility.
7. There's a trade off, because I still fantasise about giving it all up but I can think realistically and imagine backpacking in China and it doesn't charm me as much as before.
8. I might get a solution in my work, I want to be in a job where I travel to foreign countries to work, so I can ground my travel in responsible age-appropriate work.
9. That would be good enough, it's not like I'd have to give up everything then, it's not so black and white.

### **Living outside the comfort zone**

1. Moving to a foreign place is partly about seeing if I can face the challenge and survive, throw myself into the unknown.
2. I'm not sure that that means to me to survive that experience.
3. It's like constantly pushing over a threshold so it feels different. It was my way of character-building.
4. America was too comfortable, there was nothing to challenge me. In Colorado I came up over the threshold and there was fresh air, it's different, but eventually the threshold come back up and it's stale again. So then you have to go again.
5. It wasn't good enough to be in my comfort zone, I always had to be outside it. Something about the challenge of going to new places feels like that, like fresh air.
6. It feels like fresh air is good for me, though it might not always feel good, it feels like I'm widening, I have more capacity. I grow there. My individuation was about doing that, physically removing myself to other places.



7. My threshold is so high here that going back to America is like going to a foreign place now and it completely freaks me out sometimes, its such a weird place. Going home now is almost as fun as going abroad. I've become anglicised.

### **Relationship with mother and leaving**

1. I think about my real reasons for leaving differently now. I think it was to get away from my mother.
2. My father died when I was 15, I needed to get away and see what it was like to be grown up, on my own, and I couldn't do that anywhere within driving distance of home, there was too much merging with my mother, at a very young age.
3. It had to feel far away for both me and her for me to find out who I was. I think it would have taken much longer for me to emerge if I'd stayed there.

### **Attraction to psychic, spiritual, psychological realms**

1. I searched for weird psychic stuff when I was young in order to get some difference, some nourishment in that place. There wasn't much available, no consciousness. It was like an innate compulsion for me, other people weren't into it.
2. It was the only kind of difference I could get there so I was compelled by it.
3. The attraction to psychic stuff fed something in me that others didn't seem to be feeding. Later I got it from philosophy and psychology.
4. What I do now is a more developed urge but the same as I was experiencing then. It's similar to that threshold. I think I need to know what's going on in the world, I'm not satisfied with given answers.
5. Something in me needs answers and I'm not easily convinced by answers but also I can be gullible.
6. I can be seduced by things, but the seduction can be temporary.
7. If I went looking for answers now I'd go East, no more West.

### **The experience since leaving?**

1. Up and down. The first year was euphoric because I was young and having fun and the 5 months in France were the pinnacle.
2. Then I felt I had to get serious and take responsibility for myself but I didn't know what I wanted to do. I did the TEFL course and went to Poland but something had shifted and it didn't work that time. It was enough, the focus had to change.
3. I came back to the UK and studied in order to stay, then applied for citizenship and had to stay here while they had my passport.
4. That was horrible, being stuck here, couldn't even go to Paris. I had cut off my primary joy, which was travel, a big sacrifice. It went downhill till I got my residency. But by then it was my home and no longer had that difference.

5. Something about the exciting in the mundane, even grocery shopping in France is exciting because at least it's in France, things were different, had to speak French... A different mind-set.
6. The UK was no longer the exciting in the mundane and it rarely is for me here.
7. It's more like a regular guy living in his city not the foreigner in a foreign land anymore and I get some pride from being able to go to my local pub and be treated as a local, not an American.
8. In my neighborhood everyone knows who I am, which is kind of nice I guess, but it doesn't have the excitement it used to but there is something nice about the mundane here, and that surprises me.
9. I'm not always sure that's what I want though. But I forget how lonely it can be travelling on one's own and I romanticise it.
10. I like being on my own but it's a lonely experience, it's part of why you do it. Going with someone else ruins it, it's a solitary adventure.
11. (seems that P's choices are partly about solitude-travel, and community-settlement).

### **Thoughts of returning home?**

9. 1. Maybe I could live in certain liberal pockets in America but there are a lot of things I loathe about the culture there. There's a lack of consciousness I experienced in my hometown and I'd have to search again to find nourishment.
10. I'm freaked out by America at the moment and think it would be unhealthy to live there, its not so much a question about home.
11. If I ever think I could live in America, it's mostly nostalgia and it goes when I return here.
12. I would never consider returning to my hometown or state.
13. I have a consistent fantasy of retiring to France.

### **Feelings of the interview**

5. It was very interesting and I'm sure it will percolate.
6. I enjoyed it a lot. I hadn't put into words many of these thoughts before.
7. The thing about the thresholds and character-building and the seeds when I was 15 going to those psychics was new.
8. It feels like the thread goes that far back and it feels positive.

## 2. Leaving as a stepwise process

- The first step in leaving was reaching an age where it was a possibility and then choosing a university far away from home. The next step in increasing distance and increasing difference was to spend a year in Europe, first the UK, where the culture was different but the language the same, then France where both were different.
- P was always stepping towards increasing foreignness and if he had not settled in his relationship he may have continued this pattern. However, another variable is that P feels there are age-appropriate activities and it is no longer as attractive to travel as he did when younger.
- It is unclear why P's experience in Poland, a different culture and language, was not enjoyable. He suggests it may be that he was already responding to new priorities due to aging.
- When P first came to Europe he felt he would never return to his home country to live and continues to feel this way.

## 3. Motivations for leaving and continuing to travel.

- Although he did not consciously conceptualise his leaving from an early age, P always knew he wouldn't stay and he had an innate sense that he actually needed to get far away from home.
- Although P's parents did not move around and his sister remains in their home country, he wonders if there is something genetic in his innate desire because his grandparents were all immigrants.
- Motivations to travel can include looking for adventure and new experiences, wanting to begin anew without a history to compensate for, and to face challenges. The challenge of living in a very foreign place, as opposed to just being a tourist, can actually be joyful.
- P's first exposure to Europeans shaped his future by making him want to go to Europe. He hadn't had this feeling from going to Australia and he attributes this meeting as being more influential on his leaving than his experiences of being gay and needing to come out away from home.
- Although P does not talk in great deal about his experiences of being gay when young, he is clear that he had to go somewhere new to start over around that issue, he couldn't develop that side of himself surrounded by familiarity.

## 4. The 'innate' sensitivities evident when young

- P describes himself as a social outcast when younger though things improved when he was in High School and developed a group of friends. He does not elaborate on these experiences except to say he never felt at home in his home environment. Somehow what changed in HS was that

P found a way to adapt, though this did not change his desire to go far away to a different university.

- Although P grew up in the same homogenous place, and same house until he left, he mentions valuing any difference, like the racial difference evident in his school. At this age he already enjoyed travelling to other parts of his home country and felt that other places were objectively better and could not understand why anyone would choose to live where he did. It was always disappointing to return.
- P needed to get away from what was familiar or held his identity to the extent that even having some family members where he went to university was disappointing for him. He wanted to make it alone completely and re-invent himself. There is also some indication that perhaps P perceived life at home as laid out before him, school, job, etc. in an unsatisfying and predictable way.

## 5. Attraction to difference

- P has no ready answer for why foreignness attracts him so much but he ascribes the meeting with foreigners at age 19 as sensitising him to difference more than his own minority sexuality. He found their difference exciting and challenging to his own concepts and assumptions from his upbringing, which he welcomed.
- There is a consistent theme that leaving behind everyone people who knew him and their preconceptions about him was very liberating. He became different, transforming his appearance, beliefs and experiences as soon as he was liberated from that environment.
- P experienced his time in France as a pinnacle, partly because it contradicted the puritanical values of where he grew up. P feels that France was a better match for his own values than where he grew up, so there a paradoxical way in which this foreign place, by being different from P's home culture, was actually more similar to him as a person. In this case the attraction to difference conceals an underlying attraction to similarity. This is also seen in his choice of friends, who are all very international, different, but with a basic sameness of values.
- P wonders if he had grown up in France is he'd be attracted to America instead, suggestion that there is construction in opposition to the prevailing culture in order to be different. P admits he likes being different, to stand out and get attention in a positive way.
- P does not like the Americanization of the UK. A possible implication of this is that it makes the UK more like home for P, and thus reduces his own claim to specialness when he returns home. He mentions how when he returns home with his partner, his partner gets the attention because he is more different and P does not like losing his position of being special.

## 6. Attraction to linguistic differences

- A main attraction to Europe is the close proximity of differences, in terms of values, lifestyles, and especially languages. P loves the accessibility of having the opportunity of moving from one language

world into another just by going down the road. He expressed excitement about this in the interview.

- Again, P is not sure why this is so exciting for him. He can give many examples of language changes over borders etc. and how exciting this is for him. One possibility is that each language creates the possibility of another world where things might be different again. All P is able to say is that for him there is something magical about these transitions being so near to each other.
- P wonders if part of the attraction of this multi-linguistic environment is its contrast with his more 'monochromatic' culture where the differences are within an overall cultural sameness.

#### 7. A group that combines difference and sameness

- P's group of friends exhibit myriad differences by being very international, however again underlying these obvious differences are fundamental shared values of tolerance and a liberal outlook. The perspective on the world needs to be similar but where a person comes from does not matter. P wonders if the similarities mean the differences don't matter. It may also be that those similarities make the differences, which are also very valued, safe.
- P offers that difference is preferred, when it is the basis for acceptance rather than rejection. And he feels he would not like to be around people who are all the same.
- P gets tired of having to overcome negative assumptions because he is American. He does not like to have to prove a basic similarity in outlook in order to be accepted. This may also relate to his comment that being gay means it is too much of a struggle to live outside large urban areas, where perhaps this difference also could be more likely a basis for rejection.

#### 8. Encountering otherness through travel develops awareness

- Looking back at his home country, P feels many people there are not very aware of their lives, but remain self-involved in a way that he sees as unhealthy. This way of life seems a meaningless cycle of school/work, earning money, home, watching TV. P is quite critical of the lifestyle in his home environment.
- P felt that going to university, to a different environment, confronted him with new experiences that made him develop his own thinking and awareness. It woke him up and now in order to stay awake P feels he needs to keep contacting difference, to keep 'flying away' to new places. There is something about mundane normal life that is tranquilising for P.
- P speculates that he would have been dreadfully unhappy staying in his home environment partly because the sameness would have stunted his growth, so he would have been a stunted version of who he is now.
- The attraction to 'fly away' to wake up again is a struggle for P because at this age he is balancing other needs that are addressed by staying in one place. He needs to find a compromise since staying in one place is

not in itself enough. The allure of travel can prematurely cut short P's residency as it did in Colorado, where he regrets leaving so soon for Europe. He feels he could have stayed longer without getting bored or 'falling asleep'.

#### 9. Conflict and compromise between staying put and moving on related to age

- As P ages he feels new tensions between staying or 'flying away'. He feels he'd be foolish to give up the things that he can develop by staying, a relationship and career, in order to give into the desire to fly. The pull to fly away is greater in the winter for some reason.
- P attributes the decision to stay to maturing and valuing the things older people enjoy as contrasted with when he was younger. He seems to have specific age-related expectations and to continue travelling at his current age would need explication – he suggests it could signify a fear of growing up and accepting adult responsibility.
- Travelling is very much a solitary activity for P whereas settling implies developing a community to belong to. P seems to value both and realises that while settling for frequent European holidays keeps him from giving up everything, it doesn't seem satisfying enough. On the other hand imagining giving up everything and travelling like when he was younger also no longer seems quite right. At the moment neither option satisfies completely.
- P has hopes of developing a compromise by travelling as part of his work. He then feels the travel would be age-appropriate and responsible, rather than just 'flying away'. P seems to imply that travelling as before at this age would be irresponsible though it is not clear where this value comes from.

#### 10. Attraction to mystery and spirituality similar to travel

- When young, P looked for an experience of difference in psychic beliefs and spirituality. He had to search for these differences in order to get some nourishment in an environment that was otherwise very homogeneous. For P this need felt like an innate compulsion for more conscious living.
- The attraction to psychic topics fed some part of P that could not get nourished from the surrounding environment or other people. Later P got this need met from studying psychology and philosophy. P's chosen career is a more developed reflection of that urge to know about the world and not just accept inherited beliefs.
- This attraction to mystery is similar to P's experience of needing a threshold of difference that comes from travel. The seduction of place or ideas can be temporary and then he needs to explore again. If P went looking for answers now, he'd look to the East for greater difference.

#### 11. Living out of the mundane

- For P, moving to a foreign place is partly about challenging himself by facing the unknown and seeing if he can survive. He is not sure what it means to him if he succeeds at this challenge. It's an experience of constantly raising above the known to something unknown and P now realises that those challenges have been a way to develop his character.
- P feels like his home environment is too comfortable, there is nothing to really challenge him. The difference of his university experience provided challenges but eventually he became comfortable there and it felt stale again. There is a process of adapting and then needing to find something new again to struggle with.
- It does not feel good enough for P to be in his 'comfort zone'. He always needs to be outside of it and going to new places is one way to do that in order to develop, to have more capacity and to grow. P says his individuation is about physically removing himself from the known in order to feel 'fresh air' again.
- Since P has adapted to the UK, going 'home' now feels like going to a foreign place and he experiences it as a very strange place, not familiar. Now going home can offer the kind of challenge it never could when he was younger because now it has become foreign.

## 12. Relationship with mother

- P does not go into much detail about his relationship with his family except to say his father died when he was 15 and that he had too much merging with his mother. He feels, reflecting on it now. That he left his home country in order to get away from his mother.
- P felt he needed to get away from home in order to grow up and to see how he was as an adult. He felt he could not do that within easy access of this mother. They both had to feel he was far away, a substantial physical distance was necessary, in order to P to emerge. It may have happened anyway, P speculates, but it would have taken much longer.

## 13. Description of experiences since leaving home

- P describes his experiences since leaving home as up and down, with the beginning of his travelling being 'euphoric', followed by a growing feeling that he should settle down and take on adult responsibilities. The focus in P's life changed in relation to his age and his expectations of what he 'should' be doing by a certain age.
- P returned to settle in the UK and had the difficult experience of not being able to travel at all while his residency was being decided. This was an experience for P of having 'cut off his primary joy' and was difficult until he could travel again.
- By that time P had adapted to being in the UK and it no longer had the excitement of a foreign place, whereas France still can be exciting even when doing mundane things. France holds enough difference to remain exciting whereas in the UK the mundane is simply mundane, but surprisingly, P can now experience something positive in that.

- The other side of the attraction to travel has become the pride of fitting into a foreign country. P enjoys being treated like a known local in London rather than as a foreigner. P is ambiguous and ambivalent about wanting this familiarity.
- P reminds himself about the loneliness of solitary travel, which he can forget when he's settled and romanticising about going off. However, the paradox is that the loneliness has to be an integral part of travel for P, it's part of the reason he does it and having a companion along would ruin it in some way. It seems that P's choices revolve around solitude/travel and community/settlement, with the added variable to his age-appropriate expectations.

#### 14. Thoughts of returning home?

- P does not contemplate ever returning to his home environment. He could consider living in a more liberal part of his country but there remains a lot about the overall culture that does not match with his own values. Again, P refers to the lack of consciousness and the difficulty of finding something nourishing in this context.
- P's feelings about returning are at present highly influenced by the current political climate in his home country. He feels it would be unhealthy for him to try to live there at present. His rare moments of considering returning to his homeland strike him as nostalgia for good times in specific beautiful places and this feeling is only temporary.
- P feels OK about living in London and will never return to his home, but he has an idea of where he'd like to end up, he harbours a consistent fantasy of retiring to France.

#### 15. Feelings of the interview

- P found the interview very interesting and felt that some of what was discussed would continue to process itself in some way. He enjoyed the experience, especially being able to put into words thoughts that were previously implicit.
- The new ideas of travel being character-building and the idea of needing a challenging threshold to respond to, were interesting and useful. P feels that these themes and the whole issue of having left are part of a thread that includes his compulsion for spiritual experiences when he was 15, and that goes further back into this past, and that feels positive to him.



GM1 - The first question is could you begin just by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - I think that the first, it wasn't really leaving though, it was when I was in my sixth year, my last year of high school, we all moved to Tokyo, and that started it. Because we left my older brother in Paris and we left our house and we moved and more or less lived for 15 years, 14 whatever, and that felt like the beginning of thinking, of, the end. From that point, I think home, the feeling of home, which was the house we had and then the family and the way it was working together, just started more dispersing, not falling apart, but dispersing, because then I graduated from high school and my parents and my younger brother stayed in Tokyo and I went back to Paris, but instead of living in the suburbs in the house, we lived inside of Paris, it wasn't home, it was completely new, and parents and friends weren't around. And the following years, I went back to Japan so I was living with my parents, and going through difficult times with my boyfriend, and being alone. So it wasn't me just kind of, leaving, it was the family moving and then things just, because of circumstances, it was more home disintegrating.

GM2 - So what was it you felt about leaving, it sounds like you had a settled home in Paris for the first 15 years or so, and then when your parents, everybody but your brother left, something about that started a process of kind of, looser ties between you, is that right?

P2 - Yes, I mean the dynamics of the family changed, the way I could be, the way I could be me and my family, it was kind of a safe environment, but at the same time it was a place where I didn't have much space or that much of a voice. There was letting my brothers make noise and talk and then I found myself in a situation in Tokyo where I was much more confronted with my parents. My brothers, It felt like one protection had gone, and I had to interact with them a lot more directly and at the same time it was the last year of high school, it was the time of wanting to make a decision about what I wanted to study and where I wanted to go next. But it was kind of, understood, that I would graduate from high school there and my parents would stay, my dad was working there, and I would probably go back to Paris to study. I couldn't when I was at home, I thought about continuing to live with them and studying in Japan at that time.

GM3 - Can I ask why didn't you automatically stay?

P3 - (pause) I think it was an expectation of we're French and we're going to a French high school and the next step was to go to a French university, and therefore, there was something about, I think there still is, for people of that age in France, it's fairly competitive about which school they go to and which path they choose, and all of that, and it was really important that, well at that time it seemed important that people would make the right choice, and I would make the right choice, so there was no space for you know, taking a year out, thinking about things, it was, there was a kind of urgency, I knew that I would end up coming back and then studying there.

GM4 - Moving back to Japan and then studying there?

P4 - Yes, because at the same time I think in the middle of the year I became anorexic and there was a whole health issue. I was really unable, living alone in Paris, and study, and do all these things, I ended up going back. So I was kind of, I mean I've always looked at the eating disorder, but never in the context of you know, how that is the point of leaving home, and what's the point of it, and it's a feeling that interestingly kind of, came back year and year, and my therapist knew what I wanted, and I always wanted to go home, and it wasn't, there wasn't a physical thing, it was a space where I was feeling comfortable in and connected, and belonging.

GM5 - So, is that what home is for you? Do you feel that you've ever had that?

P5 - (pause) Not in, not the home as I imagined it or wanted it. I think with it's imperfections, you know, what I was and what I had up to 15, 16, I wasn't really happy with it at the time, but when I consider what I had after, it was pretty good (laughs).

GM6 - So, I think there's probably more to this story, but going back to the beginning a bit, it's the first 15 years or so, was kind of the closest to this feeling of home, what was it like for you when your parents decided to leave and you had to leave, what was it like leaving that place?

P6 - I mean, we left before, we left when I was 5 and changed house, and went to the States for 9 months, and we left when I was 13, for a year.(pause) When I was 5 I don't really remember leaving, what I remember is the transition of moving out from our flat to my grandparents' before we actually were leaving for the States, ... but when I was 13 I had friends whom I left in France, and went to the States, and you know, at that point it was really, it was exciting, and maybe we carried home with us, there was enough of us there was a sense of, there was still my parents and my brother and we were living together, and it felt that we were travelling with that, and when I was 17 it felt really exciting too, except that my brother was not coming with us, and it wasn't that I missed him, or that I really wanted him to come with us, and he was more kind of, now I'm on my own, well not on my own, but .....

And it's really, I'm not sure I look at it, I don't look at it as they left home, or they were the cause of home disappearing, it was more getting through the last year of high school and having to think about my own life, it was much more difficult and troubled me. It was kind of, growing up, and it was really not working out how I wanted it to.

GM7 - It sounded as though growing up at that point, part of that is the implication that you would have to leave your family and go back to Paris?

P7 - Yes. But I remember when I was 15, 16, I wanted to leave home, I was you know, tired of, I wanted my own house and a garden, and I wanted to move away from them.

GM8 - I want to ask about that. So, if your parents had been settled in Paris, and had no intention of ever leaving, you still would have done?

P8 - Yes, I think I wanted to be away from them. Because I don't think they were providing what I was, they were not protecting me from growing up. With that anxiety I was pretty much on my own. (pause) It's as if they were, they and my brother, providing this feeling of home to some extent, there was no active thing on their part, it was, my mother wasn't very good at it. But in a sense it was paradoxical, but,

GM9 - I'm not quite sure what you mean when you say they weren't very good at protecting you from growing up?

P9 – (pause) They weren't reassuring, and that's kind of, what I equate home with.

GM10 - So you went to Paris, and then back to Japan, and what happened then?

P10 - I went to Paris for about 6 months, went back to Japan, and started in university, started at ..... and started my BA. And then I came to England for treatment for ..... and stayed here for a year I think, and then went back to Japan, and at that point my parents were back in Paris. So I was on my own in Japan, and it didn't really work out so I came back to London, and they were, but then they stayed in Paris for a while then they were in Singapore for some years, and then I finished my degree here and went to India and Nepal for about 3½ years. And they were in Thailand, ..... and I went back to Paris.

GM11 - So, since this leaving, that was the initial leaving home in Paris, it sounds almost like your parents and you, maybe others in the family, kind of, were going around the world, in a not kind of synchronised way.

P11 - No. I mean, they were being very supportive and they've never been, I mean we were never out of touch or anything. (pause) And we would meet, back in France, or we'd meet when I was Asia, when I was spending time in Thailand, and now the distance, now they're back in Paris, and my brother had a baby, there's much more a sense of the home there recreated by the fact that they're all there and they see each other a lot more. You know, and with time our relationship has really improved.

GM12 - Can I just ask what's that like for you to have that kind of home base recreated in Paris? After so long?

P12 – (pause) I really like it and that is also connected with the fact that my mother was really unhappy in Bangkok and now she's in Paris and I'm happier that she's happier. (pause) It's strange, because it's a home recreated but I'm not part of it. I mean, what they did when they were in Asia is that they sold our house, they sold our house near Paris where we grew up and they had a house built in Brittany, and house large enough that the whole family can be all together, and what happened in Paris is that they had a small flat, so in a way when I go there and stay with them there's not that much space, so I can stay with them. But I went there with my boyfriend and we stayed in a hotel, and that felt very strange as well. It almost felt like I was betraying them that I wasn't staying, and it wasn't ..... it was more them not wanting us to stay with them because there was not enough space. But it felt like I'm home but I'm not home. And I think I was resenting him a little bit, you know I was going home but I couldn't stay with my parents.

GM13 - So what's it like then to leave and go home?

P13 - In an odd kind of way, I mean some part of me knows that I'm, when I was last in Paris I felt for the first time in about 10 years, I felt that maybe I could actually live here. When I was 18 it was just, I felt I could never, I thought French people were just so, narrow minded and if you hadn't read this or seen that you didn't..... there was

all kinds of, social and cultural expectation in order to belong, and I felt, I felt I didn't want to play that game and I felt I didn't want to, and I don't think I felt I could live there even if I wanted to. It's a bit like choosing to study in Japan in an American, an international university, it felt like I was going for the easier option than going to a private school. So part of me was not liking it and not wanting to be part of it, and another part of me was not feeling that I could, in a lot of different ways. I've gone off your question....

GM14 - You were saying for the first time ...

P14 - Oh yes, I was thinking that, I mean, what happens when I go home is I think oh, the quality of life here is much better than in England, and Paris is beautiful, and yes, maybe I could live here. Because it feels, in terms of the connection with people, and the ability to visit people and even though I don't live there and now that my parents and both my brothers are there, and my best friend and her family are there, it feels like even more, even socially I would have an easier time than in London on one level, because then there's my friends here, who are very precious and very important to me, but they're not as old and they're not as familiar, I mean, in a way they require more work. That's part of the whole feeling, I think, when you are there, it's less work. And, when I'm with somebody from a different country I feel this is my country, and feel, and I identify a lot more with French, people in France, but when I'm among French people I feel definitely like a foreigner.

GM15 - So, for some reason you identify as French and being around French people, you end up always having to .....?

P15 - Yes. Yeah.

GM16 - Is that OK?

P16 - I think more and more it is. If I can feel at home somewhere I don't mind being a foreigner, because it's very much, it's very much something that comes from outside, it feels like a label, but if I feel I've been off somewhere and I'm different but accepted, then I suppose, language is a problem because I don't feel, I don't feel like my English, is as good as somebody who's English is their first language. You know, I can't really read poetry in English or ..... or I can't really ..... which is probably a terrible thing, ..... and that kind of, bothers me, and I can't really read French anymore really, in any kind of fluent way, I really ..... so that, you know, I wish I could, well I probably can do something about it, but it doesn't, it feels a bit unsatisfying.

GM17 - You were telling me a while ago that the feeling of home was like a kind of, belonging, but that belonging was being accepted, not as 'the same' as everyone, but being accepted as being different?

P17 - As being me.

GM18 - Being you?

P18 - (pause) Yes. I think, yes, as being me, because the reality with French, if I ever I wanted or chose to you know, live there, and feel that I too could be French, to continue where I finished is almost impossible, the places I lived became part of me as if

anywhere I go, I'm just this jigsaw of different places and cultures, and then my mother is Vietnamese, so I mean, already I'm not completely French.

GM19 -I'm just wondering, well I'm wondering a lot of things, but one thing I'm wondering is that this is an experience that you tend to have, of being in different cultures ...?

P19 - My mother probably because she was born in Vietnam, where she was going to a French school because she was Catholic and then she came to Paris and then went to stay with my dad for a while. My impression is the way she dealt with it was really negate her Vietnamese side, you know she never ..... and she would cook Vietnamese food and .....but I was with her recently and I was asking her the Vietnamese New Year is the same as the Chinese New Year, so it's like ..... and I was asking her how important that was, you know, and she said it's very important, you be careful of who comes into the door first on the first day of the year, and you give money to children, you know, for something that was so important, she never made it important when we were growing up. We vaguely celebrate it when there was a Vietnamese family around, but really, so I don't know what she did with that, she just kind of decided that she was French, and that that was easier. And I think up to Primary school, I couldn't see her as different physically, and I couldn't see that her arms were physically different as a racial type, from the French people, she would be like any other French mum and so that's quite interesting really, and I didn't know her first name for some time, because it was a Vietnamese name and it wouldn't fit in with a French girl going to a French school where people are all French. There was a difference that was just not talked about and not, something like this.

GM20 - It's like, fitting in is equated with being quite homogenous, it sounds like, and what you were talking about before is that belonging, you just wanted to be, it sounded like being accepted as you, you won't have to do that ...?

P20 - Yes, yes. Maybe I find London easier if you like, because there are so many people who are just not English. When I was in Portland, California at Christmas and I went to a party and I really felt, I really felt like a foreigner, and I mean, I was, but it really felt, they were all the same and I was different, but here everybody's different so we're kind of the same in our difference. That really bothered me. And I'll always be the odd person.

GM21 - What bothered you about that?

P21 - (long pause) I'm not sure really. I think I felt inferior. This kind of inferiority, .....like everybody else was just fitting in, they knew each other, you know, part of it now, but visually it felt like they were all part of the picture, they were dressed the same, and spoke the same, and lived in, there was all this nicety about them, and I felt a bit like a broken jigsaw, and odd person of bits and pieces, and I wasn't, you know, nothing was very coming from anywhere, because it's always, you know, I'm just born there, and moved there, and lived there. So I guess, in a way, this kind of, experience is coming from that, I don't feel bad about it, but where it really stands out, I'm not sure I'm very comfortable with it.

GM22 - So, if you were in a situation where everyone sort of, almost blended into a culture of ..... If everyone's like that it kind of, fades away, if you like, for now.

But if you go someplace where everyone belongs, feels at home, the whole story is there, the parents, do you stand out as someone who's different from them?

P22 - Yes.

GM23 - Do you start to feel that your way of being and your life experiences are inferior?

P23 - Yes. I'm not sure what it is about it, if inferior is the right word I'm not sure. Maybe it's not that, it's not inferior, but I really feel I was coming from a different planet, and it's not, and I think the frustration with that particular group of people was that I was speaking English, but for some reason we're not speaking the same language, and that had to do with the way they were with each other, was, there was more form than content to their conversations, and my feeling was that coming from where I'm coming I can be, if we're talking about, it's really some kind of sincerity or real content when we communicate, but because it's so predetermined by certain forms or idioms, I'm out. It's hard to explain it, but you know, at that point I don't feel I'm particularly inferior, I just feel that, (pause) it's very frustrating.

GM24 - It's an experience of not quite being able to access those worlds and codes, and being left out?

P24 - Yes, yes.

GM25 - I want to just ask, you touched on it, but it doesn't apply quite in your case as much, but I want to ask you, you were saying that when you were younger you already had, even before your home started to move..... you were saying that you already had the sense that you needed your own space, you needed room, I wondering if you look back to that time, what is it that really made you leave?

P25 - (long pause) One of the first things that comes to mind is that I wanted to be free. It felt like I was, in the middle of my family, I was living a very secret life, nobody knew what was going on, and I don't think they were interested, but there was a desire of not having to protect me, while I was growing, ..... At the same time I, when I think back, I think I wasn't very happy, the truth is I wasn't very happy and I felt that maybe moving out would change that. When I think back, it in some ways seems crazy.

GM26 - ..... feeling of being kind of, unsettled, you were already in some ways unsettled, you were already feeling unhappy and you feel ..... Why do you think that was, ...?

P26 - Yes, yes.

GM27 - ..... what was it about you that.....?

P27 - ..... to my brothers?

GM28 - ..... what was it about you that.....?

P28 - It was a mixture of I thought I was different and or if I felt I was different, people were experiencing me as slightly odd and different, and (long pause) in some ways I think there was always something very unsatisfying about life as it was. You know, I think I was believing a fairy tale for a long, long time. Up to the point where I thought this is not happening you know, I've got to make a decision here about where I want to be, ..... but I really felt that I would be safe from that, that it wouldn't happen to me.

GM29 - What was that.....?

P29 - I wouldn't have to grow up and fear .....fear some things from what you think they were.

GM30 - So in some sense ..... you never really had this sense of really not never, but from an early age you didn't have this sense of feeling like a belonging, being accepted or whatever it was, as if you seemed to believe there was a place, there was that possibility there could be a place, that would be almost like a fairy tale?

P30 - Yes. Really also, someone would capture or create that for me, but yeah.

GM31 - So the question.....?

P31 - Well, I don't think now that would happen, and I think you know, the fairly tale ending and, after about 16 or 17 there was that belief in the fair tale, and then there was, in the last year of high school, we did philosophy, and that's where the meaning of life emerged for a real question of what I was doing where I want to go. The fairly tale lying dead, I've got to choose where I want to go, and what to think. That kind of stirred it up the most, what's the meaning of life and what am I here for, all these questions. They ..... leave the fairly tale now, what's the meaning of life. You know, and then for some time I thought I probably had it, but that was then (Laughs).

GM32 - Can I ask you one more question? It's a very general question that you've touched on in a lot of different ways, but in case there's anything you want to add, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P32 - Really difficult. .... I was homeless for a long time, and I had this feeling that I wanted a home, and there was nowhere to go back to that. And that's really the main ....

GM33 - How do you cope with that? Still, if I've understood you, living with that longing for home, yet it really isn't .....?

P33 - Well, I think a lot, now like, now I don't feel that way anymore. And I think what's stopped that to a large extent was it was maybe having my own place here, two years ago my parents bought a flat here, so that's why I moved, and that felt, you know I put my bags down and think this is it, (I don't fit in anywhere any more?) (Laughs). You know, it feels like home, it's not the home I dreamt of, so I've been here and would like it to be, but it's, I don't feel homeless, I don't feel that, there's a kind of home in Paris, there is more of that family and familiarity and there's a home here that is more about my own life, ..... and but when I studied here I had a worthwhile ..... and that was the centre of my universe, this place became so much like home. Yes, every now

and then there's in certain places and people that really becomes in the centre, the kind of, centre. ....

GM34 - The last think I'd like to ask is just what does it feel like to be talking about these things?

P34 - Um, Very intimate. Because I didn't, I didn't think very much ....., I didn't even question..... around, so. It's still strange, because I'm familiar living in other ..... so it's sort of, I've .....yeah, I'm not sure .....

GM35 - So, you're talking about these things, you're not.....?

P35 - Yes, it's more a feeling of having more of who I am, and it's not, you know, I could look at it and think well, you know, you're investigating one subject, and you want information about that, and you know, the kind of, subjective, or very pragmatic, or you know, ..... I'll share it with you, and I'll go away and it's well enough, and it doesn't feel like that, it doesn't feel like I've just ..... and that feels a bit strange.

GM36 - That it's somehow more of a straight exchange of information?

P36 - In a way it's more like ....

GM37 - (Laughs.) Can I ask just one more thing? If I've understood your story very generally, it sounds as though when you were young you had this sense that you needed to get out in order to be free, that somehow you were different, and other people thought you were different, and you had a longing to be free. Before you had the chance to act on that, your family moved and as a consequence of that you then kind of, started with years of moving around, as did your parents, so your kind of physical home became less located for a while. And the way you talk about that now, it's not so much now, but until then, it sounds as though your experience was that you never really found the place where you completely belonged, and even kind of, started, you never really had a language where you belonged, ..... so I'm imagining that you're in the world, kind of not, until now having your own flat and your parents returning to Paris and kind of, a combination of that, or trying to recreate some grounding of home or something, but until that happened, that you were in the world without a home, very much, with no home in the world?

P37 - Yes.

GM38 - But now you have some sense of being home again? And its related to having your own place here and your family kind of, being together in one place?

P38 - It's more than that, it's having a sense of direction and having people who are important to me and feel that I'm important to them here. It's knowing that people are around me, and having a sense of even the way I don't see them, they're around. I can have a sense of them. I think for some time, even a few years ago I remember feeling I know intellectually that these people, there are people around me if I need them, or that I was feeling very much alone and there was no sense of connection when they were not physically present. And that kind of, that's a great part of feeling at home as well.



GM39 - So, is what you are saying is that you in some ways kind of, finally found or developed what you were looking for in your home life?

P39 - I think I've developed something like what I was looking for, but not the..

GM40 - Not the whole thing?

P40 - And you know, what I was looking for was just, I didn't really know, and it kept changing, but really strange, and if I go back 10 years, 10 years ago, yes, I would say that I've developed what I've been looking for. Certainly going in the right direction.

GM41 - So some kind of direction?

P41 - Yes, that is important, yes.

GM42 - Is there anything else that you want to add? Feel I should have asked? Anything that's occurred to you?

P42 - No. I don't think so. (we laugh).

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## **“Francois/Valerie” Meaning Units**

**The circumstances of your leaving home:**

1. It wasn't me leaving, but my family moving from Paris to Tokyo, that was the beginning of it, home disintegrating.
2. We moved in my last year of high school but my older brother stayed in Paris and that was the beginning of the dispersal of home.
3. The feeling of home, the house we had and how it worked with the family all together, dispersed, not fell apart, because I graduated from high school and returned to Paris but not to that house. It was all new, no parents and friends around, it wasn't home.
4. Then I returned to Japan, going through difficult times and being alone.

**Some kind of process started in your family?**

1. It changed the family dynamics and the way I could be.
2. It was a safe environment but I didn't have much space or much of a voice.
3. My brothers made more noise and that felt protective but it changed when I lived on my own with my parents in Japan, I was more confronted with having to interact with them.
4. The expectation was that I would return to Paris to study because we're French.
5. There is a competitive thing about which school and which path you choose and making the right choice seemed so important.
6. There was no space for taking a year out and thinking about things, there was an urgency to keep going but I knew I'd end up back in Japan.
7. I was unable to cope in Paris, living alone and studying, and became anorexic and had to return to my parents.
8. I've never looked at the connection of the eating disorder and leaving home but it's a feeling that comes back of wanting to go home, to a space where I belonged and felt comfortable and connected but that space was gone.
9. In retrospect I feel I mostly had that up to about 16, with imperfections, not exactly as I imagine it ideally.

**What was it like leaving home with your parents?**

1. We had left before, when I was 5 we went to the US for 9 months and when I was 13 we left again for a year.
2. When I was 5 I remember preparing to leave and living with my grandparents for a while.
3. When I was 13 it was different, I had friends I had to leave but it was exciting and maybe we carried home with us.
4. We were still all together and it felt we travelled with that cohesion so it was different when I was 17 and we left my brother behind, that seemed different but not because I missed him or wanted him with us.
5. The biggest thing was getting through the last year of high school because that meant I had to think about my own life and it was difficult and troubled me to be growing up and it not working out as I wanted.

**I wanted to leave home anyway**

1. When I was 15 or 16 I wanted to leave home, to move away from my parents and have my own house and garden.
2. I wanted to leave because they were not protecting me from growing up.
3. I was on my own with my anxiety, they weren't very good at actively providing the feeling of home, especially my mother.

4. They weren't reassuring and that's what I equate home with.
5. I went from Paris to Japan and then to the UK for treatment and returned to Japan but my parents weren't there and that didn't work well so I returned to the UK.
6. My parents were living in various places and I went to Asia for 3.5 years after finishing my degree in the UK.
7. During this time my parents were very supportive and we were always in touch and would meet when possible.
8. Now they are back in Paris with my brother and his baby so there's much more sense of home recreated there again because they're all there and see each other more.
9. With time our relationship has really improved.

What's it like to have a home recreated again in Paris?

1. I really like it, partly because my mother is much happier again being there.
2. It's strange because it's a home recreated but I'm not part of it.
3. They sold our house we grew up in and built a new one large enough for the whole family and a small flat in Paris.
4. There's not much space to visit them there and I felt I was betraying them when I went with a boyfriend and we stayed in a hotel.
5. It felt like I'm home but I'm not home.
6. I felt I was resenting him a bit because I was going home but I couldn't stay with my parents.
7. When I was last in Paris I felt for the first time in about 10 years that maybe I could live there again.
8. When I was 18 I felt I could never live there, I thought French people were too narrow-minded and so concerned with what you'd read or seen, all kinds of social and political expectations in order to belong.
9. I felt I didn't want to play along with that and I felt I just couldn't.
10. So the easier option was to choose to study in an international university in Japan.

Feelings of being in Paris

1. I think the quality of life is better and the city is beautiful and maybe I could live here.
2. Even socially, with family and friends, I would maybe have an easier time than in London.
3. But I also have precious important friends here but they are more recent relationships and not so familiar, and in a way require more work.
4. That's part of the feeling of being there, it's less work.
5. I've noticed when I'm with a foreigner there I feel France is my country and I identify a lot with the French people, but when I'm with French people I feel definitely like a foreigner.
6. More and more, if I can feel at home I don't mind being a foreigner.
7. Being a foreigner is a label that comes from the outside and one can be different and be accepted.
8. Language can present a problem, an obstacle that's unsatisfying. Neither my English or French is really fluent.
9. The feeling of home is feeling accepted for being me.
10. Now I couldn't just pick up where I left off in Paris because all the places I've lived are now a part of me too.

11. I'm a jigsaw of different places and cultures, my mother is Vietnamese so I'm not completely French.

#### **My mother's foreignness**

1. My impression is that my dealt with her difference by negating her Vietnamese side.
2. She never made her culture important to us when we were growing up.
3. I think she just kind of decided that she was French and that was easier.
4. Up to primary school I didn't even see her as different physically, racially, from French people. She was like any French mom to me and I find that interesting.
5. I didn't know her first name for a long time because it was a Vietnamese name and it didn't fit with a French girl going to a French school being French.
6. There was a difference that was just not talked about, like fitting in meant being homogenous.
7. Maybe I find London easier because there are so many non-English here and everybody's different so we are all kind of the same by all being different.

#### **Being the odd person out**

1. At a Christmas party in California I really felt like I was different, the one foreigner and everyone else was all the same.
2. That experience really bothered me I think I felt inferior.
3. Everyone fit in, they knew each other.
4. Visibly they were all part of the picture, all dressed the same, spoke the same, all so nice.
5. I felt like a broken jigsaw, the odd person of bits and pieces, not really coming from anywhere, born here, lived here, moved there.
6. I don't really feel bad about it until a situation when it really stands out and I'm uncomfortable with it.
7. I really feel I was coming from a different planet.
8. I was speaking English but we were still not speaking the same language and that had to do with their way of being with each other, more form than content.
9. I used to having some kind of real content or sincerity in communication but there is was so predetermined by forms or idioms and I was out of that.
10. At some point it's not inferiority, just really frustrating. Not being able to access those codes and being left out.

#### **When you were young, what was it that really made you want to leave?**

1. One of the first things that comes to mind is that I wanted to be free.
2. In the middle of my family I felt like I was living a secret life and no one was interested in me.
3. There was a desire not to have to protect me when I was growing up.
4. I wasn't very happy in the situation and I thought that moving out would change that, which in some ways seems crazy.
5. I thought I was different and people were experiencing me as slightly odd or different.
6. There was always something very unsatisfying about life as it was. I think I was believing a fairy tale for a long time.
7. It was like that up to the point where I really had to decide where I wanted to be but I thought I would be safe from that, it wouldn't happen to me, I wouldn't have to grow up and fear things.
8. Like someone would create that kind of place for me, that would be almost like a fairy tale.

9. I don't believe in the fairy tale ending now and in high school studying philosophy the meaning of my life emerged as a question for me.
10. That kind of stirred things up the most, asking what's the meaning of life and what am I here for?

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. Really difficult.
2. I was homeless for a long time and I had this feeling that I wanted a home and there was no way back to that. And that's a main issue for me.
3. I don't really feel like that now that my parents bought a flat here. I put my bags down and think this is it.
4. It feels like home but isn't the home I dreamed of, though I'd like it to be.
5. I don't feel homeless anymore, there's a kind of home with family and familiarity in Paris, and there is a home here that's more about my own life, and studying here, this place became so much like home.
6. Every now and then in certain places and with certain people it really becomes like a centre for me.

Now there is a sense of home again

1. Having my own place and my parents back in Paris is important but more than that, my sense of being at home in the world is about having my own sense of direction and having people who are important to me and who I am important to.
2. Knowing people are around me is important, having a sense of them even when I don't see them, feeling the connection even when they are not physically around.
3. I feel I've developed something of what I was looking for in a home but not the whole thing.
4. What I was looking for was a bit uncertain and it kept changing, but I have developed certainly in the right direction of what I was looking for.

What does it feel like to be talking about these things?

1. Very intimate.
2. Some of these things I don't think very much about at the moment, don't really question them.
3. It's a bit strange, a feeling of having more of who I am.
4. I could look at it pragmatically as you wanting information on one topic and I'll share it with you and then go away and it doesn't feel like I've just told you such important intimate things and that feels a bit strange, almost like an exchange of information.

(Review of P's story, good as there are blanks on the tape: If I've understood your story very generally, it sounds as though when you were young you had this sense that you needed to get out in order to be free, that somehow you were different, and other people thought you were different, and you had a longing to be free. Before you had the chance to act on that, your family moved and as a consequence of that you then kind of, started with years of moving around, as did your parents, so your kind of physical home became less located for a while. And the way you talk about that now, it's not so much now, but until then, it sounds as though your experience was that you never really found the place where you completely belonged, and even kind of, started, you never really had a language where you belonged. I'm imagining that you're in the world, kind of not, until now having your own flat and your

parents returning to Paris and kind of, a combination of that, or trying to recreate some grounding of home or something, but until that happened, that you were in the world without a home, very much, with no home in the world?) P confirms that this is correct understanding.

**I didn’t leave home, home left me:**

1. It was my family moving to Tokyo that was the beginning of home disintegrating.
2. My stayed behind and it was the beginning of home dispersing.
3. It didn’t fall apart, the combination of the house and the family separated and just dispersed the feeling of home.
4. I mostly had the feeling of belonging at home and feeling comfortable, with imperfections, until I was 16 and we moved away.
5. We had moved and travelled a lot and it always felt like we carried home with us, there was cohesion, but this time we left my brother behind and it wasn’t I missed him but I realised I had to begin to think about my own life, growing up (P was next in line).

**What home life was like:**

1. The whole family dynamics changed when we moved, which changed the way I could be.
2. My brothers’ noise was a protective buffer between my parents and me and without that I was confronted with having to interact with my parents more.
3. Home felt like a safe environment but I didn’t have much space or much of a voice.
4. When I was 15-6 I wanted to leave home, to move away from my parents and have my own home because they weren’t protecting me from growing up.
5. I felt alone with my anxiety because they weren’t very good at reassuring me, actively providing the feeling of home, especially my mother.
6. My relationship with my parents has really improved over time.

**Difficulties growing up:**

1. The biggest thing at the time was that it was the last year of high school and I had to think about my life and growing up, which troubled me because it was not working out as I wanted.
2. There was no space for taking a year out and thinking about what to do, there was an urgency to keep going.
3. The expectation was I would return to Paris to study because we were French and there is competition to get into the right school and choosing the right path seemed so important.
4. I returned to Paris but to a different house, it wasn’t home and no parents or friends around and I was unable to cope and became anorexic.
5. I knew I would end up returning to Japan before I even left and it was a very difficult time and I felt very alone.

6. I haven't connected the eating disorder and leaving home, but the feeling I get is of wanting to go home, to a space where I belong and feel comfortable and connected but that space doesn't exist any more.
7. I went to the UK for treatment and to finish my degree, then to Asia for 3.5 years going yoga.
8. Although they were travelling too, my parents were always supportive during this time, kept in touch, and we met whenever possible.

### **Home recreated in Paris:**

1. My parents are back in Paris, my brother has a baby there, so there's more a sense of home there again with them seeing each other more.
2. It's strange because it's a home recreated but I'm not part of it.
3. They built a new house there and bought a little apartment in the city and it felt like I'm home but I'm not home.
4. I really like that this is re-established, partly because my mother is much happier living there again and that's important to me.
5. I felt like I was betraying my parents when I visited with my boyfriend and there wasn't enough room so we stayed in a hotel, and I was resenting my boyfriend because I was home but couldn't stay with my parents.

### **Thoughts of living in Paris again?**

1. When I was last in Paris I felt for the first time in about 10 years that maybe I could live there again.
2. When I was 18 I felt I could never live there, because I just couldn't play along with French people being so narrow-minded and so concerned with what you'd read or seen, and all kinds of social and political expectations in order to belong.
3. So the easier option was to choose to study in an international university in Japan but now part of the feeling of being in Paris is it's less work than London.
4. Socially, with family and friends, I might have an easier time there and the quality of life is better and the city is beautiful.
5. I also have important friends here but they are more recent, less familiar relationships and require more work.
6. I know I couldn't just pick up where I left off in Paris because I've been changed by all the places I've lived in, they are all a part of me too now.

### **My mother's foreignness:**

1. I think my mother dealt with her difference by negating her Vietnamese side.
2. She never made her culture important to us when we were growing up.
3. I think she just kind of decided that she was French and that was easier.
4. Up to primary school I didn't even see her as different physically, racially, from French people. She was like any French mom to me and I find that interesting.
5. I didn't know her first name for a long time because it was a Vietnamese name and it didn't fit with a French girl going to a French school being French.



6. There was a difference that was just not talked about, like fitting in meant being homogenous.

### **My foreignness:**

1. Maybe I find London easier because there are many non-English here and everyone's different so we are all kind of the same by all being different.
2. Language can present a problem, an obstacle that's unsatisfying. Neither my English or French is really fluent.
3. I've noticed when I'm with a foreigner there I feel France is my country and I identify a lot with the French people, but when I'm with French people I feel definitely like a foreigner.
4. Being a foreigner is a label that comes from the outside and one can be different and be accepted.
5. More and more, if I can feel at home I don't mind being a foreigner.
6. The feeling of home is feeling accepted for being me.
7. I'm a jigsaw of different places and cultures, my mother is Vietnamese so I'm not completely French.
8. At a Christmas party in California I really felt like I was different, the one foreigner and everyone else was all the same, which doesn't bother me until a situation when it really stands out and I'm uncomfortable with it and I think I feel inferior.
9. Everyone else there fit in, they knew each other, dressed the same, spoke the same, and were visibly all part of the picture.
10. I felt like a broken jigsaw, the odd person of bits and pieces, not really coming from anywhere, born here, lived here, moved there.
11. I really feel I was coming from a different planet.
12. I was speaking English but we were still not speaking the same language and that had to do with their way of being with each other, more form than content, I was left out of their style of communicating.
13. At some point it's not inferiority, just really frustrating. Not being able to access those codes and being left out.

### **Leaving home as an escape from growing up?**

1. I wasn't very happy at home and I thought moving out would change that and I'd be free, which I really wanted.
2. In the middle of my family I felt like I was living a secret life, I thought I was different or odd, and no one was interested in me.
3. There was always something unsatisfying about life as it was, it didn't match the ideal or fairy tale that I believed in.
4. I thought I would be protected from having to decide about life, grow up, have to deal with things, but they didn't want to have to protect me when I was growing up.
5. I thought that someone would create that kind of fairy tale place for me.
6. Studying philosophy in high school, and asking questions about the meaning of life and what am I here for really stirred things up and I don't believe in the fairy tale now.

### **What's it been like since leaving home?**

7. Really difficult, I was homeless for a long time and I had this feeling that I wanted a home and there was no way back to that. And that's a main issue for me.

### **An emerging sense of home:**

1. I don't really feel homeless now that my parents bought me a flat here. I put my bags down and think this is it.
2. It feels like home but isn't the home I dreamed of, though I'd like it to be.
3. I don't feel homeless anymore, there's a kind of home with family and familiarity in Paris, and there is a home here that's more about my own life, and studying here, this place became so much like home.
4. Every now and then in certain places and with certain people it really becomes like a centre for me.
5. Having my own place and my parents back in Paris is important but more than that, my sense of being at home in the world is about having my own sense of direction and having people who are important to me and who I am important to.
6. Knowing people are around me is important, having a sense of them even when I don't see them, feeling the connection even when they are not physically around.
7. I feel I've developed something of what I was looking for in a home but not the whole thing.
8. What I was looking for was a bit uncertain and it kept changing, but I have developed certainly in the right direction of what I was looking for.

### **Feelings of the interview:**

1. It has felt very intimate.
2. I don't think about some of these things much at the moment.
3. It's a bit strange, a feeling of having more of who I am.
4. I could look at it pragmatically as you wanting information on one topic and I'll share it with you and then go away and it doesn't feel like I've just told you such important intimate things and that feels a bit strange, almost like an exchange of information.

**2. The disintegration of home:**

- Moving the family unit from a known home to a foreign place, without one family member, can affect the previous cohesiveness of the feeling of home.
- The combination of house and family can hold the feeling of home.
- Being able to carry the feeling of home while a family travels may be linked to the age of the children and their dawning realisation of the need to find their own way in life.
- Family members leaving home can affect the whole family dynamic, making new demands on remaining family members.

**3. Relationship with parents:**

- Siblings can form a protective barrier between parents and a quieter child trying to avoid parental interaction.
- A home environment can feel safe for a child even when she does not have the space she needs or the ability to speak up for herself.
- Without efforts to actively reassure children when they are faced with making their first decisions about steps in life, the child may feel alone with their anxiety and feel the need to find protection from life outside the family home.
- Although P felt like leaving home because her parents were not actively protecting her from growing up, especially her mother, this relationship improved later in life when P had learned to provide some of her needs for herself.
- Some children expect their parents to be able to protect them from ever having to grow up and accept responsibility for their own lives.
- Even when geographically distant, parental contact and visits can feel very supportive to a child undergoing a difficult transition into adulthood.

**4. Having to confront growing up:**

- Leaving a home that does not live up to an ideal image can be seen as a step toward freedom, especially if the home environment is not providing a buttress against the demands of growing up.
- P was a middle child, between boys, and she felt she was different or odd, living a secret life that no one was interested in knowing about.
- Being exposed to philosophical life questions can lead to giving up on being rescued from the responsibilities of creating one's own life, and facilitates growing out of childhood's fairy tales about life.
- It can be troubling to feel responsible for one's life and to feel that it's not working out and there is no time or space to consider options.

- Choosing the right path in life can be presented as of utmost importance and urgency, partly because of how it would look to others.
- Dealing with the pressures of early adulthood responsibilities for ones life can be made more difficult without social and family support and without a familiar environment.
- Eating disorders may be connected to coping alone with these difficult situations and anorexia may be one manifestation of the feelings of needing a comfortable space where one feels belonging and knowing that such a space no longer exists.
- P was able to find a way to navigate these issues, finishing a degree before choosing an unconventional path by living in Asia studying yoga practice.

#### 5. Hidden parental foreignness:

- If a mother hides her own foreign heritage, not teaching her culture to her children but adopting the host culture instead, her children may not even recognise her cultural difference or even her physical difference (racial appearance).
- Not talking about difference in this way can give the message that fitting in means being homogenous and can have a significant effect on ones children.

#### 6. P's experience of foreignness:

- Feeling foreign is most uncomfortable when one feels like the only one who is different, sticking out as not belonging, feeling inferior, feeling frustrated at not understanding the subtle queues of a homogenous group, even when ostensibly the same language is being spoken.
- This experience of foreignness can be so extreme ad alienating that one begins to feel they don't even belong on the same planet.
- Not being fluent in any language any longer can affect one's sense of belonging anywhere and it can be easier to live in places where there are many non-native speakers so that one belongs in this shared difference.
- One's feeling of foreignness is comparative – feeling less foreign around someone who is more foreign than oneself and feeling more foreign around someone who is totally native, even in the place one grew up. In this case, to some extent the experience of being a foreigner is supported by one's own assumptions and comparisons.
- Being a foreigner can also be a label applied from the outside and it is possible to be different and be accepted.
- If one feels at home in the place, the experience or label of being a foreigner may be easier to accept.
- P has not homogenised herself as her mother attempted to do, instead, she feels herself like a jigsaw, sometimes broken, a mixture of places, cultures, an odd person of bits and pieces from nowhere.

#### 7. Home recreated but never the same:

- Having parents and family together in one place again can rekindle a feeling that there is a home again even if one is not located there oneself, though it can feel a bit strange, home and not-home.
- Staying with parents in their home, when visiting, can feel more important than staying with a partner in another place. This may have implications for the theme of growing up?

#### 8. Thoughts of returning home (home city):

- P's feeling that she could never live in Paris again has finally softened because for a long time it seemed like too much work living there and coping with narrow-mindedness and expectations, but now it seems like it could be easier to live there with family and friends and a better quality of life.
- Old friendships can be more alluring than even precious recent friendships because they have a deeper familiarity and therefore require less work.
- P realises she could not return to her home city and pick up as the same person as in the past, she has been changed by all she's experienced in places she's lived since.

#### 9. An emerging sense of home:

- Despite difficult years of feeling without a home in the world, and now feeling she could live in her home city again, P has settled in her flat here and committed herself to study and work.
- It is possible to have a sense of home in a place that is not the home of one's dreams, while not giving up on making it that.
- P is able to feel at home in the world through a combination of her family home being re-established and her own life revolving around her own home and social support.
- At certain times, with certain people and in certain places, P is able to feel at the centre of her life, and her studies and own life direction have been an important part of feeling at home in the world.
- Knowing people are around who are important to one and to whom one is important, and feeling connected to their lives even when they are not present is an important part of a sense of home.
- P feels she has developed something in the direction of what she was looking for in the sense of home, but not everything, and what was sought changed over time anyway.

#### 10. Feelings of the interview:

- Reviewing a life story centred on the issue of home can feel very intimate.

- Although P does not tend to think of these issues much at this point in her life, she found that the interview gave her a feeling of having more of who she is.
- P can think of the interview pragmatically as sharing information for a study on this topic as a way of minimising the feeling of having said such important intimate things to the interviewer.

## **“Graciella”**

**GM1 - So, could you begin just by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?**

**P1 - Circumstances? Why I left? What was happening when I left?**

**GM2 - Why you left, what was happening, when you left.**

**P2 - I was 18, I had just turned 18 and I left in May and my birthday was in November, and in Argentina you can't leave the country until you are 18. I left I couldn't... and I had a permit from my parents to go to Uruguay because my grandparents had a house there, so you know, it was OK for me to go by myself. And also I went, in my country .... with my grandparents... I think that I was just 14 .... I was really counting the minutes and I wanted to go always. And it was quite, I think the main push was a broken heart, because I broke up with a boyfriend that I was living with when I was told that he was... and he had just come back from 2 years of living in the States, in Boston, and I was always very, I had friends that had travelled in ... and had friends that been in India, and I always knew that I wanted to go somewhere else. And when I broke up with this guy it was sort of like, he was about 26 when I was with him, so I wanted to show him that I could do it too, and I felt like that I had no, I went back into my mum's house, .... a child and I hadn't lived there since I was 15 because I left my parents house, ... so, and I felt like, and I had a little kitten that I really loved that I found on the door of my house when I left for my mother's house, I was coming back and I saw this little rat there, and I thought it was a dead rat, and I came close and it was like, eyes closed, and all of a sudden when she felt heat, she just was like aaaaaah, and all her body was screaming and there was still this little sound coming out, but I took her and I nursed her, and she was like my little baby, and I was nursing her ...she opened her eyes, and I left her with my mother. And I often dream of her, and this was the first time.... I often dream of her and my dreams are always that she's ill and I can't take care of her, or she, like just recently I dreamt that I had to go, I went on a trip, and while I was on this trip I dreamed that I had left her with friends at home somewhere, and that she was very sick, she was very ill because I wasn't there. And, there is something, I think she was like a kind of, something, that I sacrificed.**

**GM3 - Something that you kind of left behind?**

**P3 - Yes. And something very, she is always, even in my dreams, and actually she is very big and fat, but in my dreams she's this little kitten and I went to the States because I was a dancer and I went to Trinidad for two months, but I didn't speak any English because I always speak French. Argentinean are not very, I mean the class that I came from, where my parents were, you know, where I lived, and they were involved with the liberation movement in Argentina, so people around me, .... so I never learned English because I also felt I never want to speak English, I want to speak French, and so the fact that I came one day and said I'm going to the States, to New York, for 2 months, my grandfather just freaked out and he was like, but I'll pay for your English school, you know, you must prepare yourself, and I knew that if I didn't do it then, I would never do it. And I was like, no, no, no, and I had just finished, I was like, I always wanted to finish things. I finished High School, and two years of university, and at the same time because of the ..... in Argentina. And I finished up, I still came out... recognised ...**

and my family wanted to me go on studying, biochemistry you know, and there was already a conflict with the family, because I studied sociology and my grandfather said that if I wanted to ... I should go the university that he wanted me to go, which was a private university which I was not interested in. And he wanted me to join the family business, .....in biochemistry ... and I was not interested in that, and he was putting on a lot of pressure. And a year before that, no, 7 months before I left they took me to ... and they worked for 3 months in ..... that is when I saw that there was a world, and I need to be here, I need to be in airports and I need to be jumping a flight... and, so I left for 2 months with the ticket to come back in 2 months, and when the 2 months up was going to be over I was in New York, I had continued in the chorus, and I called my mum, and I said, there's no way I'm coming back. And I always remember, I always talk about this like, there was one moment deciding which was to hear her swallowing, and it was also like, there was this moment, and then when she spoke again, she said, I understand, and she would support me, I was the first to do that. And they supported me until last year and I'm paying rent. I won't go into any more about that but, that was my mum and my dad .....

So I left, and I came back two years later, and it was a shock to everyone and I came back after having been in ... and India, and in Europe, and ..... and then I just kept on going. Most of the year I tried things to work there, connecting, I was ..... so I could go ..... But my name is [name] actually, which means strangers, foreigners, and is ..... wonderful in Argentina.

GM4 - ....beautiful and wonderful?

P4 - Yes, it was like .... not many people. It's not our routine, so I stayed at my parents house, and they had high expectations, and high expectations together with the notion of foreigner, foreign name, because they barred, they barred [name] one day, foreigners, so high expectations with foreign name and, and a kind of wildness. That's when I think of there was a content..... of the fantasy that ..... and I think that ....

GM5 - That those things were actually a part of your inheritance, [P4a- yes, my karma] those things were actually a part of your, almost born with them?

P5 - I think so. My karma, or my ... I think that conception is a very intense thing and what's happening from the moment of conception is ... together, and I say that, you know, yes, I do think that this last journey has been for me it had to do with that, with working through some things, and I think that finding home. It's strange cause no one can say my name. I say [name, correct pronunciation] and it's worse because they say [imitates people trying to say her name] and say 'are you Persian?' and I say no. And when I say that I'm Argentinean, if I'm in a new environment, and if I'm in a not so friendly mind, I receive quite a, not very nice reaction from people. And I had an Indian name, cause I ... in India, and my Indian name was... And after that I was thinking why don't you actually call yourself something that people can pronounce? Something that people can call me and I was talking with my friends and should I call myself 'Barb' or then we were joking and saying 'Barbie?'. But really, really ...



GM6 – What would that be like for you to change your name?

P6 – I've changed my name all the time, I've been [], I've been [] in the states, I've been [] in Germany, I've been [] in French, I've been [] in ..., and now I'm [], so my name changes constantly. I don't really mind what people call me, but I wish they would call me [name in native pronunciation] because that's who I am. When I changed my name to [ ] in India, I really felt that [native name] was not anymore needed. So I, but now also, especially sometimes, it feels complicated, people have ideas about why I should change my name or why I shouldn't. They're happy with calling me whatever they think is my name however they pronounce it, and ... when I do paperwork, I'm part Italian, when I think it's possible I have to go to the Italian embassy, um, what I mind is, what I mind is the need of people to understand, I don't like that, the need to pretend (?) we know who I am. The things that people think already when they hear my name, I think that's horrible. That's what keeps me alive, because I'm not interested, I don't go there, and sometimes, it's really something that I'm realising more and more, which is, um, I used to be a much more ... but now more and more I don't want to be kind of like I don't want people to handle me. Like and I toy with this, like if they are a different culture, but with me I am somewhere else, I am there also, interacting, but I keep myself very private. And I am terribly hungry ... to go back home, I mean home, is I had people who I met from Argentina, who think that they know me because I am from Argentina too. And when I express that, when I moved first to London, I could see how much they had built up this picture, or assumptions about how I should feel, or even my accent is not very sometimes, not very traceable. And also ...

GM7 – Can I ask something here? You said a lot of very interesting things and I'd like to ask a bit about all of it, um, but I'd like to just go back to when you were talking about growing up and you said that at the age of 18, you were just waiting, [yes] you knew, [yes] you wanted to ... but you also linked it to the relationship with your boyfriend [yes] ... But I wonder if before that, when you were younger, up until the age of 15 or so, did you think you might just always stay in Argentina, just stay and live there?

P7 – I was always, I thought I would go away for a few years and come back, like my day dream, one of my day dreams, was me coming back ... um, ...

GM8 – A day dream more of returning back?

P8 – Yes, yeah. I also think that is a statement to my parents. I think about it and I can't believe that to make a statement to them, can be so constant that it defines my life so drastically, but maybe yes.

GM9 – So it could be that it's partly that and partly something else?

P9 – Yes. (pause) There are two moments in which I think I left Argentina, that because, one time is ... the other time is, all the time I grew up I grew up in a big city. And at one point I was kind of disgusted by the people, the heat, the ... and I went to

the mountains and I was there 6 months, and um, I really really loved it and when I left, I mean it was crazy I was too young, so my mom said I should come back to the city and I also had a job and when I arrived I cried all the way and I saw myself on top of the mountains and it was as if my soul was trying to chase me. But I know that that for me was being left behind, that part of me, and I think that when I left I was still trying to find myself to find answers to, ... like my family was very dismembered, I have a very large family, and two sets of parents, because my parents were married two times to people, my mother ... I have 6 parents, I have my ... the whole environment in which I was born was very confusing, my parents... but each family was still very disconnected. It was something about wanting to look, everything was going in different directions and it was like, OK, I want to figure this out. I didn't know anything about what was going to happen to me or, or I didn't have any ... and I think that my ... And there was this idea to integrate to make life more, um...

GM10 – So the journey to India was actually an attempt or a hope to find your whole self?

P10 – Yeah. I don't know if I thought that, if I thought that ... but maybe yes... Now retrospectively I think that the moment was more unconscious than that. And this thing that, you know, ...

GM11 – OK, yes, but if I've understood you, there seems there was kind of two kind of sides to your journey. One was your leaving was somehow a statement to your family or your parents, [yes] and also that whatever you had left you experienced as leaving something behind, [yes] you experienced yourself as ... so there's that whole experience on the one hand, but on the other hand, you said that also this other thing happened when you went to Italy, there's this whole world out there, there's airports, there's travelling, [yes] that sounded like there was something quite positive there [yes].

P11 – Yes, almost like perspective. Yes, there's perspective, like gaining perspective. Like I'm in a big world. And it gave me perspective. I would have an argument with my mom and not with my dad then with my dad and not my mom and it was kind of like getting perspective, like (deep sigh) like 'I can fly' (laughs). I can be who I want in-between, I realised that. Instead of being in nowhere. I started travelling with my mom and my dad because they were ... now they are friends. I was travelling by myself when I was 6 or 7, but I was sick of travelling already. And my dad would tell me about my mom and back and forth and I always got my way, I could say the other one told me, because they weren't together, to get what I wanted... I also basically had my own way. And if I said dad said then mom would have to agree, like, but in-between, sometimes I would go, like even when I was 12 I started saying goodbye to mommy and then going to daddy on a Friday and then going to dad on Friday afternoon and in-between, ... I was on my own, and with my friends, ... very early on I started developing my own, I knew what I wanted to do with that space, and I think I started to experiment with who I am, outside of that, because with mom, I would be young, I would know what she wants from me, but with dad, it would be different, my mom wanted me to be elegant and beautiful, and my dad wanted me to be a child, and my mom was, it was important to her that I did honour to that economic stance, the... and my dad was like very worldly and it was very important to him that I didn't get corrupted by mother's comfort, it was

important to him even that I wouldn't go out for meals when I would hang out with him, and even wear... clothes, and hang out with him... and with my grandparents totally different. They were more conservative and more family oriented and um, would behave more childlike, and again I would never wear my hippy sandals to my grandparent's because that would offend them.

So I had to build up a quite, ah, I was a foreigner then already, and I remember this scene I was in the street with my little basket ... and I was by myself and it was a good feeling and also it was not a good feeling. I could decide what I wanted to do and hang out with who I wanted to do things with, but sometimes I wasn't sure where I was going, and sometimes, I was like a runaway, ... (laughs) that I haven't changed...

GM12 – (laughing) Yes, that you haven't changed really. It sounds really, like from a very early age, you had this experience of being, of being, slightly alienated from the different holds that you had, and each hold you couldn't be completely yourself, you had to be ... [yes] ... so in order to discover more of who you are you had to find a neutral ... an in-between space, where you could start to discover who you are without the pressure of anyone making demands... but the price of that it sounds like, was to kind of loose your grounding or home or something like that... [yes] ... but if I heard you correctly it is like it's still that way, in some way?...

P12 – Yes, I was grateful that I um, what I had. Home was not at home, but then there was this other element, I had a boyfriend and I always had a boyfriend, and when I was 15 I was... we had a place in the attic of my mom's house and we had our own kitchen and... but I always remember... What it means for me is that I always developed a very deep connection to the one-to-one, my relationships, that's why... [talks about relationships, but not audible]... I tend to meet guys ... like I say, I was raised by my boyfriends because I, feeling like I learned a lot from my ties to them...

GM13 – So when you think back to when you left home, now that we've talked about it a little bit, why do you think that you really left?

P13 – Because I was meant to. I mean I will answer that question with a question... Why did I have to be born in that situation, to those parents, I don't think why I left, I think what was the reason I was born there, because I think I was born there... that was what had to happen, it was my choice ... [inaudible]...

GM14 – So you wouldn't have been able not to leave?

P14 – No, just no. (wouldn't want to even contemplate that).

GM15 – So you were born to leave?

P15 – Yes. Yes, that was where I was born, where I was made to be born because I needed, I do think that I chose to grow up there, and I know that, I mean I can feel that,

there is something that I needed from there ... I needed that calling, that call, there was something that I had to do there, to be like a ... a butterfly ... [inaudible]...

GM16 – So you have a, a belief that you were born there, to get what you needed to go out into the world. [yes] so, what did you get that enabled you to go out?

P16 – Courage.

GM17 – Something about where you grew up gave you that courage?

P17 – Yes, I got the courage. And also the melancholy ... [inaudible] ... I lived in this house, and my grandparents, my... she was so old and she was ? and she would pack her bags and wait by the door, and I would say grandma what are you doing? [inaudible] she wanted to go back home.... Was melancholic... and I also needed the possibilities, not being from Europe, I needed a different perspective but also to be connected ... so there are many reasons [explains a bit about the economic realities of where she grew up but inaudible].

GM18 – [inaudible] ... that you had this core in order to leave, and I wondering if also you had ....

P18 – (laughing) ... I know, when will it stop? I'm ... I have to admit.

GM19 – Can I ask, what happens in you that sort of, all of a sudden you feel you've been in a place long enough and you ...

P19 – [inaudible section] ... One percent of that... one percent of that, but it touches me. Um, that's it. I can recall that I grew up... and I have... these are the things that are in my world, and I have a dream... If I go somewhere now I know how to get there, I have contacts ... [inaudible section again]... but these things also come to my world... is going to grow up, what am I going to do? How am I going to grow...

[tape changes, sound improves]

It's complicated.

GM20 – so it sounds like you still have this sort of, feeling that once you've set up a life, it's almost like you, like a sense that it's not enough, there's got to be something more to it [yes]. And so, you didn't say this, but I wonder if you go looking for 'the more', but what's complicating that at the moment is also this desire to settle enough to meet these other needs, or goals, having a family? Wondering how these two goals go together, wondering if that's what you're wondering?

P20 – I have no idea. Yes, and basically, I mean now I'm thinking of, I'm arguing that before the baby there's a creation prior to the baby, and what I'm thinking now is yes, the baby and the ... -baby, that's not from the excess of, from the food groups of your

production. And I never get there because I'm always fighting the survival. Know the place, make the contacts, finish the mission, you know, what I'm here for, it's always like, it's always very unsettling but I don't have the benefit of abundance, of saying I have free time to think and you know.

GM21 – and are you saying that that surplus might generate if you were to stay in one place?

P21 – Yes. ... and then you have more and more disillusion without the truth, when it starts going down I keep finding stones and then I say I accept that there are stones here, which is not a reason to leave, or I declare that actually this ground is rock. And I think that I keep thinking the ground is wrong.

GM22 – So do you have a sense of what would be the right ground for you?

P22 – Yes, it's ... when I was in India it's the only time that I thought this is the place, I just want to be here, there's nothing else I want. And I had a future and a future I cannot shake. My ticket was for one year and my ticket was expiring, and I was standing there. I had a flat and I was working there and I was learning what I wanted to learn, and he came and he shook me like this and he said you've got to go now cause otherwise you're going to be too late, you need to go now. And then quite confused I left and made so I could still use that ticket. I left. I know that was a question of life and death almost. It is a question of life or death, like I can choose life or I can choose death. I can stay here and die or I can keep on moving and live.

GM23 – so, how would staying have been like dying?

P23 – Um, because I, we are, I mean me, are such complex things, there are many components to me for instance, yet I'm happy in India but also I'm... so at a certain point, how long would I be happy there? I know I would want to have a profession, I would want to be able to make my own money, I would want, but I had my credit cards with my parents paying back home, I was getting money every month. But to me there was no working, there with the daughter and granddaughter and great granddaughter, and with a salary between the three, being comfortable there, but that was too short. It was going to turn around. And yet I was happy there. And yet I was ... but still when I found this gap between my mother and my father, it was possible to be left on the street with my little bag, and I had to, there were two opposites and if those opposites weren't there holding that tension, the gap disappears. So yes...

GM24 – It makes me wonder if, from what you've just said, if the question is not trying to live in the gap but being able to live because you know that there is a gap?

P24 – Yes.

GM25 – There can be a gap you can go to [yes] and that enables you to go on with...

**P25** – Yes, and also eventually when I think that I have ... the borders are, I don't know, the borders are not flexible, I'm ... that means there can be a dialogue between opposites, and that space at the top, sometimes it feels like there are 3 spaces, and that they confuse each other, but they can overlap each other that the one can be fluid, like, sometimes one goes into the other and the other goes into the other, and that ... sometimes it can flow without too much in one or the other there can be a fluidity. Not that I am there. But sometimes I think that this is maybe. Now physically, practically, I don't know what that may mean, what like geographically, like what part of the world that will be.

**GM26** – Where that would be?

**P26** – Yes.

[take quick break in taping]

**GM27** – You've obviously thought a lot about these things. What I'd like to ask you now is when you reflect on the time since leaving home, what's that been like for you? Those years since you left home at about the age of 18 or so?

**P27** - Hmm. (pause) [inaudible] I think that anything I would have imagined it wouldn't have been close, even near. (pause) I would never have imagined it. I didn't have anywhere to give me, with that, the imagination. I mean 10 years is a long time and I've changed a lot. I've really changed. I lived in New York and I made money there and I went to Holland and lived there, my step-sister is there, a relative, and she is two years older than me, and I went there because my visa for America expired after 6 months and I wanted to go to India, so, I also went to London... And then I had my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, and when I left home... then it was May of my 19<sup>th</sup>, not my, yes, yes there was a year there when I went to the mountains. And then I went to India, and going to parties ... [inaudible section]... That was like the main break, that was the change. It was, I loved to fly, and then I came back to Uruguay... I was very aware of some of my usual urges, and there was nothing really on offer... there was nothing to really express the longing. I had jobs during these times...

**GM28** – So what's that been like for you to have 10 years of travelling around quite a bit, settling in places, learning things, it sounds like you were looking for something, and it sounds like developing spiritually, when you look back over that as a period of time, what's it been like to you as a person to have these experiences?

**P28** – Its been good (laughs)... But not any more...

**GM29** – So there's an age limit on that?

**P29** – Yes, at 24 I was not a teenager anymore and I remember that happening, that after 24... basically, after 24 I was with this teacher and he was like twice my age and then I met and fell in love with a guy I knew before, and we were together for 4 years so I

basically went from 48 to just 20, so in terms of my boyfriends it reflects change. From a very high cloud, and then falling back and I'm just recalling all that...

GM30 – What do you mean by falling?

P30 – Um ... [inaudible] all of a sudden I realised that I didn't want my parents to support me. My family, the custom is to support the young daughter, and not so young anymore... I could have carried on if I wanted to.

GM31 – I'm wondering why you didn't want that, you've mentioned that a few times, like there's something about that that really bothers you?

P31 – Yes, because um, I wanted to, you know this thing of coming back, I wanted to be able to come back. And say thank you for the help, now I am on my own. I wanted to come back to close something, and I came back... and I wanted to come back as a woman.

GM32 – What did you want from that?

P32 – I mean the easiest to say is that I want recognition. Recognition what does that mean?

GM33 – Yes, recognition in what way?

P33 – There is something to do with the family and something to do with time. Um, well I'm not sure but something to do, however, I always... my mother broke that very strongly with a lot of struggle, taking a new feminine position outside of that patriarchal structure. She did a lot. She did wonderfully. She couldn't create something of her own, she had the courage to break through, and then she copied the same thing outside. Like the communists making a revolution and making the same thing. So she had her empire, where she, um, she is a matriarch but from my point of view lacking a bit, she was she is lacking, she's not lacking, she ... what she knows she knows from there... She has taken all the way the risks. She broke through and she stayed right outside the castle and then she made a similar one. The same one. And my grandmother on the other hand, she's very very ... she used to tell me 'oh you're doing nothing now, come and I'll teach you something useful, I'll teach you how to wash men's shirts'. She used to say do you know how to cook and I'd say no and she'd say, OK, follow me, and that was very important for her, I had to learn those things, and um, and my mother became a bit... when I lived with my mom I would do the cleaning, the cooking, she doesn't do anything of that, she totally reacted against that so badly, she went all the way over and this are my two most powerful worlds... so with my grandmother it was show me how to do cooking and washing and it was nothing to do with who I was outside ... and

GM34 – When I hear that it sounds again like you're finding a gap between two roles that have been presented, you can be a woman or a man, and you've said you're going

to go way out until you can come back on your own two feet [yes] in this kind of in-between way, a way that's created by you, is that right?

P34 – Yes. And the money thing is very important because my grandmother never had any money. Never, ever, and because of that she let herself be so humiliated by my grandfather and we grew up, because my mother is only ... years older than me, so we grew up in my grandparent's house and we saw how my grandfather would have a bad day at work, he worked downstairs in the house, he was always there, and he could come in in any moment, he had a big Doberman that... very sweet,... and my grandma would just have to, and then my mother... she had a younger husband but...

GM35 – So there's powerful feelings about dignity or being a woman, or how to be a woman, how you're allowed to be a woman I suppose [yes] and powerful themes of money [yes], themes of leaving and returning [yes]. It makes me wonder if you'll ever go back home?

P35 – (long pause) Hmmm. I don't know. I think about it sometimes.

GM 36 – Can I ask what it's like for me to ask you that, it looks like you went off... (P laughs) for a moment.

P36 – Because that's my question for the last 10 years, that's MY question. My calling, my mantra. I don't think about it. It's always there but I don't think about it. (pause) Cause I don't know and um, of course, now we are approaching at the border of what your area of interest it, because I will have to start talking about the economic crisis right now in Argentina and the possibility of going to work, supporting myself professionally, possibilities... I don't know if you know but its many deep crises and I don't think it will be one that's interesting. The possibility of even finding a nice husband. I always think, I never had a reason in the past... which is very strange because I always had an English-speaking , not just first language English but we would communicate in English. And I think oh it would be really nice to have someone who we speak the same language, tell me the same things my father used to tell me, or I could tell him the words my mother used to tell me when I was little.

GM37 – I wonder what that would mean to you, to be able to do that?

P37 – It would be wonderful, wonderful. I always feel that my, I think even I hide myself sometimes and say that no one understands me. In order to know how much that is true, I would need to experience a situation in which I could not say that.

GM38 – So an Argentinean boyfriend could really understand?

P38 – Of course not. I don't think so, but I wouldn't be able to say um, I don't know, for instance I said earlier how ... in my growing up and in my structure ... and I always felt that what they really wished for me and at the same time what they were attracted to, was, but also what annoyed them and what they wanted to change in me, was my



temperament, and I always, I was subliminally educated to be cold in the last years. And I feel something of my, I went out with a Mexican a while ago and she was talking and talking and I used to be like that. And I couldn't keep up with her, I felt so cold, so unresponsive, and I felt boring and behind, and trying too but I had to make an effort to keep up with her. I feel that something that's very much who I am, something coming out of my spontaneous place, it had to be domesticated here. Being [her name] and really wild, really wild.

GM39 – Really wild like your kitten.

P39 – Hmm. Yes, well I imagine that I also can avoid something that's a reflection of where I'm at with myself, on my outside or in my elements, or whatever you want, but that's the person who is holding me ... that is unique, and I think if I would meet someone who is from the same culture, if I can say that I have a culture, because I don't even know that, I mean yes I feel connected with [name of place] sometimes when I go there, I also feel a foreigner there, I mean I feel connected and I also feel a foreigner. I don't know if a person who was born there would be better, at least I wouldn't feel this, this desperation when I'm trying to explain to someone, things that are so fucking obvious. Like, I have to educate and this doesn't educate me and I get weaker and weaker trying to find a common ground, especially the relations between men and women are so different in Latin countries.

GM40 – Yes. It sounds as though there would be something attractive in being with an Argentinean man where you could at least take for granted a shared, even though there would be differences, some shared almost cultural understanding.

P40 – Yes. Like I say to someone ... I have a boyfriend now, whose English... I mean his English but he wasn't brought up here, and I say things like [] and he's from England so he doesn't, he has no clue about the relatives... its like if he would tell me [] and I would say 'who?', it would break his heart! He would understand after that that we're so disconnected. But I don't know about Romeo and Juliette, that I don't know about, you know it would be terrible. And those kinds of things I have to accept, that aspect of things I have to accept or take the time and educate him. But still it wouldn't be the same cause I'm giving that explanation, so it would be different.

GM41 – It reminds me about choosing to be born there, the consequence of that is this 'core' this core that you don't get unless you're born there and it sounds like there's something about being with someone else that has that core that finally at this point in your life you feel you really want. [Hmm, yes] And I'm wondering if there's some sense of 'home' in a relationship like that?

P41 – The thing is it's not very clear because considering my situation I will be, I would say I'm a bit isolated, I want to be out in the ... and sometimes I'm OK with that and sometimes that makes me sad. Mainly what I'm lonely for is to be with older people, not just, well one, but also people that can resonate with me, when you say the core what I imagine is one of these tuners of music that can (hums) and it's also a vibration

and when you vibrate and you are touching the same chord in people, it's beautiful the harmony. And that's what I want, terribly. I'm longing for it with every cell of my self, it would be wonderful... So would that be a person that was born in one country or another, in one century or another? Maybe yes, maybe not, maybe it would be someone that, well actually yes, well actually, it would, the person I'm with right now, he's helping me, and we're very different.

GM42 – For some reason that resonates when what's happening is difference, not just sameness?

P42 – Yes. Well, I think, a difference but in the same scale. Different notes but still they have to be tuned on the same scale. So yes, a difference but, part of the same tribe. You know when you meet people and you say they are from your own tribe and you just go like that (motions a coming together). You recognise the person as from your tribe, it happens, you see people passing by in nowhere, and you recognise each other, you come close to each other, you don't know what you're supposed to say but you just meet. (pause)

GM43 – Can I ask one final thing? What's it felt like to be talking about these things?

P43 – (pause) Well the thing is, I find this feeling unreal [?] and um, I think that having to ground myself, that's why when I arrived I was thinking how am I going to make any of this make sense? (laughs) I don't [inaudible] ... I kind of stunned myself by how, although you know you said it seems like you've thought about this a long time, I like to talk, I can talk, and I can think about colourful images... but actually I don't know if I really much think about these things, so that it feels real, I feel like dealing with the presence of struggling and putting all my energies towards the survival function which I call, which is breathing in and at the same time, keeping myself back and that kind of, and it takes an amazing amount of energy to do that.

GM44 – Yes. To fit in to a certain extent but not to fit in too much, to maintain this kind of distance.

P44 – Yes. Because the one thing is that my worst quality is my worst best quality is that I'm very flexible. I could live here and become a good English girl, and I can be in India with a sari and become a total Indian girl and wash the clothes of an Indian girl, and I have this kind of move ability, of coping, that's what I learned, I was a dancer and I learned but I didn't speak English, I was a dancer already but I kept on looking at people even when people are teaching me something intellectual, I tend to find out that I am repeating their movements, it happens with very charismatic people, like teachers here. One of the people I just thought oh my god, and I picked up, as I said like [name of teacher], I thought she was just, and she has spent a long time in Andalusia and I made a connection with her, and there are things that I know I've picked up from her because I have this habitual gesture kind of learning way. So that's my worst best quality because I can stop functioning.

GM45 – Yes, but I'm thinking that somehow that's something you learned from going from your mother to your father to your grandparents [yes] and as you said you were born there to learn what you needed to learn in order to go out and I think that that's a good skill in order to navigate the world but you also seem to recognise a threat in that?

P45 – Yes. The threat is that I may forget what I'm doing. And this can happen, especially in a place like London where you, where the pressure I could feel when I arrived in this city, oh ... it was like a kind of guilt. I felt it very quickly and I can feel it going away and coming back because the challenge for me is inertia, I can't stay in one place and I keep on travelling. I'm going to see others, my home, Mexico, and when I come back especially to London even the airport, the visual stimulus it makes me feel guilty about who I am because that's how um, that's how, these machines are built, they are built on making people feel... [inaudible] end of tape.

**The circumstances of leaving home**

1. I left the country as soon as I could, at 18, the legal age to leave.
2. I always wanted to go to visit my grandparents in a neighbouring country.
3. I had a broken heart from ending a relationship around then. He had come back from living abroad.
4. I had friends who had travelled and I always wanted to go somewhere else.
5. So I wanted to show this ex-boyfriend that I could do it too.
6. I had left my parent's house at age 15 but I returned at this time.
7. I found a tiny kitten on the doorway and I nursed her and she was like my little baby and I left her with my mother.
8. I often dream of that kitten, that she's ill and I can't take care of her.
9. Recently I dreamed that had to go on a trip and while I was away I had left her with friends at home and she was very sick because I wasn't there.
10. I feel she was like something I sacrificed to go away.
11. She was something I left behind. In my dreams she's always little and helpless though in real life she is big and fat.
12. I was a dancer and went to the US and to Trinidad, always speaking French. My parents were involved in the liberation movement so we didn't speak English.
13. My grandfather really reacted when I said I wanted to go to New York for 2 months.
14. He wanted me to have English lessons first at least, to prepare myself.
15. But I knew if I didn't go then I'd never do it.
16. I always wanted to finish things, high school, university, and my family wanted me to study biochemistry but I was more interested in sociology.
17. My family wanted me to go to the same private university they'd gone to but I didn't want to.
18. He wanted me to join the family business in biochemistry but wasn't interested. But he put on a lot of pressure.
19. 7 months before that they took me abroad for 3 months and that's when I realised there is a big world out there and I needed to be in airports, catching flights.

**Leaving**

1. So I left for 2 months in NY and when the time was up I called home and said I'm staying, there's no way I'm coming back.
2. That was the moment, I could hear her swallowing and she said I understand and I'll support you. I was the first in our family to do that.
3. I came back 2 years later and it was a shock to everyone.
4. I'd been in India and Europe and I just kept on going.
5. My name means strangers, foreigners in my home language.
6. My parents had had high expectations of me with the notion of a foreign name, and it has a kind of wildness. That's when the content of the fantasy started.

They were a part of my inheritance, my karma, I was almost born with them and choosing that name reflected that part of my nature.

## Karma

1. I think that conception is a very intense thing and what's happening from that moment is important and for me I think this journey has been to do with working through things, and finding my home.
2. It's strange because no one can say my name properly.
3. In a new environment when I say where I come from they are surprised and the reception is not always very nice here.
4. I also had an Indian name from my time in India and after that I asked myself why don't I just call myself something people can pronounce?
5. I was talking with my friends and we were joking about what I should call myself.

What would it be like for you to change your name?

1. I've changed my name in every country I've been to, it changes in pronunciation constantly.
2. I don't really mind what people call me but I wish they would call me by my correct name (correct pronunciation) because it's who I am.
3. When I changed my name in India I really felt that my native name wasn't needed any more.
4. It feel complicated sometimes, people have ideas about why I should change my name or why I shouldn't.
5. I'm also part Italian, and what I mind is people's need to understand or pretend to know who I am.
6. The things that people think immediately when they know my name, I think it's horrible.
7. That's what keeps me alive, because I don't go into that I don't want people to handle me in that way.
8. And I play with that a bit if they are from a different culture. I am somewhere else, but there also, interacting with them, but I keep my self private.
9. Sometimes I feel a great longing to go back to a home, I met people from my home land and they think they know me because I am from the same country.
10. They build up a whole picture of how I should feel, their assumptions about me, even my accent is not very traceable, so it confuses them.

Feelings of leaving when younger

1. I always thought I would go away at least for a few years and then come back again, like I had a daydream about this coming back.
2. I think it was partly a statement to my parents.

3. I think about that and its hard to believe that maybe my need to make a statement to them is so constant that it defines my life this drastically, but perhaps.
4. There are two moments when I feel I left my home country. The other time is that I always grew up in a big city.
5. At one point I felt disgusted by the heat, the people, everything, so I went up into the mountains for 6 months.
6. I really loved it there, it was crazy, I was too young so my mom said I should come back to the city, but when I left I cried all the way.
7. I saw myself back there on top of the mountains and it was as if I'd left my soul behind and it was trying to chase me.
8. I know that a part of me was being left behind and when I left I wasn't ready, I was still trying to find myself, to find answers.

## Family

1. My family was very large and very dismembered all over.
2. I have two sets of parents, because my parents were both married twice to people, so I really have 6 parents.
3. The whole environment in which I was born was very confusing.
4. Each family was very disconnected, like everything was going in different directions and I wanted to figure this out.
5. I didn't know anything about what was going to happen to me but I had this idea that I wanted to integrate my life more.
6. So the journey to India was like an attempt to find my whole self, though I didn't think it that way at the time. It was less conscious than that.
7. So my leaving was a statement to my parents, also I felt I was leaving something behind, that I need to answer things about myself, but also I needed to go out there into the wider world, that was positive.

## The perspective of travel

1. Travel was a way to gain perspective for me.
2. It made me realise that I'm in a big world.
3. If I had an argument with one parent and not the other there was this deep sigh when I realised I could just fly.
4. I can be who I want to be in the in-between space of those two, that was an early realisation.
5. Instead of in-between being nowhere, it was a place of possibility.
6. I started travelling very young and was sick of it already by 7, it was part of the dynamic between my parents.
7. My dad would tell me about my mom and back and forth and in this I always got my own way.
8. I could always manipulate it to get what I wanted.
9. Even at 12 I started taking more of the space in-between them for myself, to be with friends.
10. Early on I started developing my own space, and I knew what I wanted to do with it.

11. I started to experiment with who I am, outside of the known contexts.
12. My mom wanted me to be beautiful and elegant and my father wanted me to be a child, I knew what each wanted from me.
13. It was important to my mother that I had the right economic values, and my dad was very worldly and didn't want me to get corrupted by my mom's comfort.
14. My father didn't want us to eat out and the we would hang out in a kind of hippy way.
15. And my grandparents in turn were different again, very conservative and family oriented and with them I'd be more childlike.
16. So I had to build up lots of identities, I was a foreigner then already.

### The feelings of being in-between

1. I have this memory of being in the street somewhere with my basket alone and it felt good and it didn't feel good.
2. I could decide what I wanted to do, and with whom, but sometimes I wasn't sure where I was going, sometimes I felt like a runaway.
3. That feeling hasn't changed.
4. I was sort of alienated from the different places and there was no place I could be all of myself.
5. I could be myself in the neutral space but it was ungrounded and alone.
6. Home was not at home, but I always had a boyfriend, and when I was 15 we had our own place in my mom's attic.
7. It was my way of coping, to always have the deep connection one on one.
8. I was raised by my boyfriends, I learned a lot from those relationships.

### Why did you leave home really?

1. Because I was meant to.
2. I could equally answer that question with a question, why did I have to be born into that situation, to those parents?
3. I don't think why I left, I think what was the reason I was born there, because that was what had to happen and it was my choice.
4. I was not able not to leave, couldn't even contemplate that.
5. I was born to leave. I chose to be born there and grow up there because I needed something from there, I can feel that.
6. I needed that calling, that call there was something I had to do there, be like a butterfly.
7. I needed to be born there to get the courage I needed to go out and leave.

### What I got from them to go away

1. I got courage and also melancholy from that family.
2. I lived a time with my grandparents and my grandmother was old and senile and she would pack her bags and wait by the door and she said she wanted to go back home.

3. It was very melancholic.
4. I needed a different perspective, possibilities, but also to be connected, so there are many reasons.
5. Sometimes I wonder when will this leaving stop, I wonder about that I admit.
6. I needed to find a way to grow.

[inaudible sections to the tape]

P has the feeling that once she sets up a life there must be more to life, it doesn't satisfy something, it's not enough. P goes looking for the more but also increasingly wants what can come from settling in a place, different goals, maybe having a family.

1. Yes, I have no idea how to put those two goals together.
2. I never get to having the surplus in a place because I'm always still fighting for survival.
3. It's always get to know the place, make the contacts, finish the mission of what I'm in this place for, it's always very unsettling, without the abundance of free time to think.
4. Staying in one place might generate more but then there's also the disillusion about the truth.
5. When I start going deeper I find stones, and I say I can accept the stones here, it's not a reason to leave, or sometimes I declare that the ground is just rock and I think then it must be wrong.

The right ground for me

1. The only time I thought yes, this is the place, I want to be here, was in India. There was nothing else I wanted.
2. I felt I had an unshakeable future there and I had my ticket about to expire and I had to decide.
3. I had a flat, work, I was learning what I wanted, but that man (?) came and told me I had to go.
4. He said I need o go now, so I used the ticket – it was a question of life and death.
5. I can choose to stay here and die, or I can keep on moving and live.

How would staying have been like dying?

1. There are many components to me, we are all complex, though I was happy in India, how long could that last, I'm also needing other things.
2. I know I want a profession, to make my own money.
3. I was happy and comfortable there, but I needed the two opposites to hold the tension to keep the gap open. Like when I was on the street as a little girl between my mom and dad, without the tension the gap disappears.



4. It's like being able to live because I know there is a gap there, I can go to it if I need to and that lets me go on.
5. The borders are not flexible, there can be a dialogue between opposites.
6. It's like 3 spaces that can be fluid I think, I think that is possible, to go back and forth in a flow.
7. I don't know what that would mean practically or geographically, like where that could be.

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. Nothing I could have imagined would have been close.
2. I had nothing to give me the imagination to see how it would be.
3. I've changed a lot in 10 years.
4. I lived in NY and made money there, lived in Holland, India, London, and when I would go back and work nothing could express the longing.
5. It's been good but not any more, since 24.
6. At 24 I was no longer a teenager and I remember that happening, after that age I was with my teacher and he was twice my age.
7. Then I met and fell in love with a guy I had known before and we were together for 4 years.
8. Big changes in my boyfriends during that time.
9. I realised I didn't want my parents to support me anymore. The custom in my family is to support the youngest daughter so that could have carried on.
10. That was very important because I wanted to be able to come back and thank them for the support but now I'm on my own.
11. I wanted to come back to close something, I wanted to come back as a woman.
12. I wanted recognition from that.

Recognition

1. It's something to do with the family and something to do with time.
2. Something to do with a struggle against a patriarchal structure.
3. My mother broke out of that traditional feminine role but then recreated the same thing outside.
4. She has her empire where she is a matriarch. She lacked something because all she knew was to do the same thing.
5. My grandmother was much more in the traditional female role and taught me how to clean and cook, which was important for her.
6. When I lived with my mom I used to do the cooking and cleaning because she rebelled so much against any of that.
7. So those were the two powerful worlds I encountered.

Finding one's own way

1. Like P was out in the world trying to find a gap between the traditional women's role of her grandmother and the traditional men's role mimicked by her mother. Trying to find a way that would be her own.
2. And money is important because my grandmother's lack of money let her be humiliated by my grandfather.
3. Powerful themes of how one is allowed to be a woman, money and power, leaving and returning.

Will you ever return home?

1. I don't know. I think about it sometimes.
2. That's my big question for the last 10 years!
3. It's always there but I don't think about it, it's like my mantra, my calling.
4. There are the practicalities of the economic crisis at home and supporting myself professionally.
5. I wonder about the possibilities that would be open to me, even the possibility of finding a good husband.
6. Strange, I've always had an English-speaking boyfriend. We always communicated in English as our second language and I think it would be nice to have someone who speaks the same language, tells me the same things my father used to tell me, or I could say what my mother used to say when I was little.
7. It would be so wonderful. I hide myself sometimes and think no one understands me. In order to know if that is true, I'd have to experience a situation where I could not say that.
8. When I was young they were attracted by but annoyed by my temperament.
9. I've been subliminally educated to be cold in the last years. I have lost what I used to be like.
10. I've become cold, unresponsive, slow, boring. My wildness has had to be domesticated here.

Meeting sameness

1. I don't know if I have a culture, when I go home I feel connected there but I also feel a foreigner there.
2. If I can meet someone from the same culture, someone born there, if that would be better.
3. Maybe I wouldn't feel this desperation when I am trying to explain to someone things that are so fucking obvious.
4. I spent time educating them and this doesn't educate me, it weakens me, trying to find a common ground.
5. Especially the relations between men and women are really different in Latin countries.
6. Being able to take for granted some degree of shared cultural understanding.
7. My boyfriend is English, though not from here, and I protect him from realising how disconnected we are, what we don't share.
8. To tell him how much of his culture is foreign to me and not shared between us, would be terrible.

9. It's hard to accept that aspect of things. Even to educate him is different than not having to in the first place.

## Difference

1. It's not very clear, but I'm a bit isolated, lonely to be with older people.
2. People that can resonate with me, like vibrate together, touching the same chord in people.
3. I want that terribly. I long for it with every cell of my self, and it might be anyone, from another place or another time, I don't know.
4. The person I'm with now is helping me, and we're very different.
5. But it has to be difference within the same scale. Different but part of the same tribe.
6. You can recognise a person from your same tribe, you recognise each other, you don't know what you're supposed to say but you meet.

## Feelings of the interview

1. It feels a bit unreal and I have to keep grounding myself.
2. When I arrived I was wondering how would I make any of this make sense?
3. I don't know how much I really think about these things so that it feels real.
4. Like I'm dealing with the struggle of surviving, breathing in and also keeping myself back, and it takes a lot of energy to do that.
5. To fit in to a certain extent but not too much.
6. My worst and best quality is that I'm very flexible.
7. I could live here and become a good English girl or be in India and wear a sari and become totally Indian.
8. I learned how to move and cope, like I'm a dancer and I learned to copy movements.
9. Even teachers here, I've picked up a lot from them, gesturing etc.
10. It's a skill I picked up from going back and forth when you, part of what I had to learn to go out but it's also a threat.
11. There is a threat in that, that I might forget what I'm doing.
12. Like in London there is a pressure here like a kind of guilt.
13. I love to keep travelling and when I come back here, even the airport, the visual stimulus makes me feel guilty about who I am.

## **“Graciella” Meaning Clusters**

### **Dynamics around leaving home**

1. I left the country as soon as was permitted, at 18, I always had friends who travelled and I always wanted to go away.
2. My boyfriend came back from abroad and we broke up and I wanted to show him I could do it too.
3. My parents were involved in the liberation movement so we didn't speak English but I said I wanted to go to the US for 2 months and my grandfather wanted to prepare me by learning English first.
4. I knew I couldn't wait, if I didn't go then, I wouldn't go.
5. My family put a lot of pressure on me to go to the private university they went to, to study science like they did, to carry on the family business.
6. I wanted to study sociology, dance, follow my own path.
7. 7 months earlier my parents took me abroad for 3 months and I realised there's a big world out there. I needed to be in airports, catching flights, that life.

### **Symbol of the kitten**

20. I found a tiny newborn kitten on the doorway and I nursed her and she was like my little baby and I left her with my mother.
21. I often dream of that kitten, that she's ill and I can't take care of her.
22. Recently I dreamed that I had to go on a trip and while I was away I had left her with friends at home and she was very sick because I wasn't there.
23. I feel she was like something I sacrificed to go away, she was something I left behind.
24. In my dreams she's always little and helpless though in real life she is big and fat.

### **Deciding to leave and stay away**

1. I always thought I would go away at least for a few years and then come back again, like I had a daydream about this coming back.
2. I think it was partly a statement to my parents and its hard to believe that maybe my need to make a statement to them is so constant that it defines my life this drastically, but perhaps.
3. The other time I went away was when I was disgusted by the city, where I'd always lived, and I went to live in the mountains for 6 months.
4. I loved it in the mountains but I was too young and mom said I had to return.
5. I cried all the way back, because I could see myself back there on top of the mountains and it was as if I'd left my soul behind and it was trying to chase me.
6. I wasn't ready to come back, I was still trying to find myself, to find answers.

7. In NY I decided not to come back. That was the moment of decision. I heard my mother swallow and say she understood and would support me. I was the first in our family to do that.
8. I went to India, Europe, just kept going, and came back 2 years later, which shocked everyone.
9. My name means stranger, foreigner, with a connotation of wildness, so my parents had high expectations of me giving me that name. That's when the fantasy started. They were a part of my inheritance, my destiny.

## **Karma and leaving**

6. I think that conception is a very intense thing and what's happening from that moment is important and for me I think this journey has been to do with working through things, and finding my home.
7. I left home because I was meant to. I was born to leave.
8. It makes as much sense to ask why did I have to be born into that situation, those parents?
9. I don't think why I left, I think what was the reason I was born there, because that was what had to happen and it was my choice.
10. I chose to be born and grow up there because I needed to get the courage to go out and leave, I can feel that.
11. It was a match between what I needed and there was something I had to do there, be like a butterfly.
12. I was not able not to leave, I couldn't even contemplate that.

## **Name and identity**

1. It's strange because no one can say my name properly, my name gets changed in pronunciation in every country I go to.
2. I don't really mind what people call me but I wish they would call me by my correct name (correct pronunciation) because it's who I am.
3. I've joked with my friends about calling myself something people could pronounce more easily.
4. When I changed my name in India I really felt that my native name wasn't needed any more.
5. It gets complicated sometimes, the name and identity, I don't like it when people need to understand me or pretend that they know who I am.
6. Just knowing my name, people assume so much about me and I think that's horrible.
7. I really don't want to be handled in that way. I play with that a bit if they are from a different culture. I am somewhere else, but there also, interacting with them, but I keep my self private from them.
8. Sometimes I feel a great longing to go back to a home, but I met people from my home land and they think they know me because I am from the same country.
9. They build up a whole picture of how I should feel, their assumptions about me, even my accent is not very traceable, so it confuses them.

## **Family circumstances**

1. My family is large and scattered all over, with both parents married twice I really have 6 sets of parents.
2. The whole family environment in which I born was very confusing.
3. Everything was going in different directions and it was difficult to figure out but I wanted to make sense of it.
4. I didn't know anything about what was going to happen to me but I had this idea that I wanted to integrate my life more.
5. So my leaving was a statement to my parents, also I felt I was leaving something behind, that I need to answer things about myself, but also I needed to go out there into the wider world, that was positive.
6. So the journey to India was like an attempt to find my whole self, though I didn't think it that way at the time. It was less conscious than that at the time.
7. I lived a time with my grandparents and my grandmother was old and senile and she would pack her bags and wait by the door and she said she wanted to go back home. Very melancholic.
8. I needed to find a way to grow, different perspectives, but I also needed to be connected, so there are complicated reasons for leaving.
9. From my family I got courage and also a melancholia.

## **The space and perspective of travel**

1. Travel was a way to realise I'm in a big world, and to gain that bigger perspective on things.
2. I started travelling very young as a part of the dynamic between my parents.
3. My dad would tell me about my mom and back and forth and in this I always got my own way, I could manipulate the situation.
4. If I had an argument with one parent and not the other there was this deep sigh when I realised I could just fly and be who I want to be in the in-between space of those two, that was an early realisation.
5. Early on I started developing my own space, and I knew what I wanted to do with it, I started taking more of the space in-between them for myself, to be with friends.
6. Instead of in-between being nowhere, it was a place of possibility to experiment with who I am, outside of the known contexts.

## **The neutral in-between as an escape from family expectations**

9. My mom wanted me to be beautiful and elegant, my father wanted me to be a child and not get corrupted by my mom's comfort, and my grandparents in turn were very conservative and family oriented. I knew what each wanted from me.
10. So I had to build up lots of identities, I was a foreigner then already.
11. I have this memory of being in the street somewhere with my basket alone and it felt good and it didn't feel good.

12. I could decide what I wanted to do, and with whom, but sometimes I wasn't sure where I was going, sometimes I felt like a runaway, and that feeling hasn't changed.
13. I was sort of alienated from the different places and there was no place I could be all of myself.
14. I could be myself in the neutral space but it was ungrounded and alone.
15. Home was not at home, but I always had a boyfriend, and when I was 15 we had our own place in my mom's attic.
16. It was my way of coping, to always have the deep connection one on one with a boyfriend, and I was raised by my boyfriends, I learned a lot from those relationships.

[inaudible sections to the tape]

### **The longing to settle and to keep moving**

1. Once I set up a life somewhere there is feeling of something not being satisfied, like there must be more to life, it's not enough.
2. I go looking for this more but at the same time I increasingly want what could come from settling in a place, different goals, moving onto another layer, maybe having a family.
3. I have no idea how to put these two goals together.
4. It's always get to know the place, make the contacts, finish the mission of what I'm in this place for, it's always very unsettling, without the abundance of free time to think.
5. I never get to have the surplus in a place because I'm always still fighting for survival.
6. Staying in one place might generate more but then there's also the disillusion about the truth.
7. When I start going deeper I find stones, and I say I can accept the stones here, it's not a reason to leave, or sometimes I declare that the ground is just rock and I think then it must be wrong, and move on.
8. Sometimes I wonder when will this leaving stop, I wonder about that I admit.

### **I might lose something if I find the right ground**

6. The only time I thought yes, this is the place, I want to be here, was in India. I had a flat, work, I was learning what I wanted, there was nothing else I wanted.
7. I felt I had an unshakeable future there but my ticket was about to expire, I had to decide, and my teacher told me I had to go, it was a question of life and death.
8. I can choose to stay here and die, or I can keep on moving and live.
9. There are many components to me, we are all complex, though I was happy in India, how long could that last, I'm also needing other things, like a profession, to make my own money.
10. I was happy and comfortable there, but I needed the two opposites to hold the tension to keep the gap open. Like when I was on the street as a little girl between my mom and dad, without the tension the gap disappears.

11. It's like being able to live because I know there is a gap there, I can go to it if I need to and that lets me go on.
12. The borders are not flexible, but there can be a dialogue between opposites.
13. It's like 3 spaces that can be fluid I think, I think that is possible, to go back and forth in a flow.
14. I don't know what that would mean practically or geographically, like where that could actually happen.

### **The experience since leaving**

13. Nothing I could have imagined would have been close and I've changed a lot in 10 years.
14. I lived in NY and made money there, lived in Holland, India, London, and when I would return for a while, nothing could express the longing.
15. It's been good but not any more, since 24 I was no longer a teenager and I remember that happening.
16. Big changes in my boyfriends during that time.
17. I realised I didn't want my parents to support me anymore. The custom in my family is to support the youngest daughter so that could have carried on.
18. That was very important because I wanted to be able to come back and thank them for the support but now I'm on my own.
19. I wanted to come back to close something, I wanted to come back as a woman. I wanted recognition from that.

### **Returning with recognition**

8. It's something to do with the family and something to do with time.
9. Something to do with a struggle against a patriarchal structure.
10. My mother broke out of that traditional feminine role but then recreated the same thing outside. She has her empire where she is a matriarch. She lacked something because all she knew was to do the same thing.
11. My grandmother was much more in the traditional female role and taught me how to clean and cook, which was important for her.
12. When I lived with my mom I used to do the cooking and cleaning because she rebelled so much against any of that.
13. So those were the two powerful female worlds I encountered.
14. It's like I was out in the world trying to find a gap between the traditional women's role of grandmother and the traditional men's role mimicked by mother. Trying to find a way that would be my own.
15. And money is important because my grandmother's lack of money let her be humiliated by my grandfather.
16. Powerful themes of how one is allowed to be a woman, money and power, leaving and returning.

### **Thoughts of returning become questions of relationship**



11. I don't know. That's my big question for the last 10 years, it's always there but I don't think about it, it's like my mantra, my calling.
12. There are the practicalities of the economic crisis at home, supporting myself professionally, the possibility of finding a nice husband.
13. I don't know if I have a culture, when I go home I feel connected there but I also feel a foreigner there.
14. If I can meet someone from the same culture, someone born there, maybe that would be better. Maybe I wouldn't feel this desperation when I am trying to explain to someone things that are so fucking obvious.
15. I spent time educating partners and this doesn't educate me, it weakens me, trying to find a common ground, being able to take for granted some degree of shared cultural understanding.
16. Especially the relations between men and women are really different in Latin countries.
17. In relationships we always communicate in English as our second language and I think it would be nice to have someone who speaks the same language, tells me the same things my father used to tell me, or I could say what my mother used to say when I was little.
18. It would be so wonderful not to have to hide myself and think no one understands me. In order to know if that is true, I'd have to experience a situation where I could not say that.
19. When I was young they were attracted by but annoyed by my temperament but now I've been subliminally educated to be cold in the last years. I have lost what I used to be like. I've become cold, unresponsive, slow, boring. My wildness has had to be domesticated here.
20. My boyfriend is English, and I protect him from realising how disconnected we are, what we don't share. To tell him how much of his culture is foreign to me and not shared between us, would be terrible.
21. It's hard to accept that aspect of things. Even to educate him is different than not having to in the first place.
22. It's not very clear, but I'm a bit isolated, lonely to be with older people, people that can resonate with me, like vibrate together, touching the same chord in people.
23. I want that terribly. I long for it with every cell of my self, and it might be anyone, from another place or another time, I don't know.
24. The person I'm with now is helping me, and we're very different. But it has to be difference within the same scale. Different but part of the same tribe.
25. You can recognise a person from your same tribe, you recognise each other, you don't know what you're supposed to say but you meet.

## **Flexibility**

14. My worst and best quality is that I'm very flexible.
15. I could live here and become a good English girl or be in India and wear a sari and become totally Indian.
16. I learned how to move and cope wherever I went, like I'm a dancer and I learned to copy movements.
17. Even teachers here, I've picked up a lot from them, their mannerisms etc.

18. It's a skill I picked up from going back and forth when it was part of what I had to learn to go out and survive but it's also a threat.
19. There is a threat in being flexible, that I might forget what I'm doing.
20. Like in London there is a pressure here like a kind of guilt. When I come back here, even the airport, the visual stimulus makes me feel guilty about who I am.

### **Feelings of the interview**

1. It feels a bit unreal and I have to keep grounding myself.
2. When I arrived I was wondering how could I make any of this make sense?
3. I don't know how much I really think about these things so that it feels real to me.
4. Like I'm dealing with the struggle of surviving, breathing in and also keeping myself back, and it takes a lot of energy to do that.
5. It's the feeling of negotiating how to fit in to a certain extent but not too much.

**2. Determination in leaving**

- P left her home country as soon as possible. She wanted to prove to her boyfriend, her parents, and to herself that she could do it.
- P resisted family attempts to influence her future. She wanted to follow her own path and left for NY to pursue her dream without even knowing the language.
- P’s experience of being abroad had reinforced that she wanted to be out in that wide world and to be in airports, catching flights to new places.
- When younger, P became disillusioned by the city and went away to the mountains where she wanted to find herself, find answers to her questions. P loved this experience but had to return because of her age, feeling she left something important of herself behind, feeling it was too soon to return.
- In NY P was old enough to decide to stay away, which she did, creating a defining moment for herself and her family. She continued to travel for 2 years before returning briefly.
- P’s name has connotations of wildness, foreigner, stranger, and she points to this as signifying the expectations of her parents when they named her. She believes that is when the fantasy of her life started and this is a spiritual belief that it was part of her destiny and inheritance to live as she has.

**3. The returning symbol of the kitten**

- P recounts a poignant and powerful image of finding a newborn kitten on the porch when moving to her mother’s before leaving the country. P nursed this kitten and mothered it till it recovered. She often dreams of it now, dreaming that it’s ill and P is unable to take care of her.
- Recently P dreamed that she had to go away and because of her absence the kitten was sick. Though the animal is now grown and healthy, it always appears as small and helpless in the dreams. P feels the kitten symbolises something she had to sacrifice in order to go away, something she had to leave behind.

**4. Spiritual understanding of leaving**

- P understands her leaving home as part of a larger spiritual predestination. It is linked with a belief in Karma in that she believes she was born to leave in order to work through issues of home.
- From this spiritual point of view it makes sense to ask why did P choose to be born to those parents in those circumstances. She believes she needed to gain courage from those circumstances before she was ready to journey out into the world.

- There was a match between what P needed from that situation and what they needed from her. She needed to be like a butterfly for them, so from this perspective there was never any contemplation of not leaving, it had to be this way.

## 5. Name and label

- P comments that her name is changed in pronunciation in each country she goes to. She has an association to her name which makes the correct pronunciation an important recognition of her identity as a person. Although in India, P took on a new name and felt content to let go of her native name for that time.
- P also experiences intense irritation when others assume an identity for her, based upon her name, accent, or country of origin. This need to understand her in a totalising way is offensive, though P is able to play with it, while maintaining a personal distance, keeping her Self private.
- At times P has an intense longing to return home, but when she meets fellow country men who assume they know her because they share the same homeland, she is disappointed. It seems she experiences their expectations of who she is, how she must feel, all their assumptions, as a comment on interactions she might face at home.

## 6. The family circumstances

- P's family is disparate, large, with many marriages and divorces. She found the complex relationships confusing but felt a need to try to make sense of it. It led to P wanting to feel her life more integrated and leaving was a statement to this effect, for example she now sees living in India as an attempt to find her whole self instead of the fragmented experience of family life.
- P feels her reasons for leaving are complicated and partly related to her family. She felt she needed to grow, to experience broader perspectives, and this was a positive reason. But she feels she was also making a statement to her parents. She felt she may be leaving behind something and was conscious of her need to be connected to others.
- P expected to be away for a few years and then come back again, and this coming back was an important aspect of the statement to her parents. P considers that perhaps her need to make this statement to them is so constant that it has drastically defined her life.
- It is unclear how the motivation to prove something to her parents, or to show them something about herself coincides with the spiritual motive of Karma.
- P feels that two important personal characteristics she inherited from her family experiences are courage and also melancholia, from witnessing her elderly grandmother wait with her bags packed for someone to take her 'home'.

## 7. Travel and the in-between space as possibility and loss

- Travel offered the realisation of a larger perspective and P was exposed to this when still young. Her parents were apart and P was able to manipulate this situation to maximise her own freedom. She was always able to be in a space between her parents and thus avoid being trapped in either world.
- P began early to develop the potential of this space from nothing into a free space she could mould for herself and share with friends. She could experiment with her identity without the influence of family contexts.
- P knew how to be the person each of her family expected her to be, these were identities which made her feel like a foreigner in all of their contexts. The space in-between was lonely and it felt both good and not good at the same time.
- P was alienated from the places where she could have connection with her family, there was nowhere that she was allowed to be all of herself, except in the neutral space she had created. But that space was ungrounded and P had the experience of not always knowing where she was going, like she was just running from the known alternatives, and that experience can occur still.
- P did not experience her home at home. The closest she had was in her deeply connected relationships with boyfriends. These relationships were an immensely important way of coping for P. She values what she has learned from these relationships and goes so far as to say she was 'raised' by her boyfriends.

## 8. The longing to settle and the need to keep moving

- Once P feels herself settling in a place she feels a sense that there is more to life and she should keep looking for it. This keeps her always in a first phase of settling, getting to know a place, surviving, still feeling unsettled. She finds herself increasingly wanting the more that could also come from staying in a place, different goals, going deeper, maybe having a family.
- Sometimes P wonders when all this leaving will stop but she has no idea how to satisfy both desires. When she begins to go deeper into a place she always finds stones and eventually has to decide if that's OK and not a reason to leave, or if the ground is rock and not liveable.
- The only time P felt she had everything to stay and settle for the future was in India but her spiritual teacher told her it was a life or death decision for her. She could stay and die there or keep moving and live. She now sees that her happiness could not have lasted there, her desire for a profession and to support her could not be addressed.
- P feels that she continues to need the tension of two opposites in order to hold an open space of possibility for herself, as she did when young with her parents. She feels she can live when she knows there is that gap where she can go if she needs to. How she can actually realise this possibility in practical and geographical terms remains unknown to her.

## 9. The experience since leaving

- In no way would it have been possible to imagine the variety of what P has experienced since leaving her home country. It has been the fulfilment of a longing to go out and live in the world for the past 10 years but now P feels that has changed.
- As P grows older she realises she does not want her parent's financial support to continue, although that would be acceptable in her family customs. This is related to a concept of being able to return home self-sufficient, as a woman. Returning in this manner would give P recognition and would close something, possibly something concerning the statement she was making to her parents in her leaving.

#### 10. Returning in a self-defined and respected role

- P's desire to be recognised as self-supporting is related to breaking out of a conservative patriarchal structure in a way that does not reduce her to just another pre-formed structure like happened with her mother and grandmother.
- P's mother and grandmother offered her two powerful female worlds, but by exposing herself to a larger perspective, P has been able to forge other alternatives, including ones which would allow her to be self-supporting and thus financially independent.
- P espouses powerful themes of how one is allowed to be a woman, the relationship between financial independence and respect, the notions of leaving and returning having found ways to be self-determining and not defined by others.
- Returning home is P's big question for the past 10 years. It has become almost a mantra for her, always present though not always consciously reflected upon.

#### 11. Contemplating a culturally matched relationship

- P feels both connected and also foreign when she visits home but she is conscious that the relations between men and women have a specific quality in her country and it makes her wonder about the meaning of this for her future relationships.
- P considers that having a relationship with a man from her country might have positive aspects, she wouldn't have to explain or educate about things, they could take for granted some common cultural understanding, which would be a relief.
- P also fantasises about the romance of being in a relationship with the language being her own first language, where she could hear and say the things she heard her parents say when she was young.
- P wonders if she would still have to hide and feel misunderstood in such a relationship. She realises that over the years she has been domesticated and is no longer very typical of the temperament of her country. It is not clear whether P interprets this as meaning she may not experience the shared commonality she once would have with a fellow countryman.

- P feels isolation and loneliness from not having others of her tribe around. She feels the place one comes from, the age, etc. are not the important things. It's a vibrating and resonating that she longs for, and difference is not a barrier as long as it's difference within this deeper connection and P feels she can recognise this in people.

## 12. Flexibility as gift and curse

- P feels her worst and best quality is her ability to be flexible, to adapt to any culture and fit in. Her experience as a dancer in NY, not knowing the language, revealed her ability to copy movements and she finds she even does this with certain lecturers in her course.
- This kind of mimicry is a skill P feels she picked up from going back and forth between her family, being who they expected her to be. It is a way of surviving but it also constitutes a threat to her own mission, to remembering who she is. There is some indication it may also be partly a way to hide from the painful feelings of not fitting in.

## 13. Feelings of the interview

- When she first arrived, P wondered about her ability to recount her experiences in a way that would make sense. P found the experience to feel a bit unreal and she had to keep grounding herself. Thinking about these things in a way that feels real to her feels different.
- P can feel physically how she constantly has to negotiate fitting in to a certain extent but not too much. It feels like she's dealing with a struggle to survive in some way, breathing in but also keeping herself back, and this requires a lot of energy.

GM1 - OK, the first question is a very general one. Could you begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - It had personal, I think they were all personal, but there were three girls and the move out for one practically allowed me to make a decision, because at the end of the day there was a decision. It was love. Love with no destination. What I mean is I didn't decide to come to England to learn English because I expected to be with the person I was loving, do you follow me? But love was the major inspiration and I started to think about other lands before, and these thoughts were always just inside me already. I very rarely spoke to someone about it. The violence of my country I didn't like much. There was one week that I had to stay at home, which was very rare in my, I always went to work, but I'd saw someone killed, and the way I saw it, the circumstances were, I was on the bus on my way to work, I worked in a very protected environment, but even so the bus had windows so I could see. So, on my way to work, I worked up in the mountain, I saw somebody killing someone from a motorbike. And the way the person who fell on the ground, the way he fell, stayed here for a week, that was the...

At that time I had my father in hospital, for the same reason, he was shot, and I wasn't present, I didn't witness it, but I had my father in hospital, he was very ill and that gave me no reason to live in that society, so I became very disillusioned. Very disillusioned.

GM2 - Yes.

P2 - Not necessarily for my father. I had to ..... for me to say where am I living? So that was about 7 months before I met this person, by accident, I was working in public relations so I happened to meet this group of Swiss people who came to Columbia to work on a project. And there was one thing that I couldn't understand. They spoke English amongst them, and I would hear, and when they were with me they tried to speak Spanish, very poor Spanish, but they tried, because I didn't speak English, and I didn't like that. That was a major trigger I think, how come people from elsewhere come here and I cannot communicate with them, it was a challenge for me, I wasn't happy. So they stayed there for six months. I lived with this group for six months. On the ... basis I had my official boyfriend, (Laughs) when I say official (Laughs)

GM3 - (Laughs)

P3 - I was trying to get my, the official boyfriend, this is my boyfriend, my future husband. I'm going to be his future wife. The group was my work, but my personal life was through my parents, and my official boyfriend, who happened to be in a city, in Bogota, I lived in [city name] so it was 40 minutes by plane distance, and every 2 weeks I flew to Bogota, every 2 weeks he flew to [city name] so we were changing. But this experience with this group gave me so much excitement. So it felt like the splits. Formality here, beauty here and (sighs) um, policing, this is about policing, being a good girl, I never experienced this challenge of being amongst people and trying to



understand them with this poor Spanish, trying to speak Spanish to them in a different way, trying to choose words, speaking to them, perhaps slower, and every Friday when I was available, because I had to travel every two weeks, we had parties. We had dinners. There were three different flats where everybody lived, so one Friday people cooked in one flat, and then another flat, and we had a lot of fun with that. I mean, I was 25, very young (Laughs). Suddenly, a woman came to the group, a Colombian girl, who happened to have been abroad to study, and she could speak English, so I was very jealous. I don't know whether I showed jealousy, I don't know, I might have done, I don't know. But I was, there was this inside me, how can she communicate with them when I can't? So the challenge increased, it was much, much bigger. The unhappiness increased much more. I started to talk by then, I want to learn English, so people started to say America is cheaper, and I'd say no, but I wouldn't go to America, I campaigned during the Vietnam war when I was so young, so silly of me, but at the time I campaigned and I had feelings against America. It was trendy also when I was 19 to be anti American amongst the group who I was in with. So I said, no, I won't ever go to America, apart from the fact I don't like the accent. An excuse of course, so that was the time I started to talk about this and I said I want to go to England.

So, at the same time when I was working, I was with my family life, and with this group, I was also painting in my spare time, because I did four years of art, so painting for me was the time when I can express myself, either anger or being pleased, whatever. Anyway, the reason for which I mentioned this is because I sold my paintings. I started to sell my paintings. And every time I sold one I cried, because I didn't want to sell my paintings, but I needed to raise money, I don't come from a rich family, I come from a modest family. We were always had everything, but not, and I continued talking, and there was this particular man who I felt very close to, and vice versa, but he was married so it was always clear from the very beginning he was married, so it was always clear that nothing was going to happen, but we shared a lot. He talked to me about his family and we shared, and there was something about him that I liked so much, and vice versa. He started to encourage me, you're going to make it, that's your dream, you have to make it, I agree with you, a woman like you who doesn't speak English, no way. So it was an encouragement, it was as I say, a trigger. And why do I mention love, because I think it was very big love, true love there, without having to please, just love. I know I sound funny, I know, but I don't mind so much. Because I was supposed to love this guy here (Laughs).

But I was talking of, in October I had to travel to Bogota to go to the course to get married. I'm a Catholic girl and Catholics go through a course prior to marriage, so I went. I was serious for my marriage, for me to go to there was serious. Here I was, I don't think I was serious, but was playing with the idea of learning English. At the end of the day I couldn't contemplate myself even living in Columbia. But I was playing with the idea, I was having fun. So I went to the court. This man I was going to marry was a very serious man, very formal, with a PhD, he was always trying to educate me in a way, yes, and I loved that, I don't mind that somebody trying, and a wonderful mother, and the mother was just every time I got to them, the mother was very .... for me, so a wonderful lady, and I stayed in their place, he was living with his mother. I went to the course, and there was huge hall with many people, and about two minutes prior to the beginning of the course a couple walked in from the front, we were sitting here and there was a couple there, walked in, and she was pregnant, quite a bump. He

was very religious as well, I was, I'm still religious. So, he said once, I don't think that couple should be here, and I said, what do you mean, and he said, she's pregnant, she shouldn't be pregnant before marriage. I remember I froze and I said, say that again, I was speaking very softly, I hope you can pick it up, say that again, so he repeated it, with more emphasis, and I remember I stayed quiet, I went through the course, but I remember from that minute I couldn't bear for him to touch me. Every time he tried to hold my hand, I couldn't. I just, I felt, I valued pregnancy very much for a reason.

Anyway, my life changed totally. That was October, and I was getting married on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. The church was ready in my city, the dress was on the way, and rings were bought. Invitations were on the way (Laughs) and I couldn't bear that this man touches me. He saw a change in me, what happened, what happened? And I said I can't stand your comment, I don't understand your comment. But he couldn't see anything, he was still reaffirming, he was still firm in his, and the more he spoke about it the more pain I felt, like stabbing, I don't know why. I don't think I would do that now, I would be stronger now to try to discuss it, but I don't think at that time I felt I had enough confidence to argue against this man. I looked upon this man very much, but yet he couldn't influence the way I felt about his comment.

The first of December, I said to my parents, I'm not getting married. What! The whole world went against me and nobody could understand my decision because it was supposed to be a good marriage, it was a catch anyway. So I said, no. Still, when I said that to him, I said I want to go to England for six months to learn English so I'm not going married, he didn't take me seriously. He said, OK, you come back in six months and then we get married, and I couldn't explain, he wouldn't see there was something wrong, I don't want to marry you! He didn't hear. He didn't hear. He heard, you're coming in six months. I said, no, but I don't want to marry you, and that showed to me that I'm not heard and he doesn't really listen to me.

So, I sold my paintings, cancelled everything, my parents were puzzled, I understand it, they realised at least their first daughter, the eldest daughter was going to be organised, they didn't have to worry about me any more. So for them, ah, we still have to worry. I remember my flight and everything was going to be 2 February, and I remember I packed, I made my suitcase on the 2 January, one month before, do you believe it, (Laughs) it was lying there, I don't know why I did that. My parents said to me, now that we'd talked about our experiences, my parents, especially my mother, said every time I saw that suitcase that made me cry. And I understood that, but now, not at the time. I was just trying to get everything ready to leave. And I'd resigned from my job, they couldn't understand it because it was a good job. In other words, I left the life behind. Love triggered it, yes, but I wasn't going to Switzerland, I was coming to England, I wasn't going to this man. So I arrived in England, and if I continue talking about England it's not going to answer the question, but I think I've answered the question about what were the circumstances.

GM4 - OK. Can I ask a few questions?

P4 - Yes, of course.

GM5 - I want to first see, fairly generally, if I've got the gist of what you said. If I've understood you it sounds as though even when you were quite young you had this something in you that was, you didn't talk about it, but you were interested in other worlds?

P5 - Yes.

GM6 - Interested in something beyond the world you knew?

P6 - Yes, I had a dream when I was 15 of England. It was a dream and I saw this house and I remember I did a little bit of research, I went to the library and I tried to look at pictures of England. And I went, oh, this is the house that I saw, but I didn't speak to anyone. I was very, very reserved. I'm not that reserved now I can tell you (Laughs), but at the time, I remember since I began my adolescence, and my feelings, my changes, I wouldn't talk to anyone. Not my parents, not my sister, I was the eldest.

GM7 - Why do you think that was you couldn't tell anyone about things?

P7 - I didn't have anyone to talk to. I never felt that I belonged in Colombia anyway.

GM8 - OK. And in your family?

P8 - Hmm?

GM9 - And in your family?

P9 - Never felt I belonged. Never. I love my family, but I was strange, not strange, but different. There were some things, there were some attitudes, especially from my mother when I was 15, when I was 12, 13, 14, 15, that made me feel different and made me feel that I just don't belong. That has been already talked about in a way, there were some circumstances that made me feel that I didn't belong.

GM10 - What was that like for you to not feel that you belonged?

P10 - It was hell, because at the time, at the age of 15, I felt the ugliest woman in the world, in a way I was different amongst my group, I was tall, my colleagues were short. I had these strange blue eyes that were different to the other eyes, so at the age of 16 I was still a girl, totally flat, all my friends had boyfriends and were rounded already, were women, so I don't know, I felt that, I always asked the question why.

GM11 - Who am I?

P11 - Yes. And I always saw my friends as very pretty, all the girls, very pretty, so I felt ugly and so different I guess. I didn't even have the confidence to speak. Very strange, when one meets me now, but that's how I was. That was my earliest teenage years.

GM12 - And do you remember before, until the teenage years, did you feel kind of like you didn't belong, this was your home?

P12 - No.

GM13 - You didn't?

P13 - Only in adolescence, and I was, up until the age of 15 as I said, I was still a girl, my period didn't come at the time either, so I was flat and all the rest were already women, and that's why I felt I mustn't belong. Not before, no.

GM14 - So before, you did feel you belong?

P14 - Yes. I was part of the school and the church.

GM15 - So it's only in adolescence you felt you were different. You could see differences also?

P15 - Yes.

GM16 - You didn't talk about it?

P16 - Because I felt ashamed.

GM17 - OK. So being different, there was something shameful about this?

P17 - Yes.

GM18 - OK.

P18 - Funny. When I was 12 I still believed in Santa Claus for God's sake (Laughs). It was my friends at school who told me, and I felt so betrayed by my parents, because they were still, they loved Christmas and they were still trying to keep the fantasy. So I was lied to, in inverted commas, by my parents. I understand about it now, but at the time I felt so betrayed [gasps] when my friends told me, no, Santa Clause doesn't exist, it's your father, your parents. What! And I still didn't believe it. So that was my first betrayal. My first feelings of betrayal. And perhaps that was the beginning of me feeling different. Why all my friends knew about this and why I didn't?

My parents are a very reserved family, sex was always a taboo, bodily changes were taboo. So I learnt everything from my friends at school.

GM19 - So there was something about you that was different in your family. There are things that were happening in you, it sounds like, but you felt you couldn't talk about?

P19 - No.

GM20 - But it sounds as though you didn't accept the taboo about it. You want to talk to somebody about it, just not your family, there was something in you that was different in that whole kind of family culture?

P20 - Yes, yes. And now I talk to my mother about my childhood. For my mother we were her princesses, and she looked after us, I mean, she made the dresses for us, we were all her life, and that made her different, but it's something I'm not happy about it, about being that different. I think I have a streak there, being different or not being different, sometimes I feel happy about being different, but other times I'm not happy about being different because it makes me not to belong.

GM21 - Well, that's what I was wondering when you talked about the circumstances of your leaving, and you kind of go like this and this with your hands, as though there's two sides to this?

P21 - Always.

GM22 - It sounded to me as though you had a secret interest at least, if not this kind of desire to know about the world and this dream about England. And you also had this desire to belong and being different kind of was a threat to that, you wanted to belong enough that you went through kind of the cultural, culturally accepted things. You got a good job, you were going to get married, all of the things that culturally, it's like, this is cultural belonging?

P22 - Yes.

GM23 - You were doing the right thing?

P23 - And yet, I wasn't happy.

GM24 - You still weren't quite satisfied. And along came this Swiss group that kind of injected into this belonging this real taste of foreignness?

P24 - But I felt I belonged there more than there.

GM25 - Somehow you belonged with these foreigners, but you couldn't even talk with, there was a sense of belonging there that you never got...?

P25 - totally. A real sense of belonging, but not here (gestures with hands to home culture side of issue).

GM26 - How do you make sense of that? That you should belong with these people that were strangers, people with a strange language?

P26 - Yes. It was excitement. It was the smiles, it was laughter, it was talking, it was learning. Here in my family and formality, it was a different kind of learning, it was conforming, you've got to be a good girl, and remember, Mario always said to me, whoever you are with that shows who you are. I'm just translating literally, because that's the way in Spanish, that was always my mother so she always protects us by asking, who are you with? Who are your friends? Every time we had friends, she always had a say. So we were guarded in that respect. Which is what parenting is about, now with my son, we try, I try not to be that directive, but I'm keeping an eye, who is my son with (Laughs). But that somehow took my choice away. I didn't feel I had a choice there, whereas here I felt choice, and wanted to go to the experience of something I'm going to choose. And I remember when I made the decision, I had farewells everyday, I never, I could never, that was the first time I realised that I meant something for some people. I never realised that before. Because they were saying goodbye to me and there were many invitations and I was just overwhelmed by the invitations, and I realised that I was someone, in a way. And still, that didn't make me happy. Being someone, of choice. Obviously now, after I've been doing what I'm doing, I've realised the importance of choice, because I made the decision myself so that was something that I decided. I sold my paintings to get out of my ...

GM27 - Can I just ask why it's so important as you look back, that whole thing about choice? Your own choice was so crucial?

P27 - It's a very interesting question actually. I've thought about it and I've never had a chance to respond to it, I suppose it's about responsibility. It's about me being able to respond why I did it, how I did it, or to talk about experience other than somebody else talking about it, because I chose it, I don't know.

GM28 - When you make the choice it's like, it's something that comes from you?

P28 - Yes. It doesn't come from anybody else. I decided myself, and I decided myself because I'm thinking it's something that is worthwhile. Rather than me doing something, you see, having been brought up as doing as I was told, so to me this was the opposite, I'm not doing something because I'm told, but I because I want to do it.

GM29 - I just wondering one other thing about that. What was it about these foreign people? What was it about them that, if I understood you it's almost like you grabbed something in there, and just kind of, magnetism, I want something?

P29 - Totally. Language, the English language.

GM30 - What was it about the English language that just got you like that?

P30 - On reflection, because I can only talk on reflection, at the time I didn't know what it was. But there was something enchanting, something that I couldn't describe. Now on reflection, being able to speak English, and yet I don't speak English yet, I have

many mistakes, it's not, I don't speak English, but being able to speak English empowered me tremendously, my self confidence improved, I don't literally translate inside me when I speak English, which some people think I do. No, I don't. However, at some point there are some words that, in English, some English words, that are very powerful for me and that's because I compare the conceptual meaning of Spanish, and I just feel that these English words are far more, more powerful. Whereas the Spanish expression is more subdued, it's more. To me English is the language of power (Laughs), but again I would have to define power. Equality, I'm talking about equality, I'm talking about the language of, language that conveys not having to explain but to say, whereas in Spanish everything is like explaining. It's like, so many words and so many expressions, and it's flowery, and it is beautiful, I'm not saying it's not, but I feel more empowered when I speak English than when I speak Spanish.

GM31 - I'm wondering about that, because if I've understood you, I'm not sure I have so correct me if I'm wrong, when you met these people you didn't understand English at all?

P31 - No. Very little from school. Very little.

GM32 - Very little.

P32 - I could write it.

GM33 - OK.

P33 - But not the voices. They were Swiss people, their English was still foreign.

GM34 - OK, yes. I'm wondering, I have this idea that it kind of, and it's only my idea, that hearing these people speak this foreign language enchanted you, in your words?

P34 - Yes.

GM35 - And I was wondering if that symbolised something for you, that's more than just a language, although I understand when you learn the language that was an experience that was quite powerful for you?

P35 - I know what you mean. I know where you're heading to. It symbolised freedom for me. It was about freedom. It was about, yes, yes, I think I felt trapped in my own world. This was freedom.

GM36 - Yes, it sounds almost like this foreign language was a doorway to?

P36 - Yes! (loudly) And I remember in my farewell as I said, I want to go to learn English, to speak the language of the world, because I want to travel around the world. So, freedom.

GM37 - Yes.

P37 - Reflecting back on the meaning of events, yes, it was about freedom. And the people, I liked the way this group, there were times that they spoke English and I understood what they were saying, and I didn't speak English. That caused me to wonder why is this happening? Why am I understanding what this guy is saying when I don't speak English? And I responded and he continued. So I had an experience I'd never had before, which is like internalising experiences, the magic, I call it magic, I know the word is not very welcome for some people, maybe it's not the right word, but magic, something, an unexplainable phenomenon, something that I can't explain but I could feel, I could see, I could experience it. That was magic for me.

GM38 - That makes we want to ask something else. I'm wondering if comparing back on the experience with these people, the experience of magic, this thing that can't be named, something that's happened, it sounds as though one of things that was happening was you were with people who even though you couldn't even speak the same language, there was that sense of understanding?

P38 - Totally. Total communication. Total understanding. And I...

GM39 - And you hadn't had that?

P39 - No.

GM40 - In the place where you...?

P40 - ..Where I spoke the language.

GM41 - Where you spoke the language, the only place you'd ever known, where you grew up, were so familiar with, didn't feel understood? But with these foreigners with a different language?

P41 - Yes. I felt understood.

GM42 - Yes.

P42 - Totally (laughs).

GM45 - There's some kind of kinship or something with these people?

P45 - Yes. But reflecting back also, feeling understood also meant that, I felt interest in them to talk to me. And even if I spoke Spanish, they were just there with eyes open, and ears, talking. It was about showing interest in engaging, whereas I didn't have that here at all. I mean I was marrying a man who I still said, I'm not marrying you, and he couldn't grasp what I was saying. Not even when I couldn't bear his touch, and he wasn't still with it (Laughs).



GM46 - Can I just ask one more thing about this and then move on a little bit, I'm wondering, if I've understood what you've said, the kind of general feeling of what you've said, there's value on belonging?

P46 - Yes.

GM47 - There's something attractive about that?

P47 - Yes.

GM48 - But given the choice between belonging and freedom, freedom was the more important to you?

P48 - Yes. It's always the most important.

GM49 - What does freedom mean to you?

P49 - Feeling accepted.

GM50 - And that's different to belonging?

P50 - Yes, completely. Belonging, what is belonging, I mean, it's totally different from feeling accepted with being amongst people that are interested in engaging with dialogue, which is whatever I say has some meaning to another person to either question or say, I don't quite get what you're saying. The beauty of communicating. One person needs sometimes not even words, sometimes it's just eyes or a touch, it could be anything. I doesn't need words sometimes. Yes, belonging. I'm supposed to belong in Columbia, but that's not powerful enough for me, it's not.

GM51 - So, when you reflect back on the circumstances of your leaving home why do you think you really left?

P51 - I was tired. I was tired of being the pillar of my family. But this question is not new, I already reflected upon it.

GM52 - OK.

P52 - I spoke to my parents about it. I took responsibility for my family without having to take it, but I did. I'm so careful now about with my son, because it is very similar to me, taking responsibility we don't have to take. Just because I wanted my family to be well, so this is an exhausting, everyone around you well and happy, and it is not, it shouldn't be the case. I was tired, tired of being the pillar of my family, coping. Tired of being a daughter. I always taught that everything is OK, so they never bothered to, oh, hi, how are you? I don't even remember that question from my parents. Now it takes place, when we talk over the phone, how are you? Now, a perfect relationship, but there was a reason for it, I can't blame them, I'm not blaming them. I'm not placing a blame on them because they did their best. I was the physically healthiest child in the family. I was the eldest, and all my sisters had asthma or allergy. There was something

wrong with them all the time, so I was almost in a way, a normal mother, nursing in a way my youngest. One of my sisters nearly died. It's understandable that they always thought that everything is right with [name]. I was always healthy, physically healthy.

GM53 - They didn't have to worry about you in the same way?

P53 - Never. And I was at a school, a very good student, top of the class, getting good results, so we don't have to worry about [name], but I was tired of it. And one of my needs is a family that cares about me, because I didn't have that. They know, I managed to talk to them about all this, but that's one of my shortcomings, I need to see, now I'm in my adulthood, the man I'm with he cares about me, otherwise I won't be with him.

GM54 - So what if you don't, if you don't get that?

P54 - I lose, I lose interest, I lose hope, then I continue making my choice, and I continue. I had to do that in the past. I don't do that much now, but that's what I did. I need to see a caring attitude towards me.

GM55 - So, when I ask why you think you really left it sounds like there is perhaps two motivations or something. One was the attraction of freedom, and the other was the difficulty of, you didn't say it this way, but it sounds almost like the difficulty of not being seen?

P55 - Yes, I was invisible.

GM56 - Yes, because you were OK.

P56 - Yes.

GM57 - To be visible you had to...

P57 - Yes, still my sister, she's OK, still, there's still, I say what do you mean, I'm OK? I may be, but that's an assumption, and now after I've been doing this, I question more. I've gone back into my teenage years of silence, I just listen to them, I don't speak. Just invisible. In my family I'm invisible because there is a huge assumption in my family, [name] is OK. Which may not be true, or it is OK, it's bad if it has not been OK. I never talked to them when I'm not OK, and I remember my mother saying once, well we haven't heard from [name] for the last 3 months, she's not OK. She's silent, which caught my attention a lot, something I never expected from my mother.

GM58 - So when you left, it sounds, if this isn't too dramatic, it sounds almost like it was a choice to exist?

P58 - Yes. (long pause) choice to exist. [long pause]. I don't think I still exist in my family anyway. Yes, it was a choice to exist. Maybe that is what is crucial, for me, to

have a choice [long pause]. I sometimes wonder if that is right or not, I mean, ..... that is one of the reasons which I get into conflict with my loved ones. I want to have a choice ... there is a choice to exist. [deep emotion expressed during this part of interview]

GM59 - Can I move on and ask you something else?

P59 - Yes, OK.

GM60 - When you reflect upon your time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P60 - Sorry, can you ask again.

GM61 - When you reflect upon your time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P61 - At times I've felt I wanted to go back, it's not easy for me to live here. And I felt I paid for having left the man who wanted to give me everything. I see that man in a different light now. Not in a judgmental way but, I destroyed him when I said I'm not going back. And it makes me realise that people have loved me, but I don't think I will go back. I can't cope with this sort of family ... I just can't.

GM62- That's one thing I wanted to ask is if you ever could go back?

P62 - I've tried. Before I took up this course I went there for a year, it was the time I did this work that I talked about, and I wanted to go into the underworld, to see the true foundation of the culture, of Bogota, no way. But I'm a little bit arrogant about this, because I say I don't go back to a culture that disturbed me.

GM63- (Laughs)

P63 - I think that's a bit of arrogance actually. Yes.

GM64 - So is it just kind of the political situation, or kind of like, the society?

P64 - No, the society's attitudes, because political situations only observe, or if it's truly there the people's attitudes. No, I'm find my society, not everyone, I can't generalise, but the ruling class is very ..... not even the ones that claim to be doing about the conflict, they want to claim to be the political set, what Kierkegaard says about the protectors of society, or the ones that claim that they have the answers, there they are showing off, if I was with them, trying to work on the conflict resolution, they are not different from the ones that have ... trying to take the country in it's .... they're no different. They're fighting for the same thing, the only difference is that they have the power in an alien society that the others don't. .. but they're fighting for the same thing, power. Even women, it's nothing to with, it's not men, women too, there's no difference in the values of the ones that the men have, what I'm trying to say is it's not a

gender issue there, it's an existing existential issue. I prefer to stay here suffering (Laughs). A different kind of suffering.

GM65 - What kind of suffering is it here?

P65 - Trying to get the qualifications, the fact that my son doesn't live with me. Really existing. The system is hard. The system is not, and I laugh when my sisters says, do you realise what you have in life? And I say, no, and don't have to, I live. I don't want to take anything for granted, because I don't think I have anything. I don't need to have anything. And that is suffering. Existing is, and I mean having to always fight for, for a system, and the choice is painful sometimes, for God's sake, I'm not, I don't want to be one of those that lives in a fantasy, I'm always trying live in reality, even if it's painful. It gives me pain and it gives pain to others (Laughs). To my son. But that's life.

GM66 - So, I'm just wondering, going back to Columbia, the way that society is at the moment, you don't want to be there?

P66 - No.

GM67 - Being here, it sounds if almost kind of like, part of you is suffering as a part of life?

P67 - Yes.

GM68 - Have you ever thought of living anywhere else?

P68 - Before I started this course, I wanted to go to Canada (Laughs) because I knew I was going to be accepted in Canada, but then I began a course and I met the man I'm with, and I'm here, my son is here. And yes, I think I will go one day. I think so. I am 45 only (Laughs), but I don't think I will live in Spain. I think would choose where to live and that would have to be according to the social fabric. I will be choosy, in other words.

GM69 - So when you make that choice, what is it that will tell you that that's an OK place?

P69 - There's no OK place (Laughs). (pause) It would have to be Europe, why, because it's not feasible for me to go anywhere else. I don't think I would live in Japan. I don't think I would live in China, just because I don't like it. I don't think I would live in India either, although it calls my attention. There's something about it that calls my attention, just because I feel that there could be freedom there of going and doing something worthwhile. And if this relationship doesn't work, I want to go and live in a community, I like community, not all of them, I will be choosy, but I like communities with a purpose. Yes.

GM70 - So when you make this choice about where you settle or move to, it sounds like one aspect of that is you ask yourself where can I go where I can have a meaningful purpose?

P70 - Yes, absolutely.

GM71 - You can't do that back home in Columbia because society's not ready for it?

P71 - That's right...

GM72 - something about having a meaningful purpose that seems really important to you?

P72 - Something where I can do something, like do something that involves human beings, where there is other welfare?. And the lessons come especially from ... women, disadvantaged women, not necessarily disadvantaged women, because my work would be with ..... they're not disadvantaged. You've got to do something, but if they believe they are disadvantaged then, yes, men normally appear to be OK, I know they're not OK also, but they appear to be OK they do what my parents did to me. '[name] is OK.'

GM73 - What is it about that kind of meaningful purpose, and doing something that seems important to you? What is it that?

P73 - Just to convey to people that they have a choice.

GM74 - To bring that message to people?

P74 - Not necessarily,... I don't want to be a preacher, but to go out in groups and through learning groups or through or working with groups, inject, and I call it inject, rather than say, be direct, it injects a sort of, number one, hope, and convey the different ways in the way people live. Because I still feel that this world people live in a fantasy, and people who do not live in a fantasy, one, feel very down because they cannot achieve the fantasy, the fantasy is always there, if we invent it. I don't want to preach, I'm not a preacher.

GM75 - No, that's not what I'm getting. If I've understood you what I'm getting is that you want to share your experience?

P75 - Absolutely.

GM76 - Your experience of choice, the experience of alternatives. Perhaps the experience of adolescent women. Your adolescence was a very pivotal point for you. So it sounds as though your whole experience is something that you can share in a way that it's a positive way.

P76 - And I've done it in Colombia. I've done it with these women who, it's the poor, the disadvantaged, the poor, I remember them saying, we cannot afford a piece of meat, and Colombian values are just disgusting. So it's this talking about what being a vegetarian means, and finding a totally different outlook to the fact that they don't have money to eat meat, but maybe they can't eat perhaps more protein, more healthy, the fact that they don't have money to pay for transport so they have to walk a lot, and use that experience to say, how can we do more exercise and walk, and walk, and what walking does to our bodies. It seems like they feel, and they felt rich at the end, they were so happy. They realised, oh, we have a lot (Laughs). It's about informing different ways of seeing the world because they don't have perhaps the courage to have a choice and get out of the country, or they might, they won't have the opportunity that I had, meeting the Swiss (Laughs).

GM77 - So you're bringing in a different version of choice?

P77 - Absolutely. There wasn't because of, I had to survive, and I had to make money, I would always go back and liberate, it's about liberation. For me it's about liberation of people, they don't have to strive to have what is out of reach, they cannot be rich. That's the kind of thing.

GM78 - OK.

P78 - I know I talk to my parents, and they say, are you crazy? And I say, yes, I am. I am a bit crazy.

GM79 - Can I just ask one last question?

P79 - Yes.

GM80 - How has it felt to talk about these things?

P80 - [Pause] I never had the opportunity to put all this together, especially the circumstances, the transition, because that's the transition, and that's one of my issues in my course. The language of transition which is never anywhere, this language, the shift, the sudden shift. It's impossible to put into language I suppose. For me to say I felt good is very simplistic [Pause], it's always good to talk to you, so the person I don't believe in what quality, the subject of quality and the same old ..... documentation and all that, they say this is because people are replaceable, people are, how do they say it, people are indispensable, or they try to take people as such as important in the process, so that's why they documented it. But I went through that, and worked, I made a little bit of money out of it. I still believe that people matter, that people are different and that people play different roles, and people, what I'm trying to say, I think you manage very well to get to the point, to the core of my experience. It's not easy to tell it. So thanks. Because I think you're going to give me the transcripts, so I'm going to see myself bare with the kind of language I used, I'm going to see my grammar, and I'm intrigued about it, to see how I speak. I feel safe, but I always feel safe with you, I don't feel safe with everyone. I learned many things. That perhaps were in me, but I didn't quite manage to, and I thank you for that. Especially the freedom and the choice.

GM81 - It's very interesting to me that this kind of general topic, of home, leaving home and stuff goes right down, as you say, right down to the core of something, and yet, just like in your adolescence, it's something that is rarely talked about.

P81 - We never do.

GM82 - We don't talk about it, you know.

P82 - Well, we never had the opportunity to do it either. Not even in a diary, I'm a diary person, and I just write my feelings, and this and that, but I've felt that this does not convey sadness for me, that's how I feel. And in my diaries there's always sad things to remember, it's somehow different.

GM83 - Is there anything that you'd like to add, anything we didn't touch upon?

P83 - Possibly, as far as the implicit trust that I have in my sisters, especially [Lucille], the second sister, the one that goes down below, and I know that was one of the reasons for my experience, ..... I trusted her that she could take over.

GM84- OK.

P84 - And she did. Not too much, while I've been coming away here, and the holding coming away from here and it's like holding, it's this holding of the family when a crisis goes about.

GM85 - Yes.

P85 - Divorces or separations, these things .....my family..... this holding, this, we are five still, and that's a big responsibility to be able to hold the family. And having to hold my parents, I mean, when they lost her they went through depression. The house had to be sold, my mother couldn't enter that place any more because she used to say, I just feel ghosts here. So this holding, even if we are spread, we still carry out our duty all the time in order not to. So far, my parents aren't anti depressants, they just go through, it's probably the heart, and they're ageing in a way, but there's no antidepressants there, we must still hold them, because it's not easy to see a child going. It's not, I mean life for parents is very tough, it's not easy to be a parent, thank God I had only one. Only one, he has given me a lot of pain. I suppose you have parents?

GM86 - I have parents.

P86 - And I'm sure that they're thinking about you now. But I'm not supposed to interfere.

GM87 - No, I can relate to a lot of what you've been talking about.

P87 - It's rewarding, but it's also, but it's lovely as children to know that we are old for them to feel understood and accepted and not blamed, which, that's how my parents feel now, so for me it's so fulfilling to ring my parents and see how happy they are, like I feel that we are now parents of my parents.

GM88 - That's what it sounds like.

P88 - We are all happy to play that role.

GM89 - Yes, it sounds as though the role has spread now.

P89 - Yes, I mean I talk the circumstances that, I'm 45, and we are all parents, all of the children are parents and they have gone through similar upheavals, and it's not easy to be a parent. Are you a parent?

GM90 - No.

P91 - (Laughs) I think sometimes we think it's easier for fathers, but not necessarily, you're not missing anything.

GM92 - (Laughs)

P92 - You're not missing out anything. It's very tough.

GM93 - I'm missing in that sense.

P93 - What?

GM94 - I'm missing that.

P94 - Well, that's why you're doing what your doing. All the people you see are your children.

GM95 - (Laughs).

P95 - And it's easier to parent someone who's not your blood. Much, much easier. I mean, I see in my son I am more flexible and such a warmth before mother in inverted commas, to my nieces, nephews when children of my friends or when I do my work, with these women, with some of them, I'm the ideal parent, so it's easier to be the ideal parent when it's not blood. [Sighs] It is pain, blood is pain. .... so I don't think you're missing much.

GM96 - Sounds like that's another study there, a new topic?

P96 - But I don't think I would like to go through it ....., the difference between blood and, which is choice, we don't choose this, but we choose who to work with. It's about choice, isn't it? Very interesting.

GM97 - Thank you very much for your time. [END]



## **“Inez” Meaning Units**

### **The circumstances of leaving home**

1. It was a personal decision to follow love, love with no destination.
2. I didn't come to the UK to learn English but because I expected to be with the person I was in love with.
3. Though love was the inspiration, to myself I had previously thought of possibly leaving for other countries.
4. The violence in my country was difficult, I'd seen someone killed on the way to work and the image stayed with me.
5. My father had also been shot recently but I didn't witness it, he was in hospital very ill.
6. I felt I had no reason to live in that society, I was very disillusioned.
7. That was all about 7 months before I accidentally met this person. At 25 I was working in PR and met a group from Switzerland.
8. They spoke English and very poor Spanish and I couldn't understand them and I didn't like that. That was a major trigger.
9. Why do people from elsewhere come here and I cannot communicate with them, it was a challenge for me, I wasn't happy about it.
10. I lived with this group for 6 months.

### **The group**

1. The group was my work but my personal life was through my parents and my official fiancé lived in a near city and we'd visit each other.
2. The experience with this group was so exciting I felt split.
3. On the one hand formality, and policing, being a good girl.
4. On the other hand was the challenge of trying to understand this group with their poor Spanish, speaking to them in a different way, trying to find words, speaking slowly, and we had dinner parties.
5. Then a Columbian girl came who'd been abroad and could speak English and I was very jealous. How can she communicate with them when I can't?
6. The challenge and the unhappiness therefore increased.
7. I started to tell people I wanted to learn English, America is cheaper but I was anti-American so I said I wanted to go to the UK.

### **Art**

1. I was working, with my family, and with this group, and also painting in my spare time.
2. I studied art for 4 years and it was the time I could express myself, my feelings.
3. I began to sell my paintings and each time I cried because I didn't want to but we were not rich and I needed money.
4. There was a particular man in that group that was married but I got along with him so well.

5. He encouraged me, you're going to make it, it's your dream, you need to speak English. It was a trigger for me.
6. That was true love, without having to please him at all.

## Marriage

1. I was serious about marriage and also about learning English and at the same time I was playing around with both.
2. My fiancé was very serious, educated, always trying to educate me, which I liked.
3. I also loved his mother, she was wonderful and he still lived with her.
4. We were both religious and he commented that about a woman, saying she should not be pregnant before marriage. From that moment I couldn't bear for him to touch me.
5. I valued pregnancy very much for a reason.
6. The more he spoke about it the more stabbing pain I felt. I didn't have enough confidence then to argue with him.
7. I decided at the last minute not to get married and the world went against me, no one could understand.
8. I said I wanted to go to the UK for 6 months to learn English and he thought we'd get married when I got back, he didn't hear that it was over.

## Leaving

1. I sold my paintings, cancelled everything, my parents were puzzled.
2. I remember the date of the flight, I had packed one month before! I don't know why I did that.
3. Later my mother told me that every time she saw that suitcase it made her cry and now I understand that, but not then.
4. I left my good job, I left my whole life behind.
5. Love triggered it but I was not going to Switzerland to that man, I was coming to England.

## Not belonging, and interested in other worlds

1. When I was 15 I dreamed of a house in England.
2. I did research and found a picture of the house from my dream but I was too reserved to tell anyone.
3. When I began adolescence I wouldn't talk to anyone about all my feelings and changes, parents, sister, I was the eldest.
4. I didn't feel I had anyone to talk to, I didn't feel I belonged in my home country.
5. I never belonged in my family either, I was different, though I loved them.
6. There were some explicit things like attitudes from my mother that made me feel different, like I didn't belong.

7. It was hell not to belong. I felt ugly at 15, I was physically different, tall, blue eyes, totally flat chested, no boyfriend, and I always asked why?
8. My friends seemed so pretty and I felt so ugly, and different, not even the confidence to speak. I felt ashamed. It was shameful to be different.
9. Before that I felt OK, I was in just that I school and church, I just developed late and didn't fit in.

### Late development

1. When I was 12 I still believed in Santa Claus. My friends told me.
2. I felt betrayed by my parents. They were trying to keep the fantasy.
3. That was my first feeling of betrayal, being lied to about that, and the beginning of feeling different, why did all my friends know and not me?
4. My family was very reserved, sex and bodily changes were taboo.
5. So I learned everything from my friends at school. I wanted to talk about it.
6. For my mother we were her princesses. We were her life.
7. That made her different and it made us different, and I wasn't happy about that difference.
8. Sometimes I feel happy about being different and sometimes I don't, when it makes me not belong.
9. There was always two sides to it.
10. I tried to do the right thing but was unhappy.
11. I felt I belonged more with this foreign group than my own culture. A real sense of belonging that I never got in my home culture.

### Belonging with foreignness

1. It felt exciting to belong with them, the smiles, laughter, talking, learning.
2. With my family and own culture it was a different kind of learning, it was conforming.
3. You've got to be a good girl, and your friends show what kind of person you are.
4. My mother always tried to protect us by asking 'who are you with'?
5. That made me feel I didn't have a choice there, but with that group I had choice.
6. I was attracted to the experience that I could choose for myself.
7. When I was leaving I finally realised that I meant something to people, in their goodbyes. But that still didn't make me happy.
8. I sold my own paintings to take that choice, to choose for myself.

### The importance of choice

1. It's an interesting question, I've thought about why choice is so important to me but never responded, I think it's responsibility.
2. It's about me being able to respond saying why I did it, for me to be able to have the experience rather than someone else explaining it.
3. It comes from me, no one else.

4. I made the decision because I think it's worthwhile.
5. It's the opposite of doing what you're told, which was the way I was brought up.

## English language

1. It was the language that was the initial attraction to those people.
2. At the time I didn't know, but on reflection there was an indescribable enchantment being able to speak English.
3. Being able to speak it empowered me, gave me confidence.
4. Some English words are powerful because I compare the conceptual meaning of Spanish, and the English is far more powerful.
5. Spanish is more subdued, English is the language of power.
6. English is the language of equality, conveying rather than explaining, like you do in Spanish.
7. Spanish is flowery and beautiful but not as empowering. Hearing them speak was enchanting.
8. Learning English symbolised freedom for me. I felt trapped in my own Spanish world and this was freedom!
9. English was a doorway, the language of the world, I wanted to travel around the world so it was my way to the world.

## Understanding apart from words

1. Sometimes I understood them even though I didn't know their language.
2. It made me wonder why do I understand this person when I don't understand English?
3. I call it magic, a kind of internalising experience allowing communication, it was unexplainable.
4. I could feel it, see it, experience it, but not explain it.
5. It was like total communication, total understanding. I hadn't had that in the place where I spoke the same language as people.
6. I felt understood with these foreigners more than at home.
7. And I felt their interest in me, even when I was speaking Spanish.
8. There was a shared interest in engaging, which I didn't have at home at all.
9. I was supposed to be marrying a man who couldn't even understand when I said I wouldn't marry him.

## Freedom

1. Belonging is important but freedom is always more important.
2. Freedom means feeling accepted, which is completely different from belonging.
3. Acceptance allows the beauty of communication, to really have dialogue.
4. Sometimes it's just eyes, or touch, it doesn't need words always.
5. Belonging is like I'm supposed to belong in my home country but that's not powerful enough for me.

## Why did you really leave?

1. I was tired of being the pillar of my family. I've reflected on this.
2. I've spoken to my parents about how I took responsibility for my family when I didn't have to.
3. I'm very careful now with my son, so he doesn't do what I thought I had to.
4. I wanted my family to be well and happy and that's exhausting, it shouldn't be the case.
5. I was tired of being the daughter who coped, everything's OK so they never had to bother with me. They never asked how I was.
6. I'm not blaming them and now it's a great relationship.
7. They did their best and I was the healthiest and eldest, all my sisters had health problems.
8. I was like a mother, nursing my youngest. One sister nearly died. So they assumed I was OK and concentrated on the others.
9. I was a very good student too but tired of it.
10. One of my needs is a family that cares about me because I didn't have that.
11. I've been able to talk to them all. And one thing I need still as an adult, is to feel cared about and my partner does, that's why I'm with him.

## If I don't feel cared for

1. I lose interest, hope, continue to make choices and go on.
2. I had to do that in the past, until I found a caring attitude.
3. That was the other reason I left, because I felt invisible.
4. I've reflected more on my silent teenage years and see it's because they just assumed I was OK.
5. I don't talk with them when I'm not OK, I don't show that, I go silent instead.
6. My leaving was a choice to exist.

## Choosing to exist

1. I don't think I exist even now in my family.
2. Yes, that is what is crucial for me, to choose my existence.
3. That is a reason I had conflict with my loved ones, I wanted to have that choice, there is a choice to exist (strong emotion).

## What's it been like since leaving home?

1. At times I've wanted to go back, it's not easy to live here.
2. I paid for leaving the man who wanted to give me everything.
3. I see him differently now, not judgementally, I destroyed him by not going back.
4. It makes me realise that people have loved me, but I won't go back, I can't cope with the family.

## Will you ever go back?

1. I tried for a year to work in the underside of the capital but I won't go back to a culture that disturbs me.
2. I think that's a bit arrogant of me.
3. It's the society's attitudes I find difficult, the ruling class.
4. Some claim they have the answers but they are just showing off. They are not different from the ones making the conflict.
5. They are all fighting for power, women too, they have those same values.
6. It's an existential issue there and I prefer to stay here and struggle, it's a different kind of struggling.

## Struggles of life here

1. I struggle to get qualifications and with the fact my son doesn't live with me. It's a struggle to exist, the system is hard.
2. My sisters think I have so much here but I just live it, I don't think I have anything and I don't take anything for granted.
3. I don't need to have anything and that is suffering.
4. Existing is painful, fighting the system, choosing is painful.
5. I prefer reality to fantasy even if it's painful.
6. I'm choosy about where I live, the social fabric of the place is most important.

## How to choose where to live

1. It has to be Europe because it's not feasible to go anywhere else.
2. I don't like Japan, China, India, although they call to me I wouldn't live there.
3. There could be freedom to go to India and do something worthwhile.
4. If my relationship doesn't work out I will try to live in a community of some kind, one with a purpose, but I will be choosy.
5. I need to have a meaningful purpose in the place I live, society back home is not ready for it.

## Meaningful purpose

1. I need to be somewhere that I can help humans, especially disadvantaged women.
2. Men often appear to be OK but they aren't either, they do what my parents did to me.
3. I want to convey to people that they have a choice.
4. I don't want to be a preacher, but through learning with groups, working with them, to inject hope, and convey that people live in different ways.
5. People live in a fantasy and those who don't fit the fantasy feel down because they cannot achieve it.
6. I want to share my own experience of choice and alternatives.

7. I worked with the poor disadvantaged back home, and I found the values there just disgusting.
8. I explored with them looking at things in other ways, making the best of what they have. Not having money for meat or transport, might present opportunities as well as difficulties.
9. They felt rich and happy at the end, they realised how much they have. It's about different ways of seeing the world because they don't have the courage to get out of the country, or the opportunity that I did, to meet the Swiss.
10. I will always go back to liberate, its about liberation from striving for what they don't have.

### The feelings of the interview

1. I never had the opportunity to put together these circumstances and the transition.
2. The language of transition, it's impossible to put into words.
3. People matter, are different, play different roles, I feel you managed to get to the core of my experience.
4. It's not easy to tell this story, so thank you.
5. I look forward to seeing the transcript to see my words, and grammar.
6. I feel safe and I learned many things, that were in me but new, especially the issues of freedom and choice.
7. We don't get the opportunity to talk about it. In my writing I can't convey the sadness I feel about all this.

### Other issues

1. One reason I could leave was I trusted my sister to take over for me.
2. She can hold the family in a crisis, divorces, separations etc.
3. We still carry out our duty to hold the family. And it wasn't easy for them to see me go.
4. Life for parents is very tough, I've had only one and he's given me a lot of pain.
5. Now my parents can feel that their children understand them and don't blame them.
6. Its very fulfilling to ring my parents and see who happy they are, like we are now our parent's parents, and happy to play that role.
7. It's much easier to be the ideal parent to people who are not blood, people we work with or other's children. Blood is pain.
8. It's about choice again, we don't choose blood but we can choose who to work with, so its' easier.

## **“Inez” Meaning Clusters**

### **Feelings about the home country**

11. I had no reason to live in such a violent society. I'd seen someone killed on the way to work and the image stayed with me, and my father had also been shot. I was disillusioned.
12. I tried to go back for a year but I won't live in a culture that disturbs me.
13. It's the society's attitudes, the ruling class, that I find difficult.
14. They are all the same, those causing conflict and those saying they have answers, they all just want power.
15. Working with the poor and disadvantaged back home, I found their values disgusting too.
16. I feel arrogant about my attitudes towards my home country but it's an existential issue the struggle of life there and I prefer the struggle here.
17. I need to have a meaningful purpose in the place I live, society back home is not ready for that.

### **Love with no destination**

1. Leaving home was a personal decision to follow love without a loved object.
2. Coming to the UK was to learn English but with some idea of the man I was in love with.
3. Love, in some form, was the inspiration, but I had previously thought about leaving my home country.
4. Love was the trigger but I went to the UK not to follow that man I was in love with.

### **Meeting the foreign group**

1. I didn't like the fact that I could not understand their language, that was a major trigger for me.
2. I was really unhappy that I could not communicate with these foreign people, it really challenged me.
3. Being with this group was so exciting that I felt I was living two lives.
4. I was excited by the challenge of trying to communicate, finding words, speaking slowly, having parties.
5. The challenge increased when a girl came who had been abroad and could speak both Spanish and English. I was jealous.
6. There was a particular man who I connected with, who encouraged me in my dream and in learning English. He showed me true love, without wanting anything in return.

### **Wanting to learn English**



1. The experience of meeting this group made me want to learn English, in the UK, as I was anti-American.
2. It was the language that was the initial attraction to those people, an indescribable enchantment being able to speak English.
3. Being able to speak it empowered me, gave me confidence.
4. Some English words are powerful because I compare the conceptual meaning of Spanish, and the English is far more powerful.
5. Spanish is more subdued, English is the language of power, equality, conveying rather than explaining, like you do in Spanish.
6. Spanish is flowery and beautiful but not as empowering. Hearing them speak was enchanting.
7. Learning English symbolised freedom for me. I felt trapped in my own Spanish world and this was freedom! English was a doorway, the language of the world, I wanted to travel around the world so it was my way to the world.

### **The experience of two worlds**

1. My life became divided, the excitement of foreignness and on the other hand the conformity of formality, and being a good girl, being approved of by society.
2. I was both serious about and also just exploring the two sides, learning English and getting married.
3. I felt more at home, like I belonged with this foreign group than with my own culture, which I found stifling.
4. It was exciting to be with them, the smiles, laughter, talking, learning, while my own culture was reserved and conservative.
5. The learning from my own culture was learning how to conform, to be respectable.
6. There was a magic kind of understanding with this group, we could communicate without knowing each others' language.
7. It felt like total communication, total understanding, and I hadn't had that even in the place where I spoke the same language.
8. There was a shared interest in engaging, which I didn't have at home, including feeling their interest in me, which was new.
9. This compared to the man I was supposed to marry, who couldn't even understand that it was over.

### **The way of leaving**

1. My fiancé was serious, educated, and liked to educate me, which I also liked.
2. I loved his mother, we were both religious, it was a good arrangement.
3. He made a comment about a pregnant woman which I could not forgive, I could not bear his touch after that.
4. I lacked the confidence to discuss with him but at the last minute I cancelled the wedding, though the world went against me.
5. I said I wanted to go to the UK for 6 months to learn English and he assumed we'd get married after, he didn't understand that it was over.
6. I sold my paintings to raise money to go, which was a great loss for me, it's where I could express my feelings.

7. I sold my own paintings to be able to choose for myself.
8. I cancelled everything, a whole life, my work, friends, everything, to leave and everyone was puzzled.
9. I packed a month before the flight, which was very difficult for my mother. I don't know why I did that.
10. When I was leaving I realised how much I meant to people but that still wasn't enough.

### **Not belonging from adolescence**

1. When I began adolescence I wouldn't talk to anyone about my feelings and my changes, I didn't feel I belonged in my home country or my family, I was different, though I loved them.
2. Some of my mother's explicit attitudes made me feel different, like I didn't belong, which was hell.
3. I was physically different from my friends, I was ugly, they were beautiful, I was tall, blue eyed, flat chested, and I wondered why I was different.
4. I felt ashamed to be different and didn't have the confidence to speak. Until then I felt OK, I just developed late and then didn't fit in.
5. I still believed in santa claus and felt betrayed by my parents for lying to me and keeping that fantasy. Why did all my friends know the truth and I didn't?
6. My family was very reserved, sex and bodily changes were taboo, so I learned everything from my friends, I wanted to know.
7. We were different because my mother wanted to keep us as her little princesses, and I didn't like that difference.
8. There's always two sides to feeling different, sometimes I liked it, but not if it meant not belonging.
9. When I was 15 I dreamed of a house in England and I did research to find that house but kept it a secret.

### **Choice and freedom**

1. With that group I had a choice like I didn't in my protective family environment.
2. I always tried to do the right thing but it didn't bring me happiness, I felt attracted to the experience of choosing for myself, it felt more important.
3. I've thought about why choice is so important and I think it's about responsibility.
4. It's about me being able to respond saying why I did it, for me to be able to have the experience rather than someone else explaining it.
5. The decision comes from me, no one else, and I can say why I think it's worthwhile.
6. It's the opposite of doing what you're told, which was the way I was brought up.
7. Belonging is important but freedom is always more important because freedom means feeling accepted, which is completely different from belonging.
8. Acceptance allows the beauty of communication, to really have dialogue, eyes, or touch, it doesn't need words always.
9. Belonging is like I'm supposed to belong in my home country but that's not powerful enough for me.

## **Family dynamics and choosing to exist**

1. I took responsibility for my family when I didn't have to, I was the pillar of it.
2. I've spoken to my parents about it and am careful with my own son so he doesn't do what I thought I had to. We have a good relationship now.
3. I was exhausted trying to make everyone well and happy, being the daughter who coped and didn't need anything, they never asked how I was.
4. My parents had to concentrate on my sick sisters, I was the eldest and healthiest, and was like another mother.
5. Now I need to feel cared about, I didn't get that from my family and I still need it from my partner.
6. I lose interest and hope, and just go on if I don't get that caring attitude, that's what I did in the past.
7. That was the other reason I left, because I felt invisible, in my silent teenage years they just assumed I was OK because I don't talk with them when I'm not OK, I don't show that, I go silent instead.
8. My leaving was a choice to exist, that is what is crucial for me, to choose my existence.
9. That is a reason I had conflict with my loved ones, I wanted to have that choice, there is a choice to exist (strong emotion) and I don't think I really exist even now for my family.

## **Family Relationships now and understanding of being a parent**

9. One reason I could leave was I trusted my sister to take over for me, to hold the family in a crisis, divorces, separations etc.
10. We still carry out our duty to hold the family. And it wasn't easy for them to see me go but now my parents can feel that their children understand them and don't blame them.
11. Its very fulfilling to ring my parents and see who happy they are, like we are now our parent's parents, and happy to play that role.
12. Life for parents is very tough, I've had only one and he's given me a lot of pain.
13. It's much easier to be the ideal parent to people who are not blood, people we work with or other's children. Blood is pain.
14. It's about choice again, we don't choose blood but we can choose who to work with, so its' easier.

## **Struggles since leaving**

5. I paid for leaving the man who wanted to give me everything. I see him differently now, not judgementally, I destroyed him by not going back.
6. It makes me realise that people have loved me, but I won't go back, I can't cope with the family.

7. At times I've wanted to return because it's a struggle to exist here, getting qualifications, not living with my son, the system is hard.
8. My sisters think I have so much here but I just live it, I don't think I have anything and I don't take anything for granted.
9. I prefer reality to fantasy even though reality is painful, choosing is painful.
10. I'm very choosy about where I live, the social fabric of the place is crucial, it has to be in Europe because that's feasible.
11. Although the Far East and India call to me I couldn't live there.
12. If my relationship doesn't work out I will try to live in a community of some kind, one with a worthwhile purpose.

### **Meaningful purpose**

11. I need to be somewhere that I can help humans, especially disadvantaged women.
12. Men often appear to be OK but they aren't either, they do what my parents did to me.
13. I want to convey to people that they have a choice by sharing my own experience of choice and alternatives.
14. I don't want to be a preacher, but through learning with groups, working with them, to inject hope, and convey that people live in different ways.
15. People live in a fantasy and those who don't fit the fantasy feel down because they cannot achieve it.
16. I worked with the underprivileged and explored with them looking at things in other ways, difficulties might also present opportunities.
17. It's about different ways of seeing the world because they don't have the courage to get out of the country, or the opportunity that I did, to meet the Swiss.
18. I will always go back home to liberate, its about liberation from striving for what they don't have.

### **The feelings of the interview**

8. I never had the opportunity to put together these circumstances and the language of transition, it's impossible to put into words.
9. I feel you managed to get to the core of my experience and it's not easy to tell this story, so thank you.
10. I look forward to seeing the transcript to see my words, and grammar.
11. I feel safe and I learned many things, that were in me but new, especially the issues of freedom and choice.
12. We don't get the opportunity to talk about it. In my writing I can't convey the sadness I feel about all this.

## **“Inez” Themes**

1. The need for meaningful engagement with the home country
  - P experienced her home society as violent, disturbing, with attitudes she could not agree with. She was disillusioned that there is no sincere desire for change, just the need for power.
  - P feels the need to have a meaningful purpose where she lives and she prefers the struggles of her foreign life, her home society is not ready to engage with change.
  - To feel one’s own country does not live up to one’s personal ‘mission’ can feel arrogant, but P was disgusted by the values underlying the society she comes from, even the disadvantaged. She returned briefly and attempted to use her own experience of choice and alternatives to help disadvantaged groups in her country learn new perspectives on their life situation.
  - P wants to encourage others in her home country to see the world differently, and thereby she feels underprivileged groups might be liberated from striving for what they cannot achieve. This would be a way of living with the sort of lack of opportunity that P herself was able to escape from.
2. Meeting a foreign group as a trigger for leaving
  - P was confronted with not being able to understand an English-speaking group visiting her country and this was very challenging for her. The challenge to communicate was exciting, and opened up the experience of another world, which was more attractive than her familiar world.
  - P was jealous when a girl appeared who could speak both languages, and bridge these two worlds. This along with the encouragement of the group, intensified P’s resolve to learn English.
  - P’s relationship with one man in the group added to the desire to leave. This man showed P true love without wanting anything in return, and it inspired her to go out into his world, to learn English in the UK. It is not clear to what extent P wanted to follow this person (married and not living in the UK) and to what extent she wanted to learn English, but in both cases it was a personal choice to explore another world.
3. The attraction of English
  - Language can be the basis of attraction to otherness. Their use of English enchanted P as it offered a more empowered form of expression and greater self-confidence. Compared to her own language, P felt she could say things she valued in English which she couldn’t say in her native language.
  - P experienced her own language as subdued, reflecting her place in her home and social environment. To her English was the language of power and equality, less apologetic or flowery.
  - Learning this new language symbolised freedom from her own Spanish world. It was a doorway into the larger world as it was the language of the world, where P wanted to be.
4. Exposure to difference divided the experience of life
  - P’s life suddenly became divided between the excitement of foreignness and conforming to the expectations of her society. For the first time she was able to consider a choice.

- She compared the two worlds and found that the foreign group offered a sense of belonging, excitement and vitality, and an experience of the magic of communication which she had never had in her home environment. Her home world felt stifling, reserved and conservative, fulfilling expectations.
  - A crucial difference between these worlds was that the foreigners expressed a real interest in P, even though they could not understand her language. They encouraged and cared about her. There was a mutual engagement that P had not even experienced with her fiancé.
5. The price of leaving
- P gave up an engagement to be married to an educated successful man with whom she shared much. But their values regarding some things were very different, his being more conservative, and this formed a reason to postpone and then cancel the wedding.
  - The whole social world could not understand P's decision though she was confident enough to persevere and to plan to go to the UK to learn English.
  - This experience of choosing her own future was so crucial for P that she sold her own precious paintings in order to finance the trip. She gave up her whole world and in the process of saying goodbye realised how important she was to others but that did not sway her decision.
  - P does not know why, but she packed for her trip a full month before leaving and kept the bag in full view during that time, which was very difficult for her mother.
6. Late adolescent development instigating a feeling of not belonging
- P did not talk to others about the changes she was undergoing in adolescence. It was taboo in her family to discuss sexual changes and she began to feel she didn't belong in her family or wider society and this felt very difficult.
  - P went through puberty later than her friends and felt ashamed of this difference, which affected her self-confidence and ability to speak up for herself. She interpreted her physical difference as being ugly compared to others, and not fitting in.
  - P's mother wanted to maintain the innocence of her daughters, which made them seem different from other's their age. For example, P learned there was no Santa Claus from her friends, at the age of 12, which she experienced as her parents betraying her by maintaining this lie.
  - There are always two sides to feeling different, a positive and a negative, and the negative came when difference lead to not belonging. The experience of puberty seemed to trigger a distance from peers and family and the larger society. P dreamed of England and kept this secret, but this may have revealed a young sensitivity to another world, which she was later able to express with the foreign group.
7. The advent of choice and freedom
- Meeting the group offered P a choice she'd never experienced in her protective family environment. Being able to choose for herself felt important as it implied personal responsibility and independence.
  - This value was the opposite of P's upbringing, where she was taught to do what she was told, which she acquiesced to in order to belong. She now realised that freedom is more important to her than belonging.

- Freedom involves being accepted, real dialogue, whereas belonging is imposed and is not valuable enough for P to make the sacrifices necessary.
8. Family dynamics then and now
- P's role in the family was to be the strong one, to take responsibility to make everything all right for others rather than looking after her own needs. As the eldest and healthiest, P looked after her sisters, becoming invisible in the process.
  - In her life now, P needs to feel the care and concern she didn't get in her family experience. She gets that from her partner and got it from the foreign group, perhaps this was an important aspect of the potency of those relationships.
  - P left her family partly because it was difficult for her to show them when she was feeling troubled, like during her adolescence. Although she has a good relationship with her family now, she doesn't feel she really exists for them.
  - P has very strong emotion about realising her leaving was a choice for her to exist as herself. Choosing her own existence is crucial for P and worth the conflict it caused with her loved ones.
  - P was able to leave the family in the care of one of her sisters, which made it easier to leave them. The daughters now share the duty of looking after the parents and they are happy in that role.
  - From her own painful experiences as a parent, P appreciates how difficult it was for her parents to see her go and she is careful to protect her own son from the burden she felt as a young daughter. She distinguishes caring for blood relations and others, saying it is much more difficult looking after our own relations. Again, she links this to choice, we don't chose our blood relations but we can choose the people we work with, which is easier.
9. Struggles since leaving
- P feels she has paid for not returning to the man who loved her, that she destroyed him and this makes her realise how much she has been loved. However, this does not make her want to return, she couldn't cope with how the family dynamics could re-emerge.
  - She has struggled living here, with education, not living with her son, the system, and she doesn't take her life here for granted. Her sisters see her as having everything though she feels she doesn't need anything.
  - P prefers painful reality to fantasy and she experiences choosing as difficult but necessary. She chooses where she lives, the social fabric of the place is very important for P as this was lacking in her home country. The sense of community is so valued that if her own relationship were to end she would consider joining a community way of life, dedicated to some worthwhile purpose.
10. Feelings of the interview
- P has never had the opportunity to put together these circumstances and the language of transition, it's impossible to put into words but she feels I managed to get to the core of her experience. She was grateful for that as it was not easy to tell this story.
  - P felt safe and learned many things that were in me but new, especially the issues of freedom and choice. She feels that we don't get the

opportunity to talk about these things. In her writing she can't convey the sadness she feels about all this.

- She looks forward to seeing the transcript to her own words in English and to be able to look at her own grammar. This concern seems to recapitulate her original desire to learn English.