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

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“Kathy”

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

P1 - For the first time, or when I actually migrated to the UK?

GM2 - Maybe starting with the first time.

P2 - I always had a fascination with travel. I went for a Summer abroad at 14, in Cleveland where I'm from. I spent Junior Year abroad at University, in the UK funnily enough, I never thought I'd end up back here. That's when Callaghan was Prime Minister and they had something called the General Strike, so when I was studying here they had no transportation and telephones (Laughs.), I mean this is the worst country I've ever been to and here I am. I met my husband at International Business School. I went to Georgetown University and I've been interested in governments and international business for a long time. When I finished university I worked for a Japanese bank in New York and resigned back and went back to business school to get an MBA, met my husband there, he's Dutch, and moved overseas with him in '84, got married in '84 so I could get a work permit, and have been in London from '84 to '90 when we both got fed up with the UK and we left and went to Holland. Lived in Holland for three years and so we got fed paying 60% income tax and working most of the year for the Dutch Government instead of for ourselves, and we came back.

So, I'm now approaching another stage, similar to, that same stage of discontent we had just after Margaret Thatcher was kicked out of office, getting fed up with England, and I think, I don't know, there are institutional problems with the way the country's being run, that's part of it, and it could just be that we are reaching a different stage of our lives. My kids are grown up. I have two boys, 14 and 16, and they're both away at school now, and I'm ready for another adventure. So.

GM3 - So, at what age did you first move?

P3 - The first time I went overseas was 15, and that was for summer. I think it was called, I think, American (AFS?), it's a Government sponsored programme, I can't remember what it stands for to be honest, sorry.

GM4 - Did others in your family travel like you, go out into the world, or?

P4 - Well, we've always had a home up in (Point Agaro?), I don't know if you know it, in Ontario in Canada, and my father became a Canadian citizen. My parents are divorced, I don't know if that has any impact on anything, but in any case he went back to Canada because he always loved it, and he lives now in Northern Ontario. So we went to Canada every summer, although that's not really going overseas, but I was a very serious and somewhat successful equestrian, and every Summer from about the age of 10, I was on the road with a group of other riders with a big hunt club, Spring Valley Hunt Club, and we would go from State fair horse show all through the Mid West, so

from Detroit to Pittsburgh, everywhere in Ohio really, and I loved travelling and being part of (Redchest?) and that was for almost 10 years of my childhood, going to different places, competing in large events, meeting different people. And because I had some success with it, I liked it. I think if I had to compete now, I mean, I've watching the Olympics and I've got so much empathy with those people, it's very stressful. But I love the idea of being on the road with a group of like minded people. So from an early age I think I knew that I liked to travel, and just move on. If you've had enough, hop in the car and keep going, there's something new around the corner.

GM5 - So, what do you think it was that you really liked about that, kind of, keeping on the road, or travelling?

P5 - The camaraderie of being, we would usually have two large horse vans and about six or seven cars full of people, including the grooms, other riders, the trainer. There were two or three actual professional riders because there's a lot of money involved with horses, so it was kind of glamorous and exciting. But just the bonding and going to new places, staying in hotels, and there's a lot of excitement when you're in a big sporting event, I think. Anyway, I think there's a little, I thought it was a glamorous life, and coming from Cleveland, it seemed good, (Laughs.), a great opportunity to escape.

I mean, part of it too is the Mid West. I found, I mean, I don't know if it's Ohio or the Mid West in general, but Cleveland in particular, its Shaker, Protestant, very closed minded, square, middle-class values, and I found it quite repressive and I liked the idea of getting out of Cleveland. I always knew that I would not end up in Cleveland. Small town girl escapes the big city was the theme.

GM6 - So, I mean, that's interesting to me that you always felt that you had this sense that you weren't going to just stay put?

P6 - I liked being on the road. Even when I was at University in Georgetown, friends, there are two or three friends, and something would happen and we would just go on a road trip, and we would get in the car and one of us would be the driver and just start driving and going somewhere and having fun. So, anyway. And travelling as well. When I was overseas for my Junior Year abroad, a huge amount of travelling.

GM7 - What is that you like about travelling? That's so attractive somehow?

P7 - I don't know, I mean, right now my fascination is with the Far East, and I did study Asian archaeology, and Cleveland is home one of the finest art collections, Asian art collections, curated by Sheridan Lee, famous academic, and so I think the Far East, the exotic, the Orient, has always been intriguing because it's so completely different, the other, from my reality. Yes, I suppose it's just a form of escape, isn't it?

GM8 - Well, it may be a form of escape, but it sounds also like there's an attraction to what is different from you?

P8 - Absolutely, I'm very into someone from another culture and another religion. I now have a Dutch passport, I speak Dutch. I don't know, but there is a small possibility if I can engineer it that I will be moving to the Far East. I do have a post graduate diploma in Mandarin and an MA in Chinese archaeology, so I would like to capitalise on my studies of the Far East and live there.

Part of it is I'm fed up too with the UK. I mean that's just, I was mugged, I'm tired of the transportation system. I feel a little bit fed up. I feel that it's a hard life living in London, in the UK, it's very expensive, I don't know. I just want a new horizon. I've been there, done that, and I don't think England has much more to offer me, and I feel, a very good friend of mine is terminally ill right now, so and I also was in New York City on September 10th and had friend who was killed in the World Trade Center, so I started reflecting on my life and where I want to end up, and God forbid if something to me, I mean, my husband and I discussed it as we were stuck in Manhattan that week and we witnessed a lot of horror. I said I don't want to end up being buried in England. I don't want to end up in England, and that's when it came into focus, now I'm getting wrapped up again, and I definitely won't end up here. I don't know where I'll be, but it won't be here. So there you go.

GM9 - So that makes me wonder, it still sounds like there's the two things. There's the attraction to a specific foreign place, plus the escape from a place that's no longer..

P9 - Interesting.

GM10 - No longer interesting?

P10 - Yes. Um, I don't know what it is. I wish I, I thought it was because I had so much fun growing up, travelling and riding horses and being with a group of friends, and once we'd lived overseas for a long time, I don't know if you know the expression, global nomads, have you heard that?

GM11 - No.

P11 - He's stopped being able to fit in anywhere, you live in a twilight zone because there's a lot about America I don't like. I mean, I've been trying to make heads and tails of all that's happened, and this hatred of the American culture, and I can sort of understand a little bit, it's a new form of globalisation, a focus on commerce all the time, I mean the way the media constantly brings the war and tragedy into our homes because that's what sells, and all of this, I'm fed up. And I can see how people could resent the American culture, particularly because it's dominated by commerce. And so I don't know how happy I'd be if I got stuck living back in the States. I think my ideal solution would be six months in the States and six months somewhere else. I haven't decided where somewhere will be, but this is my goal. And I think living in England, there's a lot about it I love, but there's a lot about it I can see from the American perspective looking in, and I've had enough, I mean, I'd like a more spontaneous and expressive culture, or else something I find more intriguing. I feel there's something

fatalistic about the English mentality and the resistance to change, and, I've had enough but I'll miss England, I'll miss the countryside. Everyday, when people are late here, the courtesy and the friendliness, particularly outside of London, so I don't know, I'll take a little bit on board and I'll keep going and eventually I'll be a global nomad and I'll never be completely American or English, or anything, I'll be living in the twilight zone, along with my children who, you know, have two passports and so, I don't know what will happen to them, they're a phenomena of the 21st Century, aren't they? Globalisation. So they'll be global nomads as well, because they'll never really be perceived to be American, they've never lived in America. They aren't perceived to be English although they've been born and raised here, I mean, they're in very English schools, Alex is at Eton, (Stasha?) is at Dulwich College, and you know, but they aren't perceived by the English as being English, and Americans think of them as English, but they're not. They have Dutch passports, but they've forgotten how to speak Dutch. They were speaking Dutch. So they don't know the Dutch language, which will be difficult. So I don't know what will happen to them.

GM12 - When you talk about being a global nomad, is that something that maybe you're striving for?

P12 - No, not at all.

GM13 - It's just something that would be a consequence?

P13 - I had no idea when I embarked on this journey what the consequences would be. I feel that I can never go back and live in American life because I'm not just an American anymore, and I would get frustrated, especially, I don't, you know, people aren't really intrigued with how other countries live and how other religions view certain things, and I get bored when I go back to the States.

I go back every year for three weeks, and at the end of the third week I'm ready to come back here. I have more freedom here, but anyway. I didn't realise that I would be slamming a door on just leading a normal, American life by emigrating. I didn't realise by marrying a Dutchman there would be consequences for raising children, we have different religions, and my kids, you know, they don't have a strong cultural identify, just as I don't, just as my husband probably doesn't, because of our lifestyle.

GM14 - Can I ask, and I can relate to a lot of what you're saying, and you've obviously thought about this a lot, because you can express it very eloquently.

P14 - Well, I don't know about that, but I have been thinking about it, trying to, I find it very interesting what you're trying to achieve here so.

GM15 - One of my questions is, what do you think it would be like for you to not move?

P15 – Well, this is an important issue because I'm balancing the needs of my family. My husband's career, for him it would be better if we didn't move. Much better. Unless we went in three or four years time to Zurich, he works for a Swiss bank and you know, I'm getting a little bit more into the idea of maybe living in Zurich because of the mountains there, although I'm not excited about learning Swiss-German. But for him it would be better probably if we stayed here, and so I have to balance that also with the needs of my kids, they've got a few more years in school here, and Alex, if we did leave, I would have to leave one son behind at Eton. He doesn't want to leave and has two more years to go. So it's very tricky. So, there may be no possibility for us to relocate overseas, and I will have to find a way of keeping happy here, but I would find a way to live out of London or out of the UK for probably three or four months out of every year, if I can engineer that that would be the only way I could see of living here indefinitely, was if I had a second home somewhere else and I could escape whenever I wanted, which is actually a pretty good life.

GM16 - Yes. I guess I'm wondering what if you didn't escape, what would that be like?

P16 - Oh, I don't know. I would find a way to escape (Laughs.) That's not a possibility. I don't, I can't see that not happening because we escape from London every weekend to Kent. We have a little cottage there, and we have already a completely different life at weekends to our London life, and I mean, if I couldn't go to Kent I would go somewhere and explore England. I love the English countryside, I love the Lake District, Scotland, I mean I can hop on the Eurostar and go anywhere, I mean, that's the good part of living here.

GM17 - Yes, I understand that. I guess I'm trying to understand, you use the word escape, and I immediately think well, escape from what?

P17 - From what.

GM18 - What would that be if you didn't go, what is it you're escaping from?

P18 - That's a good question. Well, we have a really stressful life in London. I mean, it seems the higher our standard of living my husband and I have achieved, the less time we have to enjoy it, and that's the truth. You know, working full time, before I was doing time on an MA in work, raise two children, just getting out lives together, organising. Living in London is very stressful because it's such an urban place and part of our frustration is the transportation system, little everyday things I find more upsetting, like not finding a parking place, or getting a clamp on my car, that can really make me angry for 48 hours, whereas other issues that would be more troubling to bigger people I can sort of, deal with. But everyday frustrations are rife in the city and in London, and it just wears you down. That's what I think. I think it's soul destroying, and I think you have to escape the urban reality of London, and I'm not ready, both of us seriously can't really leave London.

I mean, my husband works at Canary Wharf, which is really a drag to get to, commute to, from anywhere. You can't commute easily there unless you live in the Docklands. And if I can engineer it professionally, I will get out of my present job situation, perhaps studying, perhaps travelling, perhaps buying a horse, but I like the idea of alternatives.

GM19 - Yes. I guess, when I listen to you there's, you haven't said this so I might have this completely wrong, but it sounded almost as though, when you talk about being in America and then you talk about here, it sounds almost as though there can be an everyday-ness, almost like an everyday drudgery, you didn't quite say it that way, that can be kind of boring and that's something that you turn from to something that's kind of novel and has some excitement or something?

P19 - I don't know, I mean, who knows. I'm an Aries, and we are the pioneers of the Zodiac and I like pushing at limits, and if I felt OK this is it, (NAME OF INTERVIEWEE), this is who you are, you're a wife, this is your job, this is your everyday existence, I'd have to re-create some kind of challenge I suppose. So maybe when you relocate and learn a new language, it's a big challenge. I like creating obstacles so that I can overcome them. Which can get back to being a competitive athlete, because I was goal orientated. And in the end I was very, very good, State champion, etc, but going into the ring and beating other people, focusing and achieving things, you know, once you're achieving it you set higher goal posts. So, yes, I suppose it's some kind of drive, push, see what my limits are.

GM20 - And what I'm wondering is if even at a quite young age you got into this competitive, sporting world because you were already like that?

P20 - Probably, I don't know. I mean, I always was a good student, but I never tried hard to succeed so much as a student, I would always B+, A-, you know, I never felt like I had to be top of my class, and so I wasn't academically competitive, and certainly when I was doing my Asian archaeology degree there were many people who were far, far more clever than I was, and I loved meeting them and respected them, so I didn't feel like I had to out there and be more academic and more successful. So I was, as a sports person, more competitive. I don't know why. That mattered to me a lot.

I think because I had more recognition. I don't know, there's a lot of fanfare at the award of a prize, you're getting money and attention amongst your peers, people I valued. Maybe I didn't value my classmates so much so I didn't care if I was smarter than they were and wanted to be an academic success, but in certain areas of my life I think I can be ruthlessly competitive, yes, less so than when I was younger though. Because I've achieved a lot (Laughs.). So, it's over a little bit.

GM21 - What do you feel you get from that?

P21 - From what?

GM22 - From being competitive and succeeding or something, what comes with that?

P22 - I suppose I feel, I would like to be able to enjoy more free time, which I now have none of, because we have managed to be somewhat successful, both of us, but I don't know what comes from that? I guess, personal satisfaction, a higher lifestyle. I mean, I think that's part of it, you know. Materialistic American (Laughs.).

GM23 - It doesn't sound like you're so typical. I guess, one of my questions is, why you? You probably have friends who didn't flee Cleveland or didn't go very far or something, why did you go out into the wide world, and are still going out into the wide world over and over again?

P23 - I don't know. I don't know. I'm curious because I'm raising my son and I see a lot of my grandfather, and my grandfather was very much involved in international diplomacy, he was actually founder of a big business so, anyway. But he'd written about it too, and he tried to change the world, I mean, this was during the Cold War, and he was preoccupied with things beyond the realm of just you know, Cleveland, Ohio, and the US, so maybe it's just an outlook that was passed down in the family, or I've inherited his gene or wanting to travel, and you know, I've a different perspective.

GM24 - Is it something that's really quite in your family ethos in a way, that everyone has this?

P24 - Not my mother. Not my mother certainly, yeah, not my mother. My father comes from more of a medical and academic background and he had built a completely different life, and he left Cleveland and retired young, and he lives on 800 acres in Ontario, and is quite a sportsman, I'd say. And he likes travelling around strange countries, and he's a very good skier too, he skies in South America, jumps out of helicopters, that sort of thing, and so I started skiing at a very young age too with them. When my parents were divorced, on weekends dad and I would go skiing.

So, yes, I guess there is a family background there. But from my mother, no. Oh, no, no, no. I mean, when she travels it's complain, complain, complain. The food. The hotel. I mean, she's just impossible frankly, that's why I lived here (Laughs.)

GM25 - OK, I'd like to ask just one kind of follow up, you've answered this to some extent, so if you want to add something else to it.

P25 - OK.

GM26 - As you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you really left home?

P26 - Well, I didn't have a great family life. I was much closer in personality to my dad, and a very acrimonious divorce. My mother and father still hate each other, well, maybe my dad hates my mother, so it wasn't fun, and I was already, I think that's why I

pursued horse riding, it was a great way to get, I was out of the house all the time. Everyday after school, every weekend I was never at home, and that was perfect. So yes, I don't know, I didn't have a cosy, fun family life, like I was saying, and when my mother remarried I didn't like my stepfather, so there was never anything to go back to, I guess that's it. I was sort of pushed out at a young age, because it wasn't necessarily such a safe place. So I always had very close friends, and I mean very close friendships. The daughter of my first trainer, I was always staying at her house, and I secretly wanted to be part of their family, so I guess that was because they had a very cosy, close-knit, nice family, and so you know, I was always very helpful and nice to them because I wanted to stay (Laughs.)

GM27 - What was it about that do you think that you found so attractive? That kind of home life?

P27 - I don't know. I had a respect for them. He was a pretty famous horse trainer, and he had a nice wife, and Sharon was older than I was, she was four years older, so that made her cool, and God, their yard had about two hundred horses in and you could ride, I mean if you lived there, at that time that would have been really perfect, to have access to you know, these fantastic thoroughbreds that he would bring in to sell. It's a strange lifestyle, horse people have their own culture, and even now, I mean I've been riding here and everywhere, you can plug right in if you're a horse person, with other horse people, and it is a separate lifestyle choice because it's all or nothing. Someone said it's a bit like owning a boat, you can't do it part time, if you own a horse you have to ride it everyday, you have to make a financial investment, there's an emotional investment, and just being involved with horses, there's a whole language, you know, knowledge, lifestyle, there's hunting, there's showing, there's competing, there's dressage, so, anyway.

GM28 - That makes me wonder if there's two different kinds of experiences here, if you have the experience of wanting to belong somewhere, and finding places where you do belong, like the whole horse community, there's a place there where you can plug in, you can belong. But it sounds like you also have the other side where you seek out being in foreign places.

P28 - Difference.

GM29 - Yes, difference?

P29 - Well, I imagine OK, if we're going to get very involved in my subconscious, my mother remarried when I was three and a half, my father's best friend, that's why my father's so angry with her, and we lived in, what had happened was Bob (*Surname* *), Dad's best friend's wife was killed in a tragic car accident and Bob lost his wife and two children, and because Bob was dad's best friend he said take your family and go up to Point Agaro where we have this island and mourn, you know, my dad would fly up every weekend and, he had his own plane, and guess who was on the island comforting Bob and his bereaved children? My mother, and they fell in love, while this was going on, the four weeks the (*Surname*) were island at Point Agaro, so mum ended up marrying Bob (*Surname*) in a very messy divorce because his wife had only been dead

for six months and they were married. Anyway, I moved into the (*Surname*) with all these poor bereaved children and my brother and sister were shortly dispatched to boarding school, and so I was the only (*Surname of Interviewee***) amongst the (*Surname*) clan, and yes, it wasn't easy. So, therefore I was very involved I think, with horses, but that was from an early age, I was sort of an outsider looking in, and that's why I wanted out. And I think, yes, I imagine that had something to do with it.

GM30 - But from an early age you had this mixture of kind of not belonging, not being at home, and also, like everyone does, wanting that?

P30 – Um, well, I find other ways of getting that kind of belonging, that's right. I had very good friends, and my friendships were very important to me, and they still are. I think, still even now, I have four or five very, very, very good friends, with them I have almost sisterly relationships with, and that is sustaining. More so than having the perfect family. I mean, not everybody can have mum and dad at home, you know, so I tried to build an alternative, but I certainly had the experience of being an outsider looking in, but eventually I did go away to boarding school too, and that was when I was 16.

GM31 - I can understand that. It sounds really difficult, but I guess I'm still wondering why different cultures? Why so foreign?

P31 – Um I don't know. I don't know where that comes from to be honest. I really don't know, but I definitely was intrigued and am still intrigued with the Far East, and I mean, I have travelled to China and Singapore and Malaysia, and yes, I would like to live there. I mean, there's a small possibility I can pull it off. We've been doing research into seeing if we can create a job for my husband in Singapore, but it may not happen, so I'll have to come to terms with that. But it makes me, I mean, I feel, you know, I don't know, it's a big decision. We'll see. I can't explain it, I just find it intriguing.

I have to tell you too, Singapore is the complete opposite of London. It's a well organised city, it's clean, it's tropical, it's safe, you know, my husband travels a lot and I'm on my own and I don't feel safe here anymore. I've been mugged, had our car stolen, our cottage in Kent has been broken into twice because there are a lot of gypsies in Kent and they're seriously bad news, gypsies. I don't know if you know about gypsies (Laughs.) Go and watch the video 'Snatch', Guy Ritchie's film, because he does a pretty good portrayal of what a gypsy, Pikey culture is like. Anyway, so I'm starting to feel fed up. It's not such a great environment anymore, and I suppose I don't feel so safe in London anymore. I'm getting fed up and I don't like the National Health System, because I have this friend who's terminally ill, I see the mistakes being made, and I think, God, you know, had it.

GM32 - I want to ask you, move on to another question, but before I do that can I just ask have you had, and I can relate to that kind of, being fed up with a place, and I wonder if you have had that experience before in other places?

P32 - In Holland.

GM33 - Holland as well?

P33 - We couldn't, this is partly financial, but we just couldn't build a nest egg, our taxes were so high. And they dreamed up every kind of tax, if you had a dog, they had a dog tax. You were taxed on the number of windows. You had a road tax for each road you lived on, to trim the tress, and all this. I mean, car tax, TV, every tax you can think of, it just never ended. And the cost of living was quite high there, I mean, buying a home isn't expensive, but we had a very big garden, we once again, had been living in Chelsea, we were fed up with living in the city so we bought a house with a four acre garden, which was a never ending nightmare, and gardeners in Holland are paid a lot of money, like, ridiculous amounts, £50 or £60 an hour. So, again we were working, I was working full time, two small children, and then every weekend we had to mow the lawn because in Holland you have to keep that garden nice unless the neighbours will complain. They're very conscious of having nice, well organised gardens, and so, you know, we had fun, but we couldn't see how we could ever get ahead in Holland. And professionally, it had limitations, and there is small mindedness in Holland, very much so, and it's a very homogenous culture. Everybody's Dutch, there are no other races. You lead a very middle class life, and it's very conformist there. They don't like anything out of the ordinary, in the suburbs. Amsterdam you have other set of rules, but we were in the countryside.

So, it just seemed like a long and boring road. Working most of the year for the Government, and then having barbecues with the neighbours who would be irritated if you had a better holiday or a better car. There was a lot of petty, small minded, competitiveness amongst the Dutch suburban families we were living with. I didn't like it. I like Holland though, I mean, we go every summer to the beach, in (place name), which is a different mentality to where we were, we bike around, but we're not part of it. But, yes, my husband couldn't wait to get out of Holland either. He couldn't wait. And he knew from a very young age that he wouldn't end up there. So he's the same. And yes, there is the kind of, wanderlust to Holland, it's such a small country and it's not really multiracial, and it's so conformist, the social control is unbelievable. Very middle class there, really, they call it Bergers, that means citizens, and the Berger mentality seemed repressive to us, so we got fed up. But I was safer than in London. I mean, I don't know what's going on, I had a lot of stress this year in business and I don't know, I definitely want to get out of here. So we'll see what happens.

GM34 - To move on to the next, one more general question.

P34 - Sure.

GM35 - When you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P35 - Well, I've been gone a long time.

GM36 - Do you look back over the years since leaving, all that time and places you've been, as interesting?

P36 - Well, what I would like, if we had enough money, would be to own a house in the US. I don't know when that will happen, but I think it will happen. I mean, we were just in Colorado a few weeks ago, skiing, and I wouldn't mind living in Colorado, maybe near Vale or Aspen, because I do love to ski and I love the mountains, and I do love America, I'm you know, despite having left my country, I am a very patriotic American, I like what America stands for. I like a lot about the American people, the openness, the warmth, there's a lot of creativity there too. It's encouraged in the education system. Free thinking, and you know, I'm truly a die-hard American. I haven't changed at all. My accent is the same, and I think I'm still the same person, but I don't miss anything about a specific place, I miss something about the quality of the American people, and I feel, if I ever feel homesick for America it would be New England, and I'm not from New England, but I am, I went to boarding school in Massachusetts, and like Autumns in New York, and I don't know, it has something.

GM37 - Do you find yourself homesick at times?

P37 - Around Christmas time, we get back every year, and I usually, as I get close to Christmas I get excited about going back, because I love Christmas and Christmas is more fun in the States, and so you know. Then I start thinking I can't wait to get back, because there are parties and Christmas music and decorations and festivities, and I don't know, my kids are always thrilled and everybody's happy to see us, so I would be very sad if I had to change our routine of going home at Christmas time. That would be a tough one. But I don't miss anything else. I just sometimes miss the American outlook, you know, and after what happened on September 11th I found it very interesting when we got back here, we finally escaped, it took a long time, we went to three different airports, you know, it took a while, we ended up driving to Boston and flew out of Logan. We were evacuated there, and I mean, it was all hassle. But we got back here, and immediately went to other Americans to share our feelings about what had happened, and I think that's part of what's brought it home is, yes, I do love my country very much. And one day I'll have a home there, I don't know if I'll live there all year though.

GM38 - That's the next thing I wanted to ask, is if you ever think about returning home?

P38 - I would like to have a home in Colorado, that's my new idea, and live there for maybe six or eight months. And then have a home somewhere else, probably in Western Europe, I don't know, we'll see. See what develops in Singapore, with my husband's job, everything.

GM38b - But ideally you would have some kind of base in America and some base...

P38b - somewhere else. However, if something, God forbid, were to happen to my husband, I wouldn't want to live alone in the UK, I would go back to the States, instantly. I think it's too tough. I feel you, I don't know, there's something cold about our lifestyle, it gives us a certain freedom because we're aren't attached to any one community, we have an anonymous life here. We're able to be succeed professionally, but if we needed a support resource I don't think there's anything either institutionally or in terms of our personal life here, that would sustain me if I had to cope on my own. I have three our four very close friends, but they all have families, and that's it. I don't have any relatives here, and I wouldn't trust the UK social system, or anything about it, or my local community, or my neighbours, I mean, I would just leave instantly. No problem.

I would leave now anyway, if I could find a way. I mean, it would be tough to leave my one son behind, but yes, I'd like to go.

GM 39 - Yes, it sounds like you're ready to go.

P39 - I'm ready to go. Well, I've been here a long time, and now that my parenting skills aren't required, I don't find my professional life that exciting. I'm bored, and I've had it, and I don't see any, the horizon seems very limited for me here. You know, I can't see a way of making, if I could wave the magic wand and change anything, there's nothing, I don't think there's anything here that would make my life perfect that I'd want to stay, if I could have anything, any job, any whatever, home, there's nothing here for me.

GM40 - My impression is that if it was about changing something, that would be a challenge, you could do that, but that wouldn't do it?

P41 - Well, I might try and get another degree (Laughs.)

GM42 - (Laughs.)

P42 - That would be my fourth post graduate degree, OK, so obviously I like setting little obstacles for myself, that's worrying (Laughs.)

GM43 - Well, it's certainly challenging.

P43 - Well, you know, one day I'd like to just be able to be happy tending a little garden in some little cottage with a picket fence, and never leave the village. But I don't think I could ever be that way. I wish I could, to be honest, I would like to be able to just settle down and accept, you know, a quieter existence, and I'm getting closer to being ready to settle down and have a different life, but I don't think I could, I have an active lifestyle. I'm pretty sporty. That's the truth. I mean, we have a tennis court and I love to play tennis, I absolutely, horse riding is still a big part of who I am, and skiing. So, you know, I would always want those activities to be part of my life.

GM44 - You used the word boredom a few times, I wonder what that is for you? What is boredom?

P44 - I obviously have a very low threshold (Laughs.). I am, I don't know, I guess I get bored easily. Impatience, I guess, people would say (*Interviewee's name*) is highly strung. I have a lot of energy. That's part of the problem. I don't know, I guess I was lucky to be born quite a capable person and so you know, certain things I've achieved might seem overwhelming to other people, but they haven't been that hard to engineer with me. Do you know what I mean?

GM45 - I think I do.

P45 - I don't know. Yes, what does it mean if I'm bored easily?

GM46 - Well, I guess my question is what is that experience of boredom? It sounds like it's impatience and it's kind of, it's almost like something pushing you on in some way?

P46 - I guess I like mental stimulants. I read obsessively. Read, read, read, read. I love films, that's a form of escape. I made a film, and I love films, love them, love them. And reading, I read all the time. So, I'm always sort of, but I don't have to, every weekend we do absolutely nothing. We live in a beautiful part of Kent, I go horse riding or do something, but the rest of the time it's just lying around reading. So I am capable of down time. I used to meditate. I don't meditate any more. I'll eventually try to crack that, but, in a little period of my life I got involved with Buddhism, now I'm not involved any more, that was when I was studying Asian archaeology, and there was a Nepalese Buddhist monk who I was friends with but, I don't know, I used to meditate and focus on nature, and do much more quiet things, and now my lifestyle's revved up because I'm running this business, I'm studying again and I don't know. So, it goes in cycles.

When I had little children my life was much more mundane, to be honest. I don't know if you're a parent, but, well it's changing nappies and playing little games and going to the park and that sort of thing, so I guess because I really spent a lot of time with my children which I felt was important because my mother didn't spend so much time with me, so I thought oh, this is a role I really have to do well, and so I spent a lot of quality time with my kids, and now

(*tape changes over*).

Stepped up my other responsibilities. I've jumped back in with both feet, both professionally and academically. So I have a lot of stress as a result of that. You don't have that much stress when you're raising kids, I mean, I didn't anyway.

GM47 - I suppose it depends on your kids! (Laughs.)

P47 - That's true, that's true. Well, who knows, I mean, knock on wood, I feel so sad they're, well the younger one being a teenager, you know, it's like it's just changed him and all that, we've got a few tough years ahead and you know, I don't know. I feel I've done that. I'm not like, really, not that I won't be there for him, but I can't help him grow up, he has to do a lot on his own now. Which is what I did. Especially the younger one, he's dyslexic and has a hard time with changing of directions, locating himself in space, and left and right, and things like that, and that is a worry, and he gets lost, and he loses things, and so he's going to need a little more parenting. And my other son is a bit more like I am, very independent and very capable, he's a scholar at Eton, good in sports, and he's very, very independent. He wanted to go away to boarding school, we didn't say you have to go to Eton. I had big misgivings about it because he's an American and you know, I thought this old English establishment school, and they'll be bullying and it's a single sex school, and you know, he got offered this place as a scholar, and he said, mum, I want to go. So, absolutely he's got, he's doing really well, whereas my younger son didn't really ever express any need for independence, he's a home body, completely. He's not driven at all, and he's very, very nice. But I worry because he doesn't have that little push, internal push to go out and conquer the world. And it's a tough world, I think it's become much worse, for our, than our generation growing up, it seems to me now it's a more ruthless, competitive world. Don't you think so?

GM48 - I do.

P48 - No job security, and you have to achieve more at a younger age, and all this testing they do here, so you know.

GM49 - I just want to ask one more thing about what we were talking about. It sounds as though, as a kind of surprising unintended consequence of going out in the world in the way you have, is that now no place is really home?

P49 - Yes, but global nomads, the expression, I didn't coin that expression, it's a phenomena that's been defined by other people who've looked into cross cultural issues and helping families deal with the transition of relocating overseas, and being on an international career path, third culture kids, you know. Yes, I didn't recognise that at all, of course not, I was just hurling myself, you know, jumping in with both feet, not looking before leaping, whatever the clichés are, and I might have done things a little different, but I don't know what, though, with hindsight. I don't know what I could have changed though, I still would have had to go, and I don't know. Part of it is the fact that I'm a couple, my husband is similar. We've gone together. I might not have achieved as much on my own, I don't know.

GM50 - But you still would have gone on your own?

P50 - Well, I think so. Because a) I ended up, I went from Washington to New York City, I worked in a completely Japanese bank, then I went to a South American bank, I was living with a group of South Americans, I was only with Latin people the whole

time I was there, you know. I spent time in Mexico one summer too, so there you go. Old pattern.

GM51 - I have one final question. What does it feel like to be talking about these things?

P51 - Well, it's not a problem. I mean, I've put a lot of thought into this because I wanted to help you in your quest because I'm also very interested in what your research finds, and just self reflection, because I am at a crossroads personally, my younger son just went away to school, he's a weekly boarder since September, so empty nests, and I'm fed up with this whole business I'm involved with, I mean, my company is owned as part of a bigger group and they are in serious financial difficulties, and it's been a lot of hassle and stress and I haven't been able to focus on what I'm interested in which is the transcultural issues, and I don't have to keep fighting the financial fight, now, I'm financially secure enough and I can turn the engines down a little bit to a lower gear, and that's what I would like to do now.

So, I have been reflecting on what I want, and September 11th, my friend who's terminally ill has forced me to think about what I want out of life, and that's when it hit me I don't want to end up in the UK, I want out. So all of these things have forced me to re-examine things, and I'm trying to make sense of what has been a series of horrible events, you know. Don't you think so?

GM52 - Yes.

P52 - I mean, just from the business perspective too, all the fraud encroaching, the company I'm involved with, there's been fraud, financial fraud. The firm my husband works for, (company name), his boss has been fined \$500,000 and has been kicked out of the company for fraud as a penalty for price fixing and RPO, so I mean, it's just rife, and maybe it's always been going but it wasn't uncovered. I feel like there's something amiss in the world, and I have been trying to make sense of it in terms of our life, so.

GM53 - So, me coming along and interviewing you on this general topic is something that's very active..?

P53 - Foremost in my mind, very current topic, yes, absolutely. So I'm happy, I'm pleased to be here and talking about it. I'm hoping you can say (*interviewee's name*), here's some insights (Laughs.).

GM54 -(Laughs.)

P54 - Anyway, no I don't mind. Feel free to ask me whatever, I mean I don't know. I would be very intrigued to know what the other people are like that you've been interviewing. Are they similar, or is everybody motivated by different things, or is it an early childhood issue, a home life that isn't safe, or is it a certain, you know, personality

type? Am I type A? (Aries?) I hate that stuff, but there are a little bit, they're kernels of truth, I mean, anyway.

GM55 - Do want to know what my impression is?

P55 - Yes, sure.

GM56 - My impression is that there's a mystery here, and that it's a very deep, existential subtext that's going on that, some of the people I've interviewed had parents who'd broken up at a very early age and they had all these kind of thoughts that that was the significant part of it, and it might a significant part of it, I don't know. That's possible. But there's lots of people who's parents split up at an early age that end up living down the road from their parents and never went away. So there's something else as well, and it seems to me that there's some of us who for whatever reason, something has opened in our being, in some sense we catch of glimpse of some kind of something, it leaves us kind of unconvinced, that we can never quite settle on home, you kind of, go searching for it, because in every human being we have this longing that nothing ever fulfils it. And I think that a lot of, people who don't have that, aren't aware of that, are able to convince themselves that they find things that are convincing enough that they feel at home. Whereas those of us that don't feel at home or repeatedly lose that feeling or whatever it is, that we're actually for some reason quite sensitive to this primordial way of being, that in fact as human beings we're not at home in this world, we're in this foreign, strange place. And we can't, for some reason we cannot tranquillise ourselves into feeling at home at least for very long.

P56 - So it's part of the human condition.

GM57 - But I think that it's completely, those of us who, there's something calling to us from the world to come out here, but there's others that have some of the things that you were, that they don't necessarily have that calling, but because they're married to someone that has to move or something, that happens, and as a consequence of that something opens within them, maybe, the unheimlich is sometimes referred to as kind of, becoming aware of that which was never meant to be seen. And I think some of those people have quite a difficult time because something opens in them that they hadn't intended to open.

P57 - They weren't prepared for the consequences of their leaving their childhood home. That's interesting. I'll tell you another thing I just thought of that I wanted to mention to you. I would say in terms of defining my personality that the one quality comes foremost to mind, and that's curiosity. And curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back. But I am very curious. I have always been. And I think this curiosity always, intellectually, I mean I've had to learn so many languages, I've studied so many subjects, I've gone so many places, I've tried so many jobs, I mean I've done so many things, and once I find out what they are they stop seeming intriguing, I move on, and I'm still you know, I'm very curious about living in the Far East in that Asian culture, the oldest culture in the world, and there's so much about it that I'm curious about and I really want to satisfy my curiosity... .

GM58 - When you say that it sounds almost as though the answer for you is that state of curiosity? Once it's been satisfied, it's spoiled in a way?

P58 - But I still don't have, I don't like, I've a low tolerance for ambiguity. I love to understand, and that's curiosity as well, just a more formal way. Apparently, what I find a paradox is in cross cultural testing to find out if an executive will succeed in being sent on an international assignment he should be able to be very tolerant of ambiguous situations where he doesn't understand, you know, their relationship in terms of space, time, language, whatever, and I don't like ambiguity, yet here I am.

GM59 - But how do you cope with it then, because you are constantly getting in situations where..?

P59 - Because I find out what the rules are, so I like if it don't really know, and you know, God knows, I've tried a lot, I mean, really. I've had a lot of different lives, and been involved with different cultures, different jobs, different professions, different types of people, you know, I think, yes, I don't know, I have a very flexible personality and I learned at an early age how to adapt my personality to fit in with different groups of people, so I have a pretty cosmopolitan group of friends, curiously enough, although not really, actually it's not surprising, they're often people who've lived overseas themselves, or they're mixed culture too. I mean, I've a Dutch friend who's married to a Persian guy; and American friend married to a Dutch guy, but neither one of them, they're children of diplomats, have ever lived in their home country, she grew up in Spain, although she's American, and her husband is Dutch but he's never lived in Holland. So people like that. And then I have my English friend who was a colleague when I was Christy's who lived for a long time in the States and she worked for ten years on boats, so she was always travelling, so similar types. But I've done everything, I've had so many jobs, you know, and it's usually pretty interesting jobs, but I don't stay in them for long. Three years. I mean, I was at Christy's in different jobs, in Amsterdam and London, so I was with them for about four years, doing all different things, and different offices, but I've never really stuck with anything for a long time professionally. This has been the longest because I'm contractually obliged, I can't leave, ...

GM60 - (Laughs.)

P60 - I own the business and I have all these contracts with companies that I have to fulfil, they're always twelve month contracts, so I've just rolled over a bunch in January, so I'm stuck here till January next year no matter what, unless I want to go to debtors' prison (Laughs.)

GM61 - (Laughs.)

P61 - And I'm not curious about that! (Laughs.)

GM62 - (Laughs.)

P62 - No, but you know, I think that's what I would say, and I don't like that I'm so curious because you know, I experimented with drugs when I was young, took a lot of drugs, LSD, you know, have done silly, dangerous things.

GM63 - What's driving that curiosity?

P63 - I don't know.

GM64 - But part of you really wants it?

P64 - Well, I think it's good because having, you know, I don't like people who don't have an intellectual curiosity, an open mindedness. I don't know what's driving it, I wish I wasn't so curious, because I wish I could settle down and have a more simple existence.

GM65 - But if I've understood you correctly, if you settled down even for a little while, you haven't described it so it may be not quite like this, but it's almost like there's this creeping, almost like boredom or something?

P65 - If I succeed in something, yes, I mean, I haven't, I've managed to get what I wanted, I didn't get as far as I wanted, I didn't get the job I really wanted at Christy's, I wanted to be cataloguer for Chinese works of arts and unfortunately if you study art or archaeology there are like ten jobs that you can have. You can either work in a museum, an art gallery or an auction house. And in an auction house there's only one or two cataloguers in each department and there are only two or three auction houses, so I did make the rounds. I did work with Christy's as an administrator, but there was no way that I was going move up because there was no way the people who had the jobs were going anywhere. Especially Christy's South Ken where I was because this guy was like 22 and had been a porter, so he had a long road and I didn't speak Chinese and I didn't have an MA in art, so I was working there and doing an MA, then it got to be too much raising children, so I stopped working there because I didn't feel I could ever get the job that I wanted. So I wouldn't say I failed because just being able to work with Christy's, it's hard to get in, and I started on the ground floor on viewing day and wiggled my way up, and ended up working for the Managing Director of both companies, Christy's Amsterdam and Christy's South Ken because I have a business background. So anyway. Yes, I don't know. I mean, that was a frustration, I didn't succeed there, but I got started professionally then, I worked full time in New York at Mitsubishi Bank, I did country risk, at the Brazilian Bank I was Credit Analyst, went to school, worked briefly for County Bank, I worked as a student counsellor for an American college when I had two babies. That was part time, that was fun. I worked managing a shop which was horrible, I've done all kinds of silly jobs, I volunteered at Amnesty International, I mean, you know, I've floated around here and there. Did art courses. So, I don't where I'm going with this, sorry. But I didn't stick with anything for long, which is probably a bad thing, and that's because I feel like oh, I get it now, Christy's doesn't intrigue me at all but I used to think, whoa, exciting, glamorous auction house, and once I got in there and realised what a group of thieves were running the place (Laughs.)

GM66 - (Laughs.)

P66 - Some of these assholes got promoted and you know, I mean, you can see now, you know about the scandals. The head of Sotheby's, they're both going to prison, they were price fixing with Christy's, and Christy's may not be around in two months time, they've been fined so heavily because of all the fraud. So, there you go. There's no intrigue, but I used to be intrigued. And I'm intrigued with the East so, and I once I conquer that, who knows.

Anyway, well tell me Greg, what else, I mean, what are the other people like?

GM67 - What are the other people like, well, there's a lot of similar themes to what you're saying, very different people who have done very different things, but a lot of things in common, a lot of kind of, general..

P67 - Personality traits?

GM68 - If there is such a thing, what your view is I don't know.

P68 - But I mean, people that are, I mean, have you found people who haven't been part of a couple or they've come over independently, or they're mostly here for professional reasons, it wasn't that they were interested in the country, they wanted a job and were sent overseas?

GM69 - Most of the people that I've interviewed have been associated with Regents somehow.

P69 - With Regents College, oh right, so they're here to study?

GM70 - Not necessarily, some are older but have raised a family or something and are now studying, but they didn't come to do that. Some of them, like you, are quite surprised to find themselves here, they never intended to come here, they just knew they had to leave home. They left home and they've been here, there and everywhere, and kind of, ended up here. They put themselves through two or three years of study, which may or may not be an important part of staying here, but I haven't yet kind of, gotten into the business world from the people that you're probably more used to talking to, and I think that would be interesting, because I don't want to be completely talking only to people that have an interest in counselling and psychotherapy. Because they may be an unusual subpopulation in some way.

P70 - Well, they're definitely motivated by different things, I mean, my husband, if you want to meet him, I'll set something up, try and get a hold of him now, he's done a very high powered job and he would live anywhere if the job were interesting. I mean, you could send him, I mean, he has to go to Abu Dhabi next week, and Abu Dhabi's currently is really God awful, it's miserable, hot, no alcohol, two or three bars and the

only people in the bars are prostitutes and workers on an oil rig, and you know, it's a very strange place and he has, an American guy who's there for a job, they're there for, I mean, my husband isn't here because he's intrigued with travelling, it's for the job. And the guy in Abu Dhabi, he's only been there six months. He doesn't really have an intrigue with Moslem culture either, he's there for the money and the career prospects. So it's different. And I would say that if they succeed in international assignments they do have certain types of flexible personalities, or language skills, or international backgrounds. I don't think you can succeed, I mean, people from Texas have a hard time in the UK, isn't that interesting? they don't adjust, I don't know why. The Texas those are who I've seen. The way they speak English is an obstacle. The culture is too different, they don't fit in, it's too hard. It's interesting to me. Certain people will succeed and others won't and there are prototypes, who will work and who won't.

GM71 - For me, the thing that's interesting is, I mean, there must be some entirely different people that are here kind of, reluctantly, I'm interested in people that choose to leave and almost if, when they see people who don't leave home feel almost panic, how could you?

P71 - Yup, that's.....?

GM72 - Yes.

P72 - I don't know about that.

GM73 - If you go back home and you..

P73 - No, not at all.

GM74 - You don't feel that you could have done that as well, you could have just stayed?

P74 - I don't know. The people I'm in touch with from University are all pretty, have pretty interesting jobs, I mean, I couldn't be a lawyer but one of my closest friends, from Georgetown, has been extremely successful in law, she's a partner in a big firm, she got married, took a year off and sailed around the world last year. I don't know, they're interesting people and I think that's great. And I have another childhood friend from Cleveland who's been in Manhattan, we moved once to New York, both of us the same year, in 1980, and she's a senior partner at Morgan Stanley Dean Whitter and she manages a fund, she's a fund manager, very successful, and she's never moved. She goes from New York from Cleveland and that's it. That's her life. And I don't, I respect her, because she's pursued a very successful career path.

GM75 - But could you see yourself living in Cleveland?

P75 - In Cleveland? I could never stay there, I mean, I could see having a home there and going back, the good thing about Cleveland is that it has a very good hospital, and my mother has been ill and even though she lives mostly in Florida now, she always

goes back to the clinic, so I don't know. No, I don't won't go back to Cleveland. I never go back anyway. I haven't been back in years. My parents have a home in Florida, so we go there. But I obviously like to talk about myself, Jesus!

The circumstances of leaving home:

1. I always had a fascination with travel.
2. I spent my junior year abroad in the UK at age 15, at university married my Dutch husband and moved to the UK, moved to Holland and then back to the UK.
3. Now we feel fed up with England, there are institutional problems with the country and maybe we're entering another stage of our lives.
4. My kids are away at school now and I'm ready for another adventure.

Did others in your family travel like you?

1. My parents are divorced and my father became a Canadian citizen and we always had a home up in Ontario that we went to each summer.
2. For 10 years of my childhood I competed in equestrian events, travelling to different places, meeting different people and I loved it.
3. I love being on the road with like-minded people. From an early age I liked to just move on, if you've had enough, keep going.

What do you think you liked about that travelling around as a child?

1. The camaraderie. It was glamorous and exciting. The bonding, going to new places, staying in hotels.
2. A great opportunity to escape from Cleveland.
3. I found my home area very closed-minded, middle-class, repressive.
4. I always knew I would not end up in Cleveland. Escape was the theme.
5. I liked being on the road, in university I had friends and we'd always go on road trips.

What is it you like about travelling?

1. I don't know.
2. Right now I am fascinated with the Far East.
3. The orient has always been exotic and intriguing because it's so different from my reality, the other.
4. I suppose it's a form of escape.
5. I am attracted to difference, someone from another culture or religion.
6. I am trying to move to the Far East to capitalise on my Asian and Mandarin studies.
7. I also feel fed up with the UK. It's a hard life here, and expensive.
8. I just want a new horizon. I don't think England has much more to offer me.

9. Friends dying has made me think about my life and where I want to end up and I don't want to end up buried in England. I don't know where I'll end up but definitely not here.

So, there's attraction to foreign places and escape from places that are no longer interesting?

1. I don't know what it is. I thought it was because I had so much fun growing up, travelling with a group of friends.
2. I'm a global nomad – I'm not able to fit in anywhere, living in a twilight zone because there's a lot about America that I don't like.
3. I've been trying to understand what's happening, the hatred of American because it's a form of globalisation and dominated by commerce.
4. I don't know if I would be happy being stuck in the US now, ideally 6 months in the US and 6 months somewhere else. I don't know where, but this is my goal.

Living in England

1. There's a lot I love about England, but looking in from an American perspective, I would like a more spontaneous, expressive, intriguing culture.
2. I'll miss England but there's something fatalistic and a resistance to change in the English mentality.
3. I'll take a little bit of it with me and keep going, eventually I'll be a global nomad and I'll never be completely anything.
4. I'll be living in the twilight zone with my children, who have 2 passports and are a phenomenon of the 21st century. They'll be global nomads as well.
5. My children will never be perceived as American, they've never lived there, they aren't perceived as English though they were born and raised here, they have Dutch passports but they've forgotten how to speak Dutch. I don't know what will happen to them.

Global Nomad

1. I had no idea when I embarked on this journey what the consequences would be.
2. I feel I can never go back to America to live because I'm not just an American anymore, I'd get frustrated with the lack of interest in how other countries live, I would get bored.
3. I go home every year for 3 weeks and at the end of the time I'm ready to leave again. I have more freedom here.
4. But I didn't realise I'd be slamming a door on just leading a normal, American life by emigrating.
5. I didn't realise that by marrying a Dutchman there would be consequences for raising children, we have different religions and my kids don't have a strong cultural identity.
6. I also don't have a strong cultural identity now, nor my husband, because of our lifestyle.

What would it be like for you to not move?

1. This is important because I'm balancing the needs of my family, my husband and his career needs, and my kids and they've got a few more years in school here.
2. If we did leave we'd have to leave one son behind. He doesn't want to leave and has 2 more years to go, so it's tricky.
3. So maybe I will have to find a way of keeping happy here, which would mean finding a way of live out of London or out of the UK for 3-4 months a year, that would be the only way of living here indefinitely.
4. I would need a second home somewhere that I could escape to whenever I wanted.
5. I would have to have a way to escape, not having that is not a possibility.
6. We escape each weekend to Kent now, where we have a completely different kind of life.
7. The good part of living here is you can hop on a plane or train and go anywhere.

What is it you're escaping from?

1. That's a good question.
2. Our stressful life in London. The better our standard of living, the less time we have to enjoy it.
3. London is so stressful partly because of transport and it's such an urban place.
4. Little everyday things can be very upsetting while bigger issues I find easier to deal with.
5. The little everyday things just wear me down, it's soul destroying.
6. We can't really leave London right now but I like the idea of having alternatives.

The boring and the exciting

1. I like pushing at limits. If my everyday existence was just a wife, I'd have to create some kind of challenge.
2. Relocating and learning a new language is a big challenge.
3. I like creating obstacles so I can overcome them.
4. As a competitive athlete I was very goal-oriented.
5. Once I achieved my goals I set higher goals, it's a push to see what my limits are.
6. I wasn't academically competitive but I was always a good student, I loved meeting people more clever than me, I respected them.
7. There was more recognition in sports, so I was more competitive there.
8. In certain areas of my life I can be ruthlessly competitive but less than when I was younger.
9. I've already achieved a lot, so it's over a bit now.

What do you get from being competitive and from your achievements?

1. I feel I'd like more free time but now we have none.
2. We have both managed to be somewhat successful and it gives personal satisfaction and a better lifestyle.
3. The lifestyle is part of it, being a typical materialistic American (laughs).

Why did YOU have to go out into the world like this?

1. I don't know.
2. I can see some of this in my son and it was in my grandfather.
3. My grandfather was involved in business and international diplomacy. He was preoccupied by things in the larger realm.
4. I've inherited this different perspective, so maybe it's a family inheritance, in our genes.

Family background

1. My mother doesn't have any of this. She complains constantly when she travels. She's one reason I live here (laughs).
2. My father had a medical and academic background, retired early to Ontario and is a real sportsman. But he also likes travelling around strange countries.
3. When my parents divorced I'd go skiing with my father on the weekends.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. I didn't have a great family life. My parents went through a very acrimonious divorce.
2. I was closer in personality to my father.
3. I was always busy after school and each weekend which was good, to be out of the house.
4. When my mother remarried I didn't like my stepfather, so there was never anything to go back to.
5. I was sort of pushed out at a young age because it wasn't such a safe place at home.
6. So I always had very close friendships and secretly wanted to be a part of my friend's family, because they were very cosy and close-knit.
7. Their family was very nice and their father was a famous trainer and they had lots of horses and my friend was older, so cool.
8. Horse people have their own lifestyle and culture, it's all or nothing with horses and you can plug into it anywhere if you're a horse person. It's a whole world.
9. (issues of not belonging at home but belonging in the horse world?)

More family background (getting very involved in P's 'subconscious')

1. My mother remarried my father's best friend when I was 3 ½.
2. They were married only 6 months after his wife tragically died and my mother had been comforting him and his children and they fell in love.
3. It was a messy divorce. I was moved into their house with their bereaved children, my own brother and sister sent off to boarding school so I was the only one in the midst of their family.
4. From an early age I was an outsider looking in. That was difficult and why I wanted out.
5. From an early age I had this experience of not belonging and finding places to belong, like with my friends.
6. My friendships remain very important to me, almost sisterly relationships.
7. I built an alternative to having mom and dad at home.

Why the attraction to places so foreign?

1. I really don't know where that comes from.
2. I've always been intrigued by the Far East. I've travelled there and would like to live there.
3. I can't explain it, I just find it intriguing.

Being fed up with a place

1. I feel fed up in London, it's not so safe anymore.
2. It's not a great environment and I don't like the NHS.
3. I also felt fed up in Holland. That was partly financial because our taxes were too high.
4. We were working ridiculous amounts just to sustain our way of life.
5. We couldn't ever get ahead in Holland.
6. It's also a very small-minded homogenous culture there. Everyone is Dutch, no other races, very middle class, very conformist.
7. We were in the countryside and the don't like anything out of the ordinary.
8. It just seemed like work, and boring, with petty small-minded neighbours in the suburbs.
9. I like Holland and the beaches have a different mentality but we're not part of the culture there. My husband couldn't wait to leave, he knew when he was young that he'd not end up there.
10. The mentality there seemed repressive to us, very controlled socially, but safer.

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. I've been gone a long time.
2. I would like to own a house in America, because I do love American even though I don't live there. I'm a very patriotic American.
3. I like what America stands for, I like the warmth and openness of American people, free thinking, and the creativity.

4. I'm a die-hard American, I haven't changed at all. My accent is the same and I think I'm the same person.
5. I miss something about the quality of the American people, not any specific place.
6. I sometimes feel homesick for New England though I'm not from there.
7. I love going home around Christmas. I would be very sad if we had to change our routine and not go back then.
8. But I don't miss anything else, just the American outlook.
9. After September 11th we sought out other Americans to share our feelings, and that made me realise I do love my country very much.
10. One day I'll have a home there, for part of the year.

Thoughts of returning home?

1. My new idea is a home in Colorado and another home in Western Europe or the Far East.
2. If anything happened to my husband I wouldn't want to live alone here, so I'd leave instantly.
3. There's something cold about our lifestyle, it gives us freedom because we aren't attached to any one community. We have an anonymous life.
4. But there is no support resource, institutionally or personally here, that would sustain me if I had to cope on my own.
5. I'm bored here now. The horizon seems very limited for me here now.
6. There's nothing here for me, if I could have anything on offer here, nothing would do.
7. I wish I could be happy tending a little garden in a little village and never leave, but I don't think I could ever be that way.
8. I wish I could accept a more settled existence and although I'm closer to being ready for a different life, it would still need to be fairly active.

What is boredom?

1. I guess I'm impatient, highly strung, I have a low threshold.
2. I have a lot of energy and was born quite capable, so I've achieved a lot but it's not been that hard for me.
3. I love mental stimulation, I read a lot, I love films, that's a form of escape.
4. I used to meditate and focus on nature and do quieter things but now I'm more active again, running this business, studying, it goes in cycles.
5. When I had little children my life was much more mundane.
6. I spent a lot of time with my children because my mother didn't spend a lot of time with me, so it was a role I really wanted to do well.
7. Now I've jumped back in with both feet, professionally and academically, which is much more stressful than raising kids, for me.

Children

1. I am sad to see them grow up but I've done my job now.
2. It's up to my sons to grow up now, I can't help them, they have to do that on their own, like I did.
3. The eldest son is more like me, independent, capable, a scholar, good at sports, he wanted to go to boarding school.
4. My younger son is a home body, he is dyslexic and needs more parenting, not driven at all, very nice boy.
5. I am worried that my younger boy doesn't have the push to go out and conquer the world.
6. And the world has become more ruthless, no job security.

Now no place is really home?

1. I didn't recognise that I'd be becoming a global nomad. I was just jumping in with both feet, not looking before leaping.
2. With hindsight I might have done things a little different but I don't know what.
3. I still would have had to go.
4. Part of it is being a couple, my husband is the same, we've gone together. I might have achieved less on my own.
5. I still would have gone alone. I was in NY working for a Japanese bank, then a South American bank, being only with Latin people during that time, spent time in Mexico one summer, the whole pattern.

Feelings of the interview

1. I've put thought into this because I'm interested in it, partly because I'm at this personal transition with my sons both at school.
2. My friend who is terminally ill has made me think about what I really want out of life and that's when it hit me I don't want to end up here.
3. It feels like there is something amiss in the world and I've been trying to make sense of it in terms of our life.
4. So this is a very current topic for me, very active. I'm hoping you can offer me some insights.
5. I'd be intrigued to hear about other's experiences of people you've interviewed.

Personality aspects

1. Curiosity has always been my primary characteristic.
2. It's been expressed academically, learning so many subjects and so many languages, going so many places, trying so many jobs.
3. Once I find out what something is, it stops being intriguing, I move on.
4. My curiosity lead to doing dangerous things when I was young, trying drugs, LSD.
5. Right now I really want to satisfy my curiosity about the Far East, that ancient culture.

6. I don't know what's driving that curiosity.
7. But I also have a low tolerance for ambiguity. I love to really understand something.
8. I cope with ambiguity by finding out what the rules are in a new place.
9. I have a very flexible personality and I learned at an early age how to adapt my personality to fit in with different groups.
10. I have a very cosmopolitan group of friends, often people who've lived overseas or are mixed culture couples, or have travelled a lot.
11. I find I don't stay in my jobs for long, about 3 years.
12. I don't like people who aren't intellectually curious or open-minded but I wish I could be less curious so I could settle down and have a simpler existence.
13. I am very ambitious but if I succeed at something I get bored.
14. P shows repeated curiosity about the other interviewees I've met and their stories.
15. My husband travels for his job, so that's a different motivation. They need very flexible personalities, language skills, or international backgrounds. People from Texas have the hardest time on international assignments, they can't adjust.
16. I don't have any feelings about people who didn't leave home. I have friends who are very successful now back home and I really respect that.
17. I don't want to ever go back to Cleveland though, I haven't been back in years.

Fascination with travel:

1. I always had a fascination with travel since childhood and I spent my junior year abroad and have travelled ever since.
2. We always had a home in northern Canada where we spent summers and for 10 years of my childhood I competed in sports that required travel to different places, meeting different people, and I loved it.
3. I love being on the road with like-minded people, if I've had enough I just move on.
4. For me there was glamour and excitement in travel, and it's a form of escape.
5. In university we'd go on road trips as a group to just get away.
6. I don't know what it is that I really like about travel. I thought it was just the fun I had as a child travelling with the sports group, but I really don't know.
7. A good part of living in London is that it is so easy to hop on a plane or train and go off somewhere.

Attraction to difference:

1. The orient has always been intriguing and exotic because it's so different from my reality, the attraction of otherness.
2. I'm attracted to difference, someone from another culture or religion.
3. I don't understand where this attraction to foreign places comes from, I can't explain it.
4. I'm so fascinated with the Far East that I'd like to live there, I've travelled there already and studied Mandarin.

Curiosity:

1. Curiosity has always been my primary characteristic but I don't know what's driving that curiosity.
2. It has been expressed in the variety of my studies, languages I've learned, places I've been to, jobs I've had.
3. When I was younger my curiosity lead to dangerous activities, like taking drugs, LSD.
4. Although I don't like others who aren't intellectually curious or open-minded, I wish I could be less so, so I could settle down and have a simpler life.
5. Currently I want to satisfy my curiosity about the Far East.
6. P repeatedly expressed curiosity about the other participants in the study, what their experiences had been compared to hers.

Ambiguity and flexibility (contradictions?):

1. I love to really understand something, I have a low tolerance for ambiguity.
2. I cope with ambiguity by finding out what the new rules are in a place.
3. I have a very flexible personality and I learned early on how to adapt my personality to fit into different groups.

Need for challenges/adventures to avoid being bored:

1. I just need a new horizon, I don't think England has much more to offer me, no challenges.
2. Little everyday things can be very upsetting while bigger issues I find easier to deal with.
3. The little everyday things just wear me down, it's soul destroying.
4. I like pushing at limits. If my everyday existence was just a wife, I'd have to create some kind of challenge.

5. Relocating and learning a new language is a big challenge.
6. I like creating obstacles so I can overcome them.
7. I am goal-oriented and once I achieve my goals I set higher ones, it's a push to see what my limits are.
8. I'm impatient, high-strung, a low threshold, lots of energy, and capable.
9. I love mental stimulation, read a lot, love films, it's a form of escape. I love to study and commit to challenges, professionally and academically.
10. Once I understand something it doesn't intrigue me any more so I move on.
11. I don't stay in jobs more than about 3 years. I'm ambitious but if I succeed at something then I'm bored and look for something new.
12. Now that I've raised my kids I'm ready for another adventure.
13. I was more competitive in sports than academics because there was more recognition in sports achievements.
14. I can be ruthlessly competitive in certain areas, more when I was young because now I've already achieved a lot. It is personally satisfying and gives us a better lifestyle.

Need to escape:

1. Escaping my home was the big theme, I knew I'd never stay there, it was very close-minded, middle-class, repressive.
2. To be happy here I'd need a second home I could escape to whenever I wanted to, outside London or the UK for 3-4 months a year.
3. I would have to have a way to escape, not having this is not an option for me.
4. I don't really know what I need to escape from, but at the moment it's the stress of life in London, it's too urban.

Feeling fed up with where I live (happened in the UK and Holland):

1. I feel fed up with the UK, it's a hard and expensive life here.
2. My friend facing death has made me think about my life and where I want to end up and I certainly don't want to be buried in England, I don't know where I'll end up but not here.
3. There's a lot to like about England, but it's not spontaneous, expressive, intriguing, there's something fatalistic and resistant to change (very different from P's character).
4. It's not a great environment here, not very safe anymore I've been mugged twice, and I don't trust the NHS.
5. I also felt fed up in Holland, where the taxes were so high we had to work a lot to sustain our standard of living. We could never get ahead there.
6. It's too homogeneous, white, middle-class, conformist, small-minded, they don't like anything out of the ordinary where we were living.
7. It seemed boring and petty. It felt repressive to us and too socially-controlled.
8. Although my husband is Dutch, we didn't feel part of the culture there and my husband couldn't wait to leave. Like me, he knew since he was young that he'd never end up there.

Being a global nomad (P introduces this term):

5. I had no idea when I embarked on this journey what the consequences would be, I just jumped in with both feet.
6. I didn't realise I would be slamming the door on just leading a normal American life by emigrating.

7. I didn't realise that by marrying a Dutchman there would be consequences for raising children, we have different religions and my kids don't have a strong cultural identity.
8. I also don't have a strong cultural identity now, nor my husband, because of our lifestyle.
9. I'm a global nomad – I'm not able to fit in anywhere, living in a twilight zone because there's a lot about America that I don't like.
10. When I leave the UK I'll take a bit of it with me and keep going, eventually I'll be a global nomad and I'll never be completely anything.
11. I'll be living in the twilight zone with my children, who have 2 passports and are a phenomenon of the 21st century. They'll be global nomads as well.
12. My children will never be perceived as American, they've never lived there, they aren't perceived as English though they were born and raised here, they have Dutch passports but they've forgotten how to speak Dutch. I don't know what will happen to them.
13. I can't live in America any more because I'm not just American now and I'd get frustrated with the lack of interest in other cultures, I would get bored.
14. I go home every year for 3 weeks and at the end I'm ready to return, I have more freedom here.
15. With hindsight I might have done things a little different but I don't know what since I'd still have had to go.
16. Although my husband is the same and we've had each other, I would have gone alone and had begun the pattern before we met.

Family environment:

1. I didn't have a great family life, my parents went through a very acrimonious divorce when I was 3½ and my mother remarried my father's best friend and I didn't like my stepfather so there was no place for me.
2. I was moved into their house, my brother and sister sent to boarding school so I was the only one in the midst of their family.
3. From an early age I was an outside looking in. That was difficult and why I wanted out.
4. I was sort of pushed out at a young age because it wasn't a safe place at home.
5. I had this experience of not belonging so I found places I could belong, like with my friends.
6. I was busy every day after school and every weekend to be out of the house.
7. I secretly wanted to be part of my friend's family because they were close-knit and had a cosy family life.
8. I got very involved in horses, where there is a whole lifestyle and culture I could belong to, with horses it's all or nothing and you can plug into this world anywhere.
9. My friendships remain very important to me, almost sisterly relationships.
10. I built an alternative to having a mom and dad at home.
11. My grandfather and father were interested in the bigger world but my mother wasn't at all, she complains when she travels and that's one reason I live here!
12. I wanted to give my sons the attention I didn't have. One of them is like me the other is not at all driven. Now they have to make their own way in a world that's become more ruthless.

Being American and thoughts of returning home:

1. I've been trying to understand this hatred of America because it's a form of globalisation and dominated by commerce.

2. Our successful lifestyle is part of being a typical materialistic American.
3. I'm still very patriotic, I'd love to own a house in American and live there half the time.
4. If anything happened to my husband I'd return immediately, but I'd never return to my home city.
5. I like what America stands for, the warmth and openness of the people, free thinking, creativity, the American outlook, that's what I miss, not any particular place.
6. I sometimes feel homesick for New England though I'm not from there and at Christmas time, when we usually visit.
7. I'm a die-hard American. I haven't changed at all, not even my accent.
(contradicts global nomad feeling).
8. Sept. 11th made me realise I do love my country very much.

Balancing needs:

1. We can't leave London yet but I like the idea of having alternatives ready.
2. I have to balance my needs with my sons' schooling and my husband's career.
3. If we left soon, we'd have to leave the eldest behind as he doesn't want to leave so its tricky.
4. Our lifestyle is cold in that we have freedom because we aren't attached to any community, we're anonymous, but there's also no support that would sustain me if I had to cope alone.
5. I wish I could be happy settling in a little village, tending my garden, never leaving, but I don't think I could ever be that way.
6. I wish I could accept a more settled existence, although I'm closer to being ready for a slightly different life it would still need to be active, challenging.
7. I don't have any negative feelings about friends who didn't leave, I respect their success, though I notice I have a very cosmopolitan group of friends, mixed-culture couples and people who've travelled a lot.

Feelings of the interview:

1. I've put thought into this because I'm interested in it, partly because I'm at this personal transition now with wanting to leave London.
2. My friend who is terminally ill has made me think about what I really want out of life and that's when it hit me I don't want to end up here.
3. It feels like there is something amiss in the world and I've been trying to make sense of it in terms of our life.
4. So this is a very current topic for me, very active. I'm hoping you can offer me some insights.
5. I'd be intrigued to hear about other's experiences of people you've interviewed.

1. Fascination with travel.

- P had very positive experiences of travelling with a sports group when young. She appreciated the bonding with like-minded people, seeing different places and meeting new people. There is a combination of being with similarity and experiencing difference that continues now with her husband.
- P does not know what it is in herself that makes her so attracted to the experience of travel, but one aspect she is clear about is that travel constitutes a form of escape for her. This is escape from the ordinary, the everydayness of life. Travel constitutes a break from the stresses of daily living and the boredom of routine.

2. Personality characteristics

- P describes her experiences in terms of definable personality characteristics such as; being attracted to difference, being deeply curious, being a flexible person, needing challenges, not tolerating boredom, and not tolerating ambiguity.
- P has always been attracted to what is different than herself. She is pulled towards the otherness of unfamiliar cultures, places, religions, people, but she does not understand the basis of this attraction. At present this attraction is mostly expressed as a desire to live in the Far East, yet P has studied these cultures and languages, so there is also some familiarity and knowledge there. It is not total difference, but perhaps difference that can be navigated with some pre-existing acquaintance? Also, P finds most of her friendships are with others like herself, internationalists and mixed-culture couples. Relates to next point:
- P loves to really understand something and finds it very difficult to live with ambiguity, the unknown or inconclusive in life. When she goes to a new place she needs to find out the rules of that place in order to reduce ambiguity. In this way she sees herself as flexible because she can adapt to different environments, yet perhaps she is also inflexible as this adaptation is rule-based, rather than toleration and openness to the unknown. The price of this adaptation may be the boredom that P experiences when she has conquered a place, understood it, and then needs to move on, escape.
- Curiosity has always been a fundamental part of P’s self-experience though she does not understand why. This has been expressed in the variety of her travels, her studies, ability to speak different languages, and jobs. P does not like people who are closed-minded and not curious. She is not curious about those people and in fact wishes she could be less curious so she would be satisfied with settling down and having a simpler life.
- P’s curiosity and need to understand seems outward-directed. She seems to be able to live with questions about herself that she has not sought

answers to, why is she attracted to difference, why is she so curious, why can't she tolerate ambiguity, why does she need to have a place of escape. These personality characteristics seem to concentrate on her relationships with others, finding a place with others.

3. Challenge and boredom create each other

- P is ready to leave the UK as she sees no challenges left for her here. Once she masters something it loses its appeal and she moves on, this happens in jobs, and places she lives. Meeting a challenge leads to boredom and the need for a new challenge to overcome, like relocating and learning a new language.
- P experiences herself as high-strung, lots of energy, and capable. She needs mental stimulation to keep her satisfied and enjoys reading and films as a form of escape but it is not clear what she needs to escape. However, it may be that it is the everyday challenges that need to be avoided, as she finds them upsetting whereas big challenges are relished. The everyday things are experienced as wearing and soul-destroying.
- P finds that she is very goal-oriented, creating higher and higher goals to see where her limits are. She is competitive in her pursuit of goals, especially in sports and business because these, more than academics, imply more public recognition, which for some reason seems more valuable than the more private satisfaction of academics.

4. Needing a physical place of escape

- When younger, escape from the difficulties of the family home was the theme of her life. This need has continued throughout P's life – she needs to always have a place to escape to, another house, another country, not having this is not a possibility though she does not know why.
- It may be the escape is from the ordinary and everyday, concerns with which P experiences as petty, close-minded, repressive. This is how she experienced her home city and Holland and she had to escape both. She also needs to escape from the stress of living in an urban setting like London.
- Escape seems to mean retreating to a more open and relaxed place, perhaps a sense of freedom FROM rather than freedom TO.

5. Frustration with surrounding culture

- After being in a place for a time frustration with the less desirable aspects of the local culture generate a need to escape. P has felt this in every place she has lived, gradually experiencing the place as too homogenous, middle-class, conformist, small-minded (like Holland and her home city), or lacking in spontaneity, expression, not being dynamic enough (London). P begins to dislike a place for aspects of the culture

that diverge from her own personality, i.e. for its difference (contradicting above), these aspects can feel repressive.

- Also, practical aspects of the local place can generate a need to move on, such as problems with transport, high taxation and its effect on standard of living, lack of safety, poor health services. The terminal illness of a friend has made it clear to P that she does not want to be buried in the UK.
- P recognises that the way she and her husband live in a place is 'cold', maintaining maximum freedom from the local culture, nonattachment and anonymity, but thereby also foregoing the support of the local culture and a feeling of belonging. Aspects of P's frustration with a place may be an expression of this maintained distance and even a lack of acceptance of the differences she encounters in different cultures.

6. Family circumstances

- At the age of 3 ½, P's parents had an acrimonious divorce and P was moved in with her new stepfather's family. She did not like her stepfather and felt this new home was not her home. She felt she was on the outside looking in, pushed out of having a safe place where she belonged.
- In response P created places she could belong, in close friendships, with friends' families, in the culture surrounding horse-riding, she created an alternative to having a mother and father and safe place at home.
- P kept herself busy in order to remain out of the house, where she felt safer. Perhaps this way of being and strategy for coping with difficulties has persevered in P's life.
- P recognises that she is more like her father and grandfather in personality than her mother. Her mother does not like travel or exposure to difference. P sees her characteristics of difference in her eldest son but is concerned for her younger son who is less 'driven' and more of a 'home-body'. P is conscious of having to balance her own needs with those of her sons and her husband's career. At times she wishes she could feel more settled in one place but doesn't think she could ever be that way.

7. The unintended phenomenon of being a 'global nomad'

- P introduces the term of global nomad to describe and make sense of her experience. It may be an expression of the previously described need to understand and reduce the ambiguity and complexity of her lived experience to something understandable/explainable.
- P had no idea when she began her foreign journeys that the consequences would be that she was closing the possibility of leading just a normal American life again. Now she's unable to fully fit in anywhere, living in twilight zone between cultures. She perceives that she cannot live just in America any more because she is not just American. Three weeks once a year feels like enough for her there as she

feels boredom with the American culture and a lack of freedom there (contradicted in next section).

- P's choices pass on the experience of being a global nomad to her children although she did not fully realise it at the time. Both P and her husband no longer have strong cultural identities and this is passed along to her sons. As a family they are condemned to live in this twilight zone and although she sees this as a phenomenon of the 21st century, P is concerned about how this will be for her children. They are not perceived as American, English, or Dutch, though they hold two passports.
- When P leaves the UK she will take a little of it along with her and go on to the next place, thus forging a changing identity in which she will never be completely anything, never belong to one place (global nomad). Now realising the consequences of her moving around, P feels she might have done things differently though it is not clear what, since she does not doubt she had to go, and that she would have gone alone, without her husband, as the pattern was set before meeting him.

8. Being American and living in America

- Although P identifies as a global nomad, and left her home country, she also continues to identify as American, saying she hasn't changed at all (even her accent), and feels strongly patriotic. She would get bored and frustrated living only in America, and the culture's lack of interest in other cultures, but she dreams about owning a house there someday and living there half the time.
- The attacks on Sept 11th made P realise how much she loves what her country stands for, the warmth and openness of the people, their free thinking and creativity, the American outlook. These are qualities and values that P also ascribes to herself and at times she gets homesick for a culture that also expresses them (matching of personal and cultural allows a certain valued interaction?). She also feels homesick at Christmas time, when her family usually visits America.
- P finds herself trying to understand the current anti-American feeling in the world and ascribes it to the globalisation and dominance of commerce in American culture. These are aspects of the culture that she herself also expresses in her personal choices and she jokingly describes their successful lifestyle as being typically materialistic American. If anything happened to P's husband she is certain she would return immediately to the USA, signifying that although she left and describes herself as 'homeless' her home culture retains a special significance to her.

9. Feelings of the interview

- 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 American way of being, and of understanding being homeless in the world?

GM1 - The first thing I'd like to ask you is could you begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - I was born in Sri Lanka and we moved to England, my parents and I, when I was five. They were doing it for me I think, they wanted me to have a British education so that's what they decided and we moved to England in 1981, and I've lived here most of my life since then.

GM2 - So, for your sake?

P2 - Yes, yes, yes. My father, both my parents had me quite late in life. After 17 years of marriage, so they were quite established in Sri Lanka. My father was a consultant psychiatrist and had been a professor and was very established there. He actually took early retirement from Sri Lanka to come to England to work. So it was a big decision for them. I was too small to have a real say in what happened, it was an involuntary, you know, I didn't go kicking or screaming. But I think their plan at the stage, I think it was '81, they're plan was to come back, to go back to Sri Lanka. Get me settled in school and then go back for holidays and things, but then the civil war started in 1983, so that really put an end to those plans. Because I think my parents would, and still would want to go back, but now that they're at a certain age they wouldn't go without me, um, yeah.

GM3 - So when I asked about your first, the circumstances of your leaving home, you were talking about leaving a home that was yours for the first five years of your life?

P3 - Yes.

GM4 - So do you consider Sri Lanka home now, or?

P4 - That's where I'm from. It gives me a sense of identity. I don't know, I've grown up here so I probably am more British than Sri Lankan, but I always, you know, if somebody asks me where I'm from, I say I'm originally from Sri Lanka, but I've lived in England most of my life. And saying that, Sri Lanka is still quite important, you know, I won't, I haven't let that go. And even though it doesn't really, well it does form my identity, but it doesn't impact on me so much. I don't live in Sri Lanka, I haven't lived there since I was five, I've only been there on holiday a couple of times for a few weeks each time, so... I don't know, it's still important, yes.

GM5 - So for some reason it's important to say that you're originally from there, and that your own kind of personal links with Sri Lanka, are just kind of like a holiday sort of experience?

P5 - Yes, yes. But the links are still quite strong, the community, the Tamil/Sri Lanka community that I know is quite strong, so the links are there. It's not that I'm isolated from it, but I'm isolated from the way of life in Sri Lanka and I think, I would like to go back, but I think it's still a fantasy and you know, if I start thinking about it seriously there are so many blocks to going back. I don't, I mean I can understand the languages, but I don't speak them - there are two languages in Sri Lanka, Sinhalese and Tamil. I haven't lived there, you know, I wouldn't, it's still a fantasy, the reality of going to live there would be very hard. But somehow, it's still there.

GM6 - What do you think that is that kind of draws you at least in fantasy to living there?

P6 - Because that's where I'm from. I know that sounds silly, but that's where I'm from, I don't know, roots. We went back to Sri Lanka in April/March this year, for the first time for me in ten years. We visited Jafna, which is in the north of the island, and that's where my parents are from originally, and there are peace talks happening in Sri Lanka so it was safe to go back. The north and east is where all the trouble has been, but for peace talks, there are flights going up there. So we went back for the first time in 26 years. So I was 2, so it was really my first visit to Jafna and to my parents'

ancestral villages. It just felt you know, that's where I'm from. It's a war ruined country, especially in the north, and my father's property there is all ruins, you know, it's just a few walls, no roof, no doors, nothing, and overgrown trees in the middle of the house and goats wandering around. But I just felt very centred there, you know, that's where I come from, and I got very upset when people, neighbours or relatives were petitioning my father for that land, and saying why don't you donate it in my Grandfather's memory to build a hospital, and I just felt very strongly that you know, this is my birth right, it's ancestral land, there's no need to sell it, there's no financial need to sell it, it's mine. Even though I haven't been there, you know, there's an emotional attachment but I haven't been there before. It's an alien concept, but I felt very strongly that, just you know, having that land is like something to hold on to. Yes, something to hold on to, and if we got rid of that maybe I would be letting go on that link and I don't want to.

GM7 - So there's something about maintaining that link and even that land in Sri Lanka that almost kind of anchors you?

P7 - Yes, yes, yes. One day I might even build a house there, who knows. More realistically is that my mother has got a property in Columbo the capital, and you know, that's mine. There's no way that's going to come out of the family and I do hope to live there one day.

GM8 - So how do you understand the importance of this to you?

P8 - Well, in everyday life it doesn't impact so much, but it defines me, it defines where I'm from. Um, yes, it defines where I'm from.

GM9 - I guess that's partly my question, because I'm thinking you could be sitting here saying I left at the age of five, England's really my home. My parents are from there but it's never really been my home. But you're not saying that, you're saying opposite in way? That in some way it's part of who you are?

P9 - Yes, I would say I'm British, but I would never say I'm English. Yes, I would never maybe go as, really, British yes, that's fine, that's a label I'm happy with, but I don't know, I think, I think it's more as I grow older that Sri Lanka's become more important because I remember when I was growing up and the civil war was happening, it was such a foreign thing, I didn't really give a damn what was happening. When my parents were, you know, there were bombings and things, it was so far, it was so removed I didn't, 'so what,' it didn't mean anything, and it's only in the last few years that I've, I don't know, there's a Tamil Tiger organisation, which is a terrorist organisation, and for years I thought they were the scum of the Earth, no, I didn't want anything to do with them, I thought they were just so, it was so wrong to be a terrorist, and that was it. I didn't want anything to do with them, and if any of our relations supported them, I remember once going to Canada and we had lots of relations there, lots of Tamils had gone from Sri Lanka to Canada as refugees and settled there, there's quite a large community there. Seeing a Tiger poster or a calendar on their wall, and just thinking, oh, we really shouldn't be associating with them, and this is only like five years ago, I thought no, I don't want anything to do with that. But I can't put my finger on it, but I think the more I sort of know about Sri Lanka, and more if I'm you know, not struggling, but trying to find my identity, the Tamil perspective is coming out and I think, in a way I do have a fantasy that I would like to, yes, it's still a fantasy, but I would like to join the Tamil Tigers now. Fight for my people's freedom. And that's such a contrast from when I was growing up.

GM10 - How do you think that change has happened? What's happened in you to have evolved in that way?

P10 - I think I've been, (pause) well, two factors. I think I'm not, I know that I'm not English. I know that I'm a person of colour. You know, and there's, you know, there's

a saying sort of, a coconut or whatever, brown on the outside and white on the inside. And you know, it's not a nice phrase, but I think that could apply to me. I've grown up in England so much, I've had a British public school education and gone to university here and done all the right things, you know. Yes, really in there, ingrained into British society, but still there's something missing and I think it's that search for something missing that led, you know, led me towards Sri Lanka.

But it's also the sense that, it's that exoticness to say, you know, when somebody asks you where you're from, and I much prefer to say I'm from Sri Lanka than say that I'm from London or Epsom. You know, it just adds a bit more, I don't know, oomph, sizzle, it livens things up, and I like that. So, yes I think I like the exoticness of saying I come from Sri Lanka. But that search to find that sort of, Tamilness, I think is still carrying on. I haven't found that yet.

GM11 - So, I want to see if I've got that, you said a lot of interesting things there. You've grown up here, to a great extent, from the age of five?

P11 - Yes, yes.

GM12 - And you maybe, I'm not sure if this is right, but maybe increasingly you've had this sense that there's something kind of missing?

P12 - Yes, yes.

GM13 - And you were also talking about the racial issue and that you are not English, because English is more, though you didn't quite say this, but English has more of a white context, but British is more inclusive?

P13 - Yes, yes.

GM14 - But, I'm thinking that that has had some impact on your experience of being in Britain, the fact that you're Sri Lankan, there could be a colour issue about fitting in here or something?

P14 - But the thing is, I do fit in, but then sometimes you take a double take. You know, through my background I've mixed with what you might consider high society, and yes, you know, I've spent the last few New Years with members of the Royal Family up in Norfolk, and that's fine, you know, they're not in my circle, but they were enjoining circles of friends, but in those situations, and in a lot of situations I've been in in the last few years, parties, or white tie balls and things, I take a real, I look around and I think I'm the only coloured person here, and for a split second it's like oomph, I'm just conscious of it.

GM15 - I'm wondering what that does to you?

P15 - It makes you self conscious, but it's also what's this about? Why should I be a guest, should I be here? If I am the only coloured person out of hundreds of people, and you know, this Summer, when I went to Royal Ascot there was, it's called The Voice, which is the black paper, they were photographing coloured people who were in the Royal Enclosure, and that amused me, but maybe it is that unusual, yes, maybe I am quite unique in being in that situation, given that opening to doors and things.

GM16 - It sounds like you feel that uniqueness?

P16 - Yes, and I wonder if that's strange in a way. A lot of the time it is very positive, but then you just think, you just have a moment of unease, yes.

GM17 - So I'm wondering what is it like then when you do go back to Sri Lanka?

P17 - Well, this is the thing. I don't know if I fit back in there. I probably fit back, there is probably an equivalent, if there's an ex-pat community society there I'd probably be happy there, but in deepest Jafna, no, that's not going to happen. The terms of reference are so far apart, and this is where I start thinking about wanting to go back, these are the barriers that stop me, and I think, you know, it's so, the value system is like, well, I think I saw how, there are deep-seated views of what my parents had brought from Sri Lanka that I still hold, but it's straddling those two spheres.

GM18 - So let's see if I've got that, it sounded almost like you were saying that in England the Sri Lankan part of you, if I can say it that way, kind of helps define you, it's a very important part of you, and then when you go to Sri Lanka it sounded almost as if you were saying that there's a part of you that isn't Sri Lankan, that you stand out in some way?

P18 - Yes, but at the same time, Yes, but I think in Sri Lanka I don't stand out so much physically, but once I start speaking I don't have the same accent as them, I don't understand Tamil, in communication you can immediately tell that I'm not from there. So in that way, my non-Sri Lankanness does define me, yes.

GM19 - So what is that like, because it sounds like you are partly at home in two cultures, and partly stand out in both cultures, is that comfortable? I wonder what that's like?

P19 - Well, it's like, are you going to be comfortable anywhere? You know, I think that's what I've come to you know, is there going to be a place where you are going to be, there's a phrase I can't remember, let everywhere be like home, I can't remember, there's a phrase, but let nowhere be a strange place, I can't remember the phrasing actually. Yes, it is difficult and it's those moments, you know, you fit into the role, well I fit into the role quite easily, but there are moments when you realise, you take stock of what's happening, and you reflect on that.

GM20 - Are there any specific things that make those moments happen?

P20 - Well, especially when I'm, if I'm the only coloured person in a white group. Those are moments when I think about that. In Sri Lanka, not so much because, only maybe if you're trying to get a rickshaw, and you know, in taking a rickshaw, going with a cousin, they said don't open your mouth as once they hear your accent then they will double the price, so things like that make you realise, but you can use it to an advantage.

GM21 - You can use it?

P21 - Yes, yes. I think people, once they look at your name they think you're going to speak with a non-English accent, and it puts people off guard sometimes. And it's quite fun, a few years ago we were having a TV repaired and the guy, the repair people, they were being really slow and I wasn't taking any nonsense, they said they hadn't got the clearance from the insurance company and so I thought, no, so I phoned up the insurance company and they said yes, they'd given their clearance, we'll give the go ahead, and got back, and the people at the repair shop when they took my name, you know, they commented on the fact that, you know, that's a very English accent, and I didn't say anything but I just sort of smiled to myself. Maybe, I don't know, they take you more seriously, yes, with more acceptance.

GM22 - Take you more seriously when you?

P22 - If you don't speak with an off the boat accent.

GM23 - Yes. So, I'm wondering where would you call home?

P23 - Home, at the moment is Epsom, in Surrey. That's home. But my ancestral, it's more than that, my, I want to say real, but Epsom is my home, in all physical dimensions that's where I'm from, and I think it's too strong to say spiritual, but there is a sense that Sri Lanka is where I'm from, that's my home country, that's home. Spiritual is too strong, but it's that sense of, yes.

GM24 - I really have that sense, and a word that come to me was almost like your soul's home is in Sri Lanka?

P24 - (deep breath) Yes, yes. Uh huh.

GM25 - So, I'm wondering what the distinction is there, when you would call Epsom home, physically as home, and yet there's this other home in Sri Lanka that hasn't been

your home since you five, your physical home, when you compared those two kinds of home, I'm wondering what the difference is?

P25 – (pause) I've said it before, but Sri Lanka gives my sense of identity, I don't think Epsom gives me any identity. I don't get any, I don't take much, that's just where I live.

GM26 - Home in the sense of everyday comforts, where you eat, have your stuff...

P26 - Yes.

GM27 - OK. I'm wondering if you can say anything more about, you said a few times that Sri Lanka kind of defines you? I'm not sure what that means?

P27 – (long pause) If I had to graduate who I am, I don't know, my faith would come first and then second or third would be that I'm a Tamil. So that's important to me. That's how I define, the important way of how I define myself, but at the same, I don't know if it's hypocritical, but I haven't followed through with that defining. I haven't fully learnt the language. There are so many things I could have done to increase that definition of being Tamil, but I haven't. But it's still important to me. Learning the language is key, but the dress, and whatever, that's, yes, it defines me but then you pick and choose. And that's kind of hypocritical I think, when you take the best bits but you leave what you don't really, you know, you take the clothes, you take the food, you take the souvenirs, but you leave, I don't know quite what you leave, but then you still have your British, Western values really, you're mixed up together, but I'm not, I'm still in the honeymoon phase with Sri Lanka. I haven't spent enough time there that I've got ingrained in that culture, but I have in a way because it's still part of me, but it's not the same. I haven't lived there. I don't know if that...

GM28 - It's rather confusing, isn't it? Because on the one hand I guess that it's maybe the second or third most important part of your identity, and you also are aware that there's lots of things you could have done that would really have embedded that, learning the language, or even living there, that you haven't done. So it's very important in a certain kind of way?

P28 - Yes.

GM29 - And not so crucial in lots of other ways?

P29 - Yes.

GM30 - Maybe it's just too hard to say, but I'm wondering in what way is it so defining, so important to maintain this part of your identity?

P30 - Well, if I lose that, I don't want to lose that, but if I lose that I think I'd be losing a part of myself, and what would happen is, I'd become, I don't want to lose that. I can't even imagine what it would be like sort of not you know, I can't even think of how it would be not having that. The colour, you wouldn't be English, you wouldn't be white, you know, it just wouldn't happen. You'd lose yourself if you weren't you know.

GM31 - Lose yourself?

P31 – (pause) Yes, you'd lose your, not your sense of self, but in a certain way yes, yes, you would lose, yes.

GM32 - You'd be a different person?

P32 - Yes, you would be a different person, yes, yes.

GM33 - So could you imagine what it would have been like for you if instead, when your mother was pregnant with you, your parents had decided to move so that you were born here? Do you think that would have made a difference, or would it still be just as important do you think?

P33 - I would hope it would still be as important. There are lots of Sri Lankans who have come here and brought up families here, second generation, and (long pause) I don't think I see any difference between them and me. We're both Sri Lankan, both Tamil, and a lot of parents, yes maybe, my parents, a lot of parents forced their children

to go to Tamil schools, there are several Tamil schools in London and the South East and they didn't, and they go for traditional South Indian music classes, dancing, whatever, they learn Tamil, and when we came to England in '81 my parents were so keen that I started to speak English that they spoke to me in English, you know, I picked up English but dropped the Tamil, and then when the war started my father's view was, he's never going to, there's a war there, it's going to go on and on and on, he's never going to go back to Sri Lanka, it's not worth him learning Tamil. And I never made an effort to learn Tamil, but a part of me always, you know, it would have been good if they had made me learn Tamil. But then if it had been forced on me, would I have resented it? And a lot of children might resent it, and they do, and they swing the other way and become so Westernised they just lose all contacts with that. Yes, a part of me does still wish that I had learnt Tamil earlier. And I do appreciate Sri Lankan music and Carnatic music and dance, but I never really learnt it. And it's never too late. I went to India last November for a few months, and I did take some classes, and that was really good, some music classes, dance appreciation classes, and that you know, it's all that search for something. It's a search for something.

GM34 - I'm really curious what that is?

P34 - The easy thing would be to say belonging, yes, belonging, but I belong here. I think there's a sense of longing for belonging there which I know may never come, but there's that longing.

GM35 - A longing to belong in Sri Lanka. I'm wonder why you long for that, what that would give you that you don't have, to belong in...?

P35 - But I, It would be wrong to say I want it now. I think I've got the rest of my life, it's a journey and I think it will come. I don't want everything to be perfect, but I think in a way it's good to have that longing, it's sort of, it's a positive thing. It's a yearning, but I look at it as a good yearning.

GM36 - One other thing I wanted to ask you about all this, given that you have this yearning and the Sri Lankan/Tamil part of you is so defining and, I'm wondering how you feel about the choices your parents made to bring you here at the age of five, that they were anxious, it sounds like they were anxious for you to really feel that you belonged here in some way? I'm wondering how you feel about that?

P36 - Well, they did it for my benefit. There was quite a sacrifice for them to leave Sri Lanka. Really, to leave your friends and family and come over here, it's a big sacrifice. So, there's a sense of gratitude, but indebtedness also, look what I did for you, sort of thing, so in a way, but I have thought about well what would it have been like if we'd stayed in Sri Lanka, and you can play lovely sort of, what would have happened if I'd gone to school there, my life would be so different. I wouldn't have had half the opportunities that I've had, or the experiences I've had now. I think it would be less complex, more simple, a slower life. It would be different. The pace of life in Sri Lanka is so much slower. While I'm saying this I'm thinking do I really want that now even? But I want both. The ideal would be to spend six months here and six months there, or something like that.

GM37 - Is it right to say that you, ideally you would like both to feel sort of fulfilled?

P37 - Yes.

GM38 - Having all of one but none of the other wouldn't be quite, at this point in your life, ...?

P38 - But at the same, there's the same feeling, if I have children I want them to at least in their infancy and growing up, to be in Sri Lanka. I'd like them to have the same chances I had. So that's kind of interesting.

GM39 - Yes, why is that important to you?

P39 - Well, I think it's such a better place to grow up than here, to bring up children, definitely. I think I'm getting to the age where, I will be settling down in the next five or ten years, and hopefully children will come. So I'm starting to think we need to start thinking about this. But yes, that's really quite important to me. But then would, you know, history will be repeating itself, maybe I would like them to have a British education here.

GM40 - It's really interesting isn't it, because it also could be history repeating itself in that like your parents you'd be willing to sacrifice a lot so that your children could have the first few years?

P40 - Yes, yes. Yes, hmm (pause)

GM41 - OK. Can I move on?

P41 - Yes, sure.

GM42 - These questions are designed more for people who have left their home at a later age, you left at a very early age, so some of them I won't be able to use in the same way, I'll have to change them a little bit, can I ask, are you living with your parents now?

P42 - I am, yes.

GM43 - You are. And have you always lived with your parents?

P43 - Yes, but I've lived abroad, I was in America for a couple of years.

GM44 - With your parents?

P44 - No, on my own. Well, yes without them living with me, yes.

GM45 - So, I mean you did your schooling here?

P45 - Yes, I did my schooling here until 18, then after a gap year I went on an internship programme to New York for nearly two years, working and studying there, and living there. Came back in '98 and then, no '97, and in '98 I started at university in Durham, which is in the North of England, and I was living up there. The reason I'm living, I lived in London, last year I was living in London, but my father had a stroke a few years ago, and they are getting older, and you know they value having me there so.

GM46 - So, you went to university, and you did a gap year.

P46 - Several of them.

GM47 - Several gap years, OK. Then you went to New York?

P47 - Yes.

GM48 - So, you haven't just stayed around in Britain, you've taken opportunities to travel, so that's something that's important to you?

P48 - Yes, travel is something I enjoy, I've been to Russia, China, Thailand, various places in Europe.

GM49 - What's the attraction there, of living in New York, or going to other places?

P49 - Well, New York, that was a really defining time for me when I was in New York. That was just, I was 19, so I think, and I was there until I was 21, so I came of age there. And the reason for going was that I wanted to get away, leave home, and you know, I don't know how deep you want it, but when I was at school, I had a place at a medical school which I turned down, so the first year after going to Epsom, and that was my first gap year, I took a year out and went to China, and did other courses, but I didn't start medical school until after my first gap year. So in the January following on I went to New York on the internship programme, and it was, you know, I wanted to be independent, but I wasn't really, I always had my mother's credit card or whatever, so you know, but you were living with people from the programme so it was independent living in a foreign country, and the freedom, you know, yes.

GM50 - I'm wondering what attracted you to that? It's like you were saying that you wanted to kind of, get out?

P50 - Yes, yes.

GM51 - Be independent, be free, go to New York?

P51 - That's a big, it was a very extravagant step, yes. Looking back, a family friend who I have a lot of time for, you know, because I hadn't gone to medical school and you know, a few months later, you know, hey, I'm going to New York, and yes, looking back it was a very extravagant thing to do, and indulgent for my parents, yes. But it's a part of me, yes.

GM52 - So are you saying that at that point in your life you felt you really needed to do something like that?

P52 - Yes, yes.

GM53 - What did you need from that?

P53 - Well, knowing that I could live somewhere else. Yes, it was testing myself out, you know, it was quite a test to go abroad, but, I can't [pause] there is always going to be a part of me that has a great fondness for New York, there's a bit of my heart there, but again I wouldn't want to settle there. I wouldn't want to settle there.

GM54 - So there's a fondness?

P54 - Yes, yes.

GM55 - It's not a place you'd want to settle forever?

P55 - No, no.

GM56 - But your going there was a partly a test in some way?

P56 - Yes, it was a test to see how you'd cope. Would you cope with living abroad, and I did, fine.

GM57 - Why did you want to know that? Lots of people wouldn't.

P57 - Well, I think it's because I had kind of failed the test to go to university, to leave and live away from home there, so in a way going to New York was my university in way, yes.

GM58 - It was your way of kind of taking that step?

P58 - Yes, yes.

GM59 - OK. The last thing I'd like to ask you is something you talked about a little bit at the beginning, and there might be something else you want to add to it, and I'll ask it in the way that I always ask it, but in your case it would be interesting to see how you would take it?

P59 - OK.

GM60 - Do you think about returning home?

P60 - (pause) Yes, yes. (Laughs). But will it ever happen, I don't know. As I said before, it's still at the fantasy stage.

GM61 - So you take that as me asking do you ever consider moving to Sri Lanka?

P61 - Yes, yes. (emphatic) What can I say. What really made me feel more strongly about it recently is, you know, the civil war that's gone on, now this is going to open a can of worms, but my want, in satisfying my desire, or appeasing something in me that because I never took an interest in the Tamil cause, the Liberation cause, I'm doing training in psychology now, and my ultimate goal would be to train as a clinical and counselling psychologist and in some way return to Sri Lanka and work with the Tamils there. And that is quite a recent goal, so, and that focused me wanting to you know, to go back to Sri Lanka. It's kind of like a purpose, and a worthwhile thing. But it's kind of making up for my lack of interest before, but again once I start thinking about it, when I was in India I was supposed to work for a, do some voluntary work for a charity that helps Tamil and Sri Lankan refugees who had gone to South India, and I was going to do some workshops to their health workers there, on basic psychology, but the language was a huge problem, I didn't speak Tamil fluently, and you know, they have people, local people from the university there who do workshops at the moment, and once they started talking to me, they could see, needed a hand they were sort of

PhD students or whatever, it would be pointless for them to translate anything they had, anything I had to say when they were more qualified than me, so that didn't work out.

But there was a presumptuousness that we've got something to offer, but I hope I've got something to offer, I say 'my people' but fellow Tamils, I think my time there, even though I didn't actually do any work, real work with that organisation it has given me a longing to do that, and I hope it becomes fruit.

GM62 - So when you consider returning home, at this point in your life you link that to being able to go back and make a contribution?

P62 - Yes, yes.

GM63 - That's important?

P63 - That's very important, yes.

GM64 - I'm wondering what is so important about that? That you really feel..... ?

P64 - In a way it's making up for my indifference before, but I think it's also part of that belongingness, you know, in doing this I would belong more, definitely. But it's scary, it's kind of a scary goal, that, it's out there, it's a goal in 10 or 15 years, yes, but if I start thinking about it, yes, by then I'll be qualified, yes that's fine, but now would I have the strength to go back and do that, and I don't think at the moment, no. But, I think there are steps I need to, you know, I need to learn Tamil and Sinhalese first of all, get qualified in counselling, or as a clinical psychologist. But you never know where life's going to take you, but that's the plan at the moment.

GM65 - OK. I think that's all I really wanted to ask you.

P65 - OK.

GM66 - Is there anything you would like to add, or anything you want to ask, something that maybe I touched on that you had more to say on? Or something I didn't touch on that felt was interesting.....?

P66 - Well, it's made me think about my, I don't think I've formulated clear answers to why Sri Lanka's very important to me, and I think that's developing, I haven't to there yet. I don't have a straight answer to give yet.

GM67 - Can I ask just one last thing, you were saying that if you could go back and contribute something, on the one hand it might make up for some indifference, why do you feel you have to make up for something?

P67 - There's nothing that I have to, but it's internal, nobody's making me do that.

GM68 - Something in you?

P68 - It's in me, to address it, and I'm conscious of the fact that I didn't care, and that's not good, yes, I didn't care what happened to all these people that were killed, and I don't like that in me. So in that way I think doing that would appease that.

GM69 - And the other thing you said about going back and being able to make a contribution, is that in a way it would give you a greater sense of belonging, and I'm wondering what would be important about that, this belonging?

P69 - I think we're all searching for belongingness, and I know you can belong to a group of friends, belong to a church, you know, again I haven't formulated an answer, but I think, I know that I belong to the Tamil race, and that's really quite a global thing, and belonging, I don't know why that's, I can't quite say why, but that is important.

GM70 - Yes, I guess that it's really important and for maybe all of us, and I'm just wondering why that is so important to us?

P70 - Well, I think, this is psychology coming out, but I think we're group, we're social, we look for, this isn't really psychology, but we look to belong to groups and I think I look to belong to that Tamil group. Maybe it's an innate evolutionary thing, maybe it's not in my genes, but it's an undercurrent and maybe I'm in touch with that, there are so many blocks so they're not in touch with that undercurrent, I don't know, but somehow I am.

GM71 - You said, a word in there, I'm wondering about, and that is 'similar,' you said it was similar, and I'm wondering if that's an important part of belonging? The similarity that gives a feeling of belonging?

P71 - Yes, but it's not as simple as that because, you know how boring it would be if we all stuck to our separate groups and separate you know, what a boring, we'd lose so much of the richness if we kept to ourselves, but I think there is similarity, yes, if you look, yes, I think there is a deep, innate sort of pull, attraction to the similar.

GM72 - I was just remembering the times when you kind of, I mean you feel that you belong here as well, but at times that that gets questioned are the times when you look around and you feel different. Like that similarity... ?

P72 - Yes, yes. It disappears, it evaporates, yes.

GM73 - In some sense, you ask 'should I be here'?

P73 - And so, but at the same time the similarity between me and another Tamil person is quite superficial, you know, just because we look the same we might not believe, but at the same time it's very deep, we come, you know, genes or whatever, it's such a deep similarity, but on the surface I'll have more in common and similar with my friends or the people, the peers that I've grown up here with. It's the contrast.

GM74 - OK. How does it feel to be talking about these things?

P74 - Fine, yes. I think, as I said before, I think doing Harriet's workshop has primed me to think about these things, and it's been quite useful talking about this, you know, I haven't got any answers yet. In a way I don't want answers, it's a journey and I'm quite happy following this journey.

END

“Kumar” Meaning Units

Circumstances of parent’s leaving homeland

1. I was born in Sri Lanka and my parents moved here when I was 5 for my sake I think.
2. They wanted me to have a British education and I’ve lived here most of my life.
3. My parents had me late in life and both were very established back home, so it was a very big decision for them.
4. I was too small to have any say.
5. Their plan was to get me settled in school and then go back for holidays and visits but the civil war started.
6. I think my parents would still like to go back but at their age they wouldn’t go without me.
7. SL was home for the first 5 years of my life.

Is SL still home to you?

1. That’s where I’m from, it gives me a sense of identity.
2. I’ve grown up here so I’m probably more British but I always say I’m originally from SL but lived here most of my life.
3. SL is still important to me, I haven’t let that go.
4. I feel it forms my identity but doesn’t impact on me much because I don’t live there.
5. I’ve only been back a couple times on holiday for a few weeks but it’s still important.
6. The links are strong with the community there, I’m not isolated from them, just the way of life there.
7. I think I’d like to go back but I think it’s still a fantasy.
8. If I think about it seriously there are many blocks to returning.
9. I can’t speak the languages, the reality would be very hard but the fantasy persists.

What is the attraction to going back?

1. Because that’s where I’m from, roots.
2. We went back recently for the first time in 10 years and for the first time I got to visit my parent’s ancestral villages and it really felt like that’s where I’m from.
3. My father’s property is in ruins from the war but I just felt very centred there.
4. I got very upset when people were petitioning my father for the land to donate it in my grandfather’s memory.
5. I felt this land is my birthright. It’s ancestral land, there’s no need to sell it, it’s mine.
6. Even though I haven’t been there before, there’s an emotional attachment.
7. It’s an alien concept but I felt that having that land is something to hold onto and if we sold it maybe I’d be losing that link and I don’t want to.
8. It’s like maintaining that land anchors me. One day I might build a house there.
9. My mother also has property in Columbia and that will be mine and I hope to live there someday and that won’t be lost out of the family.
10. In everyday life this does not impact me much but it defines me, it defines where I’m from.

Would you identify with Britain also?

1. Yes, I would say I’m British but never English.
2. More as I grow older SL has become more important.

3. When younger I didn't care about the war, it meant nothing to me, it just seemed foreign.
4. Even up to 5 years ago I used to oppose the Tamil terrorist organisation and anyone who supported them.
5. But now, I can't quite describe it but, I more I know of SL and if I'm trying to find my identity, that Tamil perspective is beginning to come out and now I have a fantasy that I'd like to join that organisation and fight for my people's freedom.
6. That's a real contrast from when I was growing up.
7. Two factors contributed to this change, I'm not English, I'm a person of colour.
8. There's a derogatory phrase 'coconut', brown on the outside and white on the inside, and that could apply to me.
9. I've been very anglicised here, public schools etc. ingrained into British society, but there's something missing and a search for what was missing lead me towards SL.
10. There's also something exotic about saying I'm from SL rather than London or the town I live in. It adds some interest and I like that.
11. But I'm still searching to find that Tamilness, I haven't found that yet.

Fitting in

1. I feel I do fit in here, I've mixed with high society, the Royal Family, in those situations and a lot of situations in the last few years I look around and I'm the only coloured person there, and for a split second I'm just conscious of it.
2. It makes me self-conscious but it also makes me ask myself 'what's this about?'
3. Why should I even be there if I'm the only coloured person out of hundreds?
4. Maybe I am quite unique in being in that situation, been given an opening to those doors and I wonder if that's strange.
5. It's usually very positive but then I just think and I have a moment of unease.

What's it like in SL?

1. That is the point, I don't know if I fit back there either. I would probably fit back there into an ex-pat community and probably be happy but in deepest Jafna, no, that's not going to happen.
2. The terms of reference are so far apart. These are the barriers that stop me from going back.
3. I straddle the two spheres and the values of those two worlds.
4. In SL I don't stand out so physically but once I speak I have a different accent and don't understand Tamil so you can immediately tell I'm not from there.
5. So there, my non-SL defines me just as my SL-ness defines me in the UK.

Across two cultures

1. It's like I am partly at home and partly stand out in two different cultures.
2. I ask myself if I'm going to be comfortable anywhere.
3. I think I've come to that question of whether any place will be home.
4. There's a phrase 'let everywhere be like home, but let nowhere be a strange place' or something.
5. It's difficult. It's easy to fit into the role but there are moments when you take stock of what's happening and reflect on that.
6. Those moments of reflection happen especially when I'm the only coloured person in the room.
7. In SL I might feel it when we're taking a rickshaw and my cousin says don't open our mouth or they'll charge us double.

8. It can work to my advantage. Here people assume I'm not going to speak with an English accent and it puts people off guard.
9. It's quite fun at times. They take you more seriously, with more acceptance when they hear my accent.

Where would you call home?

1. Home at the moment is Epsom. In all physical ways that's where I'm from.
2. But my ancestral, I want to say real, it's maybe too strong to say spiritual home, is SL. It's my home country.
3. (I suggest that his soul's home is in SL and he takes a deep breath and agrees).
4. SL gives me my identity, Epsom doesn't, that's just where I live.

Being defined by one's homeland

1. If I had to graduate who I am first would come my faith, then second or third would be that I'm Tamil, so it's important.
2. I don't know if it's hypocritical but I haven't followed through with that defining identity, I haven't learned the language.
3. There are many things I could have done to increase that definition of being Tamil and haven't.
4. It defines me but then you pick and choose the ways of expressing that, language, dress...
5. And I think it's a bit hypocritical to just take the best bits but leave other things.
6. I am not sure what you leave but I still have my British, western values and it's mixed up together.
7. I'm still in the honeymoon phase with SL, I've not been there enough to get ingrained in the culture.
8. I don't want to lose this identity, but if I did I'd be losing a part of myself.
9. I can't even imagine what it would be like not to have that.
10. I wouldn't be English, I wouldn't be white, I'd just lose myself.
11. In a way I'd lose my sense of self.
12. Yes, I'd be a different person.

Would it be so important if you'd be born here instead?

1. I hope so, I don't think there would be a difference. I'd still be SL and Tamil.
2. A lot of parents forced their children to go to Tamil schools here, traditional music classes dancing, and language classes.
3. But my parents were so keen for me to speak English that I lost the Tamil and then the war meant they wouldn't go back so there was no point.
4. So I never made the effort but in a way I wish they'd made me learn Tamil.
5. I appreciate the music but never learned it, but it's never too late.
6. It's all a search for something, a kind of belonging.
7. I belong here but it's a longing to belong there, which may never come.

What would it mean for you to belong in SL?

1. I don't want it now, I've got the rest of my life, it's a journey and I think it will come.
2. It's good to have that longing, it's a positive yearning. (almost as if having that is better than resolving it and losing the yearning?)
3. My parents sacrificed a lot for my benefit to bring me here.
4. I have a sense of gratitude and also indebtedness.
5. I have thought about what it would have been like to have stayed and my life would have been so different.
6. I wouldn't have had half the experiences or opportunities I've had here.

7. It would be less complex, simpler, slower life there, very different.
8. While I'm saying this I am wondering if I maybe want that now even but I want both.
9. The ideal would be to spend 6 months here and 6 months there or something.
10. If I have children I want them to grow up in SL at least in their infancy, to have the same chances I had, which is interesting.
11. It's a much better place to bring up children than here. So, history may repeat itself.

Have you always lived with your parents?

1. I am now but I was in America for a couple years without my parents, and I took several gap years after school.
2. I was there on an internship programme. Then I returned and lived in the north of England until my father had a stroke and I returned to London.
3. I enjoy travelling, I've been to Russia, the Far East, around Europe.
4. New York was a defining time for me, I was there from 19 to 21 so I came of age there.
5. The reason for going was that I wanted to get away, to leave home.
6. I wanted to be independent, but I wasn't really, I always had my mother's credit card, but at least it was independent living in a foreign country, and I had freedom.
7. It was a very extravagant step and indulgent of my parents but it's a part of me.
8. I needed to know I could live somewhere else. I was testing myself out.
9. I feel there's a bit of my heart in NY now but I wouldn't want to settle there, but it was a test to see if I could cope living abroad and I did, fine.
10. I wanted to know that because I had kind of failed the test of going to university, to medical school, to leave and live away from home that time, so going to NY was kind of like my university, my way of taking that step.

Do you ever think of returning home (keeping it ambiguous what is meant by home)

1. Laughs. Yes, but I don't know if it will ever happen. It's still a fantasy.
2. (P takes it as my asking if he will ever return to SL, he is emphatic about this) Recently I have felt more strongly about it because since I never took an interest in the Tamil cause during the war, my ultimate goal would be to train as a psychologist and return to SL and work with the Tamils there.
3. That has been a recent focus of mine, and I'm studying psychology.
4. It feels like a worthwhile purpose, and makes up for my lack of interest before.
5. But again the language is a huge problem, and there were locals from the university who were more qualified than me.
6. I hope I've got something to offer to fellow Tamils and I have a longing to do that and had some introduction to it when I was in India.
7. It's very important to me to go back and make a contribution in order to make up for my indifference before but also I would then belong more.
8. It's a scary goal, at the moment I don't think I would have the strength to do it but in 10 or 15 years I hope so.
9. There are steps to realising this, learn the language, get qualified, that's the plan, but you never know where life will take you.

Why do you feel you have to belong?

1. It's made me think about why SL is so important to me and I don't think I've formulated clear answers to that.

2. No one is making me make up for something, it's internal, I'm conscious that I didn't care about what happened to all those people who were killed and I don't like that in me.
3. So in a way I want to appease that.
4. I think we all search to belong and I haven't really formulated why but I know I belong to the Tamil race and that's a global kind of belonging and that's important for some reason.
5. I look to belong to that Tamil group, maybe it's evolutionary, maybe it's genetic, but it's an undercurrent that I'm in touch with.
6. I think there is a deep innate pull to the similar but it would be boring if we all kept to our separate groups, we'd lose richness.
7. Sometimes the similarity I feel here disappears, when I look around and I'm different.
8. At the same time the similarity I feel between me and another Tamil is quite superficial, because we look the same but also it's very deep, same genes or whatever – it's a deep similarity but on the surface I have more in common with my friends I've grown up with here.

Feelings of the interview

1. It feels fine.
2. Doing the workshop *Stranger in a Strange Land* primed me to think about these things.
3. It's been useful talking about this.
4. I don't feel I've got any answers yet and in a way I don't want any.
5. It's a journey and I'm happy following the journey.

Arrival in Britain

1. I was born in Sri Lanka and my parents moved here when I was 5 for my sake I think, so SL was home for the first 5 years of my life.
2. They wanted me to have a British education and I've lived here most of my life.
3. My parents had me late in life and both were very established back home, so it was a very big decision for them and I was too small to have any say.
4. Their plan was to get me settled in school and then go back for holidays and visits but the civil war started.

Relationship to the original homeland

1. SL is where I'm from and it gives me a sense of identity.
2. Though I've grown up here and am probably more British, I always say I'm originally from SL.
3. SL remains important to me, I haven't let that go, it forms my identity but doesn't impact on me much because I've lived here most of my life.
4. Although I've only been back a couple times on holidays, it's still important.
5. The links with the community there are strong, I'm not isolated from them, just from the way of life there.
6. I think I'd like to go back but there are so many blocks that it seems like a fantasy.
7. The reality is it would be very hard, I can't speak the language, but the fantasy persists because that's where my roots are from.
8. The first time I got to visit my parent's ancestral villages it really felt like that's where I'm from. I just felt very centred there.
9. I felt this land is my birthright. It's ancestral land, there's no need to sell it, it's mine. Even though I haven't been there before, there's an emotional attachment.
10. I felt that having that land is something to hold onto and if we sold it maybe I'd be losing that link and I don't want to. It's like maintaining that land anchors me. One day I might build a house there.
11. My mother also has property in Columbia and that will be mine and I hope to live there someday and that won't be lost out of the family.
12. In everyday life this does not impact me much but it defines me, it defines where I'm from and had become more important as I grow older.
13. There's also something exotic about saying I'm from SL rather than London or the town I live in. It adds some interest and I like that.
14. But I'm still searching to find that Tamilness, I haven't found that yet.
15. The point is that I don't know if I fit back there, perhaps in an ex-pat community but not integrated into the rural heartland, no, that's not going to happen.
16. The terms of reference are so far apart. These are the barriers that stop me from going back.

Race and relationship to 'adoptive' homeland

1. I would describe myself as British but never English because I'm not English, I'm a person of colour.
2. There's a derogatory phrase 'coconut', brown on the outside and white on the inside, and that could apply to me.
3. I've been very anglicised here, public schools etc. ingrained into British society, but there's something missing and a search for what was missing lead me towards SL.
4. I feel I do fit in here, I've mixed with high society and in those situations and a lot of situations recently I look around and I'm the only coloured person there, and for a split second I'm just conscious of it.
5. It makes me self-conscious but it also makes me ask myself 'what's this about?' Why should I even be there if I'm the only coloured person out of hundreds?
6. Maybe I am quite unique in being in that situation, been given an opening to those doors and I wonder if that's strange.
7. It's usually very positive but then I just think and I have a moment of unease.

Straddling two cultures

1. I straddle the two spheres and the values of those two worlds.
2. In SL I don't stand out so physically but once I speak I have a different accent and don't understand Tamil so you can immediately tell I'm not from there.
3. So there, my non-SL defines me just as my SL-ness defines me in the UK, my difference is what stands out in both places.
4. It's like I am partly at home and partly stand out in two different cultures and I ask myself if I'm going to be comfortable anywhere.
5. I think I've come to that question of whether any place will be home.
6. There's a phrase 'let everywhere be like home, but let nowhere be a strange place' or something.
7. It's difficult. It's easy to fit into the role but there are moments when you take stock of what's happening and reflect on that, like especially when I'm the only coloured person in the room.
8. In SL I might feel it when we're taking a rickshaw and my cousin says don't open our mouth or they'll charge us double.
9. It can work to my advantage. Here people assume I'm not going to speak with an English accent and it puts people off guard.
10. It's quite fun at times. They take you more seriously, with more acceptance when they hear my accent.

Home

1. Home at the moment is Epsom. In all physical ways that's where I'm from.
2. But my ancestral, I want to say real, it's maybe too strong to say spiritual home, is SL. It's my home country.
3. (I suggest that his soul's home is in SL and he takes a deep breath and agrees).
4. SL gives me my identity, Epsom doesn't, that's just where I live.

Constructing an identity

1. If I had to graduate who I am first would come my faith, then second or third would be that I'm Tamil, so it's important.
2. I don't know if it's hypocritical but I haven't followed through with that defining identity, I haven't learned the language, there are many things I could have done to increase that definition of being Tamil and haven't.
3. It defines me but then you pick and choose the ways of expressing that, language, dress... and I think it's a bit hypocritical to just take the best bits but leave other things.
4. I am not sure what you leave but I still have my British, western values and it's mixed up together.
5. I'm still in the honeymoon phase with SL, I've not been there enough to get ingrained in the culture.
6. I don't want to lose my SL identity, but if I did I'd be losing a part of myself and I can't even imagine what it would be like not to have that.
7. I wouldn't be English, I wouldn't be white, I'd just lose my sense of myself, I'd be a different person.
8. I don't think it would make a difference if I had been born in the UK, I'd still be SL and Tamil.
9. A lot of parents forced their children to go to Tamil schools here, traditional music classes dancing, and language classes. But my parents were so keen for me to speak English that I lost the Tamil and then the war meant they wouldn't go back so there was no point.
10. So I never made the effort but in a way I wish they'd made me learn Tamil etc. but it's never too late.
11. It's all a search for something, a kind of belonging. I belong here but it's a longing to belong there, which may never come.

Thoughts of living in SL

1. My parents sacrificed a lot for my benefit to bring me here and I have a sense of gratitude and also indebtedness.
2. I don't want to be in SL now, I've got the rest of my life, it's a journey and I think it will come.
3. It's good to have that longing, it's a positive yearning. (almost as if having that is better than resolving it and losing the yearning?)
4. I have thought about what it would have been like to have stayed and my life would have been so different, I wouldn't have had half the experiences or opportunities I've had here.
5. It would be less complex, simpler, slower life there, very different.
6. While I'm saying this I am wondering if I maybe want that now even but I want both.
7. The ideal would be to spend 6 months here and 6 months there or something.
8. If I have children I want them to grow up in SL at least in their infancy, to have the same chances I had, which is interesting.
9. It's a much better place to bring up children than here. So, history may repeat itself.

Plans to address previous indifference by contributing something to homeland related to increasing identification with homeland as P ages

1. When younger I didn't care about the war, it meant nothing to me, it just seemed foreign.
2. Even up to 5 years ago I used to oppose the Tamil terrorist organisation and anyone who supported them.
3. But now, I'm trying to find my identity, and that Tamil perspective is beginning to come out and now I have a fantasy that I'd like to join that organisation and fight for my people's freedom. That's a real contrast from when I was growing up.
4. Recently I have felt more strongly about it because since I never took an interest in the Tamil cause during the war, my ultimate goal would be to train as a psychologist and return to SL and work with the Tamils there.
5. That feels like a worthwhile purpose and I hope I've got something to offer to fellow Tamils and I have a longing to go back and make a contribution in order to make up for my indifference before but also I would then belong more.
6. It's a scary goal, at the moment I don't think I would have the strength to do it but in 10 or 15 years I hope so.
7. There are steps to realising this, learn the language, get qualified, that's the plan, but you never know where life will take you, I don't know if it will ever happen. It's still a fantasy.

The importance of finding similarity and belonging

1. I don't think I've formulated clear answers about why SL is so important to me.
2. No one is making me make up for something, it's internal, I'm conscious that I didn't care about what happened to all those people who were killed and I don't like that in me. So in a way I want to appease that.
3. I think we all search to belong and I haven't really formulated why but I know I belong to the Tamil race and that's a global kind of belonging and that's important for some reason.
4. I look to belong to that Tamil group, maybe it's evolutionary, maybe it's genetic, but it's an undercurrent that I'm in touch with.
5. I think there is a deep innate pull to the similar but it would be boring if we all kept to our separate groups, we'd lose richness.
6. Sometimes the similarity I feel here disappears, when I look around and I'm different.
7. At the same time the similarity I feel between me and another Tamil is quite superficial, because we look the same but also it's very deep, same genes or whatever – it's a deep similarity but on the surface I have more in common with my friends I've grown up with here.

Have you always lived with your parents?

1. I am now but I took several gap years after school and travelled and went to NY on an internship programme. Then I returned and lived in the north of England until my father had a stroke and I returned to London.
2. I enjoy travelling, I've been to Russia, the Far East, around Europe.
3. New York was a defining time for me, I was there from 19 to 21 so I came of age there.
4. The reason for going was that I wanted to get away, to leave home.
5. I wanted to be independent, but I wasn't really, I always had my mother's credit card, but at least it was independent living in a foreign country, and I had freedom.
6. It was a very extravagant step and indulgent of my parents but it's a part of me. I needed to know I could live somewhere else. I was testing myself out.
7. It was a test to see if I could cope living abroad and I did, fine but I wouldn't want to live there long-term.
8. I wanted to know that because I had kind of failed the test of going to university, to leave and live away from home that time, so going to NY was kind of like my university, my way of taking that step.

Feelings of the interview

1. It feels fine and it's been useful talking about this.
2. Doing the workshop *Stranger in a Strange Land* primed me to think about these things.
3. I don't feel I've got any answers yet and in a way I don't want any, it's a journey and I'm happy following the journey.

2. Immigration with parents at an early age

- This participant's circumstances differ from the other Ps in that he was brought to Britain by his parents to increase his opportunities in life. P did not choose to move. His parents, by choosing to move from their homeland, fit the population of the study more than P himself.
- P lived in his homeland for the first 5 years of his life and was thoroughly socialised into his adopted land by his parents. He was not encouraged to continue with his native language or to learn his native culture.
- P sees his parent's move as a big sacrifice for them and he feels gratitude for what they did for his sake, although it seems he is also living with the loss of connection to his early home. The intervening civil war curtailed the amount of contact possible with the homeland and any plans to maintain links there.

3. Deep identification with the native land, despite minimal contact

- Though P grew up here and says he's probably more British, his sense of identity remains deeply linked to his homeland. The link is not one of daily impact but a deeper sense of that being the place he's most connected to.
- There seems to be a more practical, superficial level to this identification that is problematic and a deeper emotional level that is clear. P is isolated from the way of life back home, the realities of not knowing the language and customs is a practical obstacle to return that does not lessen the feeling of being rooted there, nor the fantasy that return remains possible.
- Visiting his ancestral villages, P immediately felt a strong emotional connection and a birthright to family land. This land symbolised his anchoring in his native land and he worries that to sell it may sever his link there. He has opportunities to live in his homeland and fantasises about this.
- P does not believe he could ever re-integrate fully into life back home. He imagines a compromise would be to live in an ex-pat situation because his terms of reference will always be so different from most local people.
- P does not feel he's found his 'Tamilness' yet and although this does not make an impact in everyday life, where he comes from still defines him and moreso as he ages. He also feels there's something exotic and unique about claiming this identity in the UK and that feels positive.

4. The issue of race in his 'adoptive' land

- P would describe himself as British but not as English since he sees English as a white identity. He feels he's been very anglicised and ingrained into the social establishment of British culture but also a person of colour. P uses the derogatory phrase 'coconut' to refer to his being brown on the outside and white on the inside.
- Though he feels he fits in here and has been accepted into 'high society', he is conscious of being the only person of colour in many situations and is aware that for him something is missing and his search for what was missing increased his longing for his homeland.
- P's experience is usually very positive, but those moments of realising he's the only person of colour around raise questions for him, he wonders why that should be the case, why has he been allowed in, and he feels unease. There seems to be a question of belonging based upon race in these situations.

5. Straddling two cultures, not belonging entirely to either

- P's experience is that it is his difference which stands out and defines him in either of his countries. In his native land he cannot speak the language and would be taken as British, in the UK his race sets him apart. He feels he straddles two worlds and the values of these two worlds. It's like he is partly at home and partly stands out in both cultures. He needs something from both but doesn't really fit either and this experience leads him to wonder if he'll ever be comfortable anywhere, or ever feel at home.
- P feels he can easily fit into the role required of the world he's in but there are moments of reflection when he's obviously out of place, especially when he realises he's in a room full of white people. He feels he can use people's assumptions about him to his advantage and even be playful with these experiences. He finds that his accent gains him more acceptance here.
- P recites a half-remembered quote about 'let everywhere be like home, but let nowhere be a strange place' but does not elaborate on its meaning to him. It leaves the possible impression that this would be a desirable state for P to realise but that it is not his experience at present.

6. Identities as constructions and givens

- P proposes a gradation of the ingredients of his identity as first his faith, and second or third his native national identity, saying this reveals it is very important to him. However he struggles with the fact that he has not pursued learning the language or other cultural aspects of this identity.
- P wonders if he is being 'hypocritical' by not increasing his connection with this aspect of his identity, saying that he has really only picked out the best parts of this culture to identify with. The suggestion is that P is concerned he might be taking this identity superficially, and of necessity mixed up with his British way of life and western values.
- P feels he's not really had enough exposure to his homeland to be ingrained in it and remains in a kind of 'honeymoon' phase. However, he

is certain he would not want to lose this connection or this identity, it would be like losing not only a part of himself, but his whole identity. P cannot imagine what he would be without this, as he feels he cannot claim to be English, white, or British, he would lose his sense of self.

- P feels it would not have made a difference to his feelings if he'd been born in the UK rather than his original country since he'd still have that identity since it's both a cultural and a racial identity. P regrets that his parents emphasised integration rather than maintaining the ethnic culture, as many other parents did with their children. He also has not made the effort but still hopes to. For P this is partly encompassed in a longing to belong back there, in his original homeland and he feels this may never happen.

7. Two senses of home

- P uses the word home in two ways, his physical home is in England but his 'real' home is his ancestral home. He almost wants to call his home country is 'spiritual home' and I suggest that his soul feels at home in his native land and he takes a deep sigh and agrees. He says that his native home gives him his identity so it has a special quality that his home in England does not have, it's just where he lives.

8. Imagining fulfilling longing to return

- P experiences his longing for his home country as a positive yearning, whether it's fulfilled or not. He says he does not want to return there now as he's got the rest of his life and he believes it will happen eventually.
- P has wondered what his life might have been like if his parents had not taken him to the UK. He remarks on how different it would have been and for some reason emphasises what he would have lost, experiences and opportunities he would have missed out on.
- P describes the imagined life he didn't have as less complex, simpler, and slower than the one in the UK. As he thinks of this he reconsiders that maybe he does want that other life now rather than later, but then decides he would like both. His ideal would be to live half of the year in each place.
- If P has children he definitely would want to raise them in his home country, at least in their infancy. It is not clear whether this is a reversal of his parent's action or a repetition of it. P was in his homeland until the age of 5. He feels it is a much better place to raise children, which may mean at least, that at some point in the future P will make the same sacrifice as his parents by leaving his life behind to start again for the sake of his children.

9. Indebtedness and guilt (mostly in reference to contributing to his homeland)

- There is a sense in which P displays indebtedness to his parents and to his homeland. Both have made sacrifices that he seems to feel he needs

to repay. His indifference regarding the civil war in his homeland is something he feels he must compensate for now by making a positive contribution there.

- P's indifference to the war and opposition to the nationalist fighters has evolved into support for the struggle as he's aged. His struggle to find his identity has sensitised him to the Tamil struggle and he now even fantasises of joining the fight for his people's freedom.
- P hopes he might have something positive to offer his countrymen by returning to offer psychological expertise when he has qualified. He longs to make a contribution in order to belong more and to make up for his previous indifference.
- This feels like a scary goal to P at the moment but it would be some years away and would require steps of learning the language and finishing his training. P holds this future quite lightly, feeling unsure of what life may bring and is willing to call it a fantasy at present.
- P's desire to make amends for his previous indifference is not related to any outside pressure, it is purely internal and seems related to his growing identification with this homeland identity. P is conscious he did not care about what happened to his people during that time, those who were killed, and he doesn't like that in himself.

10. Similarity and belonging

- P believes that people have a deep innate attraction to the similar, which contradicts many of the other participants in the study. He knows he belongs to the Tamil race and it gives him a kind of global belonging and that's important to P for some reason. He hasn't been able to formulate clear answers to why this is important or why his identity remains so linked to his country of origin.
- For P, sometime the similarity he feels here in Britain disappears when he turns around and sees he's the only non-white, he's different. At the same time P recognises there are different levels of similarity. On the surface he has a more in common with the friends he has grown up with here, and he has racial appearance in common with other Tamils. But the similarity he feels with other Tamils is also a deeper connection, perhaps it's evolutionary, or genetic but in any case there is a deep and crucial undercurrent that P feels he wants to belong to.

11. Travel as a way of testing independence from parents

- P currently lives with his parents but he lived in NY for 2 years, feeling he really needed to get away, to leave home in order to prove he could live in a foreign country. It was a test for P, to replace the test of leaving for university, and being independent, which P ended up feeling he had failed. Taking that step seemed to have symbolic significance for P so he had to find another way of doing it.
- Although P was not financially independent while living abroad and travelling, he felt he passed the test of living independently and coping in

a foreign land. For some reason P really needed to know he could do that. He feels he came of age when he was abroad in NY.

- P enjoys travelling and has travelled extensively but what he enjoys about travel was not taken up as a topic by him.

12. Feelings of the interview

- 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.

"Marta"

GM1 -OK, so could you begin by relating the circumstances of leaving home?

P1 - What do you mean by circumstances?

GM2 - Just, when it happened, how it happened, where you went?

P2 - Alright. I was 19, I had just matriculated from Grammar School. Felt absolutely on my own. Left mum, dad and sister and the dog at home. I came to London, went to the hotel call Crossroads in Baker Street, which made everybody laugh and I didn't know why, but it there was a TV series called 'Crossroads.' Stayed there for a while and then eventually rented a flat, and went back home once, although I already decided I was going to live here and just came back. So that was it. So what did I come for first time? It was a short training course. Mum and I did a deal, or I don't know, actually I think she pushed me. I was always a very good student, but then I started modelling and I decided I was going to become a legend, not an actress but a actress, and I wanted to study that. Originally I wanted to do psychology I think, but she wanted me to go out and do something that was going to enable me to become a business person like everybody else in the family, people who get themselves involved with academic stuff, or can't be poor, that was the idea. So, I was enrolled to study economics which I didn't want to do, but I had a place at university. Then did all this modelling and then had a turbulent relationship with a boyfriend, one man who even hit me once, and it was to protect me from all of that she, she did a deal with me, she said if you want to go to London, why don't you go and do a practical course which she needed for her business, she needed the documentation, I basically did a course in beauty therapy, when I was here, so that was the idea, that I'd go away for 3 months, and then while I was here I enrolled to study drama, and that proved that I didn't have a personality, so I did that. Then I realised I was going to have a problem staying so I got married out of convenience to an Englishman, with whom I was having a relationship, but he was ten years older and I never really meant to, it wasn't ... saying all these things at once.

GM3 - Can I just ask, because suddenly at the age of 19 you decided to come to London?

P3 - Yes.

GM4 - You could have as easily just stayed at home and done something there?

P4 - I had no problems at home, no adversity, no, my mum saw the adversity in this turbulent relationship that I formed to this man, but I didn't, in fact if anything, my life was pretty charmed. I was doing well at school, and then there was the glamour of modelling, in a small town, I come from a small town. I couldn't have basically done anything I wanted to in that small space, but I don't think that I found it that small then, I didn't think of it as that small. I would have been OK there.

GM5 - So if it hadn't been for that relationship you could have just stayed?

P5 - Well I was OK with the relationship too, it was just I got hit once..... but I did split up with him effectively, but it was kind of, my mum meddling, and then while I was here I made something out of it.

GM6 -So what was it like coming here? From a small town, and you didn't feel the need to leave really, you just suddenly found yourself here?

P6 - Yes, [city name] isn't a small town, it's a but it's not, you know, it's not comparable in any way. But that was OK too, everything was always OK, there were lots of American students in that hotel so I didn't get a sense of what the British would be like, we were all still foreigners, and students as well, and I just remember trying to make a cup of tea for people, but I was always making it cold because I didn't realise you had to wait for the kettle to boil, I just put the button on and I thought it was ready. We didn't have things like that. I came from the Eastern Block, and then Carnaby Street and Portobello Road, second-hand markets were such a novelty. Most of that

stuff was unknown to me. And then some women tried to kiss me as well, the world opened, punks, or something, just, but I took it all in my stride, and took all the knocks, I was trying to make a career as a model, and to a degree I succeeded, but not as fast as I wanted to make it. I got a lot of rejection, but suddenly I was in this big place with lots of complications. What was the question?

GM7 - Just wondering what it was like when you got here? It sounds like it went very smoothly?

P7 - Yes.

GM8 - So you stayed for 3 years and did the beauty course?

P8 -. Not 3 years, 3 months.

GM9 - Three months.

P9 - Yes, I did that.

GM10 - And then you decided to stay for 3 years, is that right?

P10 - Then, I think I decided to stay, then, just went one push, a big ... bag, they charged me excess luggage, which was too big to move, and make home here. I then stayed to do this other course, so I was able stay while I was a drama student, and I even started, I did this, I discovered, did waitressing work to get some money, because I liked that as well. And then I decided that I actually quite like it here, but I didn't have the permit, but just one evening this man came along as I was coming out of a club some journalist picked me up, gave me a lift home, I lifted my hand, I wanted a cab, but he tried to, it was really kind of charm, no danger, then he called for his friend to come along, and that is my husband, and I'm talking to him, took me back home to meet my parents and friends, then married him, but it was all so easy. Apart from having to go through all this modelling agency, and being told I'm too short. Suddenly, I had this princess like life at home.

GM11 - So what was it like, I mean, it sounds like something happened when you got here that you really looked for ways to stay?

P11 - [Long Pause] What made me stay? If I was going to leave, there is this idea that you leave the Eastern Block for some reason. My dad had an international career because he spoke lots of languages, and he was often, he ended up with a foreign company, but living at home, because he never wanted to leave home, but there was an ambition that we would be sent off to the West for some crazy reason.

GM12 - Did that happen to everybody in your family?

P12 - No, my sister is firmly rooted at home.

GM13 - So you're the only one?

P13 - I'm the only one, yes. Well, there's only two of us. If you can, you do. If you can, I know lots of people who's parents could afford to but who didn't do it because it's scary, I hear, but why was I not scared?

GM14 - Why were you not scared and why did you stay?

P14 - I don't know. And now, when I look now at the Crossroads Hotel, I feel I would be lonely now, if this place is really like that, everybody was kind of uprooted from their family and put there, and it was temporary, and I was friendly with this American girl, and she went to Paris for the weekend and borrowed money, and I never saw her again. Even things like that.

GM15 - At that time it didn't matter for some reason?

P15 - Yes, it didn't matter. I just thought, oh God, why did she have to do that? God, it sounds naïve. And then somebody else who borrowed my clothes, and I never saw her again. These kind of things don't happen in a smaller place necessarily. Nothing really bothered me too much.

GM16 - It looks like you kind of wonder about that? Why was that the case?

P16 - Why was that the case? (pause) I just trusted everybody who came along.

GM17 - Are you saying that in some way you kind of assumed the same kind of, although there were huge differences as you remarked upon, about things in London that you didn't have back home in [], but I'm wondering if in some way you assumed people were the same here, you could trust them? In some way you needed them to be the same?

P17 - I think people are the same everywhere.

GM18 - Although, you've just been talking about how people were different?

P18 - But as I said, I thought this is just rubbish because, I lent a pair of shoes to a friend in Zagreb just before I left and I never saw them again. And I lent a piece of fur to my boyfriend here, who was from Zagreb and he disappeared ...

GM19 - So you came. You were OK about coming, is that right?

P19 - Yes.

GM20 - Unlike your sister, who seemed quite firmly at home, you were quite happy to be uprooted in that way. You came to London, and you then, if I understood you correctly, you kind of looked for ways to stay? Do another course? To get married? Why was that? What was it about being here that you wanted to actually stay here?

P20 - Yes, yes. Something about the language. If I wanted to go anywhere else and not stay in that one place I was going to move, then I had to move to an English speaking country. The United States is too far away kind of, and Canada didn't count. So the logical place was for me to actually stay here. And I don't know why the language is so important, but there's something really difficult about my own language, even now, because I've adapted my mouth to this language, it's hard for me to speak C..., it's a much harder thing to speak, but it's taken me all these years to get this far and now I've got to know where to go.

GM21 - So it was either here or Croatia?

P21 - Yes, there was nowhere else..... and I studied other languages, and my mum said, why don't you go to Vienna and then we'll be so close by, a few hours in the car, and we can come and see you. Because then she assumed I wouldn't stay there, in [] (home). So she would say, why, it was as if I wanted to get away from that, I didn't, I just liked it here. I suppose I just liked it here.

GM22 - What did you like about it here?

P22 - It was to do with the language, and the way it was spoken. Cleanly.

GM23 - That was that way of pronouncing?

P23 - I like pronouncing the language, yes.

GM24 - What did you like so much about that?

P24 - It seemed so easy and easy ..., kind of fluent, and it's nice to hear, and it's comfortable. My language sounds like a struggle. It's a struggle to make a sentence, it's beautiful but

GM25 - So after being here, realising you liked it, realising one thing you liked was the language, what was it like to go home, again? Because you went home at least once?

P25 - Yes, I went home twice or three times a year then. What was it like to go back home? I was beginning to think I'd left, like it didn't have what I liked here. Now of course, it seems like a lot more. (long pause – emotional) Now I have a seven year old daughter, she says 'I just love Croatia', she's half English, half Croatian, and I ask why and she said, I don't know mommy, it's the smells and sounds, and I just love everything, it's clean, and it's sunny and I love the language and the way it just comes out, and you see what I liked about this is it's kind of, controlled and measured and appropriate. I've been so fed up with the number one in a group always holding all the guns and the fire and ignorance and the naivety, and all this shit that is contained behind this well spoken, fluid language. Beautiful. I can see through it now. I swear a lot, like I'm trying to shock or get the other to be the same.

GM26 - So now the difference that at first was so attractive is difficult?

P26 - Well, I stick out now I think. I'm glad I do, I don't want to be like, like that, measured (long pause).

GM27 - So what's it like for you when you go home?

P27 - It's very difficult. The worst is the family dynamics, and it's just really tiring, it's lovely with my sister, but it's difficult with my mum. Dad died six years ago, I think it's 17 years now, once I was there for almost four or five months, then my dad had an accident and then survived for another 7 years I think, but I spent quite some time at home nursing him with my mum and my sister and my then husband came, he was very close to my family. He liked all those things about that home that I appreciate now much more, and yet didn't then. It's not difficult, it's very difficult, it's very difficult. It's as if, mum is scared of me, it's as if she doesn't know what I'm going to say next, she now knows what I'm doing all the time, so she can control me in some way, or she knows me so she can get into my thoughts. She had a problem with that before, because months would go by and we wouldn't speak to each other. But it's difficult, it's very difficult. It's like I want to achieve something with them, my family, and it's getting hard every time.

GM28 - Do you know what that is?

P28 - What I want? I don't know. (pause, emotional) I would like to put them in a room, one by one, for an hour, with no interruptions, but life intrudes so much there, and it's as if, I feel, my mum, purposefully arranges it in such a way that quiet moments between her and me don't happen. Her and I, now even thinking of that, ... language. Can I get a tissue (laughs).

GM29 - Are you saying that, what does that mean? (responding to gesture, Laughs) Are you saying that what you like, this thing you haven't achieved in your family yet, is to kind of, have a certain kind of time between you and them, each one of them?

P29 - Yes, well my mum really. I had that with my sister.

GM30 - OK.

P30 - And I go away, I go away back home, here, and my relationship with her is good, and it's easy to say goodbye. So, with mum, it's just as if she's trying to avoid it. And of course, I loved my mother, I was 19 and she said she spent nights in bed really worried about me and missing me and stuff, and then she had to cut me off in a way, she said that's how she deals with it. And already I'm talking to my daughter about her not leaving the country.

GM31 - Her not leaving the country?

P31 - Yes.

GM32 - You don't want her to?

P32 - No. I didn't want.

GM33 - It sounds like between you and your mother, the leaving, the adjusting was quite easy for you, but quite painful for her?

P33 - Yes. Yes. And now she seems to be the strong one, or she seems to be the one avoiding us meeting really, not physically, I'm always invited to be in the space but she'll be busy, too busy cooking dinner, lots of people, and her husband who is present, I don't seem to relax (pause) my mother.

GM34 - Well, it makes me wonder a little bit about when you were younger, before you left, how was it then?

P34 - Between me and her?

GM35 - Yes.

P35 - (pause) I think my mum is somebody who has very involved relationships with people and I felt I was, I had one like that because when I was very little, but then we grew out of it, happily. Cause I can take but my sister then, she is now stuck with

this. She's 34 and quite dependent on mum, she took a long time to leave home and all that stuff.

GM36 - So somehow, you don't know how, but somehow, at a young age you kind of wriggled out of that kind of relationship with your mother?

P36 - Yes.

GM37 - And you were able to leave quite easily?

P37 - Yes.

GM38 - And now you're coming back and wanting to meet her in a different way, it sounds like, a different kind of relationship?

P38 - Yes, yes, than the one in which she, I don't know, yes, yes.

GM39 - Can I just ask, as you were growing up, you were going to school and stuff, did you and your friends feel like it was part of the culture in some ways that people would leave, just go to the West if they could. Some would be encouraged to, is that right?

P39 - That would be the, the leaning would be towards that, not many people did it.

GM40 - OK. And as you were growing up was the expectation of you and your friends that you'd probably stay, make your home there, and have families or whatever, and careers there?

P40 - No, no I don't know what they expected of me. I suppose just not for me to become an academic.

GM41 - So it makes me wonder why you, why out of your family and maybe your friends, why did you end up leaving? [Phone rings in background]

P41 - Why did I do it? I was a privileged girl, that is a bit shameful in a Communist country, a Socialist country.

GM42 - But why would you leave that?

P42 - I don't know. At that Crossroad Hotel I slept with a draught coming over to my head, and my dad came to see me and he said, Jesus Christ child, you're stupid, go and get a flat somewhere else, what are you doing, and I said, oh, but it's OK and there is people and they make me breakfast. Why did I leave? I don't know why I left. My pictures were, week after week, in this magazine at one point, I had a very short modelling life, I had a set of wonderfully intelligent friends, I don't know why I left. I think I just ended up here. It's nothing to do with choice or.

GM43 - You ended up here, and yet you ended up staying?

P43 - I ended up staying.

GM44 - There's at least two choices there.

P44 - Right. I ended up coming because the opportunity presented itself, so I took it. Why would I not take it? Why would I not take it? I'd studied English since I was 3. Why would I not come somewhere to speak it and see what that's like? I wouldn't make sense not to take it. So the question is why was I not scared?

GM45 - Well, I guess I'm wondering again about, did everyone study English?

P45 - They did from when they were 9.

GM46 - And all those people looked for ways to come to England or would have come if they'd been offered?

P46 - If they could. Those who could leave home. (pause)

GM47 - I want to run something past you, and you tell me if it makes any sense to you or if it's just nonsense. One thing is you spoke about your father learning different languages and I'm wondering if there was something in your upbringing that had this flavour of the outside world, as a possibility?

P47 - Yes, well, yes, that's a very strong possibility.

GM48 - A very strong possibility?

P48 - In fact, almost as a must, you mustn't be an academic but you must, right, you should, you should, you should leave.

GM49 - And your wriggling out of your mother's symbiotic relationship it sounds like, enabled you to take advantage of that should? You actually, not only should you leave, but you were able to leave?

P49 - She pushed me.

GM50 - She actually pushed you? (pause)

P50 - She wasn't planning on me staying necessarily, I don't think, the plan got wrong, because the plan didn't work out because she did say why not Vienna, but why Vienna.

GM51 - So she initially pushed, you know, really encouraged you to go abroad, but she also wanted you a bit closer, is that right?

P51 - Well, by making me do that course, maybe she thought I was going to come back and do the job. Because I was ready to enrol to this kind of, film, I'd prepared myself, I was going to get in, and most of my friends had studied there already, and their boyfriends, and she did everything she could to get me not, you know, that scared her, so also being a good girl, got into study economics as well, and I thought bugger that, I don't want to do this, so I wriggled out of the situation. I gave up film studies but I also gave up conforming to study economics. Doing what my mum wanted me to do. So the whole thing has just been dancing around me, and she did it with the best intentions. (Emotional. Long Pause). That's why I say I found myself here, and I made the best out of it, but I don't know. I didn't lie in my bed thinking I'll go to London, become an actress. I was just always making the best I could out of, never to doubt the field of possibilities. I was sitting in her salon, you know, mum had a sun bed and stuff, which was quite a thing 17 years ago in Croatia, and this photographer, professional photographer came to take pictures of it, and he saw me there, I was only 18, 19, and started to take pictures of me, and then asked my mother if it would be OK for me to use your daughter. So, she kind of, thought you know, of course yes, but I made something out of that, just sitting there within her, I don't know, a chicken hushed by mother hen quite a lot. (Pause). And then I got here and did nothing but study ever since then. OK.

GM52 - So, when you think back to leaving home, why do you think you really left?

P52 - (emotional, long pause) I was sent out.

GM53 - I didn't understand that.

P53 - I was sent off.

GM54 - So you left because it was what your mother wanted?

P54 - Yes, it fitted with my mum's feeling.

GM55 - So you could have just as happily, or even more happily, stayed?

P55 - Hmmmm. And my mum had visions like that, of forever moving out.

GM56 - Visions of what?

P56 - Yes, my dad had a very successful career, my sister's a judge, mum made her. And I'm still here. I don't think she meant to do it. But that doesn't answer your question.

GM57 - Well, I think it does. It sounds like you left because that's what your mother wanted for you? But once you got here, it sounds like you kind of took hold of the reins a bit?

P57 - A bit. (pause) But when I was learning, it was all very prescribed, it was a struggle actually. I came here saying my life has been charmed, but it's been a bit of a struggle. (emotional, long pause) I got rid of the reins, five years ago when I asked my mum for the last piece of advice and she gave me the wrong answer and I knew what was the right answer. But by then I was 23.

GM58 - Can I ask another thing about leaving home, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, and you mentioned some of this, but when you reflect upon all that, those 17 years, what's it been like for you?

P58 – (long pause) Hard, actually. An hour ago I wouldn't have said this, but it's been so (Pause) a woman client, in the group actually said the foreigners who came here to study, it's easy for the locals, they know where to go, they know all the good universities, they know what they're doing. Everything is such a struggle because you don't know, she ended up in Edmonton on the wrong course, in that sense. All in all it has been really hard, but I didn't come to any harm, and nobody helped me. It's hard to forge forward with a force with which I probably would have done at home.

GM59 - What makes it harder here?

P59 – Well, you just don't know, only now do I have a sense of having a map, of having a map of what's what, kind of thing, what is available, what are the possibilities here. It's still as if I have this whole place I know

GM60 - So you're saying what has been hard is the not knowing this place, the unfamiliar way that things work, or that sort of thing?

P60 - Yes, not knowing what else, not having the whole list of things.

GM61 - Again, having kind of narrowed possibilities?

P61 - Yes, not knowing what openings are there. And yet now I'm so obsessive in knowing, you know, I know that there are three colleges in London, I'm not interested in it but I know it, and I can point people in the direction in which there are methods I'm a mess.

GM62 - What does that give you?

P62 – It gives me the truth, better, that when I chose my college most others and I knew about other orientations, maybe that's what's slowing me down, it's not me being a stranger or foreigner, it's me not wanting to be it, me wanting to know it all before I begin. (pause) So, are you still asking what it's been like?

GM63 - Yes.

P63 - I've bumbled along.

GM64 - Bumbled along in what way?

P64 - It's a bit like you know, everything is OK and I make the best out of whatever, I have been with such a huge diversity of people and men, partners, I've had two husbands now, and one person that I lived with long-term here, lots of men, but they are the kind of people that you wouldn't put in the same room together. I don't think that local girls do that, bumble along like that. I think maybe I'm naïve, or I don't know, I'm not judging anybody by anything, I just take things as they are. Being a foreigner is making me even more naïve than I would be at home, and open to anything. It's just very odd that I went from that man and his type of friends, to this man and his type of friends. It doesn't, they would never mix.

GM65 - Are they completely different worlds, it sounds like?

P65 - Yes.

GM66 - Does that attract you?

P66 - Difference? Yes, actually I'm thinking now [tape changes over] I'm missing out, I'm not learning, I kind of, I got stuck, maybe bumbling along is not quite bumbling along.

GM67 - No, it sounds like there might be something purposeful in that, bumbling?

P67 - Yes. What am I missing out now?

GM68 - Well, that kind of leads to one of the last things I want to ask you, and that's do you ever think of returning home?

P68 – Hmmm. I bet everybody cries here? I bet everybody cries at this?

GM69 - (Laughs) it can be an emotional thing.

P69 - Do they? Do they? But now I feel I couldn't do this to myself again. What I done then, I don't know that if I hadn't gone back, I haven't got a map, who would I be, I don't even speak the language anymore. (emotional) It's a very small place, it's a nice

life, going for coffees, its like Vienna, I'm quite happy on the ladder, we've got a house, but life is tough, and nobody speaks good English around me anymore, mostly refugees and foreigners live round my house

GM70 - So, does that mean that you don't think there's a chance of that?

P70 - It's tough. Its an idea that I always reject.

GM71 - But an idea that does come to you?

P71 - Oh yes. The sounds, the birds, the mix of birds, sometimes I hear them here, (pause, emotional) and what they capture are moments of peacefulness, I used to live in a nice part of town, and walk to school through town, and up another hill, and I liked going to the school. So I did like, I liked, I was happy.

GM72 - Why do you reject the thought of going back?

P72 - Why? It would feel like retiring then.

GM73 - Retiring?

P73 - Yes. What would I do there? Why would I go to such a small place now?

GM74 - You said earlier it wasn't that small a place?

P74 - It's when you called it small, I didn't like that (we laugh).

GM75 - But you had called it a small space, and I changed it and called it a small place?

P75 - Oh right.

GM76 - And you didn't like that. But are you saying there's nothing you could do there?

P76 - I'm saying I don't know what, I would be lost. It would be like going somewhere not knowing how to put the kettle on and not knowing how to go about doing anything. I would now feel, going there, like I never felt when I came here.

GM77 - Like you didn't feel?

P77 - Yes, I didn't feel like it, I felt, I felt it was an opening and I was welcome, I felt welcome, and now, I wouldn't feel welcome.

GM78 - So somehow coming to a strange place was quite an easy adaptation for you, although unfamiliar, and yet it was a very easy adaptation? Going back to the place you came from would be quite difficult?

P78 - Yes.

GM79 - I'm not sure I understand, what would make that so difficult in comparison to coming here?

P79 - Well, I was 19, anything was possible, I thought. And I had no experiences of being rejected by then, so I just thought if I turn up, you know, I'll be welcome, like I always have been. But now I have had some experiences of hardship, not major, but you know, being rejected occasionally. It happens. I imagined it would be so, so hard there, I would never be able to have anything?. You know, I don't know, it's like all the doors would be shut.....

GM80 - And nobody would want you?

P80 - To do anything, I just imagine myself having an isolated life, living in this big house with my mum, she lives a very isolated life, she doesn't like people much unless she can control them. So somehow, I don't know why, I have that kind of idea of my life there.

GM81 - That somehow you'd end up back in that house?

P81 - Yes.

GM82 - Going home would mean going back to your mother?

P82 - Oh yes. Where else would I go with such a nice house. It's so nice to be at my mothers. I think that all your needs are taken care of for you so when I'm there I turn into an incapable person, I can't even think. And yet I see myself as somebody whose

able to work around situations quite easily, but there my hands are tied behind my back, but I would go back to my mum's house, yes.

GM83 - What would happen if you did that?

P83 - I'd feel dead.

GM84 - You'd feel dead?

P84 - All the doors would be shut for me

GM85 - So there's a very strong motivation for staying away?

P85 - (Pause) Yes.

GM86 - So it's about staying alive?

P86 - Alive, as in vibrant. But if my mum was dead, if I try and imagine that, it doesn't change things very much. An awful sadness at the loss of her, of course. Still I would somehow ... enclosed in that house, in a prison. I think the house is quite significant, it's a very special house on a hill and, we moved in there when I was two, my sister was born and she was sent off and it was re-done, because my mum had better ideas of how it should be built. It was a building site, and my sister was 3 months old, she was sent to her paternal grandmother for 2.5 years because that house was a building site. I was asked if I wanted to go where she was going to go and I said, no, my sister should go, protected myself from being separated from mum, and she was sent. So the house is significant. It's clearly so important to my mum.

GM87 - It's interesting that the whole idea of going home to your home culture, your home city, is absolutely linked to either going home to your mother or at least going home to that house. They can't be separated. They're one and the same.

P87 - Yes.

GM88 - And it's almost like the leaving, there's some kind of strong link between your country, your language, when you left that house, you left all that there? And when you talk about going back, I wonder what it would be like if you ended up back there, I'm wondering if in any way that's a comment on you being here?

P88 - Of course. In other words you're saying I wasn't just catapulted out, there was a personal impetus to go, well I took the opportunity, I took the chance and I went. There was an intentionality there that I haven't owned up.

GM89 - A motivation towards life or something, opportunities?

P89 - (Long Pause). I came back once and mum said, there's something on television about mediocrity, and I said to my mum, I'm not mediocre am I? I was already 25 then, and she said of course you are, both of you are quite mediocre, you're more worried about putting lipsticks on and you know, shaving your legs, than, and there was some politician guy on the television, and then, my sister already had got a first at Law, which is quite difficult degree, so I looked at my sister and then at my dad and I said to him, dad, she just told me I'm mediocre, and he said the only mediocre thing in this house is your mother (Laughs), but I was so traumatised calling my I'm mediocre, I can't come to terms with it. Of course, she did it because she doesn't want me to be disappointed about it when life rejects me and teaches me that I am mediocre, I'm forced to be modest beyond what's happening. And that's why this whole house and everything, and every time I go there I become less than mediocre, mediocre would be strong. And yet I go, the last time I saw mum was looking old, I said to ... look, she's old please help her and they couldn't, she was like an old woman.

GM90 - It sounds like there's a strong tie, but not a strong attraction?

P90 - Between us?

GM91 - Well, I'm thinking in terms of going home, is there a very strong tie, to home, to your mother, to the house?

P91 - Yes.

GM92 - But not a strong attraction?

P92 - No, and the two are separate, different, different. Yes. Yes. I know from experience that there's nothing good there for me really. I've just got to go, and always go and come back to England[goes to get tissues].

GM93 - I want to just ask one last thing when you're ready. I'm just wondering what it feels like to talk about these things?

P93 - It feels great. It feels overwhelming, (emotional) but it also feels liberating because why have I not thought this before? I always knew this actually, I knew, but it's really good having somebody else saying it's an attraction, not attraction but there is a pull, a tie, and I always knew that my leaving and staying here was so linked with my relationship with my mum. Nobody picked up on it before. Somehow not very existential. (Laughs)

GM94 - (Laughs) But it sounds like you're saying that in some way, you knew it?

P94 - Yes. I do hope it will fit with your interview. It actually feels much better. I can relate to my mum more easily, having made all of this quite so explicit. I think what was most useful was you saying I want to relate to her in some other way, maybe that I'm away doesn't need to be quite so abusive I'd quite like to make it, I would like to be in charge, and she is avoiding that. Because I'm fighting back.

GM95 - It makes me wonder if you found that other way, so that there could be the two of you, I mean so it would really work, if that would open up the possibility of you returning home, whether that could actually be a choice then, whether you chose it or not?

P95 - But I can't believe that. I can't see that, I can't imagine, but interesting. Then definitely not, when I come home, before, when I used to go home and do some work, and the night before I go back home to London, I had this job in London with a photographer, and we were going for a drink and he said I can't believe you, this is your last evening here before going home, so then I stopped going out and I lost contact with everybody, I just needed to go home and be whatever my mum wanted me to be, in the house, that's why I kind of turn into this putty thing, and I'm not very good at putty, my sister is, she gets moulded my mum and then but I've resisted all the time, so it's quite aggressive between us. And the value that we had in relationship was done of honesty and openness and truth, so and yet we don't have that unless I tell her how I feel in the relationship and she takes some responsibility for it, with fits of doom, so I can't understand it.

GM96 - So talking about these things, it feels, it sounds like in some way it feels quite good, almost as a relief or something?

P96 - Yes, it's soothing actually.

GM97 - But also a bit overwhelming?

P97 - At the beginning when it started to come up, it felt shameful because, but I always knew it, but now you know it as well, so who am I when I'm so determined by my mum, and her moods, you know. I feel childlike.

GM98 - Is that OK?

P98 - Yes, but if you didn't make the right face it wouldn't have been. It's actually OK, it's OK. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

GM99 - Is there anything that we didn't touch on that you feel we should have?

P99 - Well, there's two things, either, now having done this, I will go away and then maybe a completely new set of the basis and feelings of importance are going to come up, as I have put this out, or nothing, will ever come up, because there is nothing else, this is basically it. It's very interesting, but it won't be in between I don't think.

GM100 - So you feel either you pretty completely covered everything?

P100 - Yes.

GM101 - Or else something has shifted and a whole bunch of stuff might emerge?

P101 - Yes. But for right now, it just feels like there's a full stop.

GM102 - Full stop.

P102 – Yes. Not because, I don't think I'm defensive, it's finished.

GM103 - Yes.

P103 - It feels like that.

GM104 - Either it's finished or this round has finished?

P104 – Yes, or this round has finished.

“Marta” Meaning Units

The circumstances of leaving home

1. I finished school and left for London at age 19, leaving parents, sister, dog at home, and felt absolutely on my own.
2. I didn't understand local jokes about the name of my hotel being the same as a soap opera.
3. I eventually rented a flat and returned home for a visit but had decided I was going to live here.
4. Originally I came for a short training course. I think my mom pushed me to do it.
5. I was a good student but I had started modelling and I wanted to be a legend, not just an actress, and I wanted to study that.
6. I had wanted to do psychology but she wanted me to do business like everyone else in the family.
7. Academics doesn't pay well, so I studied economics, which I didn't want to do.
8. Then I modelled, had a difficult relationship with a boyfriend, so to protect me from all that my mother asked if I wanted to do a practical course in London, for her business.
9. Once here, I studied drama and then got married so I could stay.
10. I'm saying everything at once.

Could you have easily stayed as left?

1. I had no problems I had to get away from at home. Even this relationship, my mother saw the problem not me.
2. I felt I had a charmed life, doing well at school and modelling.
3. There weren't great possibilities in my small town, but it didn't seem so small then. I would have been OK there.

What was it like here if you didn't feel the need to leave?

1. Everything was always OK.
2. In the hotel where I stayed I was with many other foreigners.
3. I didn't understand how to use many of the appliances. We didn't have those where I came from.
4. The shopping streets were such a novelty, so much was unknown to me.
5. I took it all in my stride, including the knocks, lots of complications.
6. I was trying to make it as a model, with some success but a lot of rejection, but it didn't happen fast enough.

The decision to live here

1. After the 3 month course I returned to do the drama course, with one huge bag, because I was able to stay as a student and also do some waitressing, which I enjoyed.
2. I decided I liked it here, but I didn't have a permit.
3. I met a man accidentally and eventually we married.
4. It was all so easy.

Why did you want to stay?

1. There was this notion that you should leave if you lived in the Eastern block.
2. My dad had an international career and spoke many languages, but he never wanted to leave home.
3. But for us there was the ambition we'd go off to the West. If you can, you do.
4. But my sister is firmly rooted at home.
5. Many people could but didn't because it is scary, but for some reason I was not scared.

So, why were you not scared and why did you stay?

1. I don't know. Now if I look at that hotel I think I would be lonely, we were all uprooted from our families and it was temporary there, even the relationships.
2. At the time nothing seemed to matter too much.
3. Nothing bothered me, even people borrowing things and keeping them, I was naïve.
4. I just trusted everyone who came along.
5. I think people are the same everywhere.

What was it about the place that made you want to stay?

1. Something about the language. I had to move to an English-speaking country and it was the closest.
2. I don't know why the language is so important but there's something difficult about my own language, it's hard now for me to speak my own language, make the sounds. It sounds cleanly-spoken.
3. It was either here or back home.
4. It wasn't that I wanted to get away from home, it's just that I liked it here.

The language

1. I liked pronouncing the language.
2. It seemed so easy and fluent, and it's nicer to hear than my own language.
3. It's a comfortable language, my language sounds like a struggle, beautiful, but it's a struggle to make a sentence.

How was it to go home after being here?

1. I went home 2or 3 times a year then.
2. I was beginning to think I'd left because home didn't have what I liked here but now it seems like a lot more (emotional).
3. My daughter says she loves the smells and sounds, sun, language, and everything about my home country.
4. She loves the way the language flows and I loved the language here because it was so controlled and appropriate.
5. Now I see through to all the shit behind this well spoken language.
6. I swear a lot to shock the other into being the same as me.
7. I stick out now and I'm glad. I don't want to be measured.

What's it like when you go home?

1. The family dynamics are difficult, with my mother, not my sister.
2. My father had an accident and died but I spent months nursing him with my mother and sister.
3. My husband at the time liked to visit, he appreciated the things I didn't at the time, but do now.
4. It's very difficult, as if mom is scared of me, what I will say next.
5. She wants to control me in some way, or get into my thoughts.
6. It's like I want to achieve something with my family and its getting harder each time.
7. I don't know what I want (emotional) I want to speak to them one by one for an hour without interruptions but life intrudes so much there.
8. I feel my mom purposely arranges it so we don't have quiet moments together.
9. I've achieved that with my sister but it's like my mom is trying to avoid it.
10. She spent nights worried about me when I left at 19, missing me, and she had to cut me off to deal with it. I loved her.
11. Already I'm talking to my daughter about her not leaving the country.

Family when younger

1. I had a very involved relationship with my mom, especially when I was very little.
2. My sister is now stuck with this and dependent on my mother, she took a long time to move out of home.
3. At a young age I was able to get out of that kind of relationship with her and leave quite easily.
4. Now when I go back I want to meet her in a different kind of relationship.

Why did you leave when others didn't?

1. I don't know, I left a privileged situation to sleep in a horrible hotel with a draught. My father wanted me to get a flat, be more comfortable, but I thought I was OK.
2. I don't know why I left, I had a modelling career, intelligent friends, I think I just ended up here, nothing to do with choice.
3. I came because the opportunity presented itself, why not?
4. I'd studied English so why not come to speak it and see what it's like.
5. It wouldn't make sense not to come, but why wasn't I scared?
6. Also in my family, with my father travelling and our values, the important things were not to be an academic and you should travel.
7. I think my mother pushed me.
8. It was a way of my mother controlling what I studied, I wanted to study film and she wanted me to study economics. Getting out of the situation stopped me from studying film but also economics.
9. I was doing what my mom wanted. The whole thing has just been dancing around (emotional).
10. That's why I say I found myself here and I made the best out of it, but I don't know.
11. I didn't lay in bed dreaming of London, I was just always making the best I could out of it.
12. I was like a little chick hushed by mother hen a lot.

Why do you think you really left?

1. emotional – I was sent out.
2. I left because it was what my mother wanted.
3. Once I got here I got some of my own direction, but my learning was still very prescribed, it was a struggle.
4. I came here initially saying my life has been charmed but it was a bit of a struggle actually (emotional).
5. I got rid of my mother's reins when she gave me the wrong advice some years ago, and I knew what the correct answer should have been.

What have the past 17 years been like, since leaving?

1. Hard actually. An hour ago I wouldn't have said this.
2. All in all it's been really hard. Locals don't realise how difficult it is for foreigners, not knowing anything about the place.
3. I didn't really come to any harm, and no one really helped me.
4. It's hard to push forward with the force I would have had at home.
5. Only now do I have a sense of having a map of what's here, available, what the possibilities are here. It's been difficult not knowing what's on offer here, what the openings are.
6. Now I'm obsessed with knowing things, I know things I'm not even interested in.
7. Knowing that much gives me a better sense of the truth, what choices I have.
8. Maybe what slows me down isn't being a stranger, its me not wanting to be one. Me wanting to know it all before I begin.

9. It's like I've really just bumbled along.
10. I make the best out of things and have been with a huge diversity of people, like my partners are all very different.
11. I don't think local girls bumble along like that.
12. Being a foreigner makes me more naïve than I would be even at home, being open to anything.
13. It just seems odd I went from one man and his type of friends to the next, who is so different, they'd never mix.
14. I don't like it if I'm not learning, like I'm missing out, maybe bumbling along isn't quite so directionless. I'm looking for what I'm missing out now.

Do you ever think of returning home?

1. I bet everyone cries here, do they?
2. Now I feel I couldn't do that to myself again.
3. What I did then, I haven't got a map now, who would I be, I don't even speak the language anymore (emotional).
4. It's small, a nice life, it's like Vienna.
5. I'm quite happy on the ladder here, we have a house but life is tough.
6. No one speaks good English around me anymore, mostly refugees and foreigners.
7. Going back is an idea I always reject.
8. But it's an idea that comes to me.
9. There are the sounds of birds, sometimes I hear them here (emotional) and they capture moments of peacefulness.
10. I used to live in a nice part of town, a nice walk through town to school, I was happy.
11. I reject the thought of going back because it would be like retiring.
12. What would I do there, why would I go to such a small place now?
13. I don't like it when you call it small, but I can.
14. I would be lost there now, I wouldn't know how to put on the kettle, like when I came here first.
15. If I went there I'd feel something I never felt coming here. Here I felt an opening, welcome, there I wouldn't feel welcome.
16. This strange place was an easy adaptation, going back would be difficult.
17. When I came here I was young, anything was possible. I had not experiences of rejection. I expected to be welcome.
18. Now I've known hardship, being rejected occasionally and now I imagine it would be so hard there and I wouldn't be able to have anything.
19. It's like all the doors would be shut.
20. I just imagine it as me being isolated in this big house with my mom, I don't know why.
21. If I went back I'd end up back in that house, with her. Where else would I go with such a nice house?
22. All your needs are taken care of there, so I become totally incapable, my hands are tied behind my back.
23. If I did return there I'd feel dead, all the doors would be shut for me.
24. So there's a very strong motivation to stay away.

The house

1. Staying alive as in vibrant.
2. If I imagine my mom dead, it doesn't change too much, I'd still feel enclosed in that house, like a prison.
3. The house is quite significant. It's a special house on a hill.
4. We moved in when I was 2 and completely renovated it. My younger sister was sent to my grandmothers during this work but I stayed, was old enough to not be separated from my mom.
5. The house is clearly important to my mother too.
6. Going back to my home culture is linked completely to going back to that house, they cannot be separated.

Why I went

1. there was a personal impetus to go that I haven't owned up to, that I took the opportunity.
2. My mother called me mediocre once and it really traumatised me. I can't come to terms with that.
3. She did it to make me modest and to cope with rejection.
4. So every time I go to that house I feel less than mediocre now.
5. Last time I saw my mother she was like an old woman.
6. There is a strong tie to her and the house, but not a strong attraction.
7. I know from experience that there's nothing good for me there.
8. I still have to go, go and return here again.

What does it feel like to talk about all this?

1. It feels great, overwhelming (emotional), liberating and wondering why have I not got this before?
2. I always knew this actually, but it's good having someone else see the pull and I always knew my leaving was linked to my relationship with my mother. No one picked up on it before, not very existential.
3. I feel I can relate to my mom easier now that I've made this explicit.
4. It was most useful to hear I want to relate to her in another way. I'd like to be in charge and she's avoiding that.
5. I can't imagine things ever changing enough that going back would become a possible choice for me.
6. When I used to go home I just needed to be whatever my mom wanted from me, in the house, losing contact with friends.
7. I turn into puty and I'm not good at that, I've resisted that all the time, so it's quite aggressive between us.
8. The value of our relationship was it was honest and open and true. We don't have that unless I tell her how I feel in the relationship and she takes some responsibility for it.
9. Talking about this feels soothing.

10. There was some shame as I realised how shaped I am by my mom. I feel childlike. I'm sure I'm not the only one.
11. I feel that either this is the whole story or that this is just the beginning and a whole new set of revelations will come up later, a whole new round, but for now there's a full stop.

Arriving in London

1. I left everyone and arrived feeling absolutely alone. I didn't feel there were any problems I had to escape from at home. I felt I had a charmed life.
2. I don't know why I left a privileged situation to sleep in a horrible hotel with a draught. My father wanted me to get a flat, be more comfortable, but I thought I was OK.
3. I don't know why I left, I had a modelling career, intelligent friends, I think I just ended up here, nothing to do with choice.
4. I came because the opportunity presented itself, why not? It wouldn't make sense not to come, but why wasn't I scared?
5. I didn't understand local jokes or how to use things (appliances) we didn't have at home.
6. I was sent by my mother to do a short training course for her business, partly to separate me from an abusive boyfriend and to prevent me studying film back home.
7. The hotel was full of other foreigners and the friendships we formed were temporary.
8. The shopping and second-hand clothes shops were a real novelty.
9. Once here I decided I wanted to stay so I studied drama and then got married.
10. I was young, everything was always OK, I took it all in my stride, including the knocks, lots of complications.
11. After the training course I returned home briefly, knowing I wanted to come back for the drama course, then returned and planned to stay. I decided I liked it here but needed ways to stay. I met a man, got married, it was all so easy.

Conflicts over studies and direction

1. I was a good student but my interests and what my family wanted for me were different.
2. I wanted to be a legend, a model and actress, and wanted to study film and psychology.
3. My mother wanted me to study business like everyone else in the family and academics were frowned upon, no money, so I studied economics, which I didn't like.
4. In London I tried to make it as a model but it didn't happen quickly enough for me.

Reflecting on the decision to stay

4. There weren't great possibilities in my small town, but it didn't seem so small then. I would have been OK there.
5. There was this notion that you should leave if you lived in the Eastern block.

6. My dad had an international career and spoke many languages, but he never wanted to leave home. But for us there was the ambition we'd go off to the West. If you can, you do.
7. I'd studied English so why not come to speak it and see what it's like.
8. Also in my family, with my father travelling and our values, the important things were not to be an academic and you should travel.
9. But my sister is firmly rooted at home.
10. Many people could but didn't because it is scary, but for some reason I was not scared.
11. I don't know why I stayed. Now if I look at that hotel I think I would be lonely, we were all uprooted from our families and it was temporary there, even the relationships.
12. At the time nothing seemed to matter too much.
13. Nothing bothered me, even people borrowing things and keeping them, I was naïve.
14. I just trusted everyone who came along.

The English language

5. Something about the language made me want to stay. I wanted to move to an English-speaking country and it was the closest. It was either here or back home.
6. I don't know why the language is so important but there's something difficult about my own language, it's hard now for me to speak my own language, make the sounds.
7. It wasn't that I wanted to get away from home, it's just that I liked it here.
8. I liked pronouncing the language. English sounds cleanly-spoken.
9. It seemed so easy and fluent, and it's nicer to hear than my own language.
10. It's a comfortable language, my language sounds like a struggle, beautiful, but it's a struggle to make a sentence.
11. My daughter loves the way my native language flows and I loved the language here because it was so controlled and appropriate (emotion).
12. Now I see through to all the shit behind this well spoken language.
13. I swear a lot to shock the other into being the same as me.
14. I stick out now and I'm glad. I don't want to be measured.
15. No one speaks good English around me anymore, mostly refugees and foreigners.

Feelings when visiting, related to family relationships

1. I went home to visit 2 or 3 times a year then.
2. The family dynamics are difficult with my mother, not my sister, and my father died.
3. My husband at the time liked to visit, he appreciated the things I didn't at the time, but do now.
4. It's like I want to achieve something with my family and it's getting harder each time.

5. I don't know what I want (emotional) I want to speak to them one by one for an hour without interruptions but life intrudes so much there. I've achieved that with my sister but it's like my mom is trying to avoid it.
6. I feel my mom purposely arranges it so we don't have quiet moments together, as if she's scared of me, what I might say. It's very difficult.
7. She wants to control me in some way, or get into my thoughts.
8. She spent nights worried about me when I left at 19, missing me, and she had to cut me off to deal with it. I loved her.
9. I was beginning to think I'd left because home didn't have what I liked here but now it seems like a lot more (emotional).
10. It's very moving for me when my daughter says she loves the smells and sounds, sun, language, and everything about my home country. Already I'm talking to my daughter about her not leaving the country.

Significance of relationship with mother

5. I had a very involved relationship with my mom, especially when I was very little.
6. My sister is now stuck with this and dependent on my mother, she took a long time to move out of home.
7. At a young age I was able to get out of that kind of relationship with her and leave quite easily.
8. Now when I go back I want to meet her in a different kind of relationship.
9. I think my mother pushed me to come here.
10. It was a way of my mother controlling what I studied, I wanted to study film and she wanted me to study economics. Getting out of the situation stopped me from studying film but also economics.
11. I was doing what my mom wanted. The whole thing has just been dancing around what she wanted (emotional).
12. My mother called me mediocre once and it really traumatised me.
13. That's why I say I found myself here and I made the best out of it, but I don't know.
14. I didn't lay in bed dreaming of London, I was just always making the best I could out of it.
15. I was like a little chick hushed by mother hen a lot.
16. Last time I saw my mother she was like an old woman.

New realisations of reasons for leaving

1. I didn't leave, I was sent out (emotional).
2. I left because it was what my mother wanted. Once I got here I got some of my own direction, but my learning was still very prescribed, it was a struggle.
3. I came here to the interview initially saying my life has been charmed but it was a bit of a struggle actually (emotional).
4. I got rid of my mother's reins when she gave me the wrong advice some years ago, and I knew what the correct answer should have been.
5. I realise that there was an important personal impetus in my leaving that I haven't owned up to, that I actively took the opportunity presented.

What have the years been like since leaving?

15. I didn't really come to any harm, and no one really helped me, but it's been very hard actually. An hour ago I wouldn't have said this.
16. All in all it's been really hard. Locals don't realise how difficult it is for foreigners, not knowing anything about the place.
17. It's hard to push forward with the force I would have had at home.
18. Only now do I have a sense of having a map of what's here, available, what the possibilities are here. It's been difficult not knowing what's on offer here, what the openings are. Now I'm obsessed with knowing things, I know things I'm not even interested in.
19. Maybe what slows me down isn't being a stranger, it's me not wanting to be one. Me wanting to know it all before I begin.
20. It's like I've really just bumbled along. I don't think local girls bumble along like that.
21. I make the best out of things and have been with a huge diversity of people, like my partners are all very different.
22. Being a foreigner makes me more naïve than I would be even at home, being open to anything.
23. It just seems odd I went from one man and his type of friends to the next, who is so different, they'd never mix.
24. I don't like it if I'm not learning, like I'm missing out, maybe bumbling along isn't quite so directionless. I'm looking for what I'm missing out now.

Thoughts of returning home?

25. I bet everyone cries here, do they?
26. It's small, a nice life, it's like Vienna. I used to live in a nice part of town, a nice walk through town to school, I was happy.
27. There are the sounds of birds, sometimes I hear them here (emotional) and they capture moments of peacefulness.
28. If I went there I'd feel something I never felt coming here. Here I felt an opening, welcome, there I wouldn't feel welcome.
29. This strange place was an easy adaptation, going back would be difficult.
30. When I came here I was young, anything was possible. I had not experiences of rejection. I expected to be welcome.
31. Now I feel I couldn't do that to myself again, what I did then, I haven't got a map now, who would I be, I don't even speak the language anymore (emotional).
32. I would be lost there now, I wouldn't know how to put on the kettle, like when I came here first.
33. Now I've known hardship, being rejected occasionally and now I imagine it would be so hard there and I wouldn't be able to have anything. It's like all the doors would be shut.
34. Going back is an idea I always reject, because it would be like retiring. What would I do there, why would I go to such a small place now?
35. But it's also an idea that still occurs to me.

36. I just imagine it as me being isolated in this big house with my mom, I don't know why.
37. If I went back I'd end up back in that house, with her. Where else would I go with such a nice house? All your needs are taken care of there, so I become totally incapable, my hands are tied behind my back.
38. If I did return there I'd feel dead, all the doors would be shut for me. I know from experience that there's nothing good for me there.
39. So there's a very strong motivation to stay away, it's about staying alive, as in staying vibrant.
40. I'm quite happy on the ladder here, we have a house but life is tough.

The house

7. The house is quite significant. It's a special house on a hill.
8. We moved in when I was 2 and completely renovated it. My younger sister was sent to my grandmothers during this work but I stayed, was old enough to not be separated from my mom.
9. The house is clearly important to my mother too.
10. Going back to my home culture is linked completely to going back to that house, they cannot be separated.
11. If I imagine my mom dead, it doesn't change too much, I'd still feel enclosed in that house, like a prison.
12. The house remains tied to memories of struggles between my mother and me. Every time I go to that house I don't feel even mediocre.
13. There is a strong tie to that house and to my mother, a bond, but not an attraction. I have to go there, go and return back here.

Feelings of the interview

12. It feels great, overwhelming (emotional), liberating and wondering why have I not got these connections before?
13. I always knew there was that constant pull home and that my leaving was linked to my relationship with my mother, but it's good to have someone else see it. No one picked up on it before, not very existential.
14. I feel I can relate to my mom easier now that I've made this explicit. It was most useful to hear I want to relate to her in another way. I'd like to be in charge and she's avoiding that.
15. I can't imagine things ever changing enough that going back would become a possible choice for me.
16. When I used to go home I just needed to be whatever my mom wanted from me, in the house, losing contact with friends. I turn into puty and I'm not good at that, I've resisted that all the time, so it's quite aggressive between us.
17. The value of our relationship was it was honest and open and true. We don't have that unless I tell her how I feel in the relationship and she takes some responsibility for it.
18. Talking about this feels soothing.
19. There was some shame as I realised how shaped I am by my mom. I feel childlike. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

20. I feel that either this is the whole story or that this is just the beginning and a whole new set of revelations will come up later, a whole new round, but for now there's a full stop.

1. Original non-problematic view of leaving home and settling in London

- P left everything behind but maintained she was not escaping anything in her home experience. Her leaving originally seemed like a straightforward opportunity that there was no reason not to take. Later, P has a different view of her leaving being connected to her relationship to her mother.
- P felt everything was going well in her life, a good career and friends, a nice life in her native city, so she is not sure why she left all this behind. At times her leaving and staying away seem almost accidentally to her, in the first instance. She remarks on her lack of fear of being in such a foreign place and signifies it as an aspect of her youth, that everything was OK and taken in her stride at that time, though it would be more difficult now.
- Ostensibly, P was sent away by her mother as a method of controlling her career and relationship choices, however, P took this situation into her own hands and decided to stay and did what was necessary to make her temporary status here permanent. This suggests an active motivation on P's part, which later becomes more clear.

2. Original rationale for staying away

- P describes herself as an ambitious young person, dedicated to becoming famous, and London provided better possibilities than her home city to actualise these dreams. This was combined with the expectation that one should take advantage of any opportunity to go to the West (from Eastern Europe), though many didn't. It seems to P that staying was simply due to the fact she liked it here, not that she was getting away from anything at home, though this understanding shifts later in the interview.
- The values in P's family were positive about travel, her father having travelled a lot for his career. For some reason P had the courage to do this, whereas others often didn't, her sister for example stayed firmly rooted at home.
- P also was struggling with how her own interests, psychology and film, did not correspond to her mother's intentions for her. P's leaving and staying away seem intricately woven into some desire to break from her mother's control and pursue her own interests, which she did. Despite these motivations for leaving and staying away, P expressed doubt about what her real reasons were, as if there is something else underlying her decisions.

3. The attraction of the language

- P was attracted to the UK because she wanted to live in an English-speaking country, the options were either that or home and she'd studied English so it seemed an obvious choice.
- Language was a very important part of P wanting to stay, though she's not sure why. She liked the cleanly-spoken pronunciation of English compared to the difficult sounds of her own language. It seems easier, more fluent, controlled and appropriate, whereas her native language is a struggle and it's hard for P to even speak it now.
- P gets emotional about the loss of her own language and her devaluing of it, especially when stating that her daughter loves this language. P feels now that she can see through what lies behind well-spoken English and she purposely swears to shock other English-speakers, to disrupt the pretence, which makes P stand out as different.
- It sounds as though speaking good English was a part of fitting in here, and of leaving behind the aspects of herself that are best expressed by her foreign language. P seems almost to resent this adaptation and the loss of her native 'self'. She no longer wants to be like the others around her.
- Language seems a potent symbol for the process, the appropriations and losses implicit in P's decision to stay here. Her feelings about English and her native language seem to be shifting as she begins to appreciate again aspects of her home culture.

4. Relationship with family, especially mother

- P feels her mother wants to control her, even get into her thoughts. Her relationship was always intense with her mother though when she was younger P was able to extricate herself from her mother's control enough to leave the country.
- At the same time, P sees her leaving as complying to some extent with her mother's desires for her career and future. She feels her mother pushed her to come here though probably did not foresee the side effect that it also freed P from mother's orbit of influence. It's as if P found herself in London and took advantage of the opportunity to be self-actualising. Her sister remains controlled and dependent upon her mother.
- P's isn't sure what she wants, but she is trying to achieve a change in the quality of her relationships with her family, especially her mother. She would like uninterrupted time with her mother, to clarify something about their relationship but her feeling is that her mother is avoiding this, in fact afraid of what her daughter has to say to her.
- P remains very emotional about the tie between her leaving and her relationship to her mother. She understands that her mother had to cut off her feelings for P as a way of coping with her daughter's continued absence from home. P has already spoken to her own daughter about not leaving the country, though she already expresses a fondness for P's home country, which is very moving and meaningful for P.
- P realises during the interview that there is more to her leaving and staying away than the attractions of London. Her relationship to her mother is a significant aspect of her staying away. She describes being like a little chick that was hushed a lot by mother hen. She recalls her

mother saying P and her sister were mediocre and this felt traumatic for P as she was trying to please her mother. P's relationship with her mother is changing significantly now, she sees her as an old woman and as not knowing everything about life.

5. New realisations during the interview

- P was very explicit about the new learning she got during the interview. She realised that she didn't leave, she was sent out by her mother, it was what her mother wanted for her and she went along with it. Once in London P began to develop as self-direction, though her learning continued to be prescribed from home for a while.
- Initially P described her life as 'charmed' but by the end of the interview she was realising that in fact it has been a struggle and this felt emotional.
- It was important for P to acknowledge that there was actually a personal impetus in her leaving, previously not acknowledged. She actively took the opportunity offered and finally got rid of her mother's reigns. An important moment in this process was when P's mother gave her the wrong advice and P realised she knew what was right for her more than her mother did.

6. The experience since leaving

- P now realises the years have been a struggle. She feels that locals underestimate the difficulties of being a foreigner, especially how difficult it is not knowing about a place, the opportunities available. Only now does P feel she has enough information to navigate her new culture, she's obsessed with knowing what's available in order to make informed choices.
- P feels it's difficult to push her life forward with the momentum she could at home. She wonders if what slows her down isn't just being a foreigner, but is her not wanting to be one, and trying to know everything before beginning anything.
- P feels she has bumbled along more than local women would have. This seems partly to be due to P's openness to experiences, to making the best of things, and consequently being with a huge diversity of people, including very diverse partners. It creates a possible impression of still being directed by the environment rather than being self-directed.
- P wonders if what she's described as bumbling isn't so directionless, but is more a searching to fill in what is missing, what remains unknown about the culture. P likes to be learning and discovering as much as possible, like in the interview.

7. Rejecting thoughts of returning as returning to what was escaped from

- P expects that this section of the interview is emotional for everyone. She reflects upon how nice her life had been at home, how birdsong reminds

her of those peaceful moments. Yet she feels she'd be lost there now, unable to navigate the place like she finally can London, everything would be strange again as it was here at first.

- Coming to a strange place was an easy adaptation for P but returning home would be difficult. She expected an openness here, to be welcomed, but she would anticipate a closed reception at home, being unwelcome in some way. She feels she couldn't do that to herself again, she doesn't have a map to follow, who would she be if she returned, she feels alienated from the language even. She imagines all the doors would be shut to her.
- Although the idea of returning occurs to P, she always rejects it because it would feel like retiring from life. If she returned she'd feel dead, there's left for her there. So there's a strong motivation for staying away, it means staying alive as in vibrant. She prefers the life she has here, it's tough but she feels she's on the ladder at least.

8. Returning always linked to the house and mother

- When P imagines returning to her home culture it is intricately linked to returning to an isolated life with her mother in their big house. In that house all her needs would be taken care of, she would become incapable and helpless. Even if she imagines her mother dead, P would still be enclosed in that house, like a prison.
- The house is very significant in her families' life. It is a large house on a hill and P lived there since 2, when her mother completely remodelled it. It remains inseparable from memories of the struggles with her mother and every time she enters the house she feels less than mediocre again.
- P feels a very strong tie to that house and to her mother, a bond, but not an attraction. P feels drawn to visiting the place but would not stay. She does not believe it could ever be different than it is there now.
- When returning home, P needed to become whatever her mother wanted from her, losing contact with friends, turning into puty, and P is not good at that, she's resisted and it's got aggressive between them. But their relationship is honest so P feels she has to explain her understanding of the relationship now and getting her mother to take some responsibility for how things are.

9. Feelings of the interview

- 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.

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

P1 - Well, it depends what broader context you want, but generally I finished my theology degree in Latvia and I, and I was working also full time, and I had quite a fight because I was trying to combine full time working with full time study. I was quite exhausted, really, and I had this idea in my mind that I wanted to come to study in England and I was working towards it for about three years and finally I got the opportunity. I knew someone in England who was happy to accommodate me and there was a set date, which was the end of August 2000, that I could come here. So that was the broader context of why it happened.

So that was sort of the significant point, but I felt, I was feeling I had accomplished something, I had finished my degree, and I suppose for quite a few people that is a turning point, that is a point of achievement and then you move on from there to somewhere else. I did feel that stage was sort of over, and I wanted to move on to something. But I knew that I wasn't going to study straight away, I wasn't exactly certain what I would study at all, nothing was clear yet, so initially I was coming here to stay with my friend and try to live in England and see what it's like and how I felt, and to see if we get on with him at all, and whether it was possible to actually stay here. That was the beginning.

GM2 - OK, so you were working full time and you were doing full time studies in theology and you had this path planned or this idea of perhaps coming to England?

P2 - Yes.

GM3 - But you had to finish that degree first, that was kind of the turning point in these possibilities, the chance to come here?

P3 - Yes, because finishing a degree was kind of a condition for carrying on with something else, and I knew what I wanted to do, I wanted to do psychology. So that was the plan I had in my mind, but when I had the degree from Latvia I could work towards acknowledging, making the same with college my degree in England, and then move on from there.

GM4 - Right, so finishing the degree was a part of, in some way, a part of your plan to come here?

P4 - You could say that, but that was not the reason why I started studying theology, because that was some time before, and I only got the idea that I wanted to come here whilst I was on my course. In some ways it was very much linked with my work because I worked in an international hotel and for that time it was quite something to be

able to work in that environment, because Latvia had suffered a lot from Communism and isolation, and this big international hotel was almost a gateway to the world, you know, it felt like, it was a privilege actually to be able to work there, and it kind of reinforced the desire to actually come and see what it's like in other parts of the world, except for being a tourist traveller, but actually trying to establish myself somewhere else.

GM5 - So let's see if I've got that. So, halfway through your theology degree something kind of changed a bit perhaps, and it sounded almost like a part of that change was kind of the influence of working in this international hotel? Is that right?

P5 - Partly. I mean, that was just one element of it. Yes, but it did play a role in it. I suppose probably one of the main reasons why I wanted to come here is because of the attitude towards gay people in Latvia, which is, at that time was quite extremely homophobic. And in a way it still is, it's probably changing slightly now, but I found it extremely difficult and the person who I knew here was a gay person as well, and from having conversations with him I grasped how different it is actually being here, as a gay person, how much easier it was to be different, whereas in Latvia if you are different you are generally labelled as a weirdo, and other negative labels are attached to you and you are not accepted, you know, you can't be part of the larger group. And that was very much a feeling of isolation which I was trying to get away from if you like. I did hope that coming here would actually help, help to alleviate, that would make it easier.

GM6 - Yes, so part of your hope was that coming to England would make it much easier to live as a gay person, and it would be OK to be different here, you wouldn't be quite so isolated?

P6 - Yes, very much so.

GM7 - I'm just wondering, had you lived at home while you were studying and working?

P7 - You mean at home with my family?

GM8 - Yes.

P8 - No, I left my home, which is in the countryside, in a town two hours away from the capital, from Riga, when I finished secondary school, and I got my own place in Riga from the first day when I started studying theology, so at that point that was already a turning point to getting away from the family and becoming independent if you like, but I changed quite a few places, and I finally ended up living with my sister, which was the last year of my study, and her boyfriend, but I had come out at that time already, and there was no problem.

GM9 - You'd come out to your family?

P9 - I came out to my family, well, I don't have a father, my father died when I was 10, but I did come out to my mother, not long before I left for England. That was the point when I felt that she should know that before I actually leave, so maybe she could make sense more of why I wanted to leave as well. But I did have a step father, who, I don't really care about what he thinks about me, and he's not very much involved at all, so he's sort of, this distant figure.

GM10 - So you left your family home in order to go to university partly, is that right?

P10 - Yes.

GM11 - You couldn't really have stayed at home and gone to university very easily?

P11 - Well, I could have, but it would have been very difficult. It would be a very long journey and that would be a waste of time, and I wouldn't have chosen to stay with the family anyway, there were things that I didn't feel comfortable about in the family, and one of them was my stepfather. We didn't get on well at all. My mother remarried when I was 14, sorry 13 actually, and since then he's living in our house and I left home when I was 17 for university. So actually I was supposed to go at 18, but I started school one year earlier so everything has been shifted one year earlier as well. I wouldn't have chosen to stay at home.

GM12 - OK, you had other reasons for leaving?

P12 - Yes.

GM13 - And your siblings, brothers and sisters, did they leave as well?

P13 - Yes, I have an older sister, three years older. She has been on and off in the family, um, let me try to remember, in the last year when I was at school when I was 16 to 17, she was in Germany working as an au pair, so that year I spent on my own, without her, living in the family house, and before that she was living in Riga as well when she was doing her degree. So she was pretty much away all of the time whilst I was living with my step father and my mother, so in a way, she was, kind of stimulated me as well to get away from the family and become independent. I was looking forward to that very much. Because in a way she was kind of my role model, in a sense, and interestingly enough we actually both did the same degree, she did theology too in the same university. She studied three years earlier, but she finished one year earlier.

GM14 - Can I ask, I'm not sure this is relevant but I won't know until I ask, what was it that attracted you to theology?

P14 - Well, this is going back and back and back all the time. It's a long story but I'll try to make it short. When I was about eight I suppose we got involved in church, my sister and me and some of my sister's friends, and then we had been going to the church together, we had been going to the church together for years, and we got more and more involved in the church structure. First it started as going to a Sunday School and taking part in the choir, singing, then we ended up years later, we ended up actually running a

Sunday School on our own in the village where we actually were living. So we actually ended up running the church and doing most things, except for the all the clerical part. So that was kind of, getting involved very much in the business of the church, as well as we got very much involved in terms of belief, and I would say now that we were, especially for my part, I was very fanatical about it, and I was deeply religious, and the reason why I started studying theology was because I was confident I would become a priest, because that was really I wanted to become. And actually I was thinking about this since probably the age of starting going to Sunday School, because that was the sort of, ideal man figure for me, there was something around that and I wanted to become that.

Then my perspective changed slightly when I started studying, actually doing it in a academic way, and it turned my world upside down. It was quite tough because I had to give up all my very strongly held beliefs and it was very disturbing, the whole of my world, the whole of my foundation was shaken up completely. And I had to find a new way, a new perspective of the world basically. Because also I was very much aware that the church did not accept gay people, at least the church which I belonged to, which was the Lutheran Church, in Latvia the main church, and it was extremely homophobic, and there was absolutely no way you can be gay and in the church. The two are completely incompatible things. So I had a choice to make, to either stay in the church and to pretend I had the stability or try basically to leave it behind and come to terms with my gayness, and I decided to go for the second one because I found that was more a authentic choice, a lot more natural for me. But that meant that I had to restructure my whole world and that took years.

GM15 - Right, OK. At some point in order to support your studies you got a job in this international hotel. Was that just by chance or was there something about that job that seemed attractive to you?

P15 - Well, I was looking for any job, I was desperate to find a job, and I got this offer and I thought that's pretty good. I was 18 when I got this job and I thought that was not bad, and ridiculously enough I ended up earning more money than my mother, who was a fully qualified doctor. The doctors earn peanuts in Latvia anyway. I was quite privileged to be able to do that.

GM16 - And during the job you said a little while ago that it exposed you to a lot of messages from the world, all these foreign people coming as tourists or whatever, was there something about that that you liked?

P16 - Yes, there was this smell of opportunity almost, you know, getting to know people. Learning also the matter of relating, how people relate outside Latvia, that's very different. If you like, the mentality of Latvia is very much Latvia is the world, and outside that there is no world, there is nothing outside, so that is your world and that is where you should be, sort of thing. And it's like outsiders are kind of scary, too strange, and not desirable. It's probably changing now again, because of the European

influence, but at that time it was very much the case, and me sort of trying to reach for something outside was very strange for everybody else.

GM17 - What was it in you do you think that made your response to this kind of otherness or difference or strangeness, positive rather than...?

P17 - I suppose I felt slightly suffocated by it and I had to get out of it, by any chance, by any means. I did not want to be part of that culture because I just could not relate to it. I mean, we can go back much further in the past, because that was very much the experience of me being at school. I was generally very much isolated, excluded and I was the odd man out as a rule, by definition, and strangely enough it started from the very early beginning when I started going to nursery school, and from the first day I felt automatically excluded from playing with other children and I could not figure out why, and today I still can't, I can't make sense of it, but I suppose this is all related, interrelated with each other, and I suppose that's the feeling of isolation and alienation from the general culture.

GM18 - And this is something that remains a mystery to you, exactly why it kind of happened this way?

P18 - Yes, I've been trying to find causes if you like, in my family background, and my family is highly dysfunctional, but nevertheless I still wonder whether that's got to do with the absence of my father or if you like over-protectiveness of my mother. I always found it extremely difficult to relate to my peers, and I suppose that's why I'm here as well, studying psychotherapy at the age of 23 amongst people who are on average 30 or more. That's one of those things, I've always been an odd man out in a sense, and I still am, but in this situation, I am odd man out in a positive way rather than negative, even though at school it was extremely negative and extremely hard.

GM19 - Are you saying at school it was...?

P19 - Nursery school, primary school, secondary school, up to the age of 17 actually, and I suppose one of the reasons why I got involved in church so much as well was because it provided some sort of shelter, security, acceptance. A kind of control which I didn't have otherwise.

GM20 - Yes, I want to see if I've got that. Although you said this in slightly different words, I want to see if this actually fits your experience. So, it sounds almost as though from a very early age your exposure to the world, first of all in nursery school, your experience was one of kind of not belonging and being different or treated as different?

P20 - Yes, I think different is probably the key word here. Different in many ways. I started going to school one year earlier, that's different, because age 6 and 7 are quite different. And I was quite ill in childhood as well, and I couldn't perform the physical exercises that other children could and that was part of a really, really tough time. Also

I was playing the violin which was considered very effeminate, not boyish at all, and I felt attracted to men at that time already, not very consciously though, I wasn't too aware of it, but I had occasional fantasies, I didn't quite understand what they meant, but I did have them. So, that generated some feelings of 'is everything alright with me?', or 'am I a weirdo?'. I used to actually to play with my sister, we used to dress up in girl's clothes, and that was again, one of the things that I used to be teased about in the family, and almost treated like a girl sometimes.

GM21 - So there were some bases for difference between you and the other young boys your age, there was also it sounds like this slight wondering in you of whether you were different in some way, or whether you were OK?

P21 - Well, I knew I was different.

GM22 - You knew you were different?

P22 - I knew I was different, there was no question of that, but at that time the question I wanted to formulate was is it OK to be different or is it not? Because at that time from others the message was that it's not to be OK, it's not OK to be different, it's not acceptable and it's revolting. This is very much how I felt about myself too. I am the weirdo, I do weird things and that's how I am. There's no further question.

GM23 - So it was clear to you that being different wasn't a gift in some way, it was a curse or something else, a difficulty, a negative thing? And you were talking about you were actively in the church and you used the word shelter, and my interpretation of that was you had found a place where you could belong and you could be accepted?

P23 - Yes.

GM24 - So, that was important to you? Belonging somewhere? [Yes, very much so] And now this makes me think that taking this job in the hotel where you were exposed to all this difference, it's interesting that for some reason your difference was negative and yet your response to other people's being different was quite positive, or at least interested?

P24 - Yes but it's in a slightly different way. The difference that was in the hotel was more positive, it was the rich world, it was a dominating, controlling world, it was the responsible world, it's difficult to put it into words, but it was a very positive image of that world, also a very hard world to live in because it's a very competitive world as well. Whereas my difference was more about weakness.

GM25 - Weakness?

P25 - Yes, as being the weaker one, the one who can't defend himself, the one who can't say things back, the one who can't punch back, and things like that. I could not

defend my differences, I could not I didn't know how to, because I wasn't that that was OK, I believe the reason why probably is because there was some underlying idea that I probably deserved it somehow. That the way I am I don't like myself so I should be punished maybe, something like that.

GM26 - And there was also this point in your university when you made this very difficult choice to be authentic, you said, authentic to what you are now calling a weakness, but there's something about it that you wanted to respect, or honour or something?

P26 - Well, in a way I felt I had no choice, well I did have a choice, but I suppose I wanted to be honest. That's probably one of my values, I wanted to be honest with myself. There's no point in lying, otherwise, I think being dishonest, is really the most difficult thing so I didn't go for that.

GM27 - I'm trying to sort of get a sense of some of the experiences leading up to this choice for you to come to England, and I'm wondering if some of the things you've been talking about did inform that choice, the fact that you didn't, it sounds like didn't really feel that you belonged, or at least in the early part of your life, didn't feel that you belonged in your home culture, to interact or feel accepted by your peers to some extent, and I'm wondering if in some ways that experience informed your decision to leave Latvia?

P27 - Well, certainly yes. It's all building up, I suppose I was preparing to leave Latvia since the age of 4 or 5 when I started going to nursery school, in a sense, because I didn't feel I belonged from the very start.

GM28 - So that made it easier to leave?

P28 - Well, it's very difficult to pinpoint whether that's ...I don't think I was looking for an easier life because I was quite aware that it wouldn't be, but I felt there was much more opportunity here and there is much more potential here to develop myself and to be what I want to be. Which I could not be in Latvia, because in Latvia it is much more restrictive and prescriptive about what you should be, how you should be, what you should be doing. There are very fixed norms which you have to follow, and if you don't you are completely on your own.

GM29 - So your experience is either you go along with what's imposed, it sounds like, something that you found quite suffocating?

P29 - Yes.

GM30 - Or you are isolated because you, it sounds like, found it quite difficult, or you leave?

P30 - I had quite a tough choice to make in a sense as well, because I was coming here to a strange land which I knew very little about, and the future was very uncertain. I had no idea where I would get with coming here, and the person who invited me I didn't, I can't say that I trusted him a huge deal, and in a way while I was coming to live with him, in a way that was jumping from one trap into another. But the other trap was something that I couldn't get out of in a future perspective, I couldn't get out of the first one, because to be able to get out of that would only be possible by jumping into another trap, and this is how I felt. It was a very tough choice because I did feel awful being here for the next two years whilst I was here, actually I was feeling very isolated, more than in Latvia, and I did ask myself whether that was worth it, and very often the answer was no, it wasn't. But then the thing that kept me here was that I had the opportunity to study, and I thought well this is why I'm here, and this is worth it. I couldn't do it in Latvia, well I could, but not the same quality and even though I felt isolated I wanted to continue because in the long run it would pay back. But I think in the last year it's changed, I've finally managed to develop more personal relationships with people, and feel more at home. When people ask me when are you going home, I say I am at home.

GM31 - That's interesting, and what I was going to ask you next is, well before I ask you about that I'd like to ask you about your experience of being here. What it's been like, but before I ask about that and about whether you do think about going back, can I just first of all ask, so you reflect back, the things you've been talking about, going all the way back to your upbringing and the choices you made in order to leave, why do you think you, what would you say is the real reason you left home? Why do you think you really left?

P31 - That's a difficult one. Are you looking for one answer?

GM32 - Well, not really, anything really.

P32 - (Long Pause) I can't pin it down to one answer, but there are several things, I can make a list of them. I think probably reason number one is escape from isolation and part of it is to do with sexuality, that I felt that I would never have been accepted in Latvia, or if I would have probably wouldn't have found a partner who wouldn't be hiding, and I'd find it annoying, I find it very disturbing when people are afraid to be honest, and most people are. If you look at Latvia from outside there are very few gay people, when you get inside, the dark rooms and the bushes are...

I suppose another reason is probably getting away from my family. Yes, I suppose I have a big thing about my mother as well. I felt very much suffocated by her in my childhood, because she was a very loving mother, but she was loving too much and she was holding me when I didn't want to be held. Getting away was, wow, finally I can do that. And I had quite a bad relationship with her since my stepfather moved in, and I actually lost contact with her very much when I was at university. Well, I did go and visit her during weekends and so on, but there was no emotional bond at all, it was extremely distant and she took it extremely painfully. And also, when I came out to her it spread the gap even more, it made it even wider. She said she was never going to accept me like that and she thought that I was ill and all the rest of it, so it was quite

tough. Interestingly enough, we have the best relationship we have ever had now, and she came over a few months ago and we could walk in the street holding hands and cuddling, and she asked me whether I was practising safe sex with my boyfriends, and I thought that was quite a step forward, and it was extremely healing. So I feel like actually my being away has had some very positive effect on her, and our relationship.

Probably another thing I could add to the list why I left is because, something I find difficult to be honest about, but I have to acknowledge that I was looking for something more than Latvia could offer, and I know that sounds a bit grandiose, and it is, yes, but I thought that I, let's put it, I suppose I still have big issues about the way I was treated in school. Excluded, isolated, beaten up often, spat at, called names and all the rest of it. There was misery from day to day for years, and I felt absolutely traumatised in school and so on, by my peers and my classmates. And I think getting away from Latvia and going the path I'm going and working hard to, if you like, to become someone, or to become a professional is one of the reasons why I'm here, it's sort of, positive revenge I suppose, to show them that I am not worse than they are, I probably am better, I'm more bright than they are in general. So I suppose that's another thing and being away from Latvia it's easier to do it than being actually there.

GM33 - So there's an escape from the isolation, and escape from suffocation, from your mother and it sounds like from the culture?

P33 - And the larger family too actually.

GM34 - And them too, and also, to kind of actualise some potential, that you could then, at least partly, to kind of show them?

P34 - Yes, it is sort of a demonstration. It does raise a lot of doubts in me whether that's an acceptable reason for doing anything, to prove something to somebody, and I do wonder about it, but it takes me where I want to go anyway, so fair enough. That's where I am, and that's who I am. I would put a third point as (pause) revenge.

GM35 - Revenge?

P35 - Yes.

GM36 - I want to ask that same question in a slightly different way, what do think would have happened if you hadn't left? Do you ever think about that?

P36 - Yes, it's scary. I certainly wouldn't have been where I am now. I'm not sure what my relationship with my mother would be like, but I would have thought it wouldn't be as good as it is now. The healing process would take much longer to sort of try to forgive her, and try to get away from her to be able to get closer again. And I suppose I would feel suffocated very much by the whole thing, the whole culture. The sort of the boy culture as well as the family culture. I would be actively gay, but it would mean more work, who I sleep with if you like, rather than anything else. Gay for

me means so many other things, it's more of a lifestyle than just sex, so I think that would have developed in that way if I'd stayed there. And also, I suppose I would have felt much more inferior and still isolated and still of less worth than anybody else because I wouldn't have got any further really, education wise and just development wise really. I don't think emotionally I would have a chance to develop as where I am now.

GM37 - I'm just wondering about this word suffocated, you've used it a few times and it sounds quite an important part of your experience. I just wonder what you mean by that, suffocated?

P37 - (Pause.) It's difficult to describe it.

GM38 - Is it like a physical sensation, or...?

P38 - (Pause.) Yes, how I would describe it is probably tied up. Restrained. Having no freedom, someone else making choices for me.

GM39 - OK.

P39 - And probably also having a lump in my throat, finding it difficult to breathe. Interestingly enough I had quite a severe form of asthma when I was in Latvia, and that physically very much relates to that. There's no sign of it here now. And that was particularly violent when I went for holidays with my mother, and that was, it was normally the climate that was blamed for it, wherever we went, I was feeling awful, I was almost dying, and then we had finish the holiday prematurely and come back, because they didn't know if I would survive until the end of the holiday because it was so bad. I couldn't sleep nights because I was feeling suffocated physically. That was very much the kind of experience I was going through.

I actually hadn't thought about this aspect, I hadn't connected it, but it makes sense. Something new, a new part I have found. And I suppose also just talking about illnesses, I was bedwetting until the moment I left home at the age of 17, and that was an extremely shaming experience and that was something that made me feel extremely inferior and inadequate, and it very much contributed to me not being able to have activities to do activities with my peers, because wherever it involved overnight sleeps

Tape reaches of side

GM40 - (talking about tape)

P40- I forgot your question.

GM41 - I was just thinking about the experience of being suffocated, and what I was going to ask was, although what you've just said now is important as well, so I was going to ask about the suffocating, well, what's so bad about being suffocated, but then

as you described it more it sounded almost like this experience of being suffocated was almost like having the life squeezed out of you in some sense? One of your descriptions was it was not free, and it sounds almost like the opposite of this suffocation, and what you seemed to be looking for as you went through your development was freedom, and freedom to you, and correct me if I'm wrong but it sounded almost like freedom to you is the freedom to actually be able to breathe?

P41 - Yes, but actually we can dig it as deep as existence, we are talking about more than enjoying life because at the time I had no idea what it meant at all. There was no, actually there is no term in Latvian for enjoying life, I think it is describing the mentality very well, you know, there were certain phrases, like being joyful about life, but that doesn't really come very close to enjoying life. There was no sense of that and there was no, I suppose it was more kind of a feeling of trying to get through something rather than actually being there and living life. It was sort of trying to get away from something and just to live through it quicker to get to something that actually has weight, because everything else didn't

GM42 - It's getting to something that, I didn't get that last part?

P42 - Something that matters, something that is kind of alive and colourful.

GM43 - It sounded to me almost like what you were saying was it was a struggle just to survive, just to exist, first of all, and then to kind of find something that could be more than just existence?

P43 - I suppose that's what most people do in Latvia, they exist, and I was very much one of them.

GM44 - But it wasn't OK for you?

P44 - No (pause). I suppose I've always been looking for something more. It wasn't just enough for me to go to school, I had go to music school too, additional sorts of activities. I have always had quite a busy life I think in that way.

GM45 - What was that more you were looking for?

P45- What was that?

GM46 - The more, you said you were always looking for more?

P46- Looking for some sort of quality. It's one of those things that's difficult to describe. (Pause.) Probably I was looking for, well, it basically comes back to what we were talking about, to belonging somewhere, feeling part of something. Feeling that I am going somewhere, a sense of direction maybe, a sense of being in control of my life, rather than being controlled by everyone else around. Setting the direction myself, and not allowing the culture, mother, family, sister, whatever, to control it for me.

GM57 - I want to ask one more thing on this before we move on. I still have this image in my mind of you working in this international hotel, and almost from what you've been saying, I'm wondering if that experience was, I mean the word that comes to me is, kind of, encouraging?

P47 - (Long Pause.) There are two sides of the coin. On the one hand you can say that it was an inspiration for me to, it was a little bit of that, that was the tip of the iceberg if you like, if I could actually examine I could say what it's like and I got the confidence that I could do it. But that wasn't enough, I wanted more, more of it. I wanted to see the whole iceberg. On the other hand, the other side of the coin was that it was very, very tough. Working there full time and extending all my energy that I had and probably even more, I was completely exhausted for a couple of years really, having no holidays at all. (pause) In a way, feeling it was probably one of the first places where I was actually feeling confident about something, not someone who is a left over from someone, from somewhere, goodness knows where, but actually felt that I was sort of needed, that I was kind of valuable, for them. There was a mixture of different experiences there.

GM48 - So when you reflect upon the time since leaving home and coming here, what's it been like for you?

P48 - The time of coming here?

GM49 - Yes, since leaving Latvia.

P49 - Until now? Well, as I said it wasn't easy at first. It was very much of a strange country with strange people, strange language, many things so different. I did feel very isolated at first and I was struggling to find my place. And I felt very much rejected as well by many people, by events that I had. I suppose it's all been changing in the last year or so, probably more now, which has got to do with relationships. That I have managed to establish relationships with some people, to establish new friendships, which I find extremely valuable, and very therapeutic. These are the kind of relationships I was probably looking for in Latvia, but I couldn't find them. So in a way I can actually be picking the fruit of my effort now, I feel that. I feel that finally I'm getting what I actually need, what I want. And yes, I suppose I'm going through this healing process which might last a very long time maybe until my last day, but I'm feeling much more confident, much more sort of grown up, much more resolved, much more sort of in harmony, and much more accepting also of the difference myself, both inside myself and outside. And also accepting of the limitations of the culture in Latvia. And I suppose very much I was feeling very victimised, very traumatised by the experience in Latvia and by people, and this was my general feeling when I came here. And I suppose I've come to a stage where it's turning around slowly and instead of feeling like a victim, I probably feel more as someone who is kind of a nurturing figure for them almost, rather than feeling resentful about what they haven't given me, and probably, we're not talking about always, but sometimes had this feeling with my mother for example, that I can actually provide support to her now, that I can actually nurture her and there were many things she didn't know when she was bringing me up, I'm aware that she was trying to give me the best she could, and she wasn't doing

anything bad to me deliberately. She was a very loving mother, but she was also very suffocating, but I suppose now it's almost a reversal of roles with her, that I have become almost like, I won't say father figure, but sort of adult figure, kind of thing. I have actually learned that there are other choices apart from that, and also I'm then able to offer these choices to her and to other people as well. It's been a long way really, it feels like, from being a victim to actually being someone who is confident enough, who has forgiven, someone who has come to terms, and someone who is willing to offer something new maybe to them which they don't know about.

GM50 - Is it right to say that, I mean it was difficult at first when you came here, and you persevered through that, and that the turning point was connected to kind of developing meaningful and important relationships?

P50 - Yes. I didn't set it as a goal of course, but it has developed naturally, somehow.

GM51 - The other thing I want to just check with you is, when you were saying that there was something about your experience of these relationships that have come into your life, something about that has allowed you to make an important shift? What is it do you think about relationships which allow you to be a lot more accepting and forgiving?

P51 - Well, I suppose I'm talking about three people here. One is Mike, who is my landlord now, has been for the last year, but I've known him for about two years now. He's much older than me and actually he could be my grandfather, but I probably regard him as my best friend because of the way we treat each other. The way he started treating me in the first place as someone who is important, someone who has a value, and I suppose that sort of, in a way he is sort of my father, if you like, that I never had, and he's almost an ideal father figure, someone who is always perfectly accepting and non critical. Someone who is nurturing, someone who is giving, but also someone who I feel like giving things to. There is neutrality, reciprocity between us, a special link which is not erotic at all. He is a gay person too, and my first fear was that he is an old man who is trying to pick up a young man, and I was very suspicious about him for quite a long time, but I suppose that was part of the healing process, that I actually realised that you can be liked in a different way too. Proving that is one of those elements, one of those things that are most important I have learnt about. The thing that I have some value, that I can have some value in other people's eyes too, and therefore I have learned to look at myself as someone who has a value. And the best thing is that we see each other on a daily basis, it's not just friends who see each other once a week or so because then in a way it's easier to be consistent and play out the role but I don't feel like he's actually playing out the role, I think that's actually the way he is.

I just wanted to say something, that I think I have fallen in love with him, as someone who is an older figure and someone who is more experienced, I'm not competing with him, not feeling resentful, not feeling suspicious, but feeling free in a relationship, and that is something fundamentally new for me.

GM52 - Yes, I can really appreciate that, that love doesn't have to be suffocating?

P52 – Yes, yes. Another relationship is with my therapist. We have been working together for one and a half years now, and have gone a very long way too, and I suppose one of the main issues I have been dealing with with him is the issue of trust. Probably I have finally learned to open up completely and not to hide things from him or being afraid, and really begin to trust 100% without any shadow of a doubt. Well, I wouldn't say 100%, but still much more than I used to, that's for sure.

The third relationship probably is my boyfriend, who we have been together for almost half a year now, and I'm still a little ambivalent about it, but I think this is the first time I have actually feelings for someone, with an erotic side too, whereas before it used to be lust, or neediness. Neediness to cling to someone. I have a feeling that it's a very different kind of relationship this time, we are two independent individuals who have actually made a choice to come together, and we give a lot of space to each other as well. It's extremely important for me at this stage. There was no way, I've had quite a few relationships so far and all of them ended for various reasons, but actually I was the one who initiated ending them most of time, because I was feeling suffocated in them. If people want to get too close, when they want to get too close they almost present a choice where I let them stick to me almost, or just get away completely, and I only made the second choice, always so far.

GM53 - Yes, which is kind of similar to your choice to leave Latvia. Like there's something fundamental about that, it sounds almost like your survival, protecting your own existence?

P53 - Yes, sort of, my territory. I think that very much describes the way I'm feeling in relationship with my mother and the family. I suppose where it all started was, my feeling of isolation, was that my mother wouldn't let me actually go anywhere with my peers because, her argument was that she felt it was dangerous and she didn't think they were nice people or whatever, so she just wouldn't let me go out with my peers and do things. She'd just physically keep me at home. And of course, me being ill and her being a doctor enforced it even more. And so I spent a lot of time in my childhood not going to school at all, just staying at home with her. On the one hand, it was what I enjoyed most, but on the other hand I suppose I wasn't aware that actually I probably wanted something different too. I wanted a sort of balance between her and the rest, and the others, and I didn't have it. So there was this suffocation and I suppose that's why I started feeling isolated myself, and actually isolating myself too, because that's what I expected from people, instant rejection.

GM54 - So I'm just wondering, having been here for about three years, and you were thinking about your reasons for leaving and the difficulty in adjusting to being here, and now it sounds like things have really turned around and things very positive are happening, I'm wondering do you ever consider going back home, to Latvia?

P54 - I've been asked this question so many times, I never, I don't know.

GM55 - Everybody asks you this?

P55 - Yes. From my perspective today, I think I will never go back to live there. I might go back for some periods of time knowing that I have the freedom to leave, but not going, moving for good. No way.

GM56 - The way you feel today you wouldn't move back and settle there, and make that your home again?

P56 - No.

GM57 - Do you visit your home?

P57 - Yes, but not too often. I suppose I would like to visit more often, but it's a financial question, but I normally do about twice a year, though I haven't been home for exactly a year. It's quite a long time, but again I had my sister and my mother, who are the closest people from Latvia, here in London, so in a way that compensates for that. But I couldn't say that I miss Latvia for the sake of Latvia, I miss Latvia for the sake of a few people I know there. Not the country, I don't miss that culture, at all.

GM58 - Just one last question, do you feel like you'll stay here then?

P58 - Well, I like keeping this option open. I need this freedom, I need the freedom to think that I might go somewhere else if I chose to, so I could go to any country in the world if I wanted to. So I'm not particularly stuck to this country, or particularly in love with it. Even though there are so many important people here and probably that would be something that will keep me here for a long time. But I might go somewhere else first.

GM59 - This sounds like a strange question, but what feels so important about that freedom? Freedom to say to yourself that maybe you'll move on from here to another new country?

P59 - Sort of feeling grown up, being able to make my own choices. It doesn't sound very good, but I wanted to say almost I was proving to myself that I was able to make any choice I wanted to. Not for the sake of proving something, because I felt so. It's not a compulsorily proving to someone else, but it's probably having the freedom of choice. I suppose being able to make a choice, it's about being alive, about actually living a life rather than existing, and actually experiencing things, and at the end of the day enjoying life, rather than being forced to do things, choosing to do things, rather than imposing things or having things imposed on you.

GM60 – OK. So it sounds like keeping open this option of maybe leaving England and living some place else, whether you do or not, it reassures you that it's your choice?

P60 - Yes.

GM61 - That you have a choice either staying or going, but it really is your choice. Because otherwise I was thinking it could start to feel a little bit like it's closing in on

you, and just someone else is determining where you can be or something, it kind of reminds me...?

P61 - Could be, yes. This was something fundamentally new that I had learned here, is that there is such a thing as enjoying life, because I didn't know there was such a thing before. Because all the messages that I got from that culture was that life was suffering. There was nothing else in life basically, just little bits of joy, like I don't know, weddings, just occasional happy moments in life which are very special, but the rest of life has to be misery. That was the sort of general attitude, and I don't want to belong to that culture at all. I can't relate to it, because I think life can be more than that, life can be more than just existence, because then what is the point in all that, if I have no choice, then if I feel like I have no choice, I think I would rather take the choice of terminating my life rather than existing with the idea that I would have to just exist all the rest of my life, I think that's terrible.

GM62 - For you choice is fundamental to life?

P62 - Yes, that's something that allows me to be (pause).

GM63 - Well, I don't have any more questions, but I'm just wondering how you feel about talking about these things?

P63 - It's quite interesting to talk about it from that point of view, because actually in my therapy as well, I have never actually focused on leaving home, as such. I've talked a huge amount about my mother and things, but not from this point of view, so it's very, it's not just interesting it's made some new connections for me about how things happen. I think we've managed to go quite deep in all things for me, probably in some sense as deep as I could go at the moment. It feels a bit sort of, loaded the whole thing, but it's good to talk about it, good to think about it and sort of get more of the whole picture.

GM64 - Do you talk about these things with friends, or with other people that have left their home or anything?

P64 - A little bit, not in such depth. But I have spoken to Mike quite a bit about it, but he's not someone who's left home anyway, well he has, he's from the north of England, but that was a long time ago, and that was not a strange country, but I suppose it is, the same in a way to come to live in London from the countryside.

GM65 - OK. I'm quite aware that there's an awful lot of things you've said that we didn't get a chance to talk about more, and I'm just wondering if there's anything else that you'd like to say that we maybe should have talked about but didn't?

P65 - I feel like we covered pretty much the whole circle really. I thought we went around then we came back to where we started, so it feels kind of contained, concluded.

GM66 - OK. Thank you.

END

“Martin” Meaning Units

Circumstances of leaving home

1. I was combining work and study and was exhausted but I had the idea I wanted to come to England so I was working towards that.
2. I got the opportunity when someone I knew was happy to accommodate me here.
3. I felt I had achieved something by finishing my first degree so I was ready to move onto something else.
4. I didn't know what I wanted to study next so I came to live with my friend to just see how it was here, how I felt, and see if we got along, that was the beginning.
5. Once I had my degree I had a starting point to carry on from that in the UK.
6. I only got the idea I wanted to come here when I was on my course. It was linked to my work in an international hotel.
7. My country was communist so this hotel was an unusual gateway to the world and it was a privilege to be able to work there.
8. That reinforced my desire to see what it's like in other parts of the world, not being a tourist but actually establishing myself somewhere.

The influence of being gay

1. A main ingredient of wanting to leave is because I'm gay and the environment was extremely homophobic whereas I'd heard it was better here.
2. The person I came to stay with here was gay and I grasped from him how it was much easier to be different here.
3. At home if you are different you are labelled as a weirdo and worse and you are not accepted, you cannot belong to the larger group.
4. I was trying to get away from that feeling of isolation and I hoped coming here would help to alleviate that.

Leaving the family home and coming out

1. I left my family home when I finished school and got my own place in the capital.
2. That was already a turning point to get away from my family and become independent.
3. I lived in a few places and ended up sharing with my sister and her boyfriend and I'd come out by then which was OK.
4. My father died when I was 10 and I came out to my mother not long before I left for England.
5. I felt she should know that before I left the country so maybe she could understand better why I wanted to leave.
6. I have a step-father who is not really involved, just a distant figure.

You couldn't stay at home and go to university?

1. It would have been difficult for me, a long journey that would have been a waste of time, and I didn't want to live with the family.
2. I wasn't comfortable with my step-father, we didn't get on.
3. My mother remarried when I was 13 and I left home when I was 17.
4. My older sister had also left the family home, so I was alone with them and her example stimulated me to be independent, which I really looked forward to.
5. She was my role model in a sense and we actually both studied theology.

The attraction to theology

1. This goes way back to when my sister and I got increasingly involved in a church when young.
2. We ended up running a Sunday school in our village and we got very involved in the business of the church.
3. We were also fanatical believers and I was deeply religious and I wanted to become a priest.
4. A priest was an ideal male figure for me but when I started studying it academically it started to turn my world upside down.
5. I had to give up all my strong beliefs and it was very disturbing.
6. I had to find a new perspective of the world and I was also aware that the church did not accept gayness.
7. You could not be gay and in the church, they were completely incompatible.
8. So I had a choice of staying in the church and pretending to be stable, or to leave it all behind and come to terms with being gay and I decided for the second because it seemed more authentic, more natural.
9. But it took years to restructure my life.

The job in the hotel as different than rest of the culture

1. I was looking for any job but was glad to be offered this one and felt quite privileged.
2. Getting to know people, it was like the smell of opportunity.
3. Also learning how people related outside my home country.
4. In my country the mentality is that it is the world, there is nothing outside, and outsiders are kind of scary, too strange, undesirable.
5. And my trying to reach for something outside was very strange for everyone else.
6. I felt suffocated by that atmosphere and had to get out of it by any means.
7. I did not want to be part of that culture, I could not relate to it.

Not fitting into the culture since childhood

1. My experience of being at school was not fitting in.
2. I was very much isolated, excluded, I was the odd man out as a rule and it started when I was very young, at nursery school.
3. From the first day I felt excluded from playing with other children and could not figure out why.
4. Today I still can't make sense of it but I suppose it's all interrelated and I suppose it's connect to the feeling of isolation and alienation from the culture in general.
5. I've been looking for the cause of this, thinking it might be because of my dysfunctional family.
6. I wonder if it's related to the absence of my father and the over-protectiveness of my father.
7. I always found it very difficult to relate to my peers, and I suppose that's why I am here studying therapy at 23.
8. I've always been an odd man out (here in terms of age) and I still am but this time in a positive way, though at school it was extremely negative.

Childhood and school

1. From nursery school to age 17 I had it very hard.
2. I suppose one reason I got so involved in church was that it provided a sort of shelter, security, and acceptance. A kind of control I didn't have otherwise.
3. Different is the key word here. I was different in many ways.

4. I started to go to school one year early which made a difference.
5. I was quite ill as a child and couldn't do much physical exercise with other children and that was part of a very tough time.
6. I also played the violin, which was considered effeminate.
7. And I felt attracted to men already at that time, though I didn't understand it.
8. So I had concerns of whether everything was alright with me, or was I a weirdo.
9. I used to play with my sister and dress up in girl's clothes and I was teased about that in the family and almost treated like a girl sometimes.
10. I knew that I was different somehow but I needed to know WAS IT OK TO BE DIFFERENT?
11. The message from others was it's not OK, it's not acceptable and it's revolting.
12. This is also how I felt about myself, I am the weirdo who does weird things and that's how I am, period.
13. Belonging somewhere was therefore important to me, and I got that in the church.

Difference

1. P responded to the difference of foreigners as positive and his own difference as negative.
2. The difference in the hotel was more positive, it was the rich world, it was a dominating, controlling world.
3. It was the responsible world, it's difficult to put it into words but it was a very positive image of that world.
4. It was also a very hard world to live in because it's a very competitive world also.
5. My own difference was more about weakness, not positive.
6. I was the weaker one, who couldn't defend himself.
7. The one who can't say things back, can't punch back, I couldn't defend my differences.
8. I didn't know how to defend myself because I didn't know that was OK.
9. There was probably some underlying idea that I deserved it.
10. I didn't like the way I am so I should be punished or something.

You decided later to choose to be authentic to this 'weakness'?

1. I felt I had no choice really if I was to be honest.
2. That's one of my values, I wanted to be honest with myself.
3. I think being dishonest is one of the most difficult things.
4. My experiences were all building up to inform my choice to leave Latvia.
5. I suppose I was preparing to leave Latvia since I was 4 or 5, when I started nursery school.
6. I didn't feel I belonged from the very start.
7. I wasn't looking for an easier life because I was quite aware it wouldn't be.
8. I felt there would be more opportunity here and there is more potential here to develop myself and to be what I want to be, which I couldn't be back home.
9. Back home it is more restrictive and prescriptive about what you should be, and how you should be, what you should be doing.
10. There are very fixed norms which you have to follow and if you don't you are completely on your own.
11. You are either suffocated by what's imposed or you are isolated.

Choice to leave

1. It was a tough choice to come here to a strange unknown land with an uncertain future here.
2. I didn't know the person who invited me very well and I didn't trust him very much so it was like I was leaving one trap for another.
3. I felt the only way out of my present trap was to jump into another one, and I knew I could never get out of that first trap if I stayed, it was permanent.
4. It was tough, I felt awful for the first two years, even more isolated than in Latvia.
5. I asked myself whether it was worth it and I often thought no, it wasn't.
6. I stayed because I had the opportunity to study and I decided this is why I'm here and it's worth it.
7. I knew that in the long run it would pay off.
8. It's changed in the last year as I've finally been able to develop more personal relationships and feel more at home.
9. When people ask me now when are you going home, I say I am home.

So why do you think you really left home?

1. That's a difficult question. I can't pin it down to one answer, but I could list them.
2. Reason number one is to escape the isolation and part of that is to do with sexuality.
3. I felt I would never be accepted in Latvia or would never find a partner who wasn't in hiding and that would be annoying.
4. I find it disturbing when people are afraid to be honest and most people are.
5. If you look at Latvia from outside there are few gay people, but the dark rooms and bushes are full of people.
6. Another reason is probably to get away from my family. I felt suffocated by my mother in childhood.
7. She was a loving mother but too much, she was holding me when I wanted to be free.
8. Our relationship got emotionally distant when she remarried and I didn't get along with him.
9. When I came out to her it spread the gap more, she said she'd never accept me as gay and that I was ill, so it was tough.
10. We have the best relationship we have ever had now and we were affectionate and she asked about my boyfriends and I thought it was a step forward and it was extremely healing.
11. So I feel my being away has had some very positive effect on her and our relationship.
12. Another reason, that I don't find easy to acknowledge, is that I was looking for more than Latvia could offer. It sounds a bit grandiose but I still have big issues about my treatment at school.
13. I was excluded, isolated, beaten up, called names etc. misery from day to day for years and I was absolutely traumatised by my peers. So I feel working hard to become someone, a professional, is one reason why I'm here, a kind of positive revenge.
14. I want to show them that I am not worse than them, probably better, brighter than them and it's easier to accomplish that out of Latvia.
15. I'm trying to demonstrate something but I'm not sure that's a good reason to do anything.

What if you hadn't left?

1. That's a scary question. I certainly wouldn't have been where I am now.
2. I don't know how my relationship with my mother would be, but not as good as it is now.
3. The healing process to forgive her would have taken longer and to get away to get closer again.
4. I would have felt suffocated by the whole culture, the boy culture as well as the family culture.
5. I would be actively gay, but more in terms of sexually active only.
6. Gay is more of a lifestyle, not just sex.
7. I imagine I'd still have felt inferior, isolated, less worthy than anybody else because I wouldn't have got further, education-wise or development-wise.
8. Emotionally I wouldn't have developed to where I am now.

The feeling of being suffocated

1. It's like being tied up, restrained, having no freedom, someone else making choices for me.
2. And having a lump in my throat so it's difficult to breathe.
3. I had severe asthma back home and it's related to that feeling, I don't have it here.
4. It was especially serious when I'd go on holiday with my mother and I couldn't sleep and it was life-threatening.
5. I was bed-wetting till I left home at 17 and it was very shaming and it made me feel very inferior and inadequate and contributed to my isolation, I could not do anything that required over night sleeping but someone might discover my secret.

The freedom to breathe

1. What I was looking for was even deeper than that, it was about existence.
2. We are talking about something more basic than enjoying life, because that wasn't even thought of then.
3. In my home language there is no word for enjoying life, which I think reveals something about the mentality of the society.
4. For me I was just trying to get through rather than actually being there and living life, just surviving.
5. I was trying to get away from something and just to live through it quicker to get to something that actually has weight but nothing else did, getting to something that matters, that's alive and colourful.
6. It wasn't OK for me to just exist like everyone else. I've always been looking for something more. I always needed additional activities, I've always had quite a busy life in that way.

What more were you looking for in life?

1. I was looking for some kind of quality, it's difficult to describe.
2. I was looking to belong somewhere, to feel part of something.
3. I wanted to feel I had a direction, a sense of being in control of my life rather than being controlled by those around me.
4. I wanted to set my own direction and not allow the culture or family to set it for me.
5. The hotel was an inspiration it was the tip of the iceberg and I got the confidence that I could pursue it.
6. But that wasn't enough, I wanted the whole iceberg.

7. On the other hand it was also very tough, very hard work. I was exhausted and without a single holiday.
8. But it was the first place where I felt confident and not a leftover, I felt needed and valued.

The time since leaving

1. It wasn't easy, strange country, strange people, strange language, many things very different.
2. At first I struggled to find my place and felt isolated.
3. I also felt very much rejected by many people.
4. It's changing now, related to relationships I've managed to establish, new friendships that I find extremely valuable and therapeutic.
5. These are the kind of relationships I was looking for back home but couldn't find.
6. I feel I'm picking the fruit of my effort now, finally I'm getting what I need and want.
7. I'm going through a healing process that might take a long time, maybe my whole life, but I'm feeling more confident, more grown up, more resolved, more in harmony, more accepting of my own difference, inside and out.
8. I also feel more accepting of the limitations of the culture in Latvia.
9. I felt victimised and traumatised by my experience with the people in my home country and that generalised feeling is slowly turning around now and instead of a victim I feel I can nurture them almost.
10. Like with my mother, rather than feel resentful, I sometimes feel I can give her support.
11. I see there was a lot she didn't know when she was raising me and she did her best.
12. She was a loving mother but also suffocating, and now it's like a role reversal, with me becoming a kind of adult figure with her.
13. I can offer my learning to other people and that show how far I've come from being a victim to having the confidence to forgive, come to terms with things.

What is it about developing relationships that has supported this big change?

1. I'm specifically talking about three people.
2. One man much older than me is my best friend because of how we treat each other. He started by treating me as someone important, with value, he's like a father I never had.
3. He's always perfectly accepting and non-critical, nurturing, giving.
4. There is a neutrality, and reciprocity between us. A special non-erotic link.
5. I was suspicious of him at first, but I learned I could be liked other than for sex.
6. Feeling valued by others has allowed me to see myself that way.
7. And the best thing is that we see each other on a daily basis so I know he's not playing a role with me.
8. I feel I have fallen in love with him, he is older and more experienced and I don't feel I am competing with him, not resentful, not suspicious, but feeling free in a relationship, which is fundamentally new for me. Love doesn't have to be suffocating.
9. Another relationship is with my therapist and I have learned to trust and open up to him completely. Not to hide or feel afraid.
10. The third relationship is with my boyfriend which is the first time I've had erotic feelings and emotional together, not just one or the other, especially not just neediness.

11. It feels very different, we are two independent individuals who have chosen to come together but we give each other a lot of space too.
12. Space is very important to me, I've ended most of my relationships because I felt suffocated.
13. If someone wants to get too close, before I let them stick to me, I get away.

Roots in family situation

1. It all started, this isolation feeling, when my mother wouldn't let me go anywhere with peers because she felt it was dangerous, they weren't nice people.
2. She would physically keep me at home and my illness and her being a doctor reinforced it.
3. So I spent a lot of time in my childhood not going to school at all, just staying at home with her.
4. On one hand I really enjoyed it but on the other hand I didn't realise I wanted something else as well.
5. I wanted a balance between her and the others, which I didn't get.
6. So I felt suffocated and started isolating myself because I expected instant rejection from people.

Do you ever think of returning home?

1. I've been asked this often and I don't know.
2. Today I think I will never return to live there.
3. I might go back for certain periods knowing I have the freedom to leave but not for good, no way.
4. I would probably like to visit more often if I could afford it.
5. I normally go twice a year but I've had my sister and mother visit here so that compensates.
6. I don't miss my home country itself, or the culture, only for a few people who are there.

Do you feel like you'll stay in London?

1. I need the freedom to think I might go somewhere else if I choose to, any country in the world.
2. I'm not stuck here or particularly in love with it, though there are important people here so I'll likely stay a while or return.
3. That freedom to say I might move is important because it lets me feel sort of grown up, like I'm making my own choices.
4. Like I was proving to myself that I was able to make any choice I wanted to, just because I felt so.
5. It's freedom of choice, not proving to someone else.
6. Being able to choose is about being alive, about actually living life rather than just existing.
7. It's about experience and enjoying life rather than be forced, choosing.
8. I learned it here that there's such a thing as enjoying life, because from home the culture says life is suffering.
9. There can be occasional happy moments in life but otherwise it's misery back home and I don't want to belong to that culture at all.
10. I think life can be more than that, what's the point otherwise, if I have no choice I'd rather end my life than just exist for the rest of it, that's terrible.
11. For me choice is fundamental to life, it allows me to be.

Feelings of the interview

1. It's interesting to talk about this from this point of view because I've never focused on leaving home as such.
2. It's really made new connections for me about how things happened, even with my mother and things.
3. I feel we've managed to go quite deep, probably as deep as I could at the moment.
4. The whole thing feels a bit loaded, but it's good to talk about it, to think about it and get more of the whole picture.
5. I talk about these things a little with friends but not in this depth, like talking to someone with some similar experience of leaving for a foreign place helps.

Working towards leaving

1. I left my family home when I finished school and got my own place in the capital.
2. That was already a turning point to get away from my family and become independent.
3. I was working towards coming to the UK and was exhausted by work and study.
4. Having a place to stay here, plus finishing my studies, provided the opportunity to come and just see how I felt here.
5. Working in an international hotel was an unusual gateway to the world and reinforced my desire to live in other parts of the world.
6. It was a chance to see how people outside my country related to each other and it felt like a privileged opportunity.
7. I was looking for some kind of quality, to belong to feel part of something, it's difficult to describe.
8. I wanted to set my own direction, a sense of being in control of my life rather than being controlled by the culture or family to set it for me.
9. The hotel was an inspiration it was the tip of the iceberg and I got the confidence that I could pursue it, but that wasn't enough, I wanted the whole iceberg.
10. On the other hand it was also very tough, very hard work. I was exhausted and without a single holiday, but it was the first place where I felt confident and not a leftover, I felt needed and valued.
11. My experiences were all building up to inform my choice to leave my home country, since I was 4 or 5, when I started nursery school.
12. I wasn't looking for an easier life because I was quite aware it wouldn't be.
13. I felt there would be more opportunity here and there is more potential here to develop myself and to be what I want to be, which I couldn't be back home, where it is more restrictive and prescriptive about what you should be, and how you should be, what you should be doing.

The impact of being gay

1. A main ingredient of wanting to leave is because I'm gay and the environment was extremely homophobic whereas I'd heard it was easier to be different here.
5. At home if you are different you are labelled as a weirdo and worse and you are not accepted, you cannot belong to the larger group.
6. I was trying to get away from that feeling of isolation and I hoped coming here would help to alleviate that.
7. My father died when I was 10 and I came out to my mother not long before I left for England because I felt it would help her understand better why I wanted to leave.
8. Being gay meant I had to leave the church, which was painful.
9. But one of my values is honesty so I felt I had no choice if I was to be honest with myself. In the end it's easier than being dishonest.

10. I felt I would never be accepted in Latvia or would never find a partner who wasn't in hiding because they were afraid to be out, and that would be annoying.

Family relationships, especially mother

1. I didn't want to live with my family and my older sister's example of independent living stimulated me to leave when I was 17.
2. My mother remarried when I was 13 and I wasn't comfortable with my step-father.
3. The isolation feeling started when my mother wouldn't let me go anywhere with peers because she felt it was dangerous, they weren't nice people.
4. She would physically keep me at home and my illness and her being a doctor reinforced it.
5. So I spent a lot of time in my childhood not going to school at all, just staying at home with her.
6. On one hand I really enjoyed it but on the other hand I didn't realise I wanted something else as well.
7. I wanted a balance between her and the others, which I didn't get.
8. So I felt suffocated and started isolating myself because I expected instant rejection from people.
9. She was a loving mother but too much, she was holding me when I wanted to be free.
10. Our relationship got emotionally distant when she remarried and I didn't get along with him.
11. When I came out to her it spread the gap more, she said she'd never accept me as gay and that I was ill, so it was tough.
12. We have the best relationship we have ever had now and we were affectionate and she asked about my boyfriends and I thought it was a step forward and it was extremely healing.
13. So I feel my being away has had some very positive effect on her and our relationship.

Alienated from national culture

1. In my country the mentality is that this country is the world, there is nothing outside, and outsiders are kind of scary, too strange, undesirable.
2. And my trying to reach for something outside was very strange for everyone else.
3. I felt suffocated by that atmosphere and had to get out of it by any means.
4. I did not want to be part of that culture, I could not relate to it.
5. There are very fixed norms which you have to follow and if you don't you are completely on your own, so you are either suffocated by what's imposed or you are isolated.
6. In my home language there is no word for enjoying life, which I think reveals something about the mentality of the society.
7. There can be occasional happy moments in life but otherwise it's misery back home and I don't want to belong to that culture at all.

8. I think life can be more than that, what's the point otherwise, if I have no choice I'd rather end my life than just exist for the rest of it, that's terrible.

Never fitting in with peers

1. From nursery school to 17 it was very difficult, I never fit in.
2. From the first day of nursery school I was the odd man out, isolated, excluded from playing with other children and I could not figure out why.
3. Today I still can't make sense of it but I suppose it's all interrelated and I suppose it's connect to the feeling of isolation and alienation from the culture in general.
4. I've been looking for the cause of this, thinking it might be because of my dysfunctional family, the absence of my father and the over-protectiveness of my mother.
5. I was excluded, isolated, beaten up, called names etc. misery from day to day for years and I was absolutely traumatised by my peers.
6. I always found it very difficult to relate to my peers, and I suppose that's why I am here studying therapy at 23, where I still am the odd one out in terms of age, but this time in a positive way, though at school it was extremely negative.
7. Different is the key word here. I was different in many ways, I started to go to school one year early which made a difference, I was quite ill as a child and couldn't do much physical exercise with other children and that was part of a very tough time, I also played the violin, which was considered effeminate and I felt attracted to men already at that time, though I didn't understand it.
8. I used to play with my sister and dress up in girl's clothes and I was teased about that in the family and almost treated like a girl sometimes.
9. I was bed-wetting till I left home at 17 and it was very shaming and it made me feel very inferior and inadequate and contributed to my isolation, I could not do anything that required over night sleeping but someone might discover my secret
10. I knew that I was different somehow but I needed to know WAS IT OK TO BE DIFFERENT, or was I a weirdo?
11. The message from others was it's not OK, it's not acceptable and it's revolting.
12. This is also how I felt about myself, I am the weirdo who does weird things and that's how I am, period.
13. Belonging somewhere was therefore important to me, and I got that in the church.

Church experience

1. I suppose one reason I got so involved in church was that it provided a sort of shelter, security, and acceptance. A kind of control I didn't have otherwise.
2. My sister and I ended up running a Sunday school in our village and we got very involved in the business of the church.
3. We were also fanatical believers and I was deeply religious and I wanted to become a priest.
4. A priest was an ideal male figure for me but when I started studying it academically it started to turn my world upside down.
5. I had to give up all my strong beliefs and it was very disturbing.

6. I had to find a new perspective of the world and I was also aware that the church did not accept gayness.
7. You could not be gay and in the church, they were completely incompatible.
8. So I had a choice of staying in the church and pretending to be stable, or to leave it all behind and come to terms with being gay and I decided for the second because it seemed more authentic, more natural.
9. But it took years to restructure my life.

Positive difference and negative difference

1. P responded to the difference of foreigners as positive and his own difference as negative because the difference in the hotel was more positive, it was the rich world, it was a dominating, controlling world.
2. It was the responsible world, it's difficult to put it into words but it was a very positive image of that world though it was also a very hard world to live in because it's a very competitive world also.
3. My own difference was more about weakness, not positive, I was the weaker one, who couldn't defend himself, the one who can't say things back, can't punch back, I couldn't defend my differences.
4. I didn't know how to defend myself because I didn't know that was OK, like I should be punished for how I was, an underlying idea that I deserved it.

Leaving was a difficult choice

1. It was a touch choice to come here to a strange unknown land with an uncertain future here.
2. I didn't know the person who invited me very well and I didn't trust him very much so it was like I was leaving one trap for another, the only way out of my present trap was to jump into another one, and I knew I could never get out of that first trap if I stayed, it was permanent.
3. It wasn't easy, strange country, strange people, strange language, many things very different.
4. It was tough, I felt awful for the first two years, even more isolated than in Latvia I struggled to find my place and felt very rejected by many people.
5. I asked myself whether it was worth it and I often thought no, it wasn't.
6. I stayed because I had the opportunity to study and I decided this is why I'm here and it's worth it, I knew that in the long run it would pay off.
7. It's changed in the last year as I've finally been able to develop more personal relationships and feel more at home.
8. When people ask me now when are you going home, now I say I am home.

Why do you think you really left?

1. That's a very difficult question, but I can list the reasons:
2. To escape the isolation, partly to do with being gay in a homophobic place.
3. To get away from my family. I felt suffocated by my mother.

4. Another reason, that I don't find easy to acknowledge, is that I was looking for more than Latvia could offer. It sounds a bit grandiose but I still have big issues about my treatment at school. I want to show them that I am not worse than them, probably better, brighter than them and it's easier to accomplish that out of Latvia.
5. So I feel working hard to become someone, a professional, is one reason why I'm here, a kind of positive revenge. I'm trying to demonstrate something but I'm not sure that's a good reason to do anything.

If I hadn't left

1. It's scary to think what would have happened. I certainly wouldn't have been where I am now.
2. I don't know how my relationship with my mother would be, but not as good as it is now.
3. The healing process to forgive her would have taken longer and to get away to get closer again.
4. I would have felt suffocated by the whole culture, the boy culture as well as the family culture.
5. I would be actively gay, but more in terms of sexually active only and that would be a loss because gay is more of a lifestyle, not just sex.
6. I imagine I'd still have felt inferior, isolated, less worthy than anybody else because I wouldn't have got further, education-wise or development-wise.
7. Emotionally I wouldn't have developed to where I am now.

The experience of suffocation and needing freedom to live

1. It's like being tied up, restrained, having no freedom, someone else making choices for me.
2. And having a lump in my throat so it's difficult to breathe.
3. I had severe asthma back home and it's related to that feeling, I don't have it here.
4. It was especially serious when I'd go on holiday with my mother and I couldn't sleep and it was life-threatening.
5. What I was looking for was about existence itself, something more basic than enjoying life, because that wasn't even thought of then.
6. For me I was just trying to get through rather than actually being there and living life, just surviving, just to live through it quicker to get to something that actually has weight but nothing else did, getting to something that matters, that's alive and colourful.
7. It wasn't OK for me to just exist like everyone else. I've always been looking for something more. I always needed additional activities, I've always had quite a busy life in that way.

A change in the experience of being here

1. 1. It was so hard at first but it's changing now, related to relationships I've managed to establish, new friendships that I find extremely valuable and therapeutic.
2. These are the kind of relationships I was looking for back home but couldn't find.
3. I feel I'm picking the fruit of my effort now, finally I'm getting what I need and want.
4. I'm going through a healing process that might take a long time, maybe my whole life, but I'm feeling more confident, more grown up, more resolved, more in harmony, more accepting of my own difference, inside and out.
5. I also feel more accepting of the limitations of my home culture.
6. I felt victimised and traumatised by my experience with the people in my home country and that generalised feeling is slowly turning around now and instead of a victim I feel I can nurture them almost.
7. Like with my mother, rather than feel resentful, I sometimes feel I can give her support. I see there was a lot she didn't know when she was raising me and she did her best.
8. She was a loving mother but also suffocating, and now it's like a role reversal, with me becoming a kind of adult figure with her.
9. I can offer my learning to other people and that show how far I've come from being a victim to having the confidence to forgive, come to terms with things.

Three transforming relationships

1. The recent change I've felt here has come about mostly through three very important relationships.
2. One man who started by treating me as someone important, with value, he's like a father I never had. He's always perfectly accepting and non-critical, nurturing, giving.
3. Though I was suspicious of his motives at first now there is trust, a neutrality, and reciprocity between us. A special non-erotic link.
4. I feel I have fallen in love with him, he is older and more experienced and I don't feel I am competing with him, not resentful, not suspicious, but feeling free in a relationship, which is fundamentally new for me. Love doesn't have to be suffocating.
5. Another relationship is with my therapist and I have learned to trust and open up to him completely. Not to hide or feel afraid.
6. The third relationship is with my boyfriend which is the first time I've had erotic feelings and emotional together, not just one or the other, especially not just neediness.
7. It feels very different, we are two independent individuals who have chosen to come together but we give each other a lot of space too.
8. Space is very important to me, I've ended most of my relationships because I felt suffocated.
9. If someone wants to get too close, before I let them stick to me, I get away.
10. Feeling valued by others has allowed me to see myself that way.

Thoughts of returning home?

1. I've been asked this often and I don't know.
2. Today I think I will never return to live there but I might go back for certain periods knowing I have the freedom to leave but not for good, no way.
3. I would probably like to visit more often if I could afford it. I normally go twice a year but I've had my sister and mother visit here so that compensates.
4. I don't miss my home country itself, or the culture, only for a few people who are there.

Considering leaving London highlights importance of choice

1. I need the freedom to think I might go somewhere else if I choose to, any country in the world.
2. That freedom to say I might move is important because it lets me feel sort of grown up, like I'm making my own choices.
3. Like I was proving to myself that I was able to make any choice I wanted to, just because I felt so.
4. It's freedom of choice, not proving to someone else. Being able to choose is about being alive, about actually living life rather than just existing.
5. It's about experience and enjoying life rather than be forced, choosing.
6. I learned it here that there's such a thing as enjoying life, because from home the culture says life is suffering.
7. For me choice is fundamental to life, it allows me to be.
8. I'm not stuck here or particularly in love with it, though there are important people here so I'll likely stay a while or return.

Feelings of the interview

1. It's interesting to talk about this from this point of view because I've never focused on leaving home as such.
2. It's really made new connections for me about how things happened, even with my mother and things.
3. I feel we've managed to go quite deep, probably as deep as I could at the moment.
4. The whole thing feels a bit loaded, but it's good to talk about it, to think about it and get more of the whole picture.
5. I talk about these things a little with friends but not in this depth, like talking to someone with some similar experience of leaving for a foreign place helps.

1. Incremental steps toward increasing independence, culminating in leaving

- Since the age of 4, P’s experiences pointed towards the choice to leave his home country. The initial step towards independence was to leave the family home. Finishing his studies was also an important step. Finding employment in an international hotel was instrumental in P’s leaving, financially, and in exposing him to foreign ways of being.
- Exposure to international culture and foreignness can be inspiring for one who has a predisposition to leave one’s homeland. P finds it difficult to describe the quality he was searching for but it had something to do with feeling a sense of belonging, that he may find that in another culture.
- Working in an international environment helped P develop the confidence to try living in the UK, to get more of what he’d been exposed to. It offered a new experience of being valued and appreciated and revealed potential opportunities that would not be available to P in his home country.
- Being able to control his own destiny, rather than have it prescribed, was extremely important to P. He was not searching for an easier life but one that allowed more choice and freedom and the possibility of belonging.

2. Sexual difference as a motive for leaving

- P’s realisation that he is gay was a main motive in his desire to leave his home country, where any difference was negatively perceived, but especially being gay. P wanted to experience his difference in a foreign culture, where he heard it was more accepted.
- Conformity in the home environment was very isolating for P since he did not fit in. One of P’s strongest values is honesty, which meant he had to leave the homophobic environment of the church, where he had belonged, and he also felt he had to come out to his mother.
- Being true to his sexuality necessitated difficult choices and increasing isolation, until he left his home country. To have an opportunities to live as a gay man, P felt he had to find a more welcoming environment.

3. Alienation from larger social context and national culture

- P always experienced himself as an outsider in his social contexts and in the nation as a whole. He identified more with foreigners, other outsiders, and did not identify with the isolationist mentality of his home country, which further marked him as different.
- P experiences his home culture as rigid in terms of norms and expectations. The choice facing P was to abide by these and feel suffocated or to become completely isolated in his own culture. P’s culture suffocated his potential and aspects of his own being.

- P notes that his native language does not have a way of talking about enjoying life and he sees this as revealing of the national mentality, which he rejects. P feels life is about choice and can include potential happiness, not just moments of happiness in on-going misery. It is unclear what has allowed P to take such a variant stance to his own culture's assumptions but it may be that the experience of rejection maintained a distance from the surrounding culture and an openness to other possibilities.

4. Difference as a source of persecution

- In a homogenous and conforming culture not fitting in is a difficult and negative experience. P has never been able to actually pinpoint why he was singled out as different and subject to violent rejection. He feels it is somehow connected to his feeling of isolation and alienation from the culture generally. He also wonders if the absence of his father and his over-protective mother contributed somehow to his difference.
- P can name various aspects of his difference yet he still questions the reason for his difference, as though there is something else to be revealed. P was younger than his classmates, was often too ill to play with others, played the violin, and was aware of his attraction to males early on. It is not clear whether these and other aspects of difference can be named retrospectively as expressions of difference, or if they are really causes of it.
- One of P's main questions was whether difference was OK. The message from his surroundings was that it was not and he internalised this message and labelled himself as 'weird'. P's only sense of belonging at this time was from his church activities so these were extremely important to him. P relates his decision to study therapy at such a young age to his experiences with his peers, but he also sees his difference from colleagues in terms of age to be a positive difference for him. So, at present, difference can be positive.

5. Religion as providing acceptance and then rejection

- The church provided P with a sense of shelter, security, and acceptance in an environment that was otherwise hostile. P was very religious and very involved in the church, seeing the priest as an ideal male role model.
- Studying theology and recognising his sexuality were both severe challenges to P's faith and he eventually had to give up his strong beliefs, which he found deeply disturbing. P had to put his own authentic natural feelings above his religious convictions as they were incompatible, but it took years for him to restructure his life along new perspectives.

6. Family relationships, especially with mother

- P's father died when he was young and he did not get along with his step-father. This made P and his mother emotionally distant and added to his desire to leave the family home and become independent. Coming out to his mother initially increased the distance between them, though now their relationship is better than ever and P ascribes that to his being away.
- P's feeling of isolation from the wider environment is partially connected to his mother's reluctance to let him socialise with peers when he was younger. There was a very close and exclusive relationship between P and his mother, which he both enjoyed and found suffocating. P did not get the balance he needed between interaction with his mother and with his peers.
- P's isolation from same-age peers led to his seeming different and the expectation of being rejected by them, which led to P further isolating himself. This resulted in very difficult schooling experiences.

7. The distinction between positive difference and negative difference

- For P, foreigners were different in a positive way since they represented a rich, dominating, controlling world full of choice. P had a very positive image of that world despite its harsh competitiveness. The suggestion is that strength and control are positive values in this difference.
- In contrast, P experienced his own difference as weakness, he could not defend himself, stand up for himself or defend his difference. He feels this is due to an underlying assumption that he deserved to be punished for his difference, that it was wrong. Presumably if he had felt his difference was OK he could have defended it and felt the strength that might have ascribed a more positive value to his difference.

8. Leaving as a positive but difficult choice

- It's difficult to know why one really left home. P is able to list three contributing factors, to escape his isolation, to escape the experience of suffocation from his mother and family, and to prove his worth to those who rejected him when he was growing up.
- P finds it difficult to acknowledge the last reason, sensing that it has an aspect of being grandiose or needing more than his home country could offer. It also has an edge of positive revenge, which P is not certain is a good enough reason for him to be pursuing a professional career here.
- P also acknowledges how difficult it was to come here, to an unknown country, new language and customs, and an uncertain future. He felt like the situation he found himself in here was another trap, but it was the only way out of the trap of being at home and that was his motivation.
- The first few years in the UK were more isolating than P's experience in his home culture and he often thought it wasn't worth it. The opportunity to study kept him here and in the last year his experience has changed. This is partly due to developing more personal relationships, to the point that he now feels he's at home in the UK.

9. Suffocation and freedom to live in relation to thoughts of not leaving

- P finds it scary to contemplate his life if he hadn't left his home country. He anticipates that his relationship with his mother would not have improved as much. He needed to get away to get closer. Emotionally he could not have developed as much as he has from being away.
- P feels he was have continued to feel suffocated by the whole cultural attitudes, especially the expectations of men. He anticipates his gay identity would have been narrowed down to a purely sexual expression. His feelings of inferiority, isolation, and worthlessness would have continued since he would not have had access to educational or developmental opportunities to counteract them.
- P describes his experience of suffocation as feeling like being tied up, restrained, someone else dictating his choices and it can bring a lump in his throat so it's difficult to breathe. P had severe asthma in his home country but not here and that experience relates to his feeling of suffocation.
- In leaving his homeland, P was really looking for something basic about existence itself, not something as superficial as just enjoying life, since that possibility had not even occurred to him yet. P's experience of life had been to just survive until he could find something that was alive and mattered.
- It was never OK for P to just exist like he saw others doing. He's always needed more freedom and has always expressed this by being involved in various activities, engaging in a busy life.

10. Improvement in experience here related to transformative relationships

- P has found the kind of relationships here that he was looking for back home and that has been very valuable and therapeutic for him. He is going through a healing process leading to increased self-acceptance of his own difference.
- Along with increasing self-acceptance, P is able to forgive and accept the limitations of his home environment, including feeling nurturing towards those who bullied him, and towards his mother. There has been a role reversal where P is able to offer his mother comfort and their relationship has improved. P feels he can offer his own learning to others now that he has the self-confidence to forgive.
- P believes that this transformation in him is due mainly to important relationships he's developed while in Britain. He has felt valued and accepted with these others, developing trust and reciprocity. He is able to feel free, rather than suffocated, in a relationship for the first time. Feeling valued in this way has allowed P to see himself that way.
- P has a romantic relationship which is based upon mutual independence and respect rather just eroticism or neediness. The space in this is crucial for P because he easily feels suffocated if the other wants to be too close to him.

11. Thoughts of returning home or leaving London revealing the importance of choice

- P is often asked if he will return home and at least at the moment he is clear he would never return to live there permanently. He could image returning for a set period knowing he has the freedom to leave. Although he does not miss his home culture at all, he would like to be able to visit his family more often.
- Likewise, P needs the freedom to think he might leave London at some point, that he could go to any country in the world. Having the freedom to consider that allows P to feel he is making his own choices, like he is proving to himself he can make any choice he wants to.
- For P, choice is fundamental to life, it allows him to be, to live life rather than just exist. P feels he has learned in the UK that there is such a thing as possibly enjoying life and this has been a significant and guiding discovery for him. P will likely stay in London for the time being because of the valued relationships he has developed here.

12. Feelings of the interview

- 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.

R-The first question is, I'm just wondering kind of generally, the circumstances of your leaving home.

P-Um, yes, I've been thinking about this question. What I always thought was the reason I left home, um, was because I didn't get space to develop myself in terms of the context I was in. I had to, I was, friends and (inaudible...) expected to be a certain way. But if I think back, it probably was more into, um, I never really felt at home in my birth place. I remember never feeling at home in my school and only in the last years of my school did I start to find my place. And I never really planned to go abroad although I always planned to move away. As soon as I was 18 I was wanting to have my own place and I couldn't wait for that since I was 12 (we laugh). Um, and, I wanted to go to art school. And that, I did an interview and it was really disappointing because they had much more experienced people and they basically told me 'come back in 10 years'. I felt very lost at that point, I thought 'oh my god what am I going to do?' And I think I was, my parents divorced when I was 9 and I was living with my mother. And, um, probably over the last 3 years before I left, the relationship between my mother and I had really degenerated. And there was very little left by the time I left as a matter of fact, about half a year before, um, I actually moved to England, which is my first step, I remember sort of thinking, 'well OK, I'm going to be out there and I'll go away for a year, and I'll see what happens' and ah, my mother was not really involved in that whole process any more and she sort of I guess didn't think I would go. She wasn't sure what was going on, I'd become really independent by that stage. And when I actually left we got into this huge fight and I didn't talk to her for a couple of months I remember, until I went to visit for Christmas. And it took a couple of years before it was really, you know, mended again. And, probably, it's interesting that I ended up in an au pair programme, because what happens is you're place in another family. And having not really had a family I think, um, I was always looking for one when I was younger. I was always wanting to become part of my friend's families or, going to my aunts and uncles, staying somewhere there, and looking for a base I guess. Um, and so, by moving to England I, I ended up in this family structure, who took me in and made me become part of it, and that, I remember in a way giving them so much because I appreciated it so much but eventually it back lashed on me, um, because they started to expect more than I could give, and um, ya, it started to get a little bit complicated. Um (short pause), um, (short pause) so in a way I think I was searching for my identity, and for exploring who I am, as I never felt so much a relation with my family or relation in context of living in Holland. And in my school probably it was also because I was not part of the norm. I would get along with everyone but I did not feel that I fitted in with any group. And I learned in a way, out of necessity probably, to get along with everyone because you want to feel accepted, and safe, and loved, and um, I mean I can notice it now still and I have to think, ok, what is it that I want instead of placing myself in another's position and thinking how do they want me to be or what do they want, and moulding myself towards that image, um, so that is... (inaudible) (short pause).

R- If I've understood you correctly, it sounds a little bit like you were (pause) kind of looking for some place where you belonged?

P- Um, (short pause) probably, I don't, I don't wish for that very consciously, um, and I, I, didn't know at first what I was looking for maybe, but I was determined to form something on my own, that I would feel, and environment I could be myself and I could

feel comfortable in. And just the thought about, you know, I mean I even would go out and buy pots and pans and towels and I couldn't wait and I had visualizations of having my own apartment (both of us laughing a bit and P's voice rising) and that's all part of it I think and how I'd do it, you know, and I'd have comments like, often men would say to me, or boyfriends of my mom would say 'well you better learn how to cook' and I'd be like 'well, oh, I'll be fine, I can live on salads and chips (? not sure) and I can take care of myself fine, you know'. And I was very stubborn in that way, um, I can take care of myself and I don't need anyone else. Um, you know, that is also part of moving abroad and, sort of saying, well, I'll prove that I can do it on my own and I don't need anyone else and some of it is very painful (short pause).

R- Ya (pause). I'm wondering, just a little while ago you were saying that you had this sense that you were different in some way.

P- Ya.

R- Could you say a little more about that maybe? What makes you different?

P- Um, funny, I was talking to my mom (inaudible) about it yesterday, and we said to each other, 'well, Ok, you leave your home town, um, and now you've become different. So sometimes you have to wonder, 'oh, I wonder how it would be to be back in Holland since I connect more now with my culture the older I get. But then she said to me, don't forget - I (meaning P) felt I never fitted in in the first place. And I'm never quite sure how that sits with me, I never did feel like I fitted in. If I come back now, I do connect with that culture more than anything else, it's more like me. Well, I've grown so differently that I don't really fit in anymore. Um, and maybe I never fitted in in the first place, as far as I felt, although I think it probably is also my circumstances which made me not fit in, or, um, also made me not so accepted by society so much, because you know, I was a child of an only mother and I had feelings about my mother and, I never felt, I felt I had my own style didn't feel I had to follow a stream, and I've seen something I've already had my thoughts about and its like getting wisdom at a very early age, about the harshness that life can also give you. And um, I remember thinking when I was 9, when my parents divorced, that, and it's funny to remember it now, and I thought, you know, I'm really happy that they're divorced - it's better for my father, and it's better for my mother, and I was like, wow, it was like relief, and I was surprised at that moment at my own, you know, like oh (talking loudly with laughter) these thoughts to go through your head when you're 9, it's quite, a lot goes on in a child's mind I guess. And that's what forms the seed of feeling different maybe, or, um, not really always connecting with other people's ladedadeda lifestyles and getting new shoes and you know, being part of the cool movement, ya.

R- It sounds almost, you haven't said it this way, but almost like something happened that opened up, even at a very early age, opened up something different in you that maybe some of your classmates or other friends didn't...

P- Ya, well I think part of that is um, and that's another thing I remember vividly, one day I said to myself and that was at the age of 12 I remember that, and I said well, sounds like I'm going to have to take care of myself and, you know, sort of the idea that if I can't count on anyone, I might as well, this is it and um, 'face reality' (sort of laughs).

R- At the age of 12.

P- Ya. And so, so I'm very, you start thinking ... (inaudible) you start thinking more independently, you don't connect your decisions, or you don't connect you decisions to anyone else, its also like I didn't have a lot of guidance or support, um, people I could ask for you know, 'what should I be doing?', so it's like, Ok, well, I'll just have to learn about what I want to be doing, I'll just have to trust on my own abilities and um, ya, I mean it's funny because it breaks me up now, I had a nervous breakdown last summer, and it's really the second time that it, although the first time it wasn't really a nervous breakdown, I ended up in a really bad relationship because of it. And I know this myself, every time I'm overworking myself I have to really be aware, OK, slow down, do what you can and you'll be fine and it's always like creating this safe world you know, support for yourself. Um, and that I think originated very much with that when I was 12 – you're on your own, you have to make your own decisions and there wasn't really a base I could fall back on. I could be anywhere and in a way that releases a lot of ties and it's also a found freedom in a way, um, but it's important to learn how to balance that and I have a lot of friends who have become gypsies, you know, they move all over the place and somehow I really think they're looking for answers and, in all these places and it's not really what they want to find and they move on and you know I tell myself every time, OK, build something of a stability, because it probably will be important later on in your life, I'm starting to feel something is changing in me, um.

R- Um, can I just ask you, you said a little while ago and I want to see if I've understood this correctly, you said, um, you left Holland and you felt you never really fitted in there in some way (P- uh huh) and then you came here and you now feel it sounds like, a kind of pull, or you're now aware of a similarity between you and the culture back home, so there's some similarity (P- uh huh) but if I've understood you, you're also saying you've been away long enough that there's also a difference.

P- Hmmm. Um, I'm learning about it at the moment. Um, I lived in America for a while, six and a half years, and when I lived there I thought I felt home, and I realised I never really felt home towards the end of my stay there. I thought better for me to go back to Europe. So Europe as a whole became in my mind where my sense of self connects more with the culture. Now I'm in London and the funny thing is the more I go back to Holland the more I feel more at ease more relaxed, my tone of voice you know is more calm speaking in my native language. Um, and the funny thing is the last time I was on the boat to England, I actually suddenly noticed that a level of stress came in, it was like OK I have to you know, get ready again, or something changed there, it's like um, the feeling of being held I think, it's maybe it depends also a lot on which culture you come from, I find the Dutch culture is quite (inaudible) and living in a big city like London is less so but also your family is there and the circumstances you come into. And I become very aware of that very moment when 'oh, OK' I have to sort of become a little bit stronger again or um, yes, it's something very slight but it was quite significant for me to notice that. Which means I don't feel completely comfortable living in London although I tell myself all the time I'm fine. And it makes me wonder um, will I ever live in Holland again? I thought I never ever would and maybe I will, I'm thinking now maybe part-time for a few years, or a few years, months out of the year, but because my vision is open so much I either have to have a really international group of friends, that are like me, who I can also connect with, or travel a lot, or something of that sense. And I really don't know how that is going to change when I get older because you become calmer and you settle down more, and you need less

excitement or input. So I leave it open, yes there's a possibility, I really don't have an ideal set of um, this is where I'm going to be, probably is not going to be London, I could live in America, I might end up there, who knows, I might end up in Italy, but I might end up in Holland as well, and that's not excluded I think.

R- No, it sounds like something's changed so that, maybe for quite a while it wasn't something you really considered but now ...

P- Um, I must say in alignment with these ideas of you know, feeling more comfortable in the Dutch culture, is very much um, I've always been very closely connected to my father's family, and I've always sort of felt at home and at times I've come to Holland and I always make sure I visit them. Um, and, my connection with my parents, specifically with my mother, immensely changed, um, and my father is changing, I'm sort of getting to put my foot down and telling how I feel, and that is hugely affecting my tie with Holland. Um, and interesting enough the last time I was there I didn't really I had such good contact with my mother and her new husband, I never felt the need really, didn't really have the energy to go and visit my family which always was a big priority, and now, you know I didn't really see the need for myself or, so it is it's really a very big influence I think on how I feel in my culture because this is the essence of where you come to and this is from where you perceive maybe the environment. And as a child probably I perceived the environment to be you know reflected from what I sensed at home.

R- So your relationship to your parents and your kind of your home, early family life, has had a huge effect on your sort of whole feeling of being in that culture.

P- Ya, and on my confidence. I had no confidence when I was younger. And that affected very much how people, I used to become so much more sensitive, you react differently to what you (inaudible), my whole picture of my environment just became so dark you know, and it makes me sometimes imagine people who are homeless, and what it must be like for them. I mean it wasn't nearly as strong as that, but your home life, I think your base of where you come back to, um, I notice that I use this word quite a lot, is, is, from where you get connected to the rest of the world, and how you see maybe the rest of the world and what friends you start to make, and ah, the ability to feel safe and to um, um, express yourself and from that expression comes an exploration and becoming, like, sort of (pause).

R- So, I mean, taking that into account, what do you think was the real reason that you left your own culture?

P- Hmmm, (pause)... reason...

R- or motivation.

P- Motivation, um, I don't necessarily want to say to find another home, but maybe to create a home for myself. I wasn't looking to fit into another home, but I was saying I'll then create my own world. Um, and I don't mind where it takes me because I don't feel that this country is friendly enough that I could feel comfortable enough to have built that for myself. And anywhere else is, people are different, that's my perception, you know, it's sort of weird but (we laugh), it's like you can start afresh, people see you,

they don't know you so you can explore, and you can just build your ideal world as you want it. Um, and that was very much the idea in my mind, ya. (pause)

R- Can I move on and ask you another very general question. Maybe you've touched on some of this. But I'm wonder then if you can reflect back, you've been talking about why you left, when you left, some of the circumstances, where you've been, if you reflect back over all those years, how has it been for you? Has there been any surprises or unintended consequences, or generally, how's it been?

P- Ah, it's been a rollercoaster (we laugh) ah, I'm happy I did it, at this stage I think I'm, I notice there's actually tears in my eyes, it's, it's been hard, ya, um, (pause) I think you set out on a road. This is another thing, I, um, I'm not sure when this actually started. Towards the end of my teens I became very aware of my weight and the way I looked, and a lot of obsessive behaviour in a way and I would always, I just become aware of it and then when I moved away, I actually became anorexic, which I didn't know at the time. I moved from England to America and in America I got into a really horrible situation in which um I had no support whatsoever from the organisation I was with and um I mean there some pretty horrible memories in my mind about being moved around and not having clothes to keep myself warm enough and not being able to call home and stuff, and (pause) and then also writing extensively to my friends and desperate to be keeping in touch with them and feeling some kind of belonging and, I lost your question.

R- I was just wondering generally how it's gone. Sounds like a rollercoaster.

P- Oh ya, I was talking about, and then I became actually quite severely, in my memory, anorexic, which I think is a lot to do with being safe in the world and wanting to control something and making something happen. So, um, I moved from Atlanta to Chicago, and then from Chicago I decided I was going to move to California. I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do, and I think the minute I left Holland I said Ok, whatever's going to happen I'm going to accept it, and just deal with it, which has had a very positive effect on the way I deal with things, and um, whatever happens you deal with it and you make the best out of it. And looking back it actually was really hard, although when I was in it, it was hard but it was the way it was, and you know, you somehow work your way through and work your way through the bind and believe in yourself that it's going to happen. You gain a lot of strength from it. Um (pause) it's funny, I was thinking yesterday, there was a question about, I went to a workshop over the weekend, and there was a question about envy, and um my first reaction was I'm never really envious, couldn't connect with anything, and then I thought, wait a minute I'm actually, I see girls walking down the street my age and you know, wearing something nice or they look well taken care of, and I'm actually envious of them and I think um, this thought goes through my mind 'oh you've had it so easy' I mean it's not difficult for you to be so happy or to feel so carefree or, which I think tells me a lot about my own process at the moment, what I'm struggling with, but also goes back a lot to, I have had to struggle a lot and, and I have had to put up with things that other people would never put up with. Both in a sense of trying to establish yourself in a culture, learning about a new culture, but also, wanting to, make friends and wanting to be accepted and you sometimes, I sometimes ended up in awkward situations where I'd say like 'what am I doing?' or, then its interesting I moved to Los Angeles, which is quite a place without morals you could say (sort of laughs). And in a way you try to adapt to a culture because you try to find your new home, I think somewhere, and I was (inaudible) with

myself and I was 'I don't really agree with this' and why are people so weird, and why do they do these things, on the other hand, maybe I should become like them because I mean otherwise I'll never fit in and these two things, which made me have often a very strong opinion of how wrong society is, and sometimes swaying to the other direction and getting myself in quite dangerous situations and at the last minute saying you know, luckily I had some luck and I could pull myself out. It sort of this finding of what is the world really like and where do I fit in and who am I and all these questions just were with me for a very long time. What do I want to do with my life, um, what can I do, um, ya, I think its just this whole story past that started when I left.

R- And what I'm really wondering is if, I understand the search, there was some kind of a seeking, or something that lead you out there, (P- uh huh) and I'm wondering if, there's any kind of surprising unintended consequences in any way?

P- Um, I think all of it (we laugh) I really, everything has been much more than I ever could imagine in very positive ways and not necessarily in very negative ways, but things I'd never thought about. Um, (pause) I never thought I'd live in England, I envisioned myself maybe one time in my life taking a trip to America. I lived in the middle of Hollywood, I mean I met all the stars, you know everyone that everyone talks about, I worked in the movies, these things that are just unreal and you have a lot more courage, you, you just push and make things happen and that is the really positive side of it I think. Um, I, worked five jobs all at the same time, I mean (laughs) I ah, I got my driving license way before I thought I'd ever get it (we laugh). Um, I met an incredible array of people, from you know, from people I never hope to meet again to some really, it's like this discovery of the world and its like so enriching and so, and that's in a way why I can say I'm not sure if I want to live in Holland and just have my own little life again. Um,

R- Can I ask, what do you think that would be like if you went back to Holland? And you kind of felt well this is the one place where I'm the most similar to, maybe I'll try living here again? What do you think that would be like after being...

P- Ya, Depends on where I would live, I think if I were to live in Amsterdam, I would naturally create a very international circle of friends, or people who are working with a variation of things, or interesting things, or um, I'd probably be quite happy to live there. Maybe go back and forth and say 'ya, I want to take a trip here or there' but I could never live in a small city again like where I came from, although, when I was younger I already said this is not, this is not really me. There's more to life than this environment and these types of people, and that's quite a, I come from a very small city but also a city with a lot of crime, and a lot of, what do you call when families marry families and marry families (laughs)? The children become sort of... (we laugh). That feeling was around. And I lived in this when I was very young in which one sister lived on one side of the house, one sister on the other side, and one across... and the whole family was in the street, and we were the city people and I was always already the odd one out in that sense, or our family was and I wasn't good with the dialect so I started to learn the dialect when I was younger. Um, and that already gave me something like 'I don't really already fit in here'. And we eventually moved to the city next door, which was much more city but still had the same characteristics in a lot of ways...

R- And you recognised at a very early age that you didn't want to stay in that kind of world?

P- That I recognised, yes, and I think that didn't necessarily have to do with my home situation, with my parents, it was more with um, a whole need to expand, and I think that was already, maybe that's something in my character.

R- Just something...

P- Some drive, and somewhere I feel, and this is my personal belief, that maybe that's my road in life, that was predestined for me, or much more my personality, my character is much more, in a way, the life I'm living now is much more, um, sort of fits in more, or I don't know how to say this.

R- OK, a better fit with that something...

P- I find myself much more in it. Um, you know, you can wonder, is it because of what has happened in my life or is it something that was already, I don't know but it was something, its maybe not relevant...

R- I just want to ask one more thing about that, it might be a kind of strange question, what do you think you would have felt if you hadn't left. If you felt what you had been feeling at that age (P- ya) but for some reason you didn't leave, or you couldn't... what would that have been like for you, to have to stay there?

P- Um, (long pause), hmmm, I can say how I feel going back there now and looking at the people who have stayed there and how sad I feel for them. I think I've always had a very inquisitive mind, it's part of my make-up. Um, and maybe I would have moved away anyway, if my home situation had been fine. Um, it just happened that it was earlier than I really intended it to be, circumstances just coming together. Um, but I definitely knew that I wasn't going to stay in the place that I was, you know, put to grow up, as I sort of perceive it. I always thought that I would live in a bigger city because it's much more me. And my mother is like that, I mean my mother, maybe, it's part of the genes or, um, I think both my father and my mother are all over the place and they love to travel and um, but my mother lived in this village and she was terribly unhappy. Now she lives in the city and it's sort of a fit for her but it doesn't really work and she is a real city person and that's who she is and that's how she fits in the world in a way and she has always grown up in a village, so it's not that she experienced it and she wants to go back to it, it's part of her, I'm not quite sure, I think, I feel somewhere it's a, something happened in my life that pushed me to get out, but which I needed to do anyway.

R- Ya, cause I was thinking there may be quite a few children whose parents split up when they were quite young but who never leave their home town, yet for you it seems almost as if it were there anyway and the circumstances made it play out in a certain way or at a certain time... (P- ya_ there was something there that was sort of calling out to you... (P-ya)

P- Ya, ya, and funnily enough I never really planned to go to England but somehow you know how sometimes things in life just happen because you don't think about it, you just do them and that's why it sort of, I just started filling out these forms I never really thought about it. I never thought it would really happen or something in that sense and

one day I found myself in England and it was 'oh, what happened' (we laugh)? So there was something there that I didn't really logically make a decision on it. It was a natural progression and it was something that fell in my lap and it was like I had no choice, I may as well try it, I don't think it is going to work, but and it just was very natural how the whole, you know, everything fell in place and it was just meant to be, something like that. And then the interesting thing, if you say what were some surprises for me, living without any degree of certainty or focus has made me trust life much more in that I find myself in situations in which I really thought this is pretty bad and something magical would happen, I've always had the right indications from life, I've always known which way to go, it's always been very natural and people experience it when they go travelling, when they go backpacking, they always have the same experience, um, things always go how they expect, as they should be, although sometimes at the last minute, and I've noticed that for most of my life really, and which is um, and I talked about this with my roommate the other day, my old roommate who I lived with for four years, how things just fitted into place so amazingly that I knew in the morning when I was going to get a car accident or when I was going to get a speaking part in a movie, or how many, how stressful that day was going to be, or who'd call me, or, I was really very much in touch with that. Every time, it's happened twice my car broke down and my roommate would come by and you know, at that same moment and pick me up and these are just, I knew it when my brother was in jail in Africa, and it was very stressful and in the middle of the night I woke up and ran to my roommates and I said 'he's just made it, he's escaped, and he's free' and she didn't even question me, she said 'ya, great', and eight hours later my mom calls up and she's like 'oh your brother's in Botswana' you know, he made it and that was quite normal to me, I lived by that and, um, I've lost it a little bit now, which, it's a pity in a way, but I have the feeling it's because I'm much more in my head, thinking about things and you know, the academic work and so maybe it's a temporary thing, but I very much come to trust in, I very much started to believe in, in necessity of life, the laws of life, according to the necessity of becoming aware or learning or growing and every experience is tailored to that. So that's something about what I believe, which I can't share with a lot of people because people often think I'm a bit off the... but it makes sense to me somehow (laughs).

R- Is there anything else you'd like to say about this whole thing?

P- Um, how it's interesting how things come together, how who I am today is so much um, so much formed by my experiences in life, you know, my personality is really what is, happened to me, and I say happened in the sense that I haven't always made the choices, choices mostly have been made for me and I trust that you know, that I don't really have to make choices and I don't really have to aim so much, it's got to work out as it should. It feels very comfortable, it takes a lot of stress off me now.

R- Can I ask, how about leaving home originally, was that like a choice or was it almost like inevitable or something?

P- Um, there was a choice that I wanted to leave at 18, as a matter of fact I left at 17, just a few months before my birthday. It worked out more like that although if I hadn't moved to England I probably would have found a way somehow to get an apartment somewhere else or some other solution to being on my own. Um, that was a very conscious decision that I wanted to be on my own but never that I would go to England, so... so ya.

R- Are you OK to move on to the next part? (P-ya. R checks tape and flips it over not realising that it has auto-reverse and it would have flipped itself!).

R- (finishing talking about something before tape starts...)

P- Um, well. Personally I'm often struggling with, um, do I need to make decisions or do I just need to let go? And society seems to say, make decisions, make decisions, you know, you can't do this, what are you, in the air or something? And my sense of self says, no, just let go, take it easy and things will happen (laughs). I mean in a way you can't change life and I think there's somehow also a connection of the two, sometimes I think I might be too much to one side, but I'm trying to find myself in there I guess, so,

R- How much to trust things will just happen as they should...

P- How are we predestined and how much control do we have, probably, ya. And I'm testing it constantly (laughs) as if... (inaudible, we laugh)...

R- ya, (laughing) my life the experiment.

P- ya, (laughing) that's how I see it I guess.

R- Ok, what I'd like to ask now is if you'd feel OK to just take a moment and reflect upon your experience of all of this, all the different things you've said, just down inside, what kind of a feeling does it bring in you...

P- makes me feel, feeling, (pause) sort of like OK, go with the flow, sometimes thinking I really wonder what it's going to bring up for me because I know some things are very sensitive, um, looking back over sort of the whole emotions throughout our last 45 minutes it's gone from really sad to really high and everything was in there. And this is how I feel, and I think I feel, um, I feel the story of my life, I can really connect with my own sad moments, and I sometimes get really sad. But I enjoy it somehow as well. And I have these really high moments, so, um, I feel it's a relief somehow at this moment, I mean, um, and I notice how much I enjoy to talk about my experience with someone who seems to somehow connect I think because you do make a lot of friends but friends always seem, the type of friends I make seem to move around themselves, I do feel that I have this, there's this deeper connection, deeper understanding, um, but often, sometimes that is briefly talked about, but you're still in your own process, I feel it very much to be um, well sometimes alone in the world and maybe this is why I like existentialism so much because this is really what I believe, ultimately we're alone in the world and yet you, you know, I, its about my process and my experience and I'm responsible for myself, um (pause), everyone is, ya, and, I don't know, sometimes I wonder, well, if its right way I'm attracted to that, um, or we have very different experiences and ya, so I feel, I feel like I've opened up something and it's a little vulnerable, but at the same time I feel excited. There's this feeling inside of me.

R- (inaudible)

P- Ya, it's like a warm, sort of, you know you want to swallow, sort of it's like these feelings combined.

R- And would it feel Ok to just stay with that feeling for a minute, and see what comes from that?

P- Ya (long pause). Somehow I feel like I want to find some calm, I feel still a little bit rushed, and it comes from um, (pause) I think this is where I connect with my jealousy as well, um, about other girls my age, it comes from not having this sense of um, holding, or and I always feels a little bit rushed I never feel (pause) ya, really at ease or, um, I guess maybe that's what I feel when I go back home, sort of like whew (indicates) like letting go completely...

R- just to really relax in some way... (P- Ya)

R- How do you feel in there about all of that now?

P- Um, (long pause) with this sort of tension I feel sort of a beating of my heart, um, looking for warmth I think, I think that's the sense, um (pause) and what often happens is, I provide it all for myself, and, um, (pause) and I don't really let people often come close I don't trust other people to give it to me because they can take it away again. This is sort of funny, this sort of touches on a different area, but I tend to have boyfriends who grow up in other countries, and you know in one way the world feels small and it's just an airplane away but it's not close and I don't want to live in their country because it's their environment and I've done that before and it worked out not very well. And at the same time I need that calm and that support, it's something I crave for, um, the feeling of stability maybe, and I can depend on something or someone or some environment or, um, and I think you can recreate that outside of your home country, I don't see that to be a problem, I just think it's quite complicated. It takes a long time.

R- Is there anything else you'd like to add, any comments or anything?

P- Ya, something about I've come to make very logical decisions I think rather than from my emotions, um, I think this has more to do with my family situation and moving out. Ya, I'm not quite sure what... (inaudible). Sort of like you protect yourself much more I think, moving away, being so alone in another country, um, you have an extra protection barrier around you to try to keep your own identity and your own values and your own feeling safe, and um, it's always a little unstable you know.

R- Thank you very much for taking part... (talk about practical process of rest of study).

Leaving Home

1. I've been thinking about this.
2. I thought that I left to get the space to develop myself away from other's expectations.
3. Now looking back it is more true to say I never felt at home where I was born.
4. I didn't fit in at school.
5. Since the age of 12 I was waiting to move away but didn't plan to go abroad.
6. I felt lost when my art school plans fell through (as part of going away).
7. My parents divorced when I was 9, my relationship with my mother deteriorated before I left home.
8. Moving to England was the first step. I was already very independent.
9. Big fight with mother when I left.
10. I became an au pair. I was looking for a family because I felt I didn't have one.
11. I was always looking for a family as a base since I was young.
12. I became part of the English family and I appreciated it so much that I gave a lot until it back-lashed. They expected too much.
13. So, I was searching for my identity, exploring who I am.
14. I never felt much relation to my family, my school, or my country. I didn't fit in.
15. I didn't fit into the norm at school. I got along with everyone to feel accepted, safe, loved, but did not belong to any group.
16. I still notice the tendency to try to be what I think others want instead of who I am. To not mould myself to that image.

(you were looking for some place you belonged?)

1. Probably but not consciously. I didn't know what I was looking for but I was determined to feel something of my own, where I could be myself and feel comfortable.
2. I couldn't wait to have my own place, I dreamed of how I'd do it and bought pots and pans.
3. I stubbornly insisted that I could take care of myself. I don't need anyone else.
4. Part of moving abroad was proving I can do it on my own and I don't need anyone else.
5. Some of it is very painful.

(what makes you different?)

1. I am different because I left my country. But my mother reminded me that I felt I never fit in even before I left.
2. Now I am older I connect more with my culture and think of returning. My home culture is more like me than anything else. But I don't fit in now after being away and maybe I never did.

3. My specific family circumstances were a part of not fitting in, divorced parents, feelings about my mother, not acceptable to society.
4. I had my own style, didn't feel I had to follow others, I had a wisdom about the harshness of life before my time.
5. I was relieved and happy that my parents divorced. I was surprised at my own thoughts at age 9 years.
6. Those kind of thoughts at that age is what forms the seed of feeling different or not always connecting with other's trying-to-fit-in laded lifestyle.

(something opened in you at an early age that made you different from your classmates?)

1. Yes. At the age of 12 I realised I couldn't count on anyone and had to face the reality that I had to take care of myself.
2. I started to think more independently, without support, not connecting my decisions to others.
3. I had to trust my own abilities.
4. Now I've had two nervous breakdowns because of it. And a very bad relationship.
5. I have to look after myself, create my own safe world, support myself.
6. This originated from age 12 when I realised I was on my own, without a base to fall back on, I had to make my own decisions.
7. This released a lot of ties, I could be anywhere, it was like freedom. But it needs to be balanced.
8. I have a lot of gypsy friends who move all over and I think they are looking for answers and not finding them in these places.
9. I tell myself to try to build some stability. I think it will be important later in life.
10. I feel something is changing in me.

(you now feel similar to your home, a pull back, but also you've been away long enough to be different?)

1. I'm learning about that at the moment.
2. I lived in America 6 1/2 years and thought it was home till near the end of my time there.
3. In my mind Europe became where my sense of self was more connected to the culture, so I went back.
4. Now I'm in London and when I visit home I feel more relaxed, my voice is more calm speaking my native language.
5. Returning to London I notice stress and feeling held, like I have to get ready again.
6. I am really aware now of that moment of having to become a bit stronger.
7. This means to me that I'm not as comfortable as I tell myself about living in London.
8. Makes me wonder if maybe I'll go back to my home country, which I never thought I'd do.
9. I would need international friends, like me, or to travel a lot.

10. As I get older I will get calmer and settle down more and need less excitement or input, so it's possible I'll move back.
11. I don't have an ideal of where I'll be, where I'll end up.

(now you consider your home country in those future possibilities?)

1. Feeling more comfortable in my own culture is connected to remaining closely connected to my father's family. Feeling at home with them.
2. Being able to stand up to my parents, changing those relationships, also hugely affects my tie with my home country.
3. Better contact in my relationship to my mother and her new husband is a really big influence on how I see my home culture.
4. I had no confidence when younger and that made me sensitive and my whole environment became dark.
5. My home, my base, is where I get connected to the rest of the world, how I see the world, what friends I make, the ability to feel safe, to express myself and from that expression comes exploration.

(taking what you've said into account, what was the real reason you left your own culture?)

1. I don't want to say to find another home. I wasn't looking to fit into another home.
2. Maybe to create a home for myself. To create my own world.
3. I don't mind where this takes me but not here, it's not friendly enough.
4. In a new place you can start afresh, you can explore and build your own ideal world because people don't know you.
5. That was the idea in my mind.

(If you reflect back, how has it been for you? Surprises, unintended consequences?)

1. A rollercoaster.
2. I'm happy I did it.
3. There are tears in my eyes.
4. It's been hard.
5. You set out on a road.
6. In my teens I became obsessed about weight and appearance. When I moved away I became anorexic. I moved from England to America and had a horrible experience and no support.
7. I became desperate to keep in touch with friends back home and to feel some kind of belonging.
8. My anorexia seemed to be about being safe in the world, wanting to control something, making something happen.
9. I moved around America. I didn't know what I wanted to do. When I left my home country I said to myself I will accept whatever happens, deal with it,

which has had a positive effect on how I make the best of things. It was very hard.

10. I could work through the difficult things as they were happening and just believe in myself. It gave me a lot of strength.
11. I realise I'm envious of girls I see who look well taken care of and I think they've had it easy compared to me. It's easy for them to be happy or carefree. My response tells me both about myself and about what I've had to put up with in my life.
12. I've had to struggle to establish myself in a culture, learning about it, wanting to make new friends, wanting to be accepted.
13. I sometimes ended up in awkward situations where I wondered what I was doing.
14. I tried to adapt to a new culture to find my new home. I had to choose between things I didn't understand or agree with and thinking maybe I should be the same to fit in. I swayed between feeling how wrong society is and getting into dangerous situations. I was finding out what is the world really like and where do I fit in and who am I, what do I want to do with my life and what can I do? This all started when I left.

(any surprising or unintended consequences?)

1. All of it. It has been much more than I could imagine in very positive ways and not in very negative ways. Some things I never thought about or places I never thought I'd live.
2. I experienced things that seem unreal, to live in Hollywood, meet the big stars, work in the movies. It gave me a lot more courage. I just pushed and made things happen. That is the positive side. I worked 5 jobs at once. Got my driving license. It's like a discovery of the world, very enriching. That's why I'm not sure if I want to live in my home country and just have my own little life again.

(what do you think it would be like if you did return home to live?)

1. Depends on where I would live. I would probably be quite happy to live in a place where I could have international friends, variety of people doing interesting things. Being able to travel still, go back and forth.
2. I could never live in a small city like where I came from. I knew it wasn't right for me even when I was young. There's more to life than that environment and those people (jokes about in-breeding).
3. Whole families would live on one street. We were considered the city people in our town, making me the odd one out. I had to learn the local dialect, which was another indication that I don't belong here.
4. My wanting to leave when I was young was not about my home experience but a 'whole need to expand', maybe something in my character, a drive, my road in life, maybe predestined, something that fits my personality. I don't know how to say this.
5. I don't know if it relates to what happened in my life or if it was something that was already there.

(so what would it have been like to have stayed?)

1. I feel sad for the people who have stayed there (in my home city).
2. I've always had an inquisitive mind – it's part of my makeup.
3. I definitely knew I wasn't going to stay in the place I was put to grow up. I moved earlier because of circumstances but I would not have stayed. It's much more me to live in a bigger city.
4. My parents also love to travel. My mother is unhappy in villages although she's always grown up in one. She is a real city person.
5. I feel that something happened in my life that pushed me to get out, but that I needed to anyway.

(Like the circumstances were interacting with something that was already there calling to you)

1. Sometimes things in life just happen without thinking. I didn't plan to come to England. I just found myself here.
2. There was something there, not a logical decision, it was a natural progression. It was like it was meant to be.
3. It was a surprise to find that living without certainty or focus makes me trust life more. Something magical happens even in bad situations.
4. I've known which way to go, it often happens when people travel, things go how they should, they fit into place. Like very beneficial 'coincidences' (my word) happen.
5. I lived by and trusted that sense of life and I've lost it a little bit now I think it's because I'm much more in my head, doing academic work.
6. I came to trust in the necessity of life, the laws of life, every experience is tailored to becoming aware or learning or growing. I don't share that with a lot of people because they don't understand.

(anything else?)

1. It's interesting how things come together. Who I am today is formed by my experiences – my personality *is* what has happened to me.
2. Things have happened to me. Choices have been made without me making them and I trust that I don't have to direct things so much, it will just work out as it should. It feels comfortable to know this, it takes a lot of stress off me.

(was leaving home originally a choice or inevitable?)

1. It was a very conscious decision that I wanted to leave by 18 to live on my own. Where I went, England, was not a conscious decision.
2. I struggle with the question of whether I need to make decisions or just to let go. Society says make decisions. My sense is that things will happen. I'm trying to

find myself in that knowledge that we can't change life. I'm constantly testing how much we are predestined and how much we are in control.

(what kind of a feeling does all this bring inside for you?)

1. A feeling of sort of go with the flow. During the session I've felt from really sad to really high and everything. This is how I feel the story of my life. I sometimes get really sad but I enjoy it as well. I also have really high moments. Right now it's relief. I enjoy talking about my experiences to someone who connects. My friends move around often. I have this deeper understanding that is sometimes briefly talked about. But I'm still in my own process and I feel alone in the world, ultimately we're alone in the world. I responsible for myself. I feel like I've opened up something and it's a little vulnerable and exciting, this feeling inside.
2. It's like all these feelings combined and its warm and I want to swallow. I feel like I want to find some calm, I still feel a bit rushed. I think this is where I connect with my jealousy about other girls my age. It's related to not having a sense of holding, I never feel at ease. I guess I feel that when I go back home, like whew, letting go completely.
3. I feel tension and a sort of beating of my heart. Looking for warmth I think. I provide it all for myself and I don't really trust people to give it to me because they can take it away again, I don't really let them come close. I tend to have boyfriends who grew up in other countries and although the world seems small, it's not close. I don't want to live in their country, their environment, but I need that calm, support, I crave for it. Maybe it's a feeling of stability. The feeling that I can depend on someone or something or some environment. I think that can be recreated outside one's own country, that's not a problem, but it takes a long time and is complicated.
4. I've come to make logical rather than emotional decisions. I think this is to do with my family situation, moving out. It's like I protect myself much more because I moved away and am so alone in another country. It's like an extra protection barrier to keep my identity and values and feeling safe and it's always a little unstable.

I left home to develop my own identity/self

1. I've always had my own style and didn't feel I had to just follow what others were doing. I was different, partly because I had wisdom about the harshness of life.
2. Having an inquisitive mind is part of my makeup.
3. I thought that I left home in order to get the space to develop myself away from other's expectations. I was searching for my identity. I don't know what I was looking for but I was determined to feel something of my own.
4. I needed a place where I could be myself and feel comfortable enough to explore who I am. Maybe I left to create a home for myself, to create my own world. I was finding out what the world is really like so I could find my place in it and discover who I am. Then I could think about what I wanted to do with my life, and what I was capable of doing. This all started when I left home.
5. Who I am today is formed by my experiences – my personality *is* what has happened to me.
6. After living in America for a while, in my mind Europe became where my sense of self was more connected to the culture, so I went back. It's like I need an extra protection barrier to keep my identity and values and safety when I'm in a foreign place, and its always a little unstable. I protect myself much more because I moved away and am so alone in another country.

Reflections

There has always been an uneasy tension between M's need to develop her own identity and her desire to feel welcome in a community. She was always aware that her experience had made her different from others. Yet she needed a neutral space where she could delve into the self she was trying to become. Exploring the world offered the possibility that perhaps she would find a place where she could create a 'self-home'. She has now become a 'person' through her experiences and she has discovered the importance to her of an environment where her own sense of self is more in keeping with the culture, thus she has returned closer to home. Being in a foreign culture paradoxically requires extra protection to safeguard her original values, which she is discovering are, to some extent, also her own.

I never felt at home/fit in

1. Looking back it is most true to say that I left home because I never felt at home where I was born. I didn't fit in at school. I didn't fit into the norm at school. I got along with everyone to feel accepted, safe, loved, but did not belong to any group.
2. I never felt much relation to my family, my school, or my country.
3. My specific family circumstances were a part of not fitting in, divorced parents, feelings about my mother, not acceptable to society.

4. I had my own style and didn't feel I had to follow others.
5. At an early age I had thoughts about my parents and life that formed the seeds of feeling different or not always connecting with other's trying-to-fit-in laded a lifestyles.
6. Later on when I was away I became desperate to keep in touch with my friends back home and to get some kind of feeling of belonging from this.

Reflections

M always felt different from others, including her family and peers and her whole culture. She didn't fit into the conventional concerns of classmates but she worked to be accepted by everyone in order to have a feeling of safety and belonging. Paradoxically, wanting to belong to every group meant she didn't belong to any of them. There is confusion about why she didn't fit in, was it something about her own being, her way of coping with her parent's troubles, or something about other's reactions to her family circumstances? There seems an ambiguity about not fitting in, finding it difficult and trying to fit in, compared with not needing to fit in and a valuing of being different (and devaluing of conventional lifestyles). After living as a foreigner, M began to value her connection to friends at home as a way of feeling some kind of belonging in the world.

The plan to leave was a reaction to family circumstances

1. My parents divorced when I was 9 and my relationship with my mother began to deteriorate. My parent's divorce and my feelings towards my mother contributed to my not fitting into my childhood environment. I felt relief when my parents divorced and was surprised at my mature reaction at such a young age.
2. Since the age of 12 I was planning to move away, though I didn't plan where I'd go or that I'd leave the country.
3. I realised at this age that there was no one I could count on, so I had to take care of myself. I started to live and make decisions independently. I had to rely on myself, create my own safety, support and trust myself. This released my ties to others and I felt an unbalanced kind of freedom.
4. Going to art school was one way out and I felt lost when this fell through.
5. I had a big fight with my mother when I left for England.
6. In England I worked with a family, which was important to me because I never felt I had a family. In fact, I had been looking for the solid base a family would give me since I was young. However it doesn't seem right to say I was trying to find another home to fit into.
7. It is also true to say that I had no confidence when I was younger, making me sensitive and making the world seem like a dark place.
8. My circumstances made me leave home earlier, but I would not have stayed anyway.

Reflections

M has what sometimes seem to be contradictory understandings of her reasons for leaving home. The lack of security in her home life contributed to her ability to leave but was not the reason - she would have left anyway. She had to develop her ability to support herself and could rely only on herself but she also says that she lacked confidence and felt sensitive at this young age. Her independence gave her a dizzying kind of freedom that needed to be balanced by some kind of belonging. Her family circumstances gave her the freedom to leave and the motivation to find a place where she might feel secured, though at the same time it does not seem right for her to say her motivation was to find an alternative family that could give her what her own parents could not. It sounds as if M had to grow up too fast and has been trying to balance the value she places on independence with the need to also belong somewhere.

The significance of divorce and changing family relations

1. My specific family circumstances were a part of not fitting in, divorced parents, feelings about my mother, these are not acceptable to society.
2. My parents divorced when I was 9 and my relationship to my mother deteriorated before I left home at 18.
3. I was always looking for a family as a base since I was young.
4. I was relieved and happy that my parents divorced, surprising thoughts for a 9 year old. Those early thoughts formed the seeds of feeling different and not always connecting with other's loaded lifestyles.
5. I also had to face being self-supporting, realising I didn't have a secure base to fall back on.
6. Being able to stand up to my parents, better contact with my mother and her new husband, and remaining closely connected to my father's family, are important parts of changing my relation to my home culture so I feel more at home there.

Reflections

The situation between M's parents created an instability in the family that had a profound effect on M's development. Dealing with this situation made M feel different from others and she had to learn to look after herself and could not depend upon others. This realisation sped up the pre-existing desire to leave home and to find a kind of home stability that she had lost. Now in her life she is changing these family relationships and this is having a positive effect on her ability to feel at home back in her original culture. Her feelings for her home culture seem quite connected to the quality of her family relationships.

Independence

1. At 12 I realised I had no choice but to be independent and look after myself, so I was already very independent when I moved to England. I couldn't wait to have my own place. I dreamed of how I'd do it and bought pots and pans. I stubbornly insisted that I could take care of myself.
2. I was determined to feel something of my own, where I could be myself and feel comfortable.

3. Moving away was partly to show I don't need anyone else, I can do it on my own. Having to think for myself and making my own decisions released ties to others. I got strength from working through difficult things as they were happening and I came to believe in myself. I provide it all for myself and don't really trust others to give me warmth etc. because they can take it away again.
4. Some of this is very painful.

Reflections

M's independence developed early in response to her parent's divorce and her family circumstances. Her experience was that she only had herself to rely upon and this brought freedom and possibilities but it was also very insecure. M insisted she could look after herself and moving away was a way to prove that. M came to believe in her ability to look after herself when she was alone out in the world. She provided her own support and warmth rather than be let down by others. Some of this development has been very painful for M.

Influence of the other

1. I used to think I left home to escape other's expectations.
2. I appreciated being a part of a family as an au pair so much that I gave too much of myself.
3. I can still notice the tendency to try to be what I think others want me to be instead of who I am. I resist moulding myself to that image. In my teens I became obsessed about weight and appearance.
4. Wanting to make new friends and wanting to be accepted is a struggle in a new culture. Sometimes I think I should be the same as others in order to fit in. I sway between disagreeing with society and getting into dangerous situations when I put fitting in first.
5. I had to learn the local dialect in the little town where we lived in order not to be the odd one out.

Reflections

M acknowledges the influence of other's expectations and her need for approval. Expectations at home need to be escaped while expectations when away need to be adapted to, to some extent. There is something more difficult about trying to be accepted in a new culture. There can be a pull to try to appease the other but M resists this. There is a tension between wanting to be accepted and wanting to be who she is.

Different levels of, or conflicting, understandings

1. I used to think I left home to get space to develop and to escape other's expectations. Now I think it's more true to say I never felt at home there anyway.
2. I was looking for a family because I felt I didn't have one. I was probably looking for some place I belonged *but not consciously*. The real reason I left home wasn't to find another home. My wanting to leave when I was young was not about my home experiences but more about my whole need to expand, something in my character.
3. The lack of a secure base at home made it necessary to be independent and this made it easier to leave. I make logical decisions (not emotional ones) and I don't make, don't have to make, logical decisions, or any decisions

Reflections

M presents various contradictions in her understandings of leaving home, why she left and what she was looking for or needing to experience. At times there seem to be different versions of the story she tells of her life, emphasising different aspects. At the very least the whole experience of leaving, including the motivations to leave, are complicated and not answered by any one motive or interpretation.

Philosophical-Spiritual Perspectives (Mysteries)

1. You set out on a road, and my wanting to leave was about a whole need to expand.
2. Maybe it was something in my character, a drive, my road in life, maybe predestined, something that fits my personality. I don't know how to say this. I don't know if it's related to my own biography or if it was already there.
3. I definitely knew I wasn't going to stay in the place I was *put* to grow up. I feel that something happened in my life that pushed me to get out, but that I needed to go anyway.
4. Somethings in life just happen without thinking, they are just a natural progression. Like I just found myself in England, it was just meant to be. Living without certainty or focus makes me trust life more. Something magical happens even in bad situations. I've just known which way to go, things fit into place and happen as they should, as often happens when people travel. Like very beneficial coincidences or synchronicities happen. I've lived by and trusted that sense of life, though I've lost it a bit now, doing academic work, being in my head. I came to trust in the necessity of life, the laws of life, every experience is tailored to becoming aware or learning or growing. I don't tell that to many people because they don't understand. Things have happened to me. Choices have been made without me making them and I trust that I don't have to direct things so much, it will just work out as it should. It feels comfortable to know this, it takes a lot of stress off me.
5. Leaving was a conscious decision but where I went, England, was not. I struggle with the question of whether I need to make decisions or just let go. Society says make decisions but my sense is that things will happen. I'm trying to find myself in that knowledge that we can't change life. I'm constantly testing how much we are predestined and how much we are in control.

6. I have this deeper understanding that is sometimes briefly talked about.

Reflections

There is a mysterious level to life that is difficult to understand or explain. Feeling the need to leave home is an example of this level. It seems as if there is something pre-existing in us or preordained, a calling that has to be followed and that does not need to be consciously manoeuvred. It is a level that can be trusted but most people are not guided by it. Travelling out in the world creates a condition where this can be followed.

What has life been like for you since leaving home?

1. Leaving has made me a different person. Although it's been a rollercoaster and quite hard, I'm glad I left, it brings tears to my eyes to say this.
2. When I left my country I told myself I would accept whatever happens and deal with it. This has had a positive effect on my ability to make the best of things but it's been hard.
3. The journey has been very unexpected and mostly positive. I've experienced things that seem unreal, like Hollywood, working in movies. It's been a very enriching discovery of the world.
4. In new places you can start afresh. Makes me uncertain if I could really live back home and have just my own little life again.
5. I feel something is changing in me and I tell myself to try to build more stability for later in life. As I get older I will get calmer and settle down, need less excitement so I might move back home.
6. I feel sad for the people who never left.

Reflections

There is something deeply emotional about talking of leaving home and what it's been like. But it's also experienced as positive and enriching. Discovery is valued. Comparing leaving home to not leaving it is clear that there is regret for those who stayed at home and didn't leave.

Difficult consequences of leaving

1. It was difficult with the English family I lived with, they expected too much, I gave too much, and it back-lashed.
2. Some of my experiences have been very painful.
3. I've been in bad relationships, found myself in very bad situations, and had two breakdowns because of how much I had to rely on myself. I had anorexia after moving away. It was about trying to be safe in the world, wanting to control something, making something happen.
4. It takes a long time to try to create safety in a foreign environment.

5. I feel envious of other girls who look well taken care of. I think they've had it easy compared to me. It's easy for them to be carefree or happy. I never really feel held or at ease.
6. I know a lot of friends who continue to try to find answers by moving all over but they aren't finding answers. My friends are also migrants and my boyfriends are foreigners but I don't want to live in their country, their environment, but I crave for the support of a relationship.
7. I don't feel I can depend on anything. I notice the stress in me when I'm living in London and it means I have to be stronger. I'm not as comfortable as I tell myself I am about living here, it's not friendly enough.
8. It's a struggle to get established in a new culture.
9. There is sadness, but also joy in the story of my life.
10. I feel very alone and responsible for myself. I am now different because I left my country. I protect myself more because I moved away and am so alone in a foreign country. It's an extra protection to safeguard my identity, values, and safety. Its always a little unstable.

Reflections

Although there is no regret about leaving home it has been very difficult and painful at times. It has been lonely and requires a lot of self-support. It would have been easier to be taken care of by someone but this can also be difficult. There is a lot of insecurity and stress in heading out into foreign places. M's Boyfriends and friendships are usually with other people who have left home, so they have this experience in common. M's experiences have made her different in a way that would make returning home difficult.

Looking for Home, returning home, and what it would mean

1. I couldn't wait to make my own place, doing it up, buying things for it. My home is my base, where I connect to the rest of the world. It includes what friends I make, the ability to feel safe, to express myself, and from that expression comes exploration.
2. I had the idea that I can start over fresh in a new place. I can explore and build an ideal world because people don't know me. But it requires adaptation to make a new place home and that's hard.
3. I thought America was home for a while but Europe is where my sense of self fits the culture more so I came back. When I visit home I feel more relaxed and calm, speaking my native language. Returning to London I notice stress and preparing myself to be stronger.
4. Makes me think I might return home, something I thought I'd never do. As I get older I will feel calmer, settle down, need less input, so going home might be an option. As I age I connect more with my own culture – its more like me than anywhere else. But I never fit in there and now even more since I've been away. But I think of returning home, where I think I could let go completely. But I'd need to travel and have international friends if I returned home. I could not live in a small place like where I came from. There's more to life than that and those people.
5. I don't have an ideal of where I should settle.

Reflections

Having one's own physical space and like-minded friends is important for M. It is a safe base from which to expand into the world. Ideally it is possible to start over in foreign places but there really has to be a match between the person and the place. Maybe for M she is realising through her experiences of being foreign, that her home, where she never felt at home, is actually the best match for her. This means that the possibility of returning home, after years of rejecting it, is now present again. However, the return home would be different in that the opening onto the big world would need to be maintained somehow.

The Feelings evoked by the interview

1. A feeling of go with the flow.
2. Feeling really sad to really high and everything in-between. This is a reflection of how my whole life story has felt.
3. I also feel relief talking about this to someone who can connect to it.
4. I feel like I've opened up something and it's vulnerable and exciting. It feels warm and like I need to swallow.
5. I still feel a bit rushed and I want to find some calm. I feel tension and my heart beating.

Reflections

The topics covered have a deep emotional significance to M. She could feel some of what it really felt like to live through these events. It is a relief to be able to talk through these things in a way that she usually can't. It's hard to find people who can relate to the experience of having left home. Something has shifted and opened during the interview.

Unthematized Meaning Units

1. It's much more me to live in a bigger city. My parents also love to travel. My mother is also a real city person though she grew up in a village.

1. Sense of Self/Identity

- A high value is associated with developing a sense of self apart from the influence of others.
- Experiencing the harshness of life makes one grow up, creating a distance from one's peers, which results in a sense of difference. Most others are more naïve about life.
- Personality is something that forms in interaction with what happens to us.
- Moving to a foreign culture can make apparent how much one has in common with one's original culture. Being in a foreign place can be a threat to one's sense of self, which remains more related to one's original culture. When your sense of self and the culture have more in common you don't have to protect yourself so much.
- There is a tension between needing space from what is familiar in order to develop one's identity and needing to protect one's identity from what is foreign.
- On the one hand one's identity needs to be kept safe from the influence of others and also what one becomes is the result of our experiences. There seems to be a paradox regarding relationships with the world in which the world is a threatening influence on developing one's self and also the very possibility of its development.

2. Never belonging anywhere

- Even from an early age one can have a feeling of not belonging. In fact it seems possible to never feel 'at home' at home.
- Getting along with everyone can be a way of feeling safe when one does not feel a belonging anywhere. Paradoxically, this strategy maintains the experience of not belonging to any one group.
- Individuals try to make sense of their feeling of not fitting in – alternating between explanations of family circumstances, individual sensitivities, experiences that separate self from peers.
- Not feeling a sense of belonging at home makes it easier to leave home.
- At some point the need for belonging can lead back to familiar relationships from one's origin.

3. Family circumstances are a significant factor in leaving home

- Divorce and resulting deterioration in maternal relationships contributed to alienation from childhood surroundings. It seems as if this led to a need to grow up too fast.
- At a young age, having to care for oneself produces unbalanced feelings of independence and freedom without necessary ties to others.

- Moving away did not discourage the search for a base that could offer security – family-style solid relationships (ones that can be counted on) continue to act as the possibility for grounding one's independence but this is not a desire to replace what was missing in own upbringing.
- Parental instability can hasten a pre-existing plan to leave home.
- Relief at parental divorce serves to reinforce one's early maturity, independence, and difference from childhood peers.
- Feelings about national culture are closely connected to family relationships – as family relations are resolved, feeling at home in own culture is more possible.

4. Independence as a personal characteristic

- Having to be independent (not having support) can become a valuing of independence in order to show others that their support is not needed anyway. Proving this to others can be an important motive.
- Independence begets independence – the more one has the more one becomes more independent from others.
- This degree of self-reliance is partly a protection from being let down again and it carries with it emotional pain.

5. Tension of responding to the other

- Other's expectations can be experienced as demands that must be met even if it means putting the other before oneself.
- There is a tension between resisting other's expectations (society), and trying to meet them (fitting into society).
- In a foreign culture being accepted can be assumed to be dependent upon transforming oneself to be the same as people in that culture.
- Other's expectations in the home environment are easier to resist than expectations when one is a stranger in a foreign environment.
- Being singled out is to be avoided yet fitting in implies a sacrifice of some kind.

6. Conflicting motives or contradictory understandings in narrative

- The whole experience of leaving home, including motivations to leave, are complicated and not answered by any one motive or interpretation.
- P emphasises the importance of independence and the competing need for approval, to belong somewhere (or to someone). This is detailed in the narrative about home as a place of imposition and not belonging but also as a possible place of providing security and a base for independence.
- Contradictions may simply be highlighting the dichotomies that need to be balanced.

7. Wider perspectives on life (spiritual or philosophical)

- Leaving home expresses a deeper level to life, a whole need to expand beyond the place where P was PUT to grow up.
- The need to leave is mysterious – perhaps personality, an underlying drive, a predestined path in life.
- Life can be viewed as governed by a calling or law and this can be trusted as something to guide choices by. This raises a question of how much the individual needs to make conscious decisions and how much things will unfold along lines that are predestined.
- Travelling out in the wider world exposes a person to the deeper mysteries in life.

8. Consequences of leaving home

- It is deeply emotional to recognise and talk about how leaving ones home country makes one a different person so that returning home will not bring necessarily be a return to the familiar.
- Leaving home and living in other lands is very difficult but also enriching and this discovery of foreignness is positive. The experience has many unexpected facets.
- New places offer the possibility of starting over again afresh and although this is difficult, something about it is also valued.
- Being exposed to other cultures opens up something that makes it difficult to imagine settling back into one's 'little' life back home again.
- There is sadness and regret for people who have never left their home yet there can also be a resentment or jealousy of others who have had easier lives because they have not had to be so self-resilient and self-supporting.
- There is great stress in having to rely upon oneself in foreign places. Leaving home entails a certain degree of self-reliance, which is isolating and unstable.
- It is more difficult to try to create a sense of safety for oneself in a foreign environment. There is a constant stress and need to be stronger when living as a foreigner.
- Moving around can signify a search for answers of some kind.
- There can be a tension between wanting to be taken care of and wanting to be self-supporting. Developing relationships with other 'internationalists' can be a way of reconciling this with others who can understand.

9. What and where is 'home'?

- Home is a physical place made by meaningful arrangement of personal possessions. It also includes friendships, feeling safe (relaxed and calm), self-expression, and all this forms a base from which one can connect to the rest of the world and explore it.
- There is a fantasy that a new place can offer a fresh start and a chance to re-create oneself but this requires a degree of difficult adaptation to the new place.
- Home implies a certain degree of sameness between self and surroundings, for example, preferably speaking the same native language.

- Realising the degree of importance of familiarity to sense of home can make one consider returning to ones native country. Aging, the desire for more stability, and changing values can be a consideration in this.
- Considering returning home after living as a foreigner implies bringing back some of the openness that has been experienced out there and crossing that with the familiar that is also valued. Living in a cosmopolitan way in ones native country might be a possible compromise.

10. Feelings evoked by the interview

- Talking about ones 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.

11. Parental history of travel, movement, migration

- Parallel interests expressed in parents – they share a love of travel and prefer city life, especially mother, although she grew up in a village.

R1- Okay, so, I guess the first thing is that I'm interested in just generally the circumstances of your leaving home, when it happened...

P1- Yeah. About ten years. But there were no intentions of leaving home permanently. I went travelling. Sorry to mess up the whole thing (both laughing) – (R- No, no). I went travelling. I took a career break from my job in Ireland and went travelling for two years, or that was the intention and came over here for the first six months and worked and then went away for a year and a half and met an English man, while I was away and travelled with him for the last six to eight months and came back here and stayed here. So, there was never any decision to actually leave and go some where else and stay there. It's just the way it happened. I just never went back.

R2- So you, you made the decision to leave to go travelling. That was your decision. It wasn't a decision to emigrate.

P2- No, the decision was to go travelling and to return to Ireland. That was. Erm, I never thought about it at the time but I never thought about staying anywhere else. I think that it was sort of taken for granted that I was just going back home again. I think that that was intention when I left. Thinking back on it now. You know. That I would return there.

R3- Are you unsure about that?

P3- Yea, I am. I am actually. I sometimes wonder about that. If I ever sort of maybe did know that I wasn't going back. It was a way of leaving faithfully, of sort of taking a taste of something else, then make the decision. But I think it was very much bound up with the job and family and ex-partners and things – I think that part of me just didn't want to go back. But I didn't have the courage to say that I'm leaving and not going back. I took a very circuitous route to making that decision.

R4- It would have meant something different to have said to yourself I'm going and to say

P4- I think so, very much so, yes. It would have meant having to tell people that I was doing that especially family and I knew that was going to cause an awful lot of upset and disappointment, erm, the actual location as to where I'd end up was never thought about really, erm, but I think that if I'd actually said that I was leaving and going to England when I come back from travelling and I'm staying there would have upset so many people at the time. And to come back after two years and to say I've met this guy and he ain't coming over here (both laughing), so I'm going to stay over there was, sort of an easier way to do it for me and the people that I had to tell when doing that, especially parents, (pause). I am unsure about it, it is 10 years ago. What my feelings were at the actual time when I was leaving but I was very aware that I was getting away from something and finding a new life but the actual route to that new life was very out of context at the time.

R5- So it wasn't a fully formed idea. It was just a need to get away...

P5- Yea, yea, yea, yea. I think that part of me was looking for something to take me away from that permanently and meeting Carl was the opportunity for me to stay here and not go back really even though I have gone back a lot in the intervening years, I visit home about 4 times a year. So, erm, but what I mean, getting back to what I'm interested in exploring here, is why I keep going back and what it means to me now. (R - Yea, I'm curious about that). So, do you want me to just sort of go with it? (R - Yea)

Em, well I mean it all sort of very much bound up with my father as well. He and my parents background. They are the sort of farming background. Live in small villages in the west of Ireland. Their origins. My parents were the only ones from their families that have moved to Dublin, so that was a very big move for them. Totally alien environment. And, em it was quite. At the time a lot of people did go to Dublin, did go

to the big city to work, etcetera, but they were the only ones from a huge family that actually did that. My mother comes from a family of nine. Sisters and one brother. My father comes from a family of six boys. So, consequently I've got hundreds of cousins, (laughing), all of whom are still in Galway. Em, when they moved to Dublin. They always felt that they were away from their roots. Away from their environment that they were comfortable in etcetera. And we were always brought up to feel that we were away from something as well and we didn't belong really there that where we belonged was down in Galway, so consequently, we grew up with a very kind of mixed identity. There was a huge rivalry in Ireland about country – city.

R6- So, even though you grew up in a city and that was your only place. There was still this huge influence of

P6- ...Ya, of where you should really belong. But you're not really from here. You're really from there. But it was a very sort of confused identity really. We would shout for the country football in Ireland team when we were growing up. We went four or five times a year down to Galway for holidays, and we grew up really feeling that we were not really from Dublin and I think that in a way when I came over here then I felt that I was not really from. I don't know - where am I from? I never really felt that I was from Dublin as such. Em, but my father was always into everything Irish. Em, Irish sport, Irish music, Irish culture, Irish tradition, Irish stories, Irish absolutely everything, which I actually loved, and enjoyed listening to. So, when I left to travel that was okay as far as he was concerned, but when I went back and said that I wasn't coming back because I met an English man and was living with him over here, he was very very very distressed and upset about that. He couldn't understand how this woman who did love the culture and tradition of the place she was from, how she could possibly leave that at all. And, erm, he died last April and that was a conversation that I tried to have with him again before he died. Did he ever forgive me really I suppose. Erm, but it has left with a sort of pick and mix idea of identity and where I'm from and what I actually like etcetera because I do tend to go back still to sort of touch upon the elements of Irish life that I actually do enjoy. I just sort of pick them up and sort of play with them for a while and then leave them there and come back here. I have found it very difficult to be part of the culture, which is revolved very much around huge families. Having to conform. Having to be part of that, erm, thing where people, where all my cousins got married very young. Had lots of children, etcetera, and the part that I was gladdest to leave was the part that was continuously asking when I was going to settle down. But I feel as if I've come to a country where there isn't that much interest in you as an individual and so that ---. About family and anything goes kind of feeling and here I can actually choose who I'm going to hang around with; who I'm going to associate with being at home meant that I had to somehow fit into this massive great big extended family and they're always wondering all over the place.

R7 - Can I ask you a question? And I want to say a little bit of what I think that I've heard you say. The question, first all is what is that like to be in a place that doesn't have that all encompassing kind of family thing?

P7 - Erm (long pause) It feels more like that you cling onto whatever you can. Erm. You find your friends, you find your work, you find your interests and you dug up your little isolated island with fields just sort of, pretty uncaring I think. Pretty uncaring society about the individual, erm, but I'm free to swim around in that great big lake and find my little island and then regard it as precious. Whereas Ireland I would think in comparison as a great big soup, swimming around in that. But I also think that I have an idea of Ireland that maybe no longer exists because this idea is sort of falling apart there as well. Erm. But what it feels like here? It feels like I've got to cling to these islands. These little points that I've found for myself which make my existence meaningful here.

Erm. But it also feels important that I've chosen those myself. I could seek within this country to find what it was that I liked and I could choose to be part of that. I didn't feel much choice in Ireland. But I guess that I feel a bit freer here in a way but it's also a hell of a lot lonelier here. Should any of those things fall apart, there isn't the safety net or the support that I would get at home. But it's also on the other hand, easier to say that things have fallen apart here than it would be at home.

R8 – I don't quite get that last part.

P8 – I'm talking about relationship difficulties. Several partners. The guy that I came back with, I'm not with him any longer. I was with him for six years. I'm with the guy I'm years with now for six years but those six, not six, four years, but that's sort of very much, I'm not sure where that's going at the moment. And here I think it's very easy to say that to people. Even though I am friends with people who are married and have kids, it's somehow much easier here to say that to people here, I think that I'm going to make a change, going to move on, or I'm going to do something different. Erm. Whereas at home you would get the support, the sheer volume of people who are there for you, etcetera, but you would also get the what's wrong with G (laughing) and erm, I'm always left with that feeling of loving the warmth and loving all the attention and loving all the human contact when I get home, just the sheer amount of people. But I feel very overpowered and actually very isolated within that, much more so than I do here. Always that strange sort of thing of feeling isolated and feeling overcrowded and not feeling that over here really.

R9- That's strange isn't it? That in a place where in some ways you're kind of deeper at home, but all of that kind of holding and embracing you can end up feeling, it sounds quite isolating. (P – Very much so, yea) Whereas here you don't any of that holding and embracing you actually have to find things to hold onto. There's this openness, this lack of expectation. But somehow you feel less isolated, or something, it sounds like.

P9 – Yea, yea. It's something I've never quite understood really. I don't have lots and lots of friends here. I have few very close friends. A few people that are very important to me. And I also think here, the actual where I work, I do feel attached to the people that I work with. Erm. When I go home I am suddenly aware of being very different. And here that difference is never highlighted. It's sort of o.k. because no one gives a shit. Erm.

R10 – Well maybe it's sort of like everyone's different here?

P- 10 -Yea, exactly, Yea, yea, I think that part of that is London as well. My partner's mum lives in Chester and this I why things have come to a head recently, he wants me to move up there for a long time now and I don't want to go and I wonder sometimes that's also because in London there's just so much difference. Erm. But up there somehow it will remind me like home. Erm. People I do know up there are mostly friends that I have to do with rock climbing and things like that but it's a much more sort of familyish, couplish, cause they always seem to do things together. You're always going to bump into someone at the supermarket. Erm. It'll remind me a little bit of living back in Ireland again. I think that I've chosen, erm, to live in a place where I am faced with that, I will chose to meet people and they will choose to meet me. I'm not going to just run into them all the time, erm, I like that just being free to just go off somewhere, on my own, when I choose to, instead of being part of something that I have to do.

R11 – A little bit more anonymous and less kind of obligation...

P-11 Yes, yes. But it does. It's always made me wonder why it is that when I go home or when I was growing up there and there is a certain. And even here, when you meet Irish people here. When I first came here, the first six months after I met Tom, the only people that I knew were Irish and that was the sister of the guy that that I was going out

with at home and she was a nurse and she was living in a house in Camden with other nurses and some Irish guys that were engineers, or something, I can't remember. They had a massive social circle of Irish people, which consisted of going to the local pub, which was Irish. Erm, listening to Irish music, which I said before I loved, erm, going to things that were just Irish people there the whole time. I absolutely hated it. I just thought, why do I hate it? Part of me was saying that I hated it because they were actually very racist. We used to go nightclubs where there was a black guy on the door and a woman called a guy a nigger one night. Things like this. They were forever slagging off people, the English. They were forever slagging off me because I was from Dublin and they were from Mayo and erm, there was all this the whole time. We're only here because we can't get a job in Ireland. And they were just so anti-everything, erm, I just couldn't get on with them at all. Now at the time ---. I often thought that I didn't get on with them because they're racist, they live in a ghetto, because they don't want to experience what this country has to offer, but I often thought then that I couldn't actually get on with them for reasons that I couldn't click with them, their humour felt very different to mine. Their Irishness felt alien to me. Because I thought what do I feel being an Irish person. I meet people here sometimes and they assume that because I'm Irish I'm going to be full of the craic, like you know a bit of the yarn and this that and the other, and I don't feel that I'm any of that and yet at the same time there are so many things about Ireland that I absolutely love. It's not that I don't fit in. It's just wanting to take the bits I like. That's been very distressing for me, erm, meeting a bunch of Irish people and all the jokes and laugh, which I actually enjoy listening to, but you're expected to be able to do it. There's just a huge pressure for you to be humorous and funny and witty and a bit of this and a bit of blarney. I just can't do it (laughter). I have my own humour. The things that I find funny. Things that I love watching, listening to, or reading, conversations that I can participate in. That very, I can do my own bit but it's never what people label as Irish humour. And it's like the Irish, you're kind of expected to be that. I don't know it's just. It has made me feel more lost within that culture than in this culture.

R12 - What's that like to go home and to feel in some ways maybe more alien than being here in London. It sounds as if you've had that experience for a long time. Long before you actually left Ireland.

P12 - Erm, yea, yea, I was okay in Dublin. Erm, but Dublin was also big enough to choose who you wanted to hang around or do things with. There were a few occasions in the last few years that I've had to go back down to Galway that meant I've been surrounded by cousins and aunts and all that. Part of me feels proud to be different. To have sort of escaped in a way you know. Erm, my father nearly moved back down to Galway when I was about 10. Even then I remember thinking, please God, please, no, please. I can't face it. It was horrible midland, It wasn't Galway, it was a horrible midland town. I remember these chimney stacks and this bog and everything and just been terrified to live in this one street in town. But, erm, how it feels now? Part of me feels proud that I've been able to carve my own - life and knowing that it takes some courage, even though I haven't done anything incredibly different with my life. Just to have escaped that. So there's pride but there's also oh, please accept me, even though I am different. Please accept me. And there has been a desperate need for that. But then I've been able to forget that as soon as I've walked away from that but I'm always shocked and surprised at the depths of it when I do go home again. That wish to be accepted for who I am and what I do. And that always takes a bit of pride. That wish to be accepted. I'll walk away and think that I don't care but at the time it's very difficult. I try to justify myself all the time, explain why I do this or... They come straight out with when are you going to settle down at all and when's the big day. I've been hearing

when's the big day for the last 20 years or so. I feel defiant. It sort of manifests itself as defiance just sitting there. But the underlying feeling is a wish to be accepted, erm, and wanting to belong and knowing that somehow a belonging means being pursued. I assumed I couldn't belong and be accepted without being swamped by it. That's the way I feel about it.

R13 - So it's like some deep yearning to belong and yet also maybe a fear at the same time...

P13 - Yea, because the fear that the price for belonging is conformity. (Huge gap) What does it mean to have to conform? I could be wrong but I somehow think that it would mean keeping a brave face all the time or not being able to talk about the more difficult things in life, not being able to be honest about feelings. Not being able to say what I really feel or think. That's what I would imagine would be the price of conformity.

R14 - But you wouldn't actually confirm to that. You would only pretend.

P14 - Yes, I would only pretend. The price of conformity would be pretending and I would do that I think - I would pretend. I am just very aware that it's a very uncomfortable thing for me to do. Pretend to be feeling something that I'm not feeling or believing something that I'm not.

R15 - In your family, do you have brothers or sisters? (P - 2 sisters.) Are you the only one that left? (Yes, yes) So, it sounds like there's this, maybe I'm making something out of this, but it sounds like there's this pattern, in your parent's family, they were the only ones that left and they went to Dublin and yet they would four or five times a year they would go back home and they really made you all feel that your home was back there and not your real home, and you in your turn, in time, escaped Dublin - you were the one, and now four times a year you go back, (P - yea)

P15 - Yes, (laughs). But I never feel as if I'm going home. They did. They always felt as if they were going home. They just worked in Dublin and they lived there and lived in a house and brought up their kids. But going home was going down to Galway. That was something that I was picked up on a lot of the time, especially when I first left, I would say I'm going home, meaning back to England and that caused a lot of 'what do mean home, this is your home'. I'd say no that is my home. It's okay to leave in a way but it's not okay to start calling it home. And this was a big thing with my father. He never really talked about it but it was always there. I called this home and that was the unforgivable thing really because when I came over here first all the Irish people I knew they weren't at home here. Home was definitely back there. And it was okay to be here as long as you hated it. Like it was okay for my parents to be in Dublin as long as they hated it. And so when we used to go to Galway as kids, we were expected to talk about Dublin as if it was an awful place and the crime and the violence and the how do you live there. And the house, the no space, the no this the no that. And it's acceptable to come back from England now for me to talk to, especially my brothers in law, my sister's husband, erm, the don't expect me to talk about it as if I hate it they know I like it. I still always get the impression that when I talk about here as home and I talk about who I love and the places that I love here, I get left with blanks really. Not amongst my friends that I still have in Dublin, cause a lot of them have left as well and gone different places and we try to meet up if we can. Family very much so. This is not home and not acceptable to call it home.

R16 - So what do you think that it was about you? That you have found a home for yourself that isn't your origin. Have you ever wondered about that?

P16 - Yea. I think that it's the part of me that wants to be left alone. That wants to be left to find her own way, you know, erm, (long pause).

R17 - Would you have to leave home in order to have the space to find yourself?

P17 – (long pause) Yea, yea, but it does feel like a very, because I've ended up with quite a fragmented life here, I think you know, given that I've got friends in different parts of the country. I'm always going back and forth, erm, and there's a part of me that has a huge wish to knit things together but I think it's something that I've thought about. The weave of life, with things connected to each other. There's part of my life here that feels very disconnected, erm, oh, what was your question? I've got off the track here.

R18 - Why you, what was it about you, that you were the one who left, that not even left, that actually made a home away from home?

P18 – I think it was about me, the one who didn't fit it. The one that never felt accepted or part of it in the first place. I found a place where I could seek out my little group of people that would accept me, and belong and I was saying in a very fragmented way and I think the why me, was yea was never belonging there, I suppose, cause I belong here. I could say that that could be like the belonging to family, the wider society, the community. There never was that sense of belonging in Ireland. Here I do feel that and I feel that I belong in various parts of my life here, I just wish, I just wish that I could knit that all together and have them all in one place.

R19 – I find myself wondering if you did knit it all together it would become...

P19 –I know this is what's worrying my relationship at the moment. I can knit them all together by going to Chester. I don't know if you know that I do couple counselling with Relate as well and I could do that there. I could have lots of things up there together. I could have my partner, my friends. I have more friends up there than I do down here and look at me I'm still down here (laughs) there is this fear of knitting things together but yet wanting things together and I think that's very much from coming from where I do come from you know. The fear of if I have everything in one place, it'll come to me and overwhelm me, rather than me going to the little pieces and choosing.

R20 - It sounds like that kind of holding that in a way you really seek, could also be kind of suffocating and almost makes you panic or something. (P- Yea, yea), So I wonder, what is that a panic of? Or a fear of?

P20 –A fear of having to perform when I don't want to perform, or a fear of not being able to be with people just when I want to be with them or they can come to me.

That's the way I live though. I live on a boat. I live on my own on the boat. I mean Theresa who I'm quite close to has never been there (laughing). Sandra one of my best-friends has never been there. Ian, my partner, has been there loads of times. Er, but theres something about when I feel safe in my own little place, I don't want anyone coming to me. I want to phone them and ask them to come to me when I want them, need them. Not when I need them, just when I want to see them. I love people asking me to go somewhere. Cause I can say yes or no. Erm, moving up somewhere where it's got to be all there around me, surrounding me, means that somehow I've got overwhelmed some place, like people choosing to be with me without me chosing to be with them. Which is what it's like in Ireland.

R21- And so what is it, like, there that's so...?

P21- I don't know (long pause) Cause I do think when I'm on my own and not expecting anyone or not having any plans to do anything , I do build one hell of a shell around me, a protective layer. I find it quite frightening to feel as if that can be disrupted unexpectedly. In fact, I sort of yearn for company and I yearn for solitude and I never quite managed to reconcile those two things. I'm fine on my own. I like being on my own, erm, and I absolutely love being with people, but there's something about when I do sort of, be on my own for a while that that layer between me and other people gets thicker and thicker and then for someone to just come through that without me peeling down the layers and go to them is very frightening. That somehow they will see

something that I don't want them to see. That I'd be like a puppet with it's strings cut or something and they would see that. I do find life quite an effort. I do find it quite, crank myself up in the morning to go into work. Once I see people, it's fine. Chatting away and stuff. It pisses me off the various people that come in, but that's okay. But I do have to crank myself up for it quite a lot, when I'm on my own I do just sort of feel cut off and isolated but it's alright feeling like that, but it's actually feeling comfortable with the feeling of isolated and feeling alone, but if it goes on for too long, erm, I find it there are more and more layers to penetrate before I get in contact with people and I guess the thing about leaving home, I always felt that I'd never quite been allowed to be alone for that long, for those protective layer to build up or something, you know.

R22 - It sounds almost like there's something slightly, as if there are almost two different worlds in a way. There's a transition to go from one to the other and it takes a little bit of time and you don't want somebody to intrude on that.

P22- Ya, ya. It's like my train journey to Chester, you know. It's 2 hours between London and there and I definitely always feel as if I'm making some sort of a transition, erm, when I go home I feel the same, flying or whatever. I sometimes feel that if someone was to pick me up and plonk me down in these places, I probably wouldn't be able to cope. Here you are you're in Dublin now, you're in Galway, you're in Chester now (we laugh), whatever, erm.

R23 - There's a period of adjustment is sounds like.

P23 - Yea, and that's what I'd fear losing I guess and would appreciate not having to do, I would fear losing that if I went up there. That period of adjustment wouldn't be allowed up there, erm.

R24 - I still wonder. I think that this is a really difficult question to answer. I certainly don't know the answer myself, and it might be similar, but I'm still wondering, what is it, you describe this solitude as being quite comfortable but you also describe it as building up layers that protect you. I'm wondering - protection from what? What is it that's frightening?

P24 - (long pause) My loss of individuality

R25 - And what would so frightening about that, if you lost your individuality? It does sound like that. What's the fear in that?

P25 - (Very Long pause) That I would become invisible. That I wouldn't be seen at all.

R26 - That you wouldn't be seen at all, or that you wouldn't even exist?

P26 - (very long pause) I think that it's something like they would see there's nothing there cause that's often how I feel when I'm alone, erm, it's not just loss of individuality. It's loss of existence almost. It's somehow that they would see that there's nothing there. That you've ceased to be almost. I feel that I've ceased to be somehow when I'm on my own. (pause) And I guess that if somebody breaks into that, I guess the fear is that they would actually be looking and there nobody there. But that's actually on a very very deep, but if I go down far enough that's what it actually feels like if someone came onto the boat and I've been there on my own for day and the night and the next day, which sometimes happens. That, erm, they would come in and there's nobody there. There's no person.

R27 - So you're protecting nothing? (P - Em, em)

P27 - Like ceasing to be unless there's other people and at the same time not minding that as long as nobody else sees it.

R28 - What if someone else sees it? Would that be a problem?

P28 - Erm, I might never be able to... get them, that they might never see me again or something. This happened to me when I was in therapy as well. I remember I had psychoanalytical therapy for about 2 years and eventually it got more and more silent each week and I did feel that I was disappearing, that I no longer existed in the room.

Because somehow to sit there and talk in the silence, the therapist would have meant that that was like being on my own and suddenly I was going fade away and I could never get out of that and if the words began on my toes, I'd never be able to get them up again. I'd never be able to speak again. I'd never be able to say look I'm here, erm, that what I guess I mean by cranking up the old life force again to actually ring people, you know, I always do think that someone could see that you know, she's not here. Where did she go?

R29 – Where'd you go? So, it sounds like, if I've understood you, it sounds almost like, in both extremes you cease to exist, (P-yes, yes) you get imploded upon in Ireland and it's like you have to struggle to survive as something separate and here when you're separate enough you also have that.

P29 - Yea, I do think that if things fell through with regards to the very space that I have in my life here, erm, that it a very fierce possibility and I would sort of have to...

R30 - And yet the way you describe it, it seems to be the only possibility, the middle possibility seems to be the only one that kind of sustains your presence in the world.

P30 - The other possibility means finding those parts that I can hold on to and connect to, yea. (long pause)

R31 – Can I ask you one more general question. I think that you have already answered it in a lot of different ways. Just to see if there's anything else you want to add to it. Just a general question, when you reflect back on the time since you left home, ten years or so, erm, how does it feel for you?

P31 – (long pause) Well, I have lived on the boat for 10 of those years. I've been here for five. I've been in two relationships. The first five years wasn't very good. The first three or four years. The last five or six years have been much, much better, erm, but it's funny the first three or four years were easier, probably because I was in the relationship that I was in. We only had each other and in a way he's the only person. I had no friends, I didn't know anybody, I certainly wasn't going to go back to the Irish people that I first met here. The last few years have been much, much better, since I met people that like doing stuff that I do, doing Relate. Stuff like that. It's been o.k. It's been very hard since the death of my father due to his illness. Going back to Ireland in the last couple of years. Erm, yea, it's o.k.

R32 - Do you think that you'll ever return to Ireland, no, o.k. (laughter)

P32 - The thing is, you know, last year when we went around Cork for a week. I absolutely love it I love all that. You know took a train and we spent two weeks driving around, showing him the whole country, such a wonderful place. That's the way I am when I'm over there, I treat it like a foreign country, erm, my holidays. I'll never go back to live but I'm curious to know what goes on there because it has changed so much in the last few years. I find a lot of that distressing. I find that an older part of me is like a plastic paddy, who wants to keep it enshrined, fields and thatched cottages. I find it....(tape changes)

Side B

P32 (Cont.) - So yea, I almost I find it very alarming what's happening in one aspect and I think that part of that alarm is that I do want it to remain a museum piece and I sort of also don't like that aspect of the way that I feel about the country and also I wanted it to remain the country of my father's time you know and things are changing a lot over there - my sister separated now. She's just got divorced, you know and things like this. There are a lot of marriages breaking down and a lot of things that are being said now that weren't said years ago.

In one part I'm really ashamed of it. I'm unbelievable about things like this sometimes. I think 'ha'. All we got over the years. This is what you were meant to be. This is what you were meant to do. So and so has got married and got lots of kids and this was the

model that was being held up to us, always in that sense it's falling apart and I'm quite ashamed of laughing at it in a way because a lot of pain for the people involved of course but part of me just feels oh well sod you. You know, it wasn't perfection. Not the be all and end all. No, I'd never go back to it. Because, I just don't want to now. I do feel as if I belong here and erm because I have good friends and a lifestyle that I do like (laughing).

R33 - I lived in Dublin for six years, (P- Did you ?), so I can really relate to what you're saying and the changes as well. I've been back a few times.

P33 - (Long pause) Erm, um, I wouldn't even go back to Dublin though. No. And yet but when I go I make sure I visit places that are. I really like over there but I've got no one to go with you see. Cause em my family would never want to visit places that I want to visit in Dublin. And a lot of friends that I had there have left anyway. And there have been a few here and a few in America. That sort of thing. So, I do miss that now. I miss being able to go home to Dublin and being able to do things that I want to do with the people that I want to do them with. Because there's just no one there. That's sad. (Long pause)

R34 - It's strange when you go back and things have moved on or all the people have moved out.

P34 - Um, um (pause).

R35 - Can I just ask one last thing now? I was just wondering. We've spoken for about 50 minutes or so and I'm just wondering what it feels like to talk about these things?

P35 - (pause) Well, it felt comfortable. I didn't expect it to be. I felt a bit. I was worried about being made to intellectualize things a lot. You're pragmatic and you're a PHD student (both laughing). Yea, it felt comfortable, erm, and I felt engaged. It did. I like the way that you sort of went deeper and deeper. To really look at something and to make it get to that point of saying that disappearance or whatever. Because I don't think that I've really verbalised that before. And, in a way I could never before really knit together the fact that I love being with people and hate being with people and love being on my own and hate being on my own. I could never see that there was any connection between those things really. Or what was the continuum between them. Of being on your own or being with others. I think that's what's really good to sort of see that there was some sort of a line of progress between one place to the other and being able to able to talk about your building up layers and what's behind the layers, maybe nothing. That yea. That felt really. That's a bit frightening you know (R-yea) very frightening to think. To actually say that was what I was afraid of. A lot less frightening than just feeling it, you know.

R36 - And that kind of deep layer. I'm really interested in that.

P36 - Um (pause)

R37- I think that it's something that all of us have some version of.

P37 - Yea, yea

R38 - Because it's not something that we readily talk about

P38 - Um

R39 - How does it feel just kind of like down where you normally feel things, down inside?

P39 - (Long pause) Well the physical sense feels quite good, quite warm, quite routed, centred. Things like that I guess. I would say that at the moment I feel what we were talking about, I'm neither one nor the other, which is quite nice. I'm neither alone or just, erm. It's a different kind of being with someone, I think. It feels really good.

R40 - Is there anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to add?

P40 - Erm, no, not really. I think that probably the death of my father did help me think about these things a lot more over the last few months anyway and you know when

family start dying in Ireland. Things like that. I'm wishing that maybe I could have maybe explained this to him. But how much you being involved have you truly left until maybe (laughing). I don't know things like that I haven't really explored that but erm, but him being gone now it's like, he was the one person that I could have talk to about it. My cycle trip. That's one thing I went through. The bunnies that I saw running across the field. Because the funny thing about Ireland is that even though they're all power to the Irish actually they don't give a shit about their countryside in a way, you know, erm, and I am quite into environmental stuff and everything and so was he and the actual Ireland's physical landscape, erm, he was the one person who really knew what I was talking about when I talked about the love of the land, the love of the place. The love of, just the physical beauty of it. Things like that. I miss that. And, I wonder often when I go back even for that now. Because I've lost that person to share that with it. To talk about it with, you know, erm, I think that I will and I think because it fairly recent. (emotional pause) Kay.

Ending comments.

The circumstances of your leaving home:

1. I didn't intend to leave home permanently - I just went travelling and was going to return home.
2. I took a career break and met someone while travelling and never went back home to live.
3. It was just assumed I'd return home afterwards.
4. But sometimes I wonder about that story.
5. I think that part of me didn't want to return but I didn't have the courage to say that I'm not coming back so I took a very circuitous route to that decision.
6. It would have upset a lot of people, especially family, if I'd said I'm staying away.
7. It was easier to say it was because of a guy I met while travelling.
8. I was getting away from something and finding a new life at the time.

It wasn't a fully formed idea, just a need to get away?

1. Yes, something in me wanted to get away permanently.
2. But for some reason I keep going back, about 4 times a year. I wonder why I keep going back and what that means.
3. It's related to my parent's background. They were the only ones from their families to move to the city.
4. City life was completely foreign to my parents, they were rootless there.
5. We were brought up also to feel we didn't belong in the city, our environment was back in the country. We were away from part of our identity when in the city.

You didn't belong to the place you grew up?

1. As a family we should really belong to the country not the city.
2. It resulted in a confused identity. I didn't know where I was from.
3. I loved everything Irish, as my father did. He couldn't understand how I could leave that to live in England (though he had left his beloved country for the city).
4. I am left with a pick and mix identity and return home to play with parts of my Irish identity that I enjoy.
5. It is very difficult to actually be a part of that culture, having to conform to the expectations of big families, when will you get married etc.
6. It is easier living here where people don't take such a personal interest in you. I am free to choose for myself.

What is it like to live in a place without that all-encompassing family thing?

1. It feels pretty uncaring. You have to cling to whatever /whoever you can.
2. But I'm free to move around and find whatever feels precious to me.
3. I have to cling to the little references that make my existence meaningful here.
4. But it feels very important that I've chosen those references for myself.
5. It is much freer but also lonelier here, without the safety net or support of back home.
6. I can be more honest about my difficulties here, especially relationship difficulties.
7. People are more accepting of different relationship patterns here and it's easier to end with someone without everyone wondering what's wrong with me.
8. When I go home I love the attention, warmth, and volume of human contact, but I also feel overpowered and isolated within that. Even more isolated than here. There I feel a strange mix of isolated and overcrowded.
9. I've never understood that.
10. Here I have a few close friends and workmates and my difference is accepted because there is no set thing to conform to, whereas when I go home, my difference is highlighted.
11. Outside London there is less difference, like back home. It's also more family and couple oriented and less anonymous. I value my freedom to just go off on my own rather than the obligation of having to do things.

Being around Irish people

1. When I first arrived here I ended up in a big circle of Irish people doing Irish things and I hated it.
2. They were anti-everything: I hated their racism and their complaining about the English and slagging me because I am from Dublin and they were from the country. They were only here because they couldn't get work back home.
3. They didn't want to experience this country, they lived in a ghetto.
4. But I couldn't in fact relate to them, their Irishness was alien to me. They just assumed I was like them.
5. I wasn't any of the things they expected and yet I love a lot about Ireland.
6. There's a huge pressure to be a certain kind of Irish that I can't do.
7. I have my own individual humour but it's not traditional Irish humour.
8. That difference makes me feel lost in my own culture more than in this one.

What's it like to feel more alien at home than abroad?

1. Dublin, like London, is big enough to allow for choice regarding friends.
2. When I go to my family in the country part of me is proud of my difference and that I escaped.
3. When I was 10 we almost moved back and I remember thinking I couldn't face it.
4. I was terrified to live in a one-street town.
5. I'm proud I've had the courage to carve out my own life.
6. But I also have a desperate need for acceptance. Please accept me even though I'm different.

7. I am surprised at the depth of that need when I go home and feel it again. The need to be accepted for who I am and what I do with my life.
8. I walk away and proudly pretend I don't care, but it is difficult and I try to justify myself.
9. On the surface I feel defiant towards their impositions but underneath I wish for acceptance and belonging.
10. I assume that belonging means giving in, I can't belong and be accepted without being swamped. My fear is that the price for belonging is conformity.

Conformity

1. I think the price of conforming would mean not being able to be honest about what I think or feel, especially the more difficult things in life.
2. But I couldn't do that, I could only pretend. The price of conformity for me would be to pretend and that's a very difficult thing for me.

Generational pattern?

1. When my parents used to go back to the country they felt like they were going home, but for me when I go back it doesn't feel like I'm going home.
2. I was corrected when I would be back in Ireland and say I was going home, meaning back to England. They said 'this is your home!'
3. It's OK to leave but it's not OK to call it home.
4. It's not OK to be here and to be at home, or to call it home, it really was unforgivable for my father.
5. It's OK to be here as long as you hate it, like it was OK for my parents to be in Dublin as long as they hated it.
6. We had to pretend Dublin was an awful place and we didn't like it when we went back home to the country.
7. Now my brothers in law and friends in Dublin let me tell them that I actually like London but family still look blank when I talk about the places and people that I love and about London as home.

What is it about you that you're like this?

1. There is a part of me that wants to be left alone.
2. I've found my home in a foreign place because there's part of me that wants to be left to find her own way.
3. As a result my life has been fragmented. I'm always going back and forth and there's a huge wish to knit everything together into a connected weave.
4. I was the one who didn't fit in at home. I never felt accepted or a part of it in the first place.
5. Now I've found a place where I can have a small group of accepting people and belong here.
6. I never had that sense of belonging to the family, wider society, the community, in Ireland.

7. I feel I do belong here in various ways but I wish I could knit all that together and have it all in one place.

Living alone or with others

1. I could have everything in one place if I moved with my partner away from London, work, relationship, friends.
2. There is a fear of having everything together yet also wanting it. I think it's about coming from the situation I come from.
3. My fear is that if I have everything in one place it will overwhelm me rather than me going to it and being able to choose.
4. There is panic and suffocation in this.
5. There is a fear of having to perform and people imposing on me when I don't want that. I want to be with people when I want and not to when I don't want.
6. I don't want people to choose to be with me without me choosing to be with them, which is what it's like in Ireland.
7. I live on my own on a boat and even my best friends have never been there.
8. I feel safe in my own little place and I don't want people coming there unless I invite them.
9. I love being invited somewhere because I can say yes or no.
10. I build a protective layer around me when I'm alone and not expecting anyone.
11. It would be frightening for that to be disrupted suddenly.
12. I can't reconcile my yearning for company and for solitude. I like to be on my own and to be with other people.
13. But when I have enough time alone the protective layer between me and others gets thicker and if anyone went through that without me slowly peeling down the layers that would be very frightening. They might see something I don't want them to see.
14. They might see I'm like a puppet with its strings cut. I do find life difficult. I have to crank myself up to meet the world. Once I'm there it's fine.
15. When alone I can feel cut off and isolated but that's comfortable enough. If it goes on too long more layers build up between me and others.
16. At home I never was allowed to be alone long enough for those protective layers to build up.
17. It's like P doesn't want anyone to intrude on her transition from her own world to the shared world of others.
18. Yes, like the train journey to the north – it's a transition, also when I go home to Ireland. The transition time allows me to cope with the new place.
19. It takes a period of adjustment and I fear losing that.

Loss of identity

1. When I build up layers I'm protecting myself from a loss of individuality.
2. To lose that would be frightening because then I would become invisible. I wouldn't be seen at all.
3. It's not just a loss of individuality, they might see that there's nothing there, cause that's what I often feel when I'm alone. It's a loss of existence almost.

4. They could see that I've ceased to exist almost when I'm on my own. If someone breaks in I'm afraid they would see that there's no one there. That's very deep down, that there's no person there.
5. I cease to exist unless others are around and I don't mind that as long as nobody sees.
6. If someone were to see my absence they might never see me again. In therapy I felt I was disappearing, fading away, and I would never be able to get any words out again to say 'look I'm here'.
7. In both extremes P ceases to exist. She gets imploded upon and unable to be separate or so isolated she might disappear.
8. I need to find those parts I can hold onto and connect to.

How has it been since leaving home?

1. The first 5 years weren't good but were easier because I was in a relationship and we only had each other. The last 5 have been much better because I have met people who like what I like.

Will you ever return home?

1. I love touring around my country on holidays but it's like a wonderful foreign country.
2. I'll never go back to live there
3. It has changed a lot and I find it a bit distressing as there's a part of me that would like to keep it unchanged, like a shrine, a museum.
4. I want it to remain the Ireland of my father's time.
5. I don't like my desire to keep it unchanged.
6. There is a lot of change and social things being seen that were kept hidden and presented as perfect. I feel sad for them and angry that they went along with it.
7. I don't want to ever go back. I belong here now because I have good friends and a lifestyle I like.
8. I miss being able to go back to visit Dublin and the people there but my family wouldn't go to the places I want to visit and a lot of friends are gone. That's sad.

How did the interview feel?

1. It felt more comfortable than I expected. I was worried I'd have to intellectualise a lot.
2. I felt engaged. It felt good to go deeper and deeper. I've verbalised some new things today. And made connections between loving and hating being with people and loving and hating being on my own.
3. It's a bit frightening to say some of these things.
4. Physically I feel quite good, warm, rooted, centred.
5. At the moment I feel neither one nor the other, not alone or imposed upon – which feels really good, a different kind of being with someone.

Anything else?

1. The death of my father helped me think about these things over the past few months.
2. I wish I could have explained these things to him. He was one person I could have talked to about this. We were both into environmental things and loved the landscape.
3. We loved the land, the physical beauty. Now I've lost the person I shared that with and I miss that. I wonder if I'll go back for that even, now.

Meaning Clusters

“Patricia”

Doubts about my leaving story

1. My leaving home seemed almost accidental, not planned.
2. I went travelling on a career break and intended to return but met someone and never did return.
3. I wonder about the truth of that story – I think I didn’t have the courage to say I’m leaving and not coming back.
4. My family would have been upset if I announced I was leaving and staying away. To say it was because of a guy I met was easier.
5. Something in me wanted to get away permanently. I needed to get away from something and to find a new life.

Returning home

1. I wonder why I go back about 4 times a year.
2. I’ll never return to live there. I have good friends who I relate to and a lifestyle I like here now.
3. I wish Ireland would stay unchanged, like in my father’s time, like a museum or shrine.
4. I don’t like my desire to keep it unchanged but I find the changes there distressing.
5. I miss being able to go back and visit Dublin with my friends there, they have all moved. It’s sad.
6. Since my father died I have no one to share my love of the physical beauty of Ireland so I wonder if I’ll go back for even that now.

Confused identity related to parental story

1. My need to get away is related to my parent’s background.
2. My parents were the only one’s from their families to move to the city, where they were foreign and rootless.
3. We were brought up to feel we were foreigners in the city, didn’t belong there. Our family was supposed to belong to the country, that was our identity.
4. So I had a confused identity, I didn’t know where I was from, where I belonged.
5. I am left with a pick and mix identity and return home to play with the parts of my Irish identity that I enjoy.
6. It’s OK to be here as long as I hate it, like it was OK for my parents to be in Dublin as long as they hated it. We had to pretend Dublin was awful and say that we hated it to family when we visited the country.
7. It’s OK to leave but it’s not OK to call it home. That really was unforgivable for my father.
8. Now I can tell in-laws and friends that I like London and my life here but my family still look blank if I try to tell them.

Comparison of chosen culture and native culture

1. I loved everything Irish and shared this with my father. But the conformity and expectations required of Irish culture were difficult for me.
2. For me it's easier living in an uncaring place where people don't take such a personal interest in you. I have to cling to whoever I can but I can make my own free choices.
3. It is very important to me to have been able to choose for myself which references feel meaningful for me.
4. It is freer and lonelier here. I lack the support but I can be more honest about relationship difficulties here.
5. Here people are more accepting of difference because there is no set thing to conform to.
6. I love the attention, warmth, amount of human contact at home, but I also feel overpowered and even more isolated than here. At home my difference from others is highlighted.
7. I've never understood that mix of feeling isolated and overcrowded at home.
8. I value my freedom and anonymity and don't like feeling obligated to do things as happens in places that are so family and couple oriented (like Ireland and outside London).

Feeling Different from other ex-pats

1. I hated being with other Irish people in London, complaining about being here.
2. I chose to be here, they were only here for work and didn't want to experience being here.
3. They assumed I was like them but I couldn't relate to them, their Irishness was foreign to me and I wasn't what they expected an Irish person to be.
4. I felt pressured to be the stereotypical kind of Irish person to fit in, but I can't do that, for example I have my individual kind of humour that isn't traditional Irish humour.
5. Feeling different from my own culture makes me feel more lost there than in a foreign culture.

Need for acceptance/to belong

1. I have a desperate need to be accepted. Please accept me even though I am different.
2. I feel the need for acceptance for who I am and how I live most deeply when I return home.
3. I pretend I don't care but I also justify myself. I feel defiant towards their impositions but underneath I still want their acceptance that I belong.
4. I assume that I can't belong and be accepted without having my individuality swamped.

5. I do feel I belong here in various ways and have a small group of accepting people around me.

The threat of conformity

1. My fear is that the price for belonging is conformity.
2. Conforming means not being honest about what I think or feel.
3. I can't do that, I could only pretend. For me, conforming would mean pretending and that would be very difficult for me.

Proud of my difference and independence

1. When I visit my family part of me is proud of my difference and that I escaped.
2. Even when I was young I was terrified to live in such a small place, at least in Dublin I could choose my friends.
3. I'm proud I've had the courage to carve out my own life.
4. There's a part of me that wants to be left alone.
5. I've found my home in a foreign place because there's part of me that wants to be left to find her own way.

I never fitted in at home

1. I was the one who didn't fit in at home. I never felt accepted or a part of it in the first place.
2. I never had that sense of belonging to the family, wider society, the community, in Ireland.
3. I love touring around my country on holidays but it's like a wonderful foreign country.

Ambiguity towards Fragmentation and Consolidation

1. My life has been fragmented. I'm always going back and forth.
2. There's a huge wish to knit everything together into a connected weave, to have it all in one place.
3. I could have everything in one place but I both want it and fear it. I think its related to my early life situation.
4. I fear having everything in one place will overwhelm me.
5. I fear losing the period of adjustment when going from being alone to being with others.

The threat of being overwhelmed

1. I feel overwhelmed when I don't have the freedom to choose – me going to it and being able to choose. I want to be with people when I want and to be alone when I want.
2. The threat of this makes me feel panic and suffocated.
3. There is a fear of having to perform and people imposing on me.
4. I don't want people choosing to be with me rather than me choosing to be with them. That's what it's like back home in Ireland.
5. I live in an isolated place and even my best friends haven't been there.
6. I feel safe in my own little place and I only want people to come if invited.
7. I love being invited because then I can say yes or no.

Negotiating the gap between solitude and being with others

1. I build a protective layer around myself when I'm alone and not expecting anyone.
2. It would be frightening for that to be disrupted suddenly.
3. I can't reconcile my yearning for company and for solitude. I like to be on my own and to be with other people.
4. When I have enough time alone the protective layer between me and others gets thicker and if anyone went through that without me slowly peeling down the layers that would be very frightening. They might see something I don't want them to see.
5. They might see I'm like a puppet with its strings cut. I do find life difficult. I have to crank myself up to meet the world. Once I'm there it's fine.
6. When alone I can feel cut off and isolated but that's comfortable enough. If it goes on too long more layers build up between me and others.
7. At home I never was allowed to be alone long enough for those protective layers to build up.
8. I don't want anyone to intrude on the transition from my own world to the shared world of others.
9. Yes, like the train journey to the north – it's a transition, also when I go home to Ireland. The transition time allows me to cope with the new place.
10. It takes a period of adjustment and I fear losing that.

Loss of self

1. When I build up layers I'm protecting myself from a loss of individuality.
2. To lose that would be frightening because then I would become invisible. I wouldn't be seen at all.
3. It's not just a loss of individuality, they might see that there's nothing there, cause that's what I often feel when I'm alone. It's a loss of existence almost.
4. They could see that I've ceased to exist almost when I'm on my own. If someone breaks in I'm afraid they would see that there's no one there. That's very deep down, that there's no person there.
5. I cease to exist unless others are around and I don't mind that as long as nobody sees.

6. If someone were to see my absence they might never see me again. In therapy I felt I was disappearing, fading away, and I would never be able to get any words out again to say 'look I'm here'.
7. In both extremes P ceases to exist. She gets imploded upon and unable to be separate or so isolated she might disappear.
8. I need to find those parts I can hold onto and connect to.

Relationship to father

1. Shared love of the beauty of the land and environment with father.
2. Shared love of Irishness with father.
3. Father would never understand calling London home.
4. Father's death helped me think about these things over the past few months.
5. I wish I could have explained these things to him. He was one person I could have talked to about this.
6. Now I've lost the person I shared those things with and I miss that. I wonder if I'll go back for that even, now.

How did the interview feel?

1. It felt more comfortable than I expected. I was worried I'd have to intellectualise a lot.
2. I felt engaged. It felt good to go deeper and deeper. I've verbalised some new things today. And made connections between loving and hating being with people and loving and hating being on my own.
3. It's a bit frightening to say some of these things.
4. Physically I feel quite good, warm, rooted, centred.
5. At the moment I feel neither one nor the other, not alone or imposed upon – which feels really good, a different kind of being with someone.

2. Importance of finding a way to leave that keeps relationships intact

- It can be difficult when something in a person knows they need to get away from home and the home environment will not allow that leaving to take place.
- It can take too much courage to confront this head on, so other modes of leaving, supposedly unplanned and accidental, like travelling or meeting a partner that lives in another place, can allow leaving without upsetting family.
- The stories of leaving home can have various layers of truth to them.
- The reaction of family can have a strong bearing on the process of leaving home.
- The positive experience of the new place can need to be hidden from family left behind. There can be a delicate negotiation by the migrant to keep intact the myth that the new place can never be home and that home is always better.
- It is imagined that leaving home can present a new beginning, a new way of life.
- A strong parental relationship can keep alive certain aspects of the relationship to the home country. When that parent dies, part of the country relationship may die also or at least the death can reinvigorate reflection on relations to home. The relationship to ‘home’ culture can be largely mediated through relationship to a parent (father).
- It can feel important to try to explain the need to leave to a member of the family who might be able to understand.

3. Parental migration can affect next generation’s identity and experience of home

- Parental attitudes to the place the family is raised can affect the children’s relations to that place.
- Parental experience of being foreign and rootless due to migration (country to city) can influence a child’s feeling of belonging and need to migrate.
- If the parent/extended family rejects where the child is raised, then the child loses the only source of home given to them - the parent’s abandoned home was never the child’s. The child is denied belonging to their known environment but also does not belong to the parental environment, they are foreign in both places. Some children react to this in a way that increases the likelihood of leaving home and the home culture entirely.
- Identity and knowing where one belongs are connected and not knowing where one is supposed to belong can result in a confused identity.
- Not knowing who one is, not having a set identity associated to a particular place, allows for some freedom in choosing who one will be, trying on identities and combining them.

4. Not fitting in related to value placed on independence and meaning of conformity

- It is possible to be 'the one' in a family who never fits in, never feels accepted or a part of the family or community environment, feeling quite apart.
- Even at a young age moving to a smaller place can seem terrifying because it implies fewer self-made choices about relationships.
- The perception is that conformity to certain expectations is required to fit into the home culture and that can feel like too much of a sacrifice of the personal freedom to choose for oneself.
- It can feel easier to live in an uncaring, unsupportive, and lonely foreign place in order to maintain greater freedom and honesty rather than conforming at home. Conformity means not being honest about one's own feelings or thoughts, in other words, pretending.
- Independence can be valued even more than the attention, warmth, and human contact offered at home. For someone who values independence to this extent, that attention can feel overpowering, resulting in the experience of being overcrowded and isolated simultaneously.
- Feeling isolated and different at home is more painful and acute than feeling it away from home. One can feel more lost at home than in a foreign place.
- Environments that are couple or family based can feel like a burden and are avoided by people who value their individuality and independence.
- An ex-pat community that tries to maintain the home culture also highlights this feeling of not fitting in, being different, not embodying their expectations while being assumed to be one of them.

5. The need for acceptance

- There is a desperate need to be accepted with acknowledgement of one's difference.
- Returning to the home environment can generate the deepest need for acceptance of who one truly is and how one is living. To be accepted there is most significant for some reason.
- The need for acceptance can conflict with the need for independence resulting in behaviours such as justifying oneself, and defiance.
- Belonging and being accepted at home seem incompatible with valuing individuality but belonging in a foreign place seems possible without this conflict. It's as if the acceptance at home is a different kind of acceptance, or home is a qualitatively different kind of place?

6. Proud of being different and being independent

- In comparison to one's family, there can be a feeling of pride from having the courage to escape and carve out an independent life that's different.

- There can be an acceptance of the aspect of self that values finding one's own way enough that living as a foreigner seems warranted.

7. Ambivalence about relationship and solitude

- Always going back and forth, home and abroad, connection and solitude, can make life feel fragmented and lead to a desire to connect everything together in one place.
- One's early life situation of living between two 'homes' and neither were really 'home', may be related to both wanting and fearing having everything in one place.
- Having everything in one place would mean losing the choice of when to be with others and when to be alone, there would be no period of adjustment between solitude and being with others and that might be overwhelming, something would feel panicked and suffocated.
- It can feel crucial to maintain one's choice about when to be alone or with others rather than constantly being imposed upon as can happen at home.
- Living an isolated existence can be a solution to this as others have to be invited into one's space or one has to be invited into another's space, respecting personal choice.
- It can be very difficult to reconcile the need for company and for solitude.

8. The need for private (transitional) space

- Alone in a private space a protective layer can form around one's private world. This takes time to form and to come down again and this process should not be interrupted. It would be frightening for someone to disrupt those layers and to see into the self underneath.
- There is a fear that there really is nothing at the core and this fear that there is no living person in there needs to be hidden from others.
- Going from solitude to the social world requires time to 'crank oneself up'. The longer spent alone the more protective layers build up and the longer it takes to make the transition back to others, and this needs to be done privately. This may be connected to the original home environment not allowing one to be alone long enough to have one's experience of a private inner world without the imposition of the other.
- The transition time from being abroad to going home can help in adjusting to the new environment.

9. Fear of a loss of self

- Building up layers protects individuality and to lose that would mean not existing, not being seen.
- Being alone can seem like a loss of existence, not just individuality, and it would be frightening for anyone to see that secret, that there's no

person in there. If someone saw that absence they might never see the person again, she would be invisible and lost forever.

- If no one is around one can cease to exist, and if one has not private space, one can cease to exist. We exist between the two extremes of being imploded upon by the other and being isolated into disappearance. We need to have something in the world to hold onto and to connect to.

10. Returning home?

- It is not clear why P returns home 4 times a year but it is clear she will never return to live there.
- There is a desire for the home country to remain unchanged, like a museum or shrine from the time of her father. Although she is not comfortable with her desire for it to stay the same she feels sad and distressed about the changes.
- Her relationship to her home country has changed since the death of her father and the love of the landscape and things they shared together may no longer be a reason for her to return home. Its like a foreign country to have wonderful holidays.

11. Feeling of the interview

- 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 verbalised 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.

GM1 - OK. The first question is can you begin by relating the circumstances, the general circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 - Sure. Well, I suppose there was lots of leaving home, and so it's difficult to say it was one leaving, but I suppose the most obvious as such was when I first left for university, which was my sort of, physical separation from the home that I grew up in. And that was a peculiar situation in that I had left school and I had been due to go to university in Bristol, I've talked to you about this before, but at that time I had just got into a relationship with this man, Nigel, and that sort of broke up at the time that I was supposed to be going to university, and I was all very heartbroken and very confused. And also, though whilst desperate to get away from home I was suddenly finding myself liberated in living in a sort of grown up, out-of-school world, and going back to university sort of terrified me, that I would just be, I don't know, returning to a sort of institutional environment that I was desperate to get away from.

And so I had been ... to university to cut a long story short, but then left immediately and didn't go. So I returned home and stayed living at my parents' home for another year, although not normally living there, but really partially living with friends, over that period of time. I found the whole idea of leaving home, when it came to leave home, you know, to go to York, I eventually went, I was terribly nervous and anxious, and I just sort of feel that, you know, as much as I always felt alienated at home and had fantasies of leaving, I didn't feel that I had the courage or the emotional ability to actually leave and look after myself. It really scared me.

GM2 - So, it was both this kind of, you said a little while ago, almost desperate to leave?

P2 - Yes, to some extent.

GM3 - But also,

P3 - An unhappiness there anyway, certainly. I don't know if it was a desperation to leave, I don't know if I even fantasised about leaving. I suppose the fantasies about leaving and the desire to escape were a sort of emotionally challenging way of filling in a painful situation, that same situation also kept me there because it didn't give me the kind of stability or security so that I could actually leave. And so when I actually went to York, the thing was I actually packed to go on my own and I didn't want my parents coming as I had to catch the train, and what have you, it had to be like a sort of baptism of fire that I had to, strangely sort of, a strange, peculiar thing really, because there were probably friends who knew me at the time who probably would have seen me as very capable and competent, I had lots of friends who were older than me and who didn't live at home, and you know, whom I spent lots of time with, and I wasn't particularly wedded to living with my parents, but at the same time, yes, very trepidatious and anxious about leaving home, and I suppose also you know, I suppose going to an environment with people my own age just scared me, as well. It would be like being at school where I was ... alienated, which in many ways I did feel that at my time in York as well, it was quite difficult.

But I suppose that was the sort of, first of living away from home and leaving home, and although I was feeling alienated, having no desire not to return home. I don't know if it was to go back to my parents' home, but it was difficult to cope with being there. When I left university, I went home to my parents for a couple of weeks before moving out of home, into Brighton in fact.

GM4 - So, once you actually made that step to leave?

P4 - Yes, I could cope.

GM5 - You did cope?

P5 - Yes. I felt, I did feel somewhat alienated from the group of people around me at York, the fellow students, again a sort of mixture of feeling somehow, it gave me a peculiar mixture of sort of, confidence and lack of confidence.

GM6 - You felt that at home as well?

P6 - Yes, I suppose so. Because I think, I suppose the thing that emotionally just kind of cut me at home so much was my dad, and I kind of, had a very, just turbulent, competitive relationship with my dad which I looked down on him really I suppose. I mean, in one way I did feel that gave me a kind of sense of superiority and confidence, and yet he also really undercut me because I felt so scared and uncertain within that, I sort of, didn't know how to deal with it. We didn't know how to deal with each other in that environment.

When I left for university my mum also left home as well. She had said that she was just waiting until I'd left for university. It would be easier all round so she left and I left.

GM7 - So, would you say that you ever felt at home at home?

P7 - In retrospect I always felt like an outsider, but I suppose you know, you don't have any experiences to compare that to. I look at those pictures as a child or, I've a picture of me, I suppose I must be about 3 years old with my dad in a swimming pool somewhere, he's holding me up, and I can remember that I think it was a false memory, I just remember sort of thinking, oh, my God, let me go. I just couldn't bear the thought, I thought, what am I doing here, and I sort of seem to remember so acutely at a young age, so surely something's gone wrong here that I don't quite, this is not really where I belong, is it? I don't know if that was more so much feeling that I didn't belong at home or just the fancy that my dad wasn't my dad, and there was something surely awry with this situation, that he seemed to always deny me, or I deny him, or something, you know. So home always had that sort of sense of tension, you know, it never felt like a very relaxed place, although you know, if I dream about it, I often dream of our house, a lot of my dreams came from that place, as it was when I was a child not as it is now

GM8 - So, if you start from your origins there was always this sort of unsettling undercurrent of 'where do I belong?' and that it somehow isn't right?

P8 - Yes.

GM9 - And then you kind of broke out of that world and went to university where you still felt something, this kind of feeling that, you know?

P9 - Yes

GM10 - What happened after that?

P10 - I was living in Brighton for about four or five years on and off, interspersed with sort of periods of travelling, and I suppose as I imagine it, that period would be a period of reclaiming some kind of adolescence, ... as I am now, I didn't want very much responsibility, I quite quickly, so I just by chance I got a part time job as a care assistant in Brighton, a job that applied for, but didn't really, I suppose on one level I didn't want anything that entailed any more responsibility or commitment, but on another level it didn't really even occur to me that I could do anything I don't really know why. I just think I needed to go for a different kind of, just something relatively carefree, I think I felt that were teenage years were relatively careful so I wanted to just have, and I remember talking about it at the time to friends, that I was deliberately seeking out a lack of responsibility. At first actually, in Brighton I had that job and then I left and worked for the Richmond Fellowship for about 9 months on a full time basis, but I just sort of fell out it, this is not what I want to do. Yes, at the time, I suppose at that time although I'd already had fantasies about going to other countries and stuff, and at that time that was when I really thought there may be different things I want to do, work overseas, and at that time, when I was working at the Richmond Fellowship, sort of deciding this isn't really what, I didn't want to study, it was the logical thing to work full time, even though it wasn't what I left all this behind for or just thought of get bogged down in crap that I don't want. I remember I went to Morocco with Jamie actually, for a holiday, I remember it was a very difficult kind of holiday mostly, but it was a real kind of revelation to me in terms of thinking, oh yes, I want to travel. I went to Morocco for New Year I think, a couple of weeks, we went together. It was interesting seeing the kind of differences in our experiences, things like that, I'm in fact, the one, I was particularly laid back about going and I think he was more anxious, but probably more focused on the whole experience, but then I think the reverse was I think I sort of flourished much more than he did, and I really liked that experience of just being in Morocco, travelling over by boat and stuff, and I just thought, yes, that's what I want to do, just go and see it.

So I came back to England, and went back and then I handed my notice straight away, and decided that I was going to teach English as Foreign Language, then went for training in Egypt to teach English as a Foreign Language. So, you know, I went to, I think I sort of got that and then served notice and then went Cairo shortly after, I can't remember exactly the time line, there might have a bit more a time delay.

GM11 - Can I just ask, was this, was this the first experience of travelling in a foreign culture?

P11 - No, I had travelled with my parents and with friends at school and stuff. Somehow this was a more pivotal experience.

GM12 - It sounds like something opened in you, something changed in your?

P12 - There was something, you know, going on, going from Spain to Morocco, going to another continent, going to a developing country and doing it by boat, you know, and just arriving. Because it was incredibly threatening, I mean Tangiers is a very, I don't know, it's quite an intimidating city. I mean, you get off the boat, and they're really aggressively at your face immediately, and then there's sort of getting the boat, getting the train from Tangiers straightaway down to Marrakech, it's a kind of exotic travelling places and sort of, getting off at Marrakech, and like, where am I, you know what I mean, it just looks so. I remember walking along a street from the train in Marrakech and turning the corner and thinking, oh God, that's a Third World city, and there's that, where are we going? And this is the way, but it just hit me for like a second, I thought, shit, you know, we had met this Irish woman on the train who was very strident, and said, yes, we're going this way, and she was just off, but as soon as that happened I suddenly sort of, there was a switch over in experience, and I hadn't been particularly intimidated by this, but that sudden moment it hit me by surprise, and I thought, yes, God, this is great and I just loved it somehow, that sense of being somewhere so different, and having a little taste of that kind of, adventure, and really sort of doing it on a low budget, and then Jamie had got sick whilst we were there, so I had to spend time looking after him.

GM13 - But what did you love about that, what happened there?

P13 - Relief. At that moment, there was a relief in that experience. There was a relief in realising that I had the ability and the confidence to do that, and I always somehow suspected that I had, and so there was a kind of realisation of my ability and my capability, and a kind of, I suppose a realisation about other types of life. I felt there was a sense in which it, and you read stories of adventurous people, and I felt I was meant to be an adventurous person, but I was somehow thwarted. I just thought, yes, you know, I can do this, this is something that I could sort of, thrive on, but maybe I had an adaptability as well. I can adapt to different circumstances, and I like that about myself, that characteristic that I feel good about in myself, that I feel capable of going to places where people live differently and speak different languages and whatever, and finding out about that in a way that isn't just perceiving everything through a preconceived framework, but is just much more sort of, I don't know, inductive, or, just something that's about that, just learning about experience by having experience. About other ways of living, being in those other places myself.

GM14 - So you had had the experience growing up and not really being able to adapt to that environment quite, because for you, you weren't quite able to adapt? But somehow in this foreign place you discovered this ability to adapt?

P14 - Yes, well even if I couldn't adapt it felt appropriate not to be able to because it was such an alien place. That it then took me back to a place where I can really think, OK, how do I go about adapting, you know what I mean, whereas somehow there in my home or in my own country, I just felt that I should be able to cope with this somehow, but I can't really, there's something missing. Whereas there there's a kind of unravelling and then putting back together again.

GM15 - So, a little while ago you were talking about this sense of release?

P15 - Yes.

GM16 - Was it a release from that should?

P16 - Yes, I suppose so, yes. And I don't think I thought that at the time when I went to Morocco for the first time. It was a holiday I suppose as well, it was kind of, going somewhere that was attractive, and strangely being with Jamie and this relationship was very up and down, and temperamental, and I suppose the emotional pain of it was just so generated by him, and I remember actually recently Jamie had, I was at Jamie's house and there was a picture of him in Morocco on that trip, and I was just sitting by a fountain, and I looked quite small and there was this huge and I said, oh God, I look like Princess Diana, and he said I bet you felt like it too, and I did, because it was just like the picture of her outside the Taj, her sort of isolation, so I was quite isolated in that, although I didn't really feel that sort of, kind of being with him but thinking, God, so maybe there's a catharsis in that as well in my sort of, thinking, OK, I can put a wedge in this relationship somehow. I don't know, but that sort of, relationship was very undermining for me, and undermined a lot of my confidence, so maybe it gave me a flavour that I was actually capable of doing things on my own in testing circumstances.

GM17 - So was it some kind of acknowledgement of your own independence?

P17 - Yes. Yes

GM18 - Because, that that was a possibility?

P18 - Yes. So, it was followed up pretty rapidly by going to Cairo, which was a much greater stake to that claim, because I was on my own, I suppose. So, I wanted to follow through with that emotion pretty quickly I think. Didn't want to let it go.

GM19 - So it was an important change for you?

P19 - Yes, it was. A sort of confidence that maybe I could just try. My mum, she sometimes I don't know what she made but she sort of, described me as this sort of, happy go lucky, beach-bum or something, I don't think, I think that's what she imagined I'd been doing in India, that was rather ... really. But, I think I've had that fantasy about myself, particularly at that age, that younger age, she probably saw me wanting to do that, and I suppose to some extent I wanted to sort of, break away from the conventions of, a conventional lifestyle which I saw as restricting or maybe even painful.

GM20 - What was it that was restricting or painful with that kind of, conventional life? What is it about that that for you was difficult?

P20 - Well, I suppose the immediate thing was when my grand dad began living in the home, with my mum and my dad and my granddad, and but that just, I was always finding that so emotionally traumatic somehow. Also my sexuality as well, and sort of like, what we were talking about, which comes first, ... certainly I think, the feeling of being attracted to other men, recognising those, yes, I suppose before recognising those kind of feelings, I suppose despite feeling a bit troubled at home, I was quite popular at school, for instance, at an infant sort of, junior age, I had a sort of group of friends and stuff, there was a sort of, bang, this thing hit in, leaving Junior

School, and feeling alienated. And I think people suddenly decided that I was a poof, probably before I decided.

GM21 - At what age was that again?

P21 - I think I sort of see it, well, it's difficult because I suppose it first hit it going to Junior School which would have been at the age of 9, 10, at that age I was still quite popular, but I can see the kind of, tensing in a sense already, you know, I hated playing football and stuff like that, and we had to play boys games and at times I found it really intimidating, ... but no one really kind of teased me much for it, I was still popular, you know what I mean, in a sense. But suddenly, at that age, leaving that school at about 11 I suppose, and sort of, going to a Secondary School with older boys, and that kind of culture of teasing became more prevalent. Certainly there I became quite alienated, so that period was at least 2 years, and then going to Grammar School, an all boys school, really I was utterly miserable the whole time. I mean, I think I used to go to school sometimes and count the number of words that I'd spoken to somebody at the end of the week, I mean I just didn't speak to people. So, I was terribly depressed and I think that depression was about, lots of things, I was terribly lonely, and I was scared, and my dad, it was my parents and my home life, somehow to love from my mum, ... caring for my granddad, it was odd somehow, sitting down to a school, a mid-class school, and my background was very middle class, a nice background, I was middle class, you know, and I think, and then I was gay, you know, I thought, well I suppose I didn't think that at the time, but I knew that I fancied men. So it just all kind of..... fitted in anywhere. I did feel completely like there's nowhere where I belong.

GM22 - And you were in a setting where there was this 'should' that you should belong there?

P22 - Yes, yes, somehow I should feel like, well, not belonging anywhere that I'm from. Not school, certainly not at home, I don't have a circle of friends whom I socialise with, and sort of, alienated.

GM23 - you were describing kind of, a lot of the different manifestations of this not fitting in, and you say that it was also there when you were really young.....?

P23 - Yes, but I think I just remember feeling that I wasn't wanted. at Infant School when I was 5 or 6, ... my dad taking me fishing, I remember there was a worm on the end of the fishing pole and I sort of remember just sort of, thinking why have you brought me here? Is it because my mum has told you to do things with me, and I'm hearing that conversation, like you know, I don't want to be here you know, and thinking, can we go home, I want to go home. ... was at home, but it was just, I wasn't wanted I don't think, and my dad has said so, that no, I didn't want you as a child, so it wasn't just, I don't think it was just my fantasy. I think I genuinely wasn't wanted, and I felt it. I knew it. What can you do with that when you're a child, you know, you can't think, oh well, I'll go somewhere where I am wanted, this is where I am. But I was wanted by my mum and my granddad, but there was this sort of, big undercurrent of like this person, my dad, was eminently didn't want me around. So, I couldn't really feel at home I suppose. Just such a powerful emotion. I was always sitting in the middle of how my mum would sort of, negotiate her relationship with me

and her relationship with my dad, there was competition all the time. It has left such a strong sense of lack of confidence it's still going on now even after my childhood, the same There's just something missing, and you can't just you know. I'm angry with him. I've lost my temper it doesn't change it, you know, it doesn't go away. I can't imagine it ever going away. I sort of almost don't want it to go away because I don't want to be close to him, I want to have that control over it, that I can negotiate a kind of boundary around it somehow.

GM24 - So, even though this lack, this distance, has been very painful and difficult, letting go would kind of ... ?

P24 - Yes, well yes.

GM25 – something to dread in that ..?

P25 - Yes, there's ways of, for me, there's ways of living with that pain, I don't feel pain about it all the time. I suppose I don't believe anymore. I don't believe in a resolution with him somehow, I can't see it somehow. It's not like I don't want it, it's just I just cannot, I just don't believe he has the emotional articulacy to ever move into that point of mutual understanding around my experiences. I just don't believe it. I've tried it, in all sorts of ways, I just don't want to try that, I don't want to invest so much in the idea of that and the fantasy of that.

Yes, so when I just came back from India recently, I was at my mum's house and I spoke to my dad on the phone, and I sort of, put the phone down and said to mum, good God, it's just that reaction that my dad has on me, that I just, God, I've got to leave the country again (Laughs). And I thought, fuck, I just can't stand the thought, and I've sort of got over that feeling, but my immediate kind of, panicked reaction was that I can't stand being in the same country, I hate the idea of that. And it's sort of, his girlfriend they live in Brighton and she lives nearby..... came round And it's sad, I mean, it's not nice, it's painful when I'm there experiencing that relationship. I don't believe it's the undertone to everything about leaving home though.

GM26 - No, because I'm thinking that as difficult and painful as this relationship is, there are probably quite a few young men who would have really difficult relationships with their fathers, and some of them would end up working with them, living next door to them, or whatever, but for you, for some reason, you not only left the home, you left the whole country, repeatedly.

P26 - Yes.

GM27 - I wonder why, that was your response?

P27 – (pause) I don't know.

GM28 - It's almost, it sounds as though you didn't quite..... maybe it's the first place you really kind of felt free, whatever that means? You were just feeling just completely, in the most foreign place you had ever encountered in your life?

P28 - No, there's truth to that. I suppose, I guess I always imagined somewhere really, places where I would fit in, be at home, but also at a younger age I do, when my sexuality, and I remember thinking I didn't really with idea of being gay somehow. But again, I think that's a very common experience with young men. But one of fantasies I had was I wondered what it would be like to be gay in another country. And I think that was a thought that always kind of rested there somewhere, it was nestled at the back of my spine somewhere, that sort of, almost kind of, I don't know, I'm not exactly sure why I had that fantasy, I don't recall any particular episodic moment when I thought yes, that's what I want to find out at a very young age. Yes, maybe there's something in this, I don't know but, my dad had a friend who was younger than my dad, it was my first actual experience of kissing, and I was about 16 I think, and I suppose he must have been about 30, something like that, and this experience confused me a lot and troubled me a lot for a long time, and a lot of the mixed emotion I suppose with this somewhat abusive and he was American, he and it just gave me a feeling of (taste?) in that stolen weekend I suppose it was really, when I guess he was seducing me really. I was talking about this recently because of this stuff about Jonathan King, and or even when it sort of passed that moment, think that he was kind of, you know, entrapping me, it was the fact that he took me out. It gave me a taste of a kind of lifestyle beyond the parameters of the town and the kind of environment that I grew up in, international, and basically it was the reason why he used to come to our family home is because he was American and his parents and girlfriend and stuff were all in America, so he would just come to the house for some home life, and so he was very different to my dad, you know, but I suppose he was just somehow sort of attractive to me, this lifestyle, success and travelling and my dad in contrast was always living the same average life. So maybe that was something that sort of planted a seed, I don't know. It was an experience that affected me for a long time so, again it was caught up with my sexuality, thinking I didn't instantly identify with being gay..... and no one to talk with about this experience, at all.

GM29 - It makes me just wonder if you were heterosexual, and your home life was OK, if you, I mean it's hard to imagine I suppose, that being the case, but if so, do you think you would have just settled down there ...?

P29 - No, not really. I don't really

GM30 - So, then it makes me wonder if despite the difficulties of home life and your sexuality, if you feel there is something else pulling you to this kind of, wider, international.. ?

P30 - Maybe it was just mystery, as you say, mysteries is a word that sticks with me very much, ... attracted to mysteries. Things I didn't understand. Though, I think now the way, a lot of the way that I approach what I'm doing now is to focusing on things that I just don't understand, what does that mean in terms of so maybe now I think there was often a sort of, attraction to ideas, not knowing, yes and also the interest, I wasn't only interested in facts and figures, I was also interested in the interpretation. So maybe that was one thing, the idea of going for me into uncharted territories, physically as well, that would maybe give some coherence to all those sort of, uncharted realms of emotion that I felt so much, but had no outlet for somehow. And certainly feeling alienated in the environments that I grew up in, all over the place, that maybe thinking well, maybe there's something about what I'm attracted to anyway,

maybe that's what feels familiar as well as frightening, and maybe that's something, what rationally, without consciously thinking of it, compels me to explore that in me how is it, you know, because I know the alienation I have, well maybe I just take that somewhere else, what is that about, what is that about in me?

So, I remember talking about this with, my parents .. talking about travelling a lot, but at the time they were also talking about as if it was quite a brutalising experience that I pretty much impose on my own, putting myself in difficult situations, to almost break something, do you know what I mean, really kind of push it, because I just felt this need to sort of, kick, kick myself, and think the only that came over, I don't know why, maybe one of the ways I thought of doing that was just putting myself in foreign situations that were challenging, that would maybe kick me alive. Because I felt dead in some ways by those experiences that I've described. So just to challenge myself, and I did wonder about it. I mean, I did sort of think, God, why am I doing this, you know. Again, when I went travelling in Indonesia and I remember writing in my journal, I kept a journal as I was travelling, and writing in the airport the day I was leaving, I remember I wrote that I am worth something, and the whole thing of being able to kind of prove to, I don't know, ... discovery of just, really not coping at all when I arrived and at the end of it just Indonesia, and this explore thing, I love that kind of sense of independence and it's like a sort of meditative sort of thing as well, an unattachment, very different a sort of sense of movement contained kind of, in myself, it just, ...longing to meet various people..... everything was stripping away as well.

GM31 - What do you like about that?

P31 - Yes, I like that. It's interesting that analogy to meditation, because that's kind of, stripping away, there is that kind of trying to clarify something about who I am, if I am what I am, you know, those things that I imagine constitute me looking at those things, or letting them go really. I seek those experiences, but I feel confident because I'm having to prove or lose or even, but yet, being so much as well.

GM32 - Being in quite a different way?

P32 - Yes, yes.

GM33 - In a less kind of identified way?

P33 - Yes, yes. (pause)

GM34 - A more mysterious, the thing that I was thinking a little while ago was that I was wondering if your experience was that you felt, because of this kind of, that your whole being in a way was quite mysterious to you, if being in the various mysterious cultures and very new places, you couldn't just if that was the place where you felt less of that conscious split between kind of, almost like the inside and the outside?

P34 - Yeah, more mysterious. Yes, I think that's a good observation. Because my being is mysterious, and I think, yes sort of nurture of mysteries, it gives a kind of equivalency which is

GM35 - Well, that's what I was thinking, you described your experience of being home, your fear of the outer or ?

P35 - No, I think that's a good observation. Yes, to commune with mystery, to commune with not knowing, to borrow this, yes, it's strangely comforting. It just reaffirms that everything is that if I feel that I think one of the most sort of, comforting I guess impermanence..... for me comforting just laying somewhere, being somewhere completely without..... and just looking at the stars and just seeing the curvature of the Earth, and just thinking that's me, it's a comforting, it's such a big universe so it's actually pleasant. quite a long way from quite a lot of things and I just felt yes, ... maybe it does feel like being at home.

GM36 - One thing I want to ask is, so, the thing's you've been talking about, as you reflect back to when you left home, why do you think you really left home?

P36 - (pause) I think I would have gone mad (Laughs). I can't imagine not, I don't know. I think I always imagined it would happen, I go back to the village and I'd drop in and see people who'd just stayed there, and stayed in that village and they've all lived there, I never, ever, ever thought that I would do that ever. I always thought that I would leave at some point. Part of it was beyond my choice really, it was just inevitable.

GM37 - What is that?

P37 - I don't know what it is. (Laughs)

GM38 - (Laughs.)

P38 - What is it?

GM39 - Well, it sounds as if, and I've heard this from other people as well, it sounds almost like there's this calling, and there's no question that that's got to be the way. There may be a lot of reasons that you point to that really make a lot of sense, but regardless. (P agrees throughout this description)

P39 - There's something beyond all those reasons, absolutely, there's this siren just, it is painful though when I think of it, and it's hard growing up with that feeling (pause). But I suppose that gave me the sense again of, and trying to find an escape that would be commensurate to my needs really, going away to university clearly wasn't enough moving to Brighton was a step, ... maybe before I did follow that, you know what I mean, but I had to go beyond, had to go further Well, I suppose that's what attracted me to anthropology..... in a sense coming back to some of those special circumstances yes, that's the way that I've been. Marry the idea of actually doing something, having, studying something and developing it, as what you perceive as an interest, was that kind of or even explore you know, England when I was at college, looking at disruptions and alien, looking at things as a..... an easier kind of..... I don't know if that has to do with all those at the time when I became involved and everybody had left, I mean, that's clearly sort of informs some kind of, probably at the time it was more informed by fantasies of like, you know, going away to another country. Although of course those experiences have been, especially the work that I'd done in India which has been much

more prolonged periods of living out of and being far different to the kind of experience I had when travelling, a different kind of engagement, a different kind of engagement with being not at home, but really fresh with that idea of being, of being a home really.

GM40 - And it sounds like, if I've understood that part you were saying a little while ago, it sounds like by seeing things in an anthropological way, you can even come back to home and you can, you can make the familiar into something foreign?

P40 – Yes, absolutely. It's also making sense of my own sense of not belonging really, the body of a collections of people's experiences, a higgledy piggledy, ... similar kind of experience, a yearning that they don't really understand, and sort of exploring those in one way or another.....

GM41 – Can I ask now, you've talked of this but you might have some more to say about is, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home how has it turned out for you?

P41 - Much happier (Laughs.). So much happier, and it's what I always fantasised about, I suppose, as a forlorn child or a teenager, that when I grow up it will be better, I will be freer strangely, well not that strange..... but you know what I mean. People imagine their childhood as being the sort of freer time, but I was so care-worn as young and I was so particularly as a teenager, so I just thought I would have a kind of much more independent, so it has been, again a sort of release really.

GM42 - Is this anything surprising, any unexpected consequences do you think?

P42 – Well I think about how do I relate to my home. I um, one of the things that as I relate to my family, because I do find that difficult really, I mean, not just my dad, just the obvious kind of, don't not just me but the extended family, my mum I feel quite, all quite different from all their experiences, I suppose because I was in some ways. I mean, my dad I sort of feel like it's a relationship that I have to manage in some way to just maintain it, so that I don't want to sort of, cut him off, but I want to be able to sort of, I feel it's not related to that, sort of let be or to think about how it works, see how I work with it, because there was a couple of times when I've sort of feeling it's too traumatic, and I do have coping mechanisms and forgotten all about and have to rethink about all that. I don't really know what it all means. But one of the things of that extended family that I know, through my dad's side of the family, I don't feel terribly sort of, family orientated anyway, so it's interesting that the other day I had a text message from my dad's cousin, in Worthing near Brighton who I met about 5 years ago, to say why don't you come over some time, and my sort of instincts are I don't really want to, but it's that I just don't want to get involved with them, and getting involved obviously with my dad again, you know what I mean, that whole kind of, they have no idea what I'm doing with my life or how I think about it. Just none. And to have play a role that is not me, that's what I feel like with my dad, I feel like I'm pretending to be, I feel like a bit of a Zombie, I go through this process of yeah, yeah, it sort of alienated me from people. And from my mum as well, with whom I have a better relationship, but there's all sorts of levels of alienation that we don't touch upon, and our relationship is much more kind of difficult than I would like to admit, ... not as traumatic in the same way.... and I don't I mean, my dad's (hard?) as a family man, or it's interesting, you know like coming back

to my mum, I told you before, at Christmas, I came back to her and her partner who has children, their life is all so family, homely, kind of with two children living in the same town, and it's all kind of, all like babysitting and going out for dinners, and I think that my mum finds that quite difficult, it's not it's all kind of rosy or anything, like everyone's pretending it's all good, but it's there and it's established and I don't fit into that. And I, yes, I sense my isolation, because I wonder what would happen if my mum died, then who will my family be? And I suppose that there isn't any.

GM43 - I mean it sounds like there's a very ambivalent kind of connection there, and on the one hand having some connection to family and some kind of home of some kind is very important, but on the other hand, you didn't quite say this, but I was wondering if there's also something about that feeling quite cosy, that you would find difficult.

P43 - Oh, I do find it difficult yes. Yes, I do. I mean, I feel immensely frustrated really. I suppose because I find it just so awfully boring (Laughs.) God, what are all these people doing, (we laugh) I find other people's families more fascinating than my own.

GM44 - But not for long (Laughs.)

P44 - But not for long, no. Probably if I was part of that family I wouldn't find it so fascinating. And I suppose that's what family is all about, isn't it? So somehow, I'm not, I don't know, well they say you can't choose your family and just have to get on with it, and I suppose there's a belief there something good about going through all that, you know rather than just avoiding it all. And I suppose I sometimes feel that I honestly don't subscribe to that belief, but I'm, sometimes I feel as though I've avoided the fact that I just don't know where I am in that, anywhere in that family stuff, and I don't know where I want to be particularly. Certainly when I was India I didn't need to worry about it because nobody was there anyway. And even when I'm here I'm not terribly anxious about it, it sort of hit me in the face a little bit because of that recent onslaught with my dad ringing me up asking me to go to breakfast all the time and sort of getting to the point where he rings on the mobile..... and because I just don't want that, or certainly I need to think about what I want, and I don't know yet, and I don't trust him really. Give him an inch and he'll take a yard, and he doesn't perceive me at all, and when we talk it's like, and maybe..... to some extent, but I just don't, the person he sees me as I just don't recognise as myself in other contexts. Probably the person that I present myself as when I'm with him is not the person I recognise in other contexts either, but...

GM45 - Is there a part of your experience of being at home, a experience of not being seen to be really the person you are?

P45 - Yes, yeah. I don't know, I suppose my dad just being very jealous or cruel, emotionally cruel. My mum being very over anxious about me. I think my parents are frightened of me really. And I knew that from a very young age, and it was quite difficult to cope with that, you feel sort of, my god, ... they never spoke to me ever, ever, you know, my dad would never be really strict, ... bad relationship, I mean, nasty but not strict. So he was treating me like an adult sometimes, but I felt that sometimes my childhood..... my dad. I felt like I had to somehow cope and be grown up,..... I remember being at Grammar School, must have been aged 13 or so, and my parents went to an open evening to talk about my work, and I, they sort of, came back and my mum said it was really embarrassing because your dad didn't talk

to the teachers, he was really intimidated by them, and he doesn't really want to go anymore, well why does he go then? And they decided not to go and they never went ever again to any checking out thing at school, and in fact I made that decision for them because I said that it was kind of, alright, but really when I was 13, it was ridiculous, and I think there was enough of that really, it was just accepted that I was somehow grown up and more capable, and they were really not very nurturing really. I feel like I had a lack of I suppose, nurturing, and so in some ways I've had to cope on my own when I couldn't cope on my own, so it was all very scary, so maybe I've sought out situations again where I've had to cope, by putting myself increasingly kind of, alien environments that are somehow but also nurturing within that as well. Something I've not had.

GM46 - Why do you think that is?

P46 – (pause) There's a kind of reassurance in trying things I don't know, it's certainly what my emotions tell me, there's a kind of reassurance, and I think it just comes back to that kind of reassurance in mystery, in not understanding and maybe then learning that that's sort of, OK, and that I have don't have to really understand the framework. And I have fantasies of escape, maybe there's always that sort of punishment in it, that I think, yeah, I'll go away then, and I pack that out in some way, show that I'm somehow special and able to do that. Particularly at my parents.....

GM47 - Can I just ask, you talked a little, I'm aware that we talked about thinking of your journey home, and your journey now back to your home culture.

P47 - Yes.

GM48 - And I wonder what that's like?

P48 - Well, it's difficult, I knew it would be difficult. In other ways I like it. I anticipated it for a long time and I think I'm coming home, and I knew it was a kind of denouement to my experience and there was a resolution to what I've been doing and coming home was almost part of that staying in Nepal for a while with this kind of intermediary experience, in Nepal it felt quite good actually, it felt like being on holiday while being at work. Coming back you know, at Christmas, going to my mum and dad's to the house I'd barely known. I felt annoyed when I got the coach from Heathrow Airport up to mum's flat, and it was all dark and gloomy, and they had to meet me at the coach station, and somehow the coach station was much more complicated than they'd led me to believe, but they, it was late at night and I was really tired, I'd been travelling for like 48 hours, and I spent sort of, half an hour looking for them all over the place wandering about this empty coach station, and they'd been looking for me, and I thought why didn't they say a particular, I mean I didn't know the place, why didn't they say a very clear spot? I thought it would obvious that I'd get up and they'd be there at the coach when I got off, and they weren't. And I thought, fucking typical, of my mum, I said you have no idea what I'm doing or thinking about things that would make my life easier she was there and she didn't realise and she was all in a panic, but it just kind of, like Oh God, it's just so hard, make it a little bit easier for me. I just felt really pissed off.

And I remember another time when I'd come back to England from travelling and I'd asked her to please tell my friend in London that I'm coming and I haven't made an

arrangement to meet her but I can't get in touch with her, I sort of got that, sorry I couldn't get in touch with her, and just, oh God, I've got nowhere to stay tonight and so it's those kind of experiences of when things are really tricky which put me back on to that, that feeling of being somehow let down.

GM49 - It sounds like an experience of being let down, and it also sounds like also it's again that experience of the difference in your worlds?

P49 - Yes, exactly. It's just they can't quite understand it that I can't just sort of, turn up and just think, oh well, I'll just find something, I mean there's, I'm on a low budget as well, I can't just think, oh I'll just stay in a hotel in London, you know. Well not many people can say that. Yes, it's that feeling of being let down, and I do feel let down. Certainly in the way that my mum, we have such minimal conversation about what I've been doing in India all this time doing my work. And as I say, they can't really understand it, but I mean, it's seems like it's frightening for them, my dad said, oh, I bet you had a lot of curries, and it's banal really. Ok, maybe they haven't had the sort of education that I had, but I'm their son, you know, can't they just rise to the occasion, ask slightly more fascinated questions? I do find it, again I think that's something I wanted to escape from.

GM50 - It sounds almost like you're coming from this kind of situation where you deeply appreciate that there is a mystery and the foreign-ness and you come back and you expect something of an understanding from some of these people that you feel that there should be some kind of connection, but you just don't get it.

P50 - I just don't get it. I don't know why, I mean it's not like my whole life here revolves around my parents, but I suppose that's the kind of thing that I was brought up with against most starkly when I got back, and I think parentally they care, I get some sense of that. But, I don't imagine leaving in the same way again somehow. It's been a rite of passage, it feels like being away and choosing to come back and to find a way of studying and working in England and working through my thesis, and maybe becoming an anthropologist or something, don't know exactly what yet, I need to do that in this country. Also, I couldn't have done that in India because there wouldn't have been the kind of opportunities for me to do that there, at this stage of my life. And I think it is something about coming back and reflecting on that experience is important. convention, but I think you know, it's also, to me it felt appropriate, it felt that that would be a way that I could make opportunities for myself. I certainly felt that if I'd stayed in Calcutta I would have been there and anything I was doing would have gone nowhere, not been recognised or appreciated in the context I wanted to be appreciated, or where I can learn. I mean, again on nurturing, sometimes I sort of, feel that my PhD and what I seek is a kind of nurturing, definitely. Looking for nurturing relationships and things like that, there is a kind of comfort in that. So, I think I am committed to being based here for some time. I don't, I mean, when I say, no, I won't stay here, I don't envisage a life in which I won't spend a period of time travelling and maybe an extended period of time overseas. And that might turn into living overseas. It might turn into having some kind of base here, but with travel or field work as a component of my life. So I envisage certainly, overseas experience, I suppose I envisage India, not necessarily I really felt like today, when I was talking to that somehow India has become part of my landscape that I'm really not prepared to let go of. It's an emotional thing.

GM51 - So what if for some reason you had to settle here and you just had to stay here, would that work for you?

P51 – You mean like certainly giving up on the idea of travelling, what would that be like?

GM52 - Nothing you could.....?

P52- Yes, I think probably my closest friends have never left England, so bond with theirs.....I feel I needed that home in a former life, they've had very different experiences of life. it's not such a trauma, maybe it would be alright, maybe I could let go of something, the idea of escape. Escape from, well I feel just frustrated. Because I don't think I fantasise about escape anymore. I think I used to fantasise of escape and escape from that kind of lack of understanding that I was talking about, you know. Now, actually as maybe you perceive your fantasies as you get older and then they turn into something else. No I don't imagine it as escape. But I had a life in India, you know what I mean, so I can't sort of, it would be terribly traumatic, you know the thought of not seeing my friends and people that I've loved there again, I mean that would, I would hate that. And if I never go anywhere other than India that would be alright somehow. I don't really feel that real compulsion to go to uncharted territories at all now. I think in India I somehow kind of kicked it, that compulsion..... so in a sense I mean, India's a big place, and maybe in the part, Calcutta, I could have a life there, I'd have a little home somewhere, I don't know. I think for the last 5 years I've spent more time in Calcutta than I've spent time in anywhere else.

GM53 - So it's familiar, but I'm wondering if, from what you were saying previously, it's familiar and yet?

P53 - Yes, it's also very foreign. I felt when I was out there, God, ... and I suppose being back here, it doesn't feel awful, it doesn't feel like, oh God, I can't wait to leave, it feels OK, I like it actually. I mean, I like to see my friends, and my family although they're the tougher ones, but I do like it. I like the life that I have here too, you know, I do like that. I like thinking also that I've got things to do here, when I came back I didn't have anything to do, I've quite a lot of things to do, and that feels good, just being here, I sort of feel that my life is going forward really, especially as it's difficult money worries that I've had I do feel a sense of progress and things falling into place really. And it's almost sort of, again, sort of the dark, mysterious way that I don't quite understand about all the things I've done, it's been a difficult progress towards this point, but somehow it's working out.

GM54 - It hasn't been planned?

P54 - No, though there's a kind of pattern to it, but it's not been, there's not been much premeditation on my part really. I suppose it's been a conviction of wanting to do certain things.

GM55 - I have this one more question. What's it feel like to be talking about this whole topic, these things?

P55 - It's nice to really talk about it in a sort of condensed period of time, you know the year, and the dates, the chronological order, about various themes and issues, I love to contemplate, but I don't care I don't often have a chance to sort of, of sit down and talk about things in such depth. Revelations..... I think the thing we were talking about, equilibrium and mystery, was very ... It was sad..... I don't find it upsetting, I do though, I find it emotional. I don't find it joyous either, um, I find it a fascinating conversation.

GM56 – So, I get the impression that there's something new in this for you?

P56 - Yes, that is the key theme in my life I think, there has been in various manifestations. I envisage well, remaining so somehow, although it's interesting..... I think I do envisage I guess, somehow, negotiating this territory, of, our territory I suppose, and that for me, I don't know, I feel like according to a ... but an anthropologist, they're all doing the same things, a lot of people are doing the same thing, and and it's quite grounding, you know what I mean, to talk about my sense of alienation and gives that a sense of calmness to me, and I can reflect on that and think yes, OK, and have those feelings. It's alright. And sometimes I feel as though I don't, having left somewhere, I used to feel that I didn't let myself off the hook emotionally, that I always wanted to stay behind. Knew everything....., but I don't. It's not being in control, but at least able to cope. I feel I've been learning about, I have been allowing myself to get well, I don't have to learn things by myself, I don't have to be in everything.

GM57 - It makes me wonder if it's almost like there's two worlds here, a world you were describing where you grew up, and where a lot of us have grown up, where things are very at face value, they're as large as they appear to be, and things can be concluded, and people as well as the world, and that you, that there, you never fit there?

P57 - No.

GM58 - But you fit much more in this world where everything is in a way, uncertain, and you felt uncertain..... that in fact that is, much more of a world that's right for you somehow?

P58 - Yes, I suppose it is. Yes. And it makes me happy to be in that kind of space.

GM59 -?

P59 - And most things, like relationships that began and people around me won't try to break up, and to get a boyfriend or something like that, not just me, but that's like you know, it makes me think about what would a relationship mean for me if I'm so attracted to a kind of but I think that's something, what I was saying to you before, that sort of, letting myself off the hook and allowing myself to feel that it's all fine, I know that I could enter into a relationship without necessarily even knowing what I'm doing, but that's all fine, and I think that for me, that's a big lesson I've had to learn to life, I'm still learning, I don't think I commit to a conclusion of my childhood, in my childhood I used to think I had to find a way that I can cope, I have to find a way which I can be strong enough to be adult as a child. I felt sort of, ...maybe that's what all of us do, but I think for me it's an acute feeling, it's, just letting myself

be, really. I suppose I don't fit into that mode, but I feel they've all left me, I don't feel that they left me to go away, I don't think that's true either actually now, ... I feel what going away, what leaving home, or going to other countries, or going to India, what it means to me now is something quite different, and it's alright really again, I don't have to conceptualise that as escape, or you know, it's just something that I do. It's alright. I like it. It doesn't mean I don't want to be here either, but I think it's, and I think that comes across just going through that, just pushing always that one step further from going to Morocco, going to Indonesia, then sort of progressively for a longer period of time, and being in Calcutta comes across as..... more prolonged occasions than I ever imagined it.

GM60 - That you finally found a place that was both mysterious and home?

P60 - Yes.

GM61 -?

P61 - Yes, and I don't really know that I want to go and live in Calcutta, it's there that's interesting..... Why did I move to Calcutta, I don't know why, I think it was chance, but that's what happened.

GM62 - Anything else you want to add or?

P62 - It's quite a happy ending really. (Laughs.)

GM63 - (Laughs.) Rewind and stop the tape there.

P63 - Yes, yes. (Laughs.) no, but it just feels like, talking about that just there, it's that conceptualises something of the indeterminacy of the the mystery you were talking about, I suppose actually I'm allowing myself to learn about thinking that that's OK, and it feels quite upbeat actually now.

GM64 - It made me think when you said that if what I said matched your experience at all, and you spoke about how much it does, then Calcutta was a place that can be both mysterious and home, that having had that experience maybe you found it shifted some assumption, that had to be a certain kind of thing, and that now you can go through with that world, sort of?

P64 - I think what it was, was that when I went to Calcutta the first time and stayed for a year, it wasn't, it certainly wasn't like being at home, but it was a prolonged time, period of being abroad in one place, and something that I suppose again, sort of was attractive but compounded by feeling that I could cope and it was all kind of igniting my sense of my own mysteriousness, and I went back again and really it was going back just not long after, still really in the emotional part of that sort of chemotherapy time really, and not really actually, I think still feeling quite physically and emotionally run down when I went, but it's all very bizarre in lots of ways, and certainly wasn't the easiest time that I had living there, but I think it's just went on for such a long time, long enough to just sort of, yes. Yes, I just sort of, got something out of it. I don't need to prove that I can do it anymore, because I've done it.

The circumstances of your leaving home:

1. There were many leavings rather than just one, but the first physical separation from home was my leaving for university.
2. An important relationship had just ended and I was upset and confused.
3. I was desperate to get away from home, unhappy there, but terrified about returning to an institutional environment.
4. I ended up living with friends and my parents for an additional year, enjoying feeling liberated and grown-up
5. I always felt alienated at home and always had fantasies about leaving, but when it came down to finally leaving, I was very nervous and anxious and I didn't feel I had the courage or emotional stability to look after myself.
6. The fantasies about leaving helped me cope with the unhappiness at home, a home life that didn't give me the stability or security to leave.
7. When I left to go to university at York, I wanted to go on my own, not be seen off by my parents, it had to be a baptism of fire.
8. Friends who knew me at the time probably would have seen me as capable and competent and although I didn't really want to live with my parents, I was trepidatious about leaving home.
9. Partly I was scared to return to an environment with people my own age, my friends were older, and I was alienated at school.
10. But once I left I had no desire to return, I could cope and it was too difficult coping with my parents.

Mixtures of feelings:

1. I felt alienated from students at university and it felt like a mix of confidence and lack of confidence.
2. What felt so emotionally difficult at home was my turbulent, competitive relationship with my dad and I looked down on him.
3. That gave me this sense of superiority and confidence but I felt scared and uncertain with that, we didn't know how to deal with each other.
4. When I left for university my mother also left my father, she had just been waiting for me to leave, so we both left.

Not belonging:

1. In retrospect I always felt like an outsider. I have a photo of my father holding me at 3 and I can remember thinking 'let me go', I thought 'what am I doing here?' and later he took me fishing and I remember thinking 'why have you brought me here?'
2. I remember acutely at a young age that something's wrong, this is not really where I belong.

3. It's not clear if I was feeling I didn't belong at home or that my dad wasn't my dad, like we denied each other somehow.
4. I remember feeling I genuinely wasn't wanted and my father has said that's true, I wasn't wanted as a child and I think my mother told him to do things with me.
5. What can you do with that knowledge as a child? I had nowhere else to go where I would be wanted or belong.
6. I was wanted by my mom and my granddad, just my dad didn't, so I couldn't really feel at home. It was a powerful emotion.
7. There was a competition between my father and me for my mother's attention and that still continues. It has left a strong sense of lack of confidence for me.
8. Our house was tense, not relaxed, although I often dream of that house, how it was when I was a child.
9. I still feel angry with my father. I can't imagine these feelings ever going away and I don't want them to because I don't want to ever be close to him. I wanted to maintain a controlled boundary.

Travelling:

1. I travelled and lived in Brighton next, on and off, reclaiming my adolescence, not wanting much responsibility.
2. I didn't want commitment to a job but also didn't really think I could do much, but I consciously wanted a carefree time, after a careful adolescence.
3. I knew I didn't really want the work I was doing and fantasised about travelling and working overseas. I didn't want to get bogged down in work or study.
4. I went to Morocco with a friend and realised I really want to travel and I flourished during those two weeks and I thought this is what I want, to just go and see.
5. When I got back I immediately quit my job and decided to train in Egypt to teach English as a foreign language.
6. There was something pivotal about that experience, going to a different continent, a developing country, and arriving by boat.
7. Tangiers is very intimidating and threatening, and taking the train from there and it was exotic, with a feeling of 'where am I?' It was a third world city and so different.

First experience of foreign travel:

1. It was like a switch went off in me, a sudden moment of surprise, and I thought I love this, being somewhere so different, the adventure, being on a low budget.
2. At that moment I felt relief. I realised I had the ability and confidence to do this.
3. There was a realisation of my capability and of other ways of life.
4. I felt that I was meant to be an adventurous person but that I'd been thwarted. This is something I can thrive on.
5. I found I can adapt to different circumstances and I like that about myself.
6. I feel capable of adapting to places where people live differently, speak different languages, and really getting into the experiences of those different ways.

7. It was easier to adapt to these foreign places than my home environment, or if I couldn't adapt it felt appropriate because they were so alien, but at home I felt I should be able to cope but I couldn't, there was something missing.
8. The release I felt in the foreign place was partly a release from that I 'should' be able to adapt.
9. I felt isolated on that trip, the relationship was undermining of my confidence but I got a flavour that I could do things on my own in difficult circumstances.
10. It was an acknowledgment of my independence, so I followed it up quickly by going to Cairo.
11. That was on my own so it was a greater stake in that claim to independence and I wanted to follow through quickly, not to lose it.
12. I got the confidence to try to really break away from the conventions, the conventional lifestyle that I experienced as restricting and even painful.

What was difficult about that?

1. I was always finding it emotionally traumatic living with my mother, father, and granddad.
2. Also my sexuality, feeling my attraction for other men, and not knowing which comes first.
3. But before I recognised those feelings I was troubled at home and also quite popular at junior school, had a group of friends.
4. But leaving junior school (age 9-10) these sexual feelings happened and I felt alienated, I think others decided I was a poof before I did.
5. I can see the tensing in a sense, not wanting to play sports, I found it intimidating, I was still popular, until Secondary school, when I was with older boys and the culture of teasing began.
6. I became quite alienated there and was utterly miserable afterwards at Grammar school.
7. I just didn't speak to people there, I was terribly depressed, I was very lonely, and I was scared.
8. I had a nice middle class background, but it was odd somehow, I know I fancied men, but it was all like there was nowhere I belonged, not at home, not at school, not in a circle of friends to socialise with, just alienated.

Relationship with father:

1. I find ways of living with the pain of my relationship with my father.
2. I can't see things changing between us, I don't believe he has the emotional maturity to have any mutual understanding of my experiences.
3. I've tried to change things with him in various ways but I don't want to continue to invest in the idea, the fantasy of that.
4. When I returned from India I spoke to my dad on the phone and the effect he has on me I feel I've got to leave the country immediately!
5. My immediate panicked reaction is I can't stand to be in the same country and I hate that.
6. I don't believe that relationship is the undertone to everything about my leaving home though.

Being gay:

1. In this completely foreign place was the first place I really felt free, I always imagined there would be places where I'd fit in, be at home.
2. I wondered what it would be like to be gay in another country.
3. I'm not sure why I had that fantasy but it was always there.
4. My first sexual experience was with an American man much older than I (30, I was 16) and it troubled me a lot for a long time.
5. I felt he was kind of entrapping me, took me out and it gave me a taste of a kind of environment beyond the parameters of my town and the environment I grew up in.
6. He was sort of attractive to me, being international, his lifestyle, success and travelling and my dad in comparison always living this average life.
7. This planted a seed I think, and there was no one to talk to about this whole experience, I didn't identify as being gay instantly, but it affected me.

Attracted to mysteries:

1. I was always attracted to things I didn't understand, to mystery.
2. An attraction to ideas, to not knowing, not only to facts and figures but to interpretation.
3. The idea of going into uncharted territories, physically as well, trying to get some coherence for the realms of emotion I felt so much but had no outlet for.
4. I'm left wondering what is that alienation about in me, feeling alienating in all my early environments, maybe what I'm attracted to feels familiar as well as frightening. Maybe that's what compels me to explore my own experiences.
5. I experience my whole being as quite mysterious, so being in a mysterious new culture, its' like the split between inside and outside is lessened. It gives a kind of equivalency.
6. I'm attracted to the experience of communing with mystery, to commune with not knowing, it's strangely comforting.
7. It is comforting because it reaffirms just that everything is mysterious so if I feel that, it's OK.
8. It's comforting for me to feel the impermanence of things, just laying somewhere, just looking at the stars and seeing the curvature of the Earth and just thinking this is me.
9. It's comforting that it's such a big universe and when I'm a long way away from everything, maybe it does feel like being at home.
10. There's a kind of reassurance in trying things I don't know, it really feels reassuring.
11. It's a reassurance in mystery, in not understanding and learning that it's OK, I don't have to understand the framework.

Challenging situations:

1. I remember realising that in all this travelling I put myself in quite brutalising situations.
2. I impose these on myself to almost break something, to push it, a need to really kick myself alive.
3. Putting myself in foreign situations that were challenging was a way to do that because I felt deadened in some ways by those early experiences.
4. I did sort of think, why am I doing this to myself?
5. I remembering writing in my travel journal 'I am worth something' and being able to prove that I could cope out there, a sense of independence, a meditative nonattachment, meeting other people, stripping away everything, a movement in myself.
6. It's a kind of trying to clarify something about who I am, if I am what I am, letting things go really, I seek those experiences and the confidence of having to prove, or lose, and being in a different, less identified way.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. I would have gone mad (laughs)
2. I can't imagine not going, I always imagined I would.
3. I go back to visit and see people who've stayed there and I never ever thought I would do that.
4. Part of it was beyond my choice really, it was inevitable, and I don't understand that.
5. ** There's absolutely something beyond all the reasons I could give for leaving.
6. ** There's just this siren, it's painful and it's hard growing up always with that feeling.
7. ** I had to try to find an escape that would be commensurate with my needs (important not to mistake the needs for the reasons!!).
8. Going away to university clearly wasn't enough, moving to Brighton was a step, I had to go beyond, further.

Choice of study:

1. I suppose I was attracted to anthropology because I could combine actually doing something, studying something and developing something, looking at disruptions and being alien, fantasies of going to another country
2. The experiences of study and being away, like the work I've done in India, has been prolonged periods of living far away and very different than travelling. A different kind of engagement with being not at home, but really meshed with that idea of being a home too.
3. Anthropology also gives the chance to return to the familiar and make it foreign and making sense of my own sense of not belonging at home.

How has it been since leaving?

1. I've been so much happier since leaving. It's been the fulfilment of my fantasies, since a child or teenager, that when I grow up it will be better.
2. I hoped I would be freer and for me my childhood was not a free time, I was care-worn, now is freer, a release.

Remaining difficult family relations:

1. I find it difficult to relate to my family, not just my dad but the extended family I feel very different from all their experiences.
2. I have to manage my relationship with my father, to maintain it somehow without cutting him off or it being too traumatic.
3. I don't feel very family-oriented anyway.
4. I was invited over by my dad's cousin and my first instinct was that I don't really want to go. I just don't want to get involved with them and with my dad again.
5. They have no idea about me, what I'm doing with my life or what I think about it.
6. I feel I'd have to play a role that is not me, like with my dad, I feel like I'm pretending, like I'm a zombie.
7. I have a better relationship with my mom, but there's also all sorts of levels of alienation we don't touch on, and our relationship is much more difficult that I'd like to admit.
8. My mom and her partner's life is so family-oriented, so homey, all babysitting for step-daughters and going out for dinners, and I think my mom finds that difficult, it's not all rosy. It's there and established and I don't fit into that.
9. I do sense my isolation because I wonder if my mom died who would my family be then and I suppose that there isn't any.
10. That family cosiness, I would like that if it felt OK, but it really is difficult for me, very frustrating and awfully boring.
11. I find other people's families more fascinating than my own but only because they're not mine.
12. They say you can't choose you family and you have to just get on with it and I suppose there's something good about going through all that rather than avoiding it.
13. In a way I feel I have avoided the fact that I don't know where I am in that family stuff or where I really want to be.
14. In India I didn't have to deal with it and I usually don't have to here but recently my dad started ringing me up to meet and I don't want that. I need to think about what I want, but I don't really trust him.
15. When we talk he doesn't perceive me at all, the person he sees me as I just don't recognise.
16. Probably the person I present myself as when I'm with him is not the person I usually am either.
17. My dad is emotionally cruel and my mom is over anxious about me, I think they are both frightened of me really, from a young age, and it was difficult to cope with.
18. My dad would be nasty but not strict, he treated me like an adult sometimes when it was supposed to be my childhood and he was supposed to be my dad.

19. I remember my father was really intimidated by my grammar school teachers when I was 13 I told them they didn't have to go to any more meetings at school, I shouldn't have been deciding that.
20. It was just accepted that I was more grown up and could cope and they were not very nurturing.
21. I feel I had a lack of nurturing and had to cope on my own when I really couldn't and it was scary.
22. Maybe I've sought out situations again where I had to cope , by putting myself in increasingly alien environments but also getting nurturing in that now.
23. And there's the fantasy of escape, it has an element of punishment in it, I think I'll go away, show that I'm special and able to do that, especially to my parents.

Returning home:

1. I knew it would be difficult and it is but in other ways I like it.
2. My mom and dad were supposed to meet me at the coach station and it was a difficult place to find them and they weren't there and I'd been travelling long and I was angry and I thought it was typical of my mom.
3. She has no idea what I'm doing or what things would make my life easier. I just want them to make it a little bit easier for me.
4. I really feel let down by them sometimes, I ask simple things to help me out and they let me down.
5. They can't understand my world or the world, how it operates when you're on a low budget.
6. And my mom asks so little about what I've been doing in India all this time. They can't understand it and it's frightening for them and they end up saying banal things.
7. I'm there son, can't they ask more interested questions? That's something I wanted to escape from, that kind of interaction.
8. I know they care but my leaving has been a rite of passage.
9. I've returned here now to reflect on my time away and to finish my studies and take advantage of career opportunities that are only here for me.
10. Coming back and finishing my studies here is a way of making more opportunities for myself. If I stayed in India it would have gone nowhere, my work would not have been recognised or appreciated where I wanted it to be.
11. In a way I was looking again for nurturing, of myself and my work. The comfort of that.
12. So I feel committed to being based here for a while but I don't imagine a life without travelling or extended time overseas, or living overseas.
13. It will be a mix of maybe a base here and overseas experience, maybe India as it's become a part of my emotional landscape and I don't want to lose that.
14. It doesn't feel awful to be back, I like it, seeing friends and even family, I like that.
15. I like the life I have here, the things I have to do here, like my life is going forward, things falling into place.
16. It's been a dark mysterious process that I don't understand, getting to this point, but somehow it's working out. There's been a pattern to things but not a premeditated plan, more a conviction.

What would it be like if you couldn't travel and had to just stay here?

1. My closest friends have never left England and have that sense of a settled home and maybe I needed that home in a former life, maybe it would be alright, not such a trauma, maybe I could let go of the idea of escape.
2. I used to fantasise of escape from that lack of understanding from my parents but I don't think I fantasise about that now, it would just be the frustration.
3. But it would be traumatic to feel I wouldn't see my friends and people I loved in India again, I had a life there. I would hate that.
4. If I never go anywhere other than India that would be OK, I don't feel the need to go to new places now. I think I kicked that compulsion in India, and maybe I could have a life in Calcutta.
5. For the last 5 years I've spent more time in Calcutta than anywhere else.
6. Calcutta is like a place that's both familiar and foreign.

The feeling of the interview:

1. It's nice to really contemplate this is a chronological order, various themes and issues.
2. I don't often have the chance to sit down and talk about things in such depth.
3. I think the thing about equilibrium and mystery was a revelation.
4. It was sad, emotional, not upsetting, fascinating but not joyous.
5. I think the key theme in my life has been this, and I see it as remaining, this sense of my alienation, it gives a sense of calmness to talk about it.
6. It's alright to reflect on it.
7. It makes me happy to be in a kind of uncertain, inconclusive space.
8. And it makes me wonder what would a relationship mean for me and it means letting myself off the hook, being able to enter into a relationship without even knowing what I'm doing.
9. I'm learning this feeling of just letting myself be, ever since childhood when I had to be strong enough to be adult as a child and cope with everything.
10. What leaving home means to me now, going to India, is quite different and I don't have to keep conceptualising it as escape, I can accept it, it's alright.
11. There's an indeterminacy to this mystery we were talking about, and I'm allowing myself to think that's Ok and that's quite upbeat.
12. Being in Calcutta the first time, for a prolonged time, and finding I could cope, really ignited my sense of my own mysteriousness.
13. And returning then I finally stayed long enough that I don't need to prove I can do that anymore, I've done it.

“Peter” Meaning Clusters

Having to leave and fear of leaving:

1. First of many leavings was to university and I had to go alone not with my parents, as a baptism of fire.
2. Partly I was afraid to return to an institutional environment with people my own age again.
3. Friends would have seen me as capable and confident but I was trespicious about leaving home, anxious, nervous I wasn't courageous or stable enough to look after myself.
4. Having fantasies about leaving helped me cope with being at home.
5. I was desperate to leave. I was very alienated and unhappy at home.
6. Home life did not give me the security to feel I could leave and cope alone.
7. I found it emotionally traumatic living with my father, mother, and grandfather. The house was tense, not relaxed.
8. Once I left and realised I could cope, I had no desire to return.
9. When I left for university my mother also left my father.
10. I still often dream of that house, how it was as a child.

Alienation at school and university:

1. I felt troubled at home but popular with friends at junior school.
2. Leaving junior school (9-10) I began to realise my sexual feeling for men and I felt alienated and others started calling me gay.
3. I started to feel tense, not fit in, feeling intimidated, still popular till secondary school when I was alienated by the culture of teasing.
4. By grammar school I was miserable, talking to no one, depressed, lonely, scared.
5. Later I felt alienated at university, it was a mixed feeling of lack of confidence and confidence.

Relationship with father (past):

1. The most difficult thing at home was the turbulent, competitive relationship with my father.
2. I felt superior to him and scared of the confidence this gave me at that age.
3. Photos from my childhood of my father and me bring back vivid memories of feeling 'let me go', 'what am I doing here with him?'
4. It's not clear if I felt I didn't belong at home or more that my dad wasn't my dad.
5. My father and I rejected each other. I felt he didn't want me and he confirmed this. As a young child I didn't know how to cope with his inability to cope with his own son.
6. It was a powerful emotion to not feel at home because your father didn't want you.

7. My father competed with me for mother's attention and it has left me with a strong sense of lack of confidence.
8. I don't want my anger towards my father to disappear, I want to maintain a boundary between us.
9. My father was nasty but not strict. He treated me as an adult sometimes when it was supposed to be my childhood and he was supposed to be my father.

Relationship with father (present):

1. My relationship with my father does not underlie everything about my leaving home.
2. I don't believe my father has the emotional maturity to change and I don't want to continue to invest in the idea of that possibility.
3. I find ways of living with the pain of my relationship with him.
4. My reaction to being around my father is one of panic, I can't stand to be in the same country as him, I've got to leave and I hate that.
5. I manage my relationship with my father so that I don't cut him off entirely and I minimise the trauma for me.
6. I need to decide what I really want from my father because he's making contact and I don't trust him.
7. He does not see me at all, who he sees I don't even recognise as me.
8. The person I am with him is probably not the person I usually am either.

Family relations generally:

1. There was nowhere I belonged, school, socialising with friends, or home.
2. My sexuality complicated these existing feelings of not belonging.
3. I don't feel family-oriented and find it difficult to relate to the extended family. I feel different from all of their experiences.
4. I would have to play a role, pretend, be a zombie, they have no real idea about me or my life.
5. I don't fit into that homey family cosiness, I find it frustrating and very boring.
6. My relationship is better with my mom but there is alienation and difficulties there that we don't talk about. But if she died I'd really have no family.
7. In a way, by living abroad, I've been able to avoid looking at my isolation in the family and how I'd like things to be.
8. I really feel let down by my parents when I ask them to help me out in a simple way and they let me down. I wish they could support me in a way that made things a little easier for me.
9. My parents seem to have so little understanding of my world, little basic ability to imagine what I've been through.
10. My parents ask so little about what I've experienced while away. They can't understand it and it's frightening for them and they end up saying banal things. I wanted to escape from that kind of interaction, I'm their son can't they ask more interested questions?
11. I think my parents were both frightened of me as a child and that was difficult to cope with.

12. They weren't very nurturing, it was accepted I could cope on my own before I really could and it was scary.

Being gay:

1. My sexuality complicated feelings of not belonging anywhere as I was growing up.
2. I always had the fantasy of wondering what it would be like to be gay in another country.
3. My first sexual experience was with an American man much older than me, which troubled me for a long time.
4. He was taking me out and giving me a sense of an environment beyond my own town and home environment.
5. He was somehow attractive to me, being international, his successful lifestyle and travelling and how in comparison my dad lived a very average life.
6. This planted a seed I think, and there was no one to talk to about this whole experience, I didn't identify as being gay instantly, but it affected me.

Relation of family experience to leaving:

1. I can't imagine not leaving, I know I would and I would have gone crazy if I didn't.
2. I don't understand it, but it was partly beyond my choice, inevitable. There is something beyond any reason I could give for leaving.
3. There is a siren, it's painful and hard to grow up with that feeling.
4. I had to find an escape that would be commensurate with my needs and university wasn't enough, Brighton was a step, but I had to go further.
5. IMPORTANT NOT TO MISTAKE NEEDS FOR REASONS AND VISA VERSA.
6. Maybe I've sought out situations again where I had to cope , by putting myself in increasingly alien environments but also getting nurturing in that now.
7. It was easier to adapt to foreign places than to my home, partly because if I couldn't adapt it felt appropriate there because it was so alien, but at home I always felt I should be able to cope but couldn't. The release I felt in a foreign place was partly a release from that 'should' be able to cope.
8. And there's the fantasy of escape, it has an element of punishment in it, I think I'll go away, show that I'm special and able to do that, especially to my parents.
9. I've been so much happier since leaving. It's been the fulfilment of my fantasies, since a child or teenager, that when I grow up it will be better.
10. I hoped I would be freer and for me my childhood was not a free time, I was care-worn, now is freer, a release.

First experience of foreign travel:

1. I spent some time in Brighton reclaiming my adolescence and avoiding any responsibility while fantasising about living and working overseas.

2. First trip to Morocco and I flourished, I knew this is what I want, it was pivotal.
3. It was like a switch turned on, a sudden moment of surprise, I felt I loved it, being somewhere so different and exotic, the adventure, a different continent, arriving by boat.
4. At that moment I felt relief because I realised I had the ability and confidence to do this, to be the adventurous person I was meant to be.
5. I liked my ability to adapt to people and languages so different to me.
6. I sensed I could be on my own in difficult circumstances, I could manage independently.
7. When I returned I wanted to leave again immediately so I wouldn't lose this new claim on my independence, so I quit everything and went to Egypt to train at TEFL.
8. I quickly got the confidence to break away from the conventions of life which I'd experienced as restricting and even painful.
9. This completely foreign place was the first place I'd really felt free. I'd always imagined there would be places where I'd fit in, be at home.

Comfort in mystery:

1. I was always attracted to things I didn't understand, to mystery, to not-knowing, and to interpretation.
2. I wanted to go into uncharted territories, physically as well, to get some coherence for the emotion I felt but had no outlet for.
3. I wonder what my sense of alienation, which I've always had, is really about.
4. Maybe I'm attracted to the familiar and the frightening. Maybe that's what compels me to explore my own experiences.
5. I experience my whole being as quite mysterious, so being in a mysterious new culture, its' like the split between inside and outside is lessened. It gives a kind of equivalency.
6. I find it strangely comforting to commune with mystery and not-knowing, because it reaffirms that everything is mysterious, so it's OK if I feel I'm mysterious.
7. It's comforting for me to feel the impermanence of things, just laying somewhere, just looking at the stars and seeing the curvature of the Earth and just thinking this is me. It's comforting that it's such a big universe and when I'm a long way away from everything, maybe it does feel like being at home.
8. It's reassuring trying things I don't know, because in the not understanding and mystery I learn it's OK , I don't have to understand.

Challenging situations:

1. I remember realising that in all this travelling I put myself in quite brutalising situations and wondering why am I doing this to myself?
2. I impose these on myself to almost break something, to push it, a need to really kick myself alive.
3. Putting myself in foreign situations that were challenging was a way to do that because I felt deadened in some ways by those early experiences.

4. I remembering writing in my travel journal 'I am worth something' and being able to prove that I could cope out there, a sense of independence, a meditative nonattachment, meeting other people, stripping away everything, a movement in myself.
5. It's a kind of trying to clarify something about who I am, if I am what I am, letting things go really, I seek those experiences and the confidence of having to prove, or lose, and being in a different, less identified way.

Choice of study:

1. I suppose I was attracted to anthropology because I could combine studying something and developing something, looking at disruptions and being alien, with fantasies of going to another country
2. The experiences of study and being away, like the work I've done in India, has been prolonged periods of living far away and very different than travelling. A different kind of engagement with being not at home, but really meshed with that idea of being a home too.
3. Anthropology also gives the chance to return to the familiar and make it foreign and making sense of my own sense of not belonging at home.

Experience of returning to the home country:

1. My leaving has been a rite of passage and now my return is a chance to reflect upon that. It's been difficult to return and I knew it would be but it doesn't feel awful.
2. Returning now and finishing my studies is a way of keeping opportunities open in the future. If I stayed in India it would have gone nowhere, my work would not have been recognised or appreciated where I wanted it to be.
3. I was partly looking for the comfort of having myself and my work nurtured again.
4. So I feel committed to being based here for a while but I don't imagine a life without travelling or extended time overseas, or living overseas. It will be a mix of maybe a base here and overseas experience, maybe India as it's become a part of my emotional landscape and I don't want to lose that.
5. I used to fantasise of escape from that lack of understanding from my parents but I don't think I fantasise about that now, it would just be the frustration.
6. But it would be traumatic to feel I wouldn't see my friends and people I loved in India again, I had a life there. I would hate that.
7. If I never go anywhere other than India that would be OK, I don't feel the need to go to new places now. I think I kicked that compulsion in India, and maybe I could have a life in Calcutta.
8. For the last 5 years I've spent more time in Calcutta than anywhere else.
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The feeling of the interview:

1. It's nice to really contemplate this is a chronological order, various themes and issues. I don't often have the chance to sit down and talk about things in such depth.
2. I think the thing about equilibrium and mystery was a revelation.
3. It was sad, emotional, not upsetting, fascinating but not joyous.
4. I think the key theme in my life has been this sense of alienation, and I see it as remaining, and it gives a sense of calmness to talk about it.
5. It makes me happy to be in a kind of uncertain, inconclusive space. (relates to his connection to mystery).
6. And it makes me wonder what would a relationship mean for me - it means letting myself off the hook, being able to enter into a relationship without even knowing what I'm doing.
7. I'm learning this feeling of just letting myself be, ever since childhood when I had to be strong enough to be adult as a child and cope with everything.
8. What leaving home means to me now, going to India, is quite different and I don't have to keep conceptualising it as escape, I can accept it, it's alright.
9. There's an indeterminacy to this mystery we were talking about, and I'm allowing myself to think that's Ok and that's quite upbeat.
10. Being in Calcutta the first time, for a prolonged time, and finding I could cope, really ignited my sense of my own mysteriousness.
11. And returning then I finally stayed long enough that I don't need to prove I can do that anymore, I've done it.

“Peter” Themes

1. Leaving as a difficult necessity

- Although others saw P as confident and capable, he did not feel this way about himself. His home life had not helped him to develop his self-esteem or confidence in his ability to look after himself.
- P felt the only way he could really leave was to go alone, without anyone’s support, as a baptism of fire.
- On the one hand P was desperate to leave, feeling alienated and unhappy at home, and fantasies of leaving helped P cope with this home environment. On the other hand, P was also nervous and anxious about leaving, could he really do it. (if he couldn’t, how could he cope at home without that fantasy?)
- Once P realised he could cope, there was no desire to return to the emotionally traumatic situation at home, and shortly after leaving home his mother also left his father.
- That home environment remains significant in P’s emotional life and he continues to have dreams situated in that childhood home.

2. Alienation among peers

- As P began to realise his attraction to men, he began to feel alienated at school and was the object of teasing. This exacerbated his not feeling in and he felt tense, intimidated, though still popular with his group.
- By grammar school, in an all-male environment, P had withdrawn from almost all interaction, feeling depressed, lonely, and scared, with no significant support at home.
- These experiences can make a person reluctant to return to institutional settings where teasing and alienation occur. P eventually returned to university and felt a mix of the confidence to cope independently and the lack of confidence to belong.

3. Sexuality and belonging

- Realisation that one identifies as gay (an unaccepted sexual minority in P’s experience) can exacerbate pre-existing feelings of not belonging anywhere.
- P fantasized about being gay in a foreign place, somewhere else where it might be acceptable, or where it might be more easily expressed, because one is away from everything and everyone familiar, for example.
- Exposure to a gay lifestyle or culture can be an experience of difference and something more exotic than one’s own environment. It can be alluring if one is already sensitized to the unfamiliar. For P, this exposure included an introduction to the larger world of international travel, success, compared to the conventional life of his parents.

4. Relationship with father

- A relationship with a parent can be very difficult and painful without it being the underlying reason for leaving home.
- In P's relationship with his father, the child-parent roles were reversed. This was very confusing for P as a child, to feel in competition with his father for his mother's attention, to feel superior to his father and yet afraid because he had a sense it should be otherwise.
- Photographs can elicit vivid memories of difficult parental dynamics. P did not feel comfortable in his father's care and did not know how to cope with his father's inability to cope with him. It was clear that his father was not comfortable with his father role at this time and this had a huge emotional impact on P.
- It is not always clear how much a conflicted parental relationship contributes to not feeling comfortable in the home environment. For P it was a powerful feeling to not feel at home because his father did not accept him and that in fact he was not even his father.
- P wants to continue to maintain his anger towards his father to protect himself from being hurt any more as it seems his father still lacks the emotional maturity to really change.
- P can feel a kind of panic around his father that send him into thoughts of leaving the country and he's not comfortable with that reaction. He needs to decide what he wants from his father in order to manage this contact in a way that maintains some relationship without causing further pain to P.
- P feels that his father does not see him for the person he really is and that P also changes to become someone slightly different around his father. There is no meeting, father to son, between them.

5. Family relationships generally

- Into his feelings of not belonging anywhere in his social, school, or home environment, P began to feel his sexual difference also and was unable to discuss that with anyone, resulting in another layer of alienation.
- P feels largely alienated from the experiences of others in his extended family, that they do not understand him or want to, leaving him to pretend to play a role in order to be comprehended and fit in to any extent. Living abroad has allowed P to avoid facing this family situation.
- It is true to say that this lack of understanding is reciprocal in that P also finds this cosy home life frustrating, unfulfilling, and boring.
- P's family life really centres around his mother, although there are unexamined layers of alienation there also.
- P feels let down by his parents, their lack of practical attention to what would support him, their lack of understanding of his experiences, their apparent lack of interest in his projects and life. It's as if they are frightened to really know about his life, which keeps the interaction superficial and alienates P further.
- It seems that the parent's inability to parent P as a child, to nurture him, to overstress his independence from them, and to be afraid to know him,

has continued into adulthood, and continues to be emotionally painful for P.

6. Leaving as related to but more than family experiences

- P always knew he would, and had to, leave. He does not understand why this was so inevitable for him, beyond a choice or any rationale he could give for it. He grew up with this feeling and it was difficult (a call that signifies one's dislocation).
- Leaving the family situation can feel like an escape and also have the motive of punishing parents for what they did not provide and for the child to show he is able to live without them. For P, the escape had to actually meet his needs, leaving alone was not enough, it had to be somewhere that was nurturing in its foreignness.
- It can be easier to adapt to foreign places than to one's own home environment. Partly because there is not the same expectation that one 'should' be able to adapt to a foreign place because it is so alien. It can feel like a real release to be in a foreign place and feel it would be OK if one could not cope, whereas at home it isn't.
- Interesting that P actually felt he could cope in very alien places but actually couldn't in the familiarity of his home world.
- P has felt much happier and freer since leaving home. He has found the freedom from care and responsibility that plagued him as a child at home, the situation he had fantasised about as a way of coping when young.

7. Needs and reasons

- It is crucial to note that the need to leave home and the reasons given to leave can be related without conflating one to the other. In P's case it is clear that there is a larger, not understood, need to leave that can be related to reasons that are identified after the fact but that do not explain the need itself.

8. The confidence to travel

- The first experience of foreign travel can be pivotal as a realisation of long held dreams if it is accompanied by the needed confidence to cope in foreign places.
- It can be a relief to feel one is able to fulfil one's ambitions to be adventurous, a whole exotic world therefore opens to be explored.
- P loved his first experience of foreign travel and sensed an appreciation for his ability to be independent and to adapt to these strange environments, languages, difficult situations and people in a way he hadn't found at home.
- P's newfound confidence was essential in his choice not to pursue conventional forms of life which he had hitherto experienced as painfully restricting.

- P's first experience of foreign travel was also his first experience of feeling free. Such a foreign place confirmed that there could be a place where he would feel comfortable, at home, and like he fitted in.

9. The affinity to mystery

- P was always attracted to what he did not understand, to mystery, to what remained unknown. This included his experience of himself as incoherent emotionally and his desire to explore himself. For example, P continues to wonder about his sense of alienation and what that's really about in his case.
- It can be strangely comforting to experience mystery when one feels oneself to be mysterious. It can affirm that mystery is an acceptable part of the world and thus oneself is acceptable.
- P experiences himself as mysterious, so being in a mysterious new foreign place creates a match between the world he experiences and his own being. This match is like a kind of equivalency that makes him feel at home. Feeling at home is the experience of this interaction of the inner and outer matching. Home is the communion of mysteries.
- P finds it comforting to feel himself in perspective with the whole universe and the impermanence of everything. Somehow these experiences can offer the possibility of maybe feeling at home.

10. Giving birth to oneself

- P realises he imposes brutalising situations on himself in an attempt to break himself open after the closing down of his early life. He is trying to kick himself alive, to challenge himself back into life.
- Proving he can cope with anything gives him a sense of self-worth, independence, meditative non-attachment, and the ability to meet others while clarifying to himself who and what he really is.

11. Finding a direction

- The choice of studying anthropology combined the chance to study something while living something, to look at being alien while being in an alien place.
- Experiences of living and studying in a foreign place for a prolonged period allowed P to combine being not at home with the idea of making a home.
- P's choice of study has also given him tools to return to the familiar home with a perspective that can make it seem foreign and can give the possibility of making some sense of his not feeling at home at home.
- Returning home to complete his studies is a way for P to maintain the maximum openness in his future opportunities. Remaining abroad would have begun to reduce his opportunities in the future.

12. The experience of returning home now

- Although difficult, returning home is an opportunity to reflect upon the time away and the rite of passage that leaving was.
- In returning, P was partly looking for the comfort of having himself and his work nurtured by others and the environment and his experience is that this is enabling his life to be satisfying and to move forward.
- P does not feel the need to escape his parent's lack of understanding by leaving his home country, but he does imagine his life will always entail travel or living overseas, perhaps including India where he was able to build a life for himself and he wants to sustain that connection.
- P's time in India was transformative. He has strong relationships there and spent more time there than anywhere else over the past 5 years. Calcutta has become a place that is familiar yet also remains foreign, therefore satisfies the need for mystery but also feels like home, perhaps the only place which satisfies in this way. Living in Calcutta, P has managed to dislodge the compulsion to constantly find new places and he wonders if maybe some day he will locate his life there.
- Returning home is crystallizing some of the meaningfulness of P's time in Calcutta, that leaving home now can mean something other than escape from the family situation and being in Calcutta for such a long time finally proves conclusively that he can cope, while instilling a sense of his own mysteriousness to himself.
- P feels it is a dark and mysterious process that has brought him to this point in his life but in some way there seems to be a pattern at work and although not premeditated or planned, it seems to be working out well as an expression of his convictions.

13. The feeling of the interview

- 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 needs 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.

GM1 - So, my first question is could you just begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

R1 - Yes. I suppose if it's known, but it's a very private story.

GM2 - Yes.

R2 - So, I left, when you say leaving home what do mean? When I left my country, or when I first left my family home, or when I left my home town? Or, I mean, because I sort of think, I started leaving home was when I entered High School, because my High School was in another town, actually not another town, it was like a place built around the school, so I felt that it was already, it was just 15 minutes on the bus, which was very close, and it was regarded like part of the town, but for me it was like going away, and I did feel when I'm there it's like I'm somewhere else, I'm not at home. And it was really major, and important factor for me. And then I studied in another town, another place, so where actually I felt really on my own, and so, but then I was coming back all weekends, and then the next stage it was that I left for another country, but when I came back to my family home after a year, or 10 months, and then I left my parents home and started to have my own home in my home town (Laughs).

GM3 - Yes

R3 - So, I think that was all about actually moving from my family home and establishing my own home, so it was a bit of a circle. Then after that, and every stage was traumatic.

GM4 - OK.

R4 - And I think the most traumatic one was at the very end where actually I was in the same town, but was really out of.....[Tape stops]

[Interview continues]

R5 - The idea of going back, I can't cope with that idea.

GM6 - The idea of moving back?

R6 - Yes, of moving back. So, there's this process, it was like moving, you know, in different directions, like the first moving in terms of my family, like growing up, and then the other was more a geographical one about home town, home country, that relation.

GM7 - OK.

R7 - And why I left my country, is that a question at the end or (Laughs)? Because I met someone who I decided marry, to move over here, and that was the reason. But of course, I think it was different, and now when I look back I think that it was like an excuse rather than a reason, and now when I look back I feel more and more sure that it would happen somehow anyway.

GM8 - Right. So that marriage was more kind of a way of making happen something that you felt was inevitable?

R8 - Oh yes, yes. And especially in fact I was trying to leave the country and I was actually trying to leave for Italy, and I hadn't succeeded, and then this kind of happened, and then that started to move in that direction that I would, actually I came over here first for 6 months and then came back and lived for a year and then moved to Britain for good. At that time I thought for good (Laughs).

GM9 - How long ago was that?

R9 - Five years ago.

GM10 - So, let me see if I've got that. It sounds as though you originally left kind of, the first thing that you would call leaving home was originally when you kind of made this move to this school that was far enough away that it at least had this feeling of kind of moving out, leaving home. And then you moved actually further away to the next school. And then, at that point you moved?

R10 - Because I had finished, that was, I mean, the context of all this moving is that actually the country I'm living in is changing its shape, and I mean I don't know if you know, I'm from former Yugoslavia, so there was this large scale problem of what is home and this home is falling apart.

GM11 - OK.

R11 - So, before I finished my university I couldn't really afford any longer to live in another town where my university was, so I was forced to go back to my family house and start life from there, and I just couldn't do that anymore. And I just felt I can't, I can't be back at home. And I decided actually the best is to leave the country, so I left for the Czech Republic and I stopped my university at that time, and I felt it's more important to me compared to study.

GM12 - It was very important to you at that point?

R12 - Yes, yes. Actually I think that I was able to stay and survive living at the family home, but I found it unsatisfactory because and the other reason of all these moves was that every stage was actually moving more towards independence and what I found very satisfactory when I moved to the Czech Republic was that in fact for the first time I was

absolutely able to support myself, so which was like, great. But then after a while I needed my vocation so I went back, so that was a compromise. But, I hadn't my university before I moved here actually, I moved to Britain and then I finished university.

GM13 - OK.

R13 – So I was kind of compromising all the time about, in fact part of my education was leaving home, so how to manage both those things like requirements that I have to give exams on certain dates, and that I want to live in a way I like, so in other words that I could have my own space where I could produce some mental space as well, I mean, was one motivation all the way through.

GM14 - So, the impression I'm getting is this kind of process of moving away from home was really important to you?

R14 - Yes.

GM15 - What was so important to you? What made that so important?

R16 - Probably, you know, I was brought up with two other sisters and it took me a while to get my own room.

GM17 - OK. (Laughs)

R17 - So that was quite a title, and I got it I think when I was around 18 or 19, and I felt, you know, my God, I wasted all my life to get that (Laughs). I had to leave. I mean at that point I wasn't even capable of sharing a room because I thought that it was like, I need more space, and so that's what that was about. It is about having your own space, and I don't know what's so important about it, how do you say, you know, being your own master? I think being on equal foot with others. This kind of, desire, I think it's about taking your own destiny to your own hands, so that actually you have a feeling that decisions you are making are, you know, that you are making the decisions, and that, and I think that it is, you know, if you are talking about substantial worries and questions, it's very much about you know, having a feeling that every decision you make and every choice you make, you stood for that and you kind of, planned it. And that, and I think that home, maybe because it's very like, territorial, that the easiest to prove this kind of individual independence.

GM18 - So, there's something about being at home that made it impossible for you to have that kind of space and that kind of independence?

R18 - Yes, because you can't, I think that it's like, in order to define yourself, you know, it's like first you have to be negative, so it's like I'm not..... so how to be positive about it, and I couldn't really, I mean I couldn't really figure that out in the context of my family because it was too many like interests, and maybe my idea was that might just has to prevail (Laughs).

GM19 - And was this the same for your sisters?

R19 - Not really, I feel a bit also, because I'm the oldest one, so I always had this feeling that I am the ice breaker, and that I am going somewhere where they go up to me, I mean my sisters in kind of, an easier way, and you know, it's already there for them, and but, funnily enough, my middle sister also left home and she lives in Canada now, but she left with her whole family, which she established in our home town, in our family house. So, the only, the only person who stayed in our family house was in fact my youngest sister, and she's in a kind of, I don't know, maybe the remains, the remains of the family I think, because even my mother has moved out.

GM20 - OK.

R20 - (Laughs) And my father died, so I feel that, and we lived in a house not in a flat, and the house itself was a huge big deal for our family, and there was debate about selling it at the time, and not selling it, and what to do, and in a way we all felt that we feel that the house is bigger than us, because it's an old family house and my mother inherited it from previous generations. So, there was that burden. It was charged with this simple family, and family which is more than, it's not that one could make a decision about it.

GM21 - OK, almost like more than anyone could live up to?

R21 - Yes, but at the same time I heard that, there are rumours in my family that my mother might want to sell it, and I was thinking that in fact I would try to be very against it even if I am not there (Laughs). So, it's very, I feel it's really, and we all get terribly upset even if we don't live there anymore, but it's terribly, I don't know, argumentative, what has happened, what kind of work has happened in the house, and it's terribly emotional. I think that...

GM22 - Even though two of you are living so far away?

R22 - Oh yes, oh yes, absolutely. It's so strong. And it's ridiculous (Laughs).

GM23 - So what does the house symbolise? What does it mean if it's so important even when you are not living there, and maybe will never live there again?

R23 - Yes, I think it's family, or I feel it's ideal state.

GM24 - Ideal state?

R24 - Yes, I feel a sense of ideal state of relationship because we moved there when we were, I mean, when the family was whole and when we were not aware that one day we will leave that house. So, there wasn't knowledge involved, and so I feel that memories of a happy childhood which, and we all claim ownership of them, and I think if anyone

would do something to the house it would be like, oh my God, actually we are questioning what was there, and was our family ideal or not. Because there was a very strong picture that our family was ideal, and in fact it turned out that it's not and it's just normal like any other family. But the house was like, untouchable. And it's very funny, because my father died and my mother met another man and in fact, she moved in with him, she didn't move him into the house, and I think that that would be like an anathema. So it's like we are all leaving that house, without actually being able to cope with it, if you know what I mean.

GM25 - It sounds almost, though you didn't say it quite like this, so correct me if this is wrong, but it sounds almost like a little bit of kind of, almost like a museum that houses a very, very ideal, almost innocent time?

R25 - Yes, yes. And we all keep our stuff there, so, for example, I have only one bookshelf there, but I'm terribly annoyed if something is going to happen to that, and I'm all concerned what will happen with my books, and it's always correspondence if someone is going to borrow or move that, all this kind of thing. And yes, but in the end who has lived there is my sister and she's kind of a prisoner of the house. I feel that. Because I don't know what will happen, if she decides to move so we are in a kind of limbo, because the majority of time we don't live there so we have to do something about it because it's quite a big house and you know, unresolved.

GM26 - So what do you think would happen if to you, living here in London, if the house was sold? Just wasn't there anymore?

R26 - Yes, I think that, I mean I was thinking about it, because when I heard, at first I was annoyed that no one told me, and but I suppose they didn't tell me because I would react badly, so, because I did react badly in the past so they felt oh, OK, it's not the moment yet. But nothing has happened yet actually. But I feel that it will, I just wouldn't have anywhere to go there, I think that's the problem. Because it's like, I wouldn't have anywhere to stay in my home country.

GM27 - You couldn't stay with your mother in her new place?

R27 - No, no. I would find that unacceptable, though they would be probably very pleased, and but, no. I mean, of course I have friends there and all this, but I would just find it very, to be awkward.

GM28 - To go home and to not stay in that house would be unimaginable?

R28 - Yes. Yes. I mean, I would just feel that, my God, someone has pulled the ground underneath me.

GM29 - Yes, that's what it sounds like, there's something about that house which is extremely grounding for you? Even when you're living here in London?

R29 - Yes. Yes. Yes, and I mean that even, you know, it's silly because I don't know, I was trying to interfere with things from here about some decisions there, which is totally irrelevant (Laughs) and I calmed down I mean it was just totally, I mean everyday questions of management, but... and on the whole when I'm going there I'm trying to be like a hotel guest, I try not to really think about it as terribly important and try to respect that it's ... this place, I mean my sister lives there, but it's very weird because I think that that's the feeling for all of us there, so the place is a bit spooky, because it's terribly important..., so you feel like everything is put back you know, you don't have the feeling that people live there really. There is some kind of feeling of restraint, or a slight feeling of tension that you don't want to disturb anyone. Because my sister from Canada, at first ...

GM30 - So what would happen if the whole place was rearranged? What would happen to you if you went back and everything is rearranged, redecorated?

R30 - I think that now I would, you know, I would say yes, OK, fine, I mean what can I do? I mean I can't really have control over it. I mean, I would be, yes, because more or less that it's happened, because obviously something would have to happen because you know, you have to move things, because I don't know, the roof is leaking, so you have to move the chairs that way, you know, I mean I can't have control over that. But, I think that the main issue is having the house or not having it. And I mean, I have also some ideas about maybe one day if I have some money, I was even thinking about buying the house, buying this house (laughs), or trying to make some kind of, because I don't feel that in fact, because the ownership of the house is quite clearly my mother's, so it's not, so I don't feel that I own it, but at the same time it's very important and, so I might feel a bit that interference with legal issues and priority issues, I think that that really is a big problem, because you feel that even if something is not literally yours, you claim ownership in some way, emotional ownership. That is the problem.

GM31 - Just before we leave this, I just want to ask one more thing. How do you think it happened that in your family this house acquired so much importance?

R31 - Hmmm [Pause] There always something to be done about, on that house, it was always like falling apart, and now it's like falling apart. It's never, it's not a perfect house, it's not well built, I mean, yes it's good, but you always have to do something, or to move around even because the number of people who lived there when I was born changed over the years, someone died, someone moved in, someone moved out, we rented this part out, so you have to adjust, and there was huge effort made to do those things, and so I think that we, it was always part of our family life that some kind of sacrifice to that house, either for example, if you want to do this change then we can't go all together to holiday because my father has to stay and to work, and be with the builders, while we all go to holidays.

So, it's like trauma, and so I think that's one of the things, but another I think that it's purely like private in terms that I think, you know, related to relationships between, it's

my mother's house, and it's her mothers, originally my grandmothers, so there is that theme of problem about it, and bringing new families in the house, that was also a problem because my father wasn't welcomed, but in the end he moved in (laughs). And then we all came about, I don't know why it was so important. I don't know. We had another house, but, it's very funny, and we sold that, in another part of the country, which was our summer house, and when the war broke out, and I think that war was quite contributory to the whole issue of the house. With war, the whole notion of home was heightened, you know, that was not only the main topic, but that was the [catalyst] and everywhere it was all about home, and so whatever you thought, like, oh my God, where is my home, what am I doing, and you are listening, you are hearing about home, and you are watching other people's homes being ruined, so I think that there is huge anxiety about that, and so what happened with our summer house is that we couldn't go there, and we used to go there every summer, and because of the war in the other republics, so we didn't know what to do. And I was trying to persuade my parents to sell that, because we won't be able to go there, and they were not able to do that purely for emotional reasons. They couldn't cope with that. And especially my mother because she was almost born there, I mean, not born, but she saw that house being built and all this, and I when I was [shorter], I mean, she was there 50 and something years, and I was there 20 years, so this kind of different kind of memories and emotional attachments.

And in the end we left that house and some other people moved in, and we lost control of the house. And I moved to Britain, so I lost the interest, and in the end when I was, when I came back on one occasion to visit my family, they told me that they'd sold the house. They told me that, I don't know, off hand, oh we sold the house, you know, and I was like, Arrghh, horrible! This is wrong! And I just thought, oh my God, I made such a huge mistake because I was pushing that and in fact I was wrong, and then in the end my mother got her act together and sold the house and managed to get the control over it, which is good. But I just thought, oh no, I mean, if I knew I would actually have been able to influence it in a different way.

GM32 - So why did she change her mind?

R32 - Because the situation changed, politically. And in fact, it wasn't any longer true that we can't access the house, and also my situation privately changed so that, and I was thinking maybe I would be able to go easily from Britain, I would be, it would be OK for me to go there. And maybe I would be even able to I don't know, negotiate a price or something, so even if it's not completely now under our ownership, so it's just that I thought that maybe there is some space, but I think that in fact what happened is that the idea that my mother realised that that's totally passed for her and that she wouldn't ever go there. Whereas I saw the continuation. I think that that was the reason, and I didn't really ever talk about it with her. I thought OK, fair enough.

GM33 - So, it's like your mother's emotional connection has been cut?

R33 - Cut, yes, yes, yes.

GM34 - Can I ask about a few other things? I'm wondering how you felt originally about leaving home? The first time you left, whether it's the time you went to High School, or whatever, were you quite scared, or quite excited? What was it like?

R34 - I liked it. I mean, I'm curious, I was curious, so I was, what's happening around there, that's all. I mean, yes, I always liked to go back, that's another thing.

GM35 - (Laughs) But before we talk about that, but let's talk about that later, I'm just wondering again a little bit more about what was it like for you to leave, because I'm thinking that well, you know, sometimes the eldest child didn't. The middle child or the youngest child leaves. The eldest one feels responsibility to have to stay there for whatever reason. But for you, you felt you wanted to go, and you were also kind of, cutting a path that your sisters could follow if they wanted to? I wondering, did you always feel that way? Or did something happen that made you feel like you want to leave and find out what's out there, or did you kind of, always feel that?

R35 - Oh, you mean that I always felt I'm a dropout (Laughs)?

GM36 - (Laughs) Well. Did you always feel that you would leave home, or was it a surprise, did you think that maybe you would spend your whole life there?

R36 - OK, I will answer that question in an indirect way. I was [talking] to someone the other day about being in Britain and how do I feel about it, you know, and at some party I had been introduced to some guy and he says, oh, it's really easy for you to be here because here you are a stranger so you have this strangeness, whereas I'm an Englishman so it's really, I can't you know, do anything interesting, and you have all this strangeness about yourself because you are a foreigner. So he saw that as kind of an advantage, and then, and I was telling the story to another friend and that friend said to me, yes, but you were not a stranger at home in your home country, and I said actually that's not true, I mean, I was a stranger there as much as I am a stranger here. I mean, more in apparent ways, I mean, ... so that I am not an English person so it's quite obvious, but I think that when you are in, in your so-called own environment, you can't really see if someone is a stranger or not. So I would connect on your question with that, that it's like, it's more for me a feeling of being part of the community or not. I mean, I'm a very social person and communicative, but I was never part of the community in terms of, I never liked to play with the other children in my street.

GM37 - So are you saying that where you grew up you never quite felt at home there?

R37 - Oh yes, well I did.

GM38 - You did?

R38 - Also, on the matter of home, what was the favourite game of me and my sister, we were making flats and then we would build, and flats would be built with chairs so you basically what you do you share one room into different places with chairs, and

then you like kind of, arrange your, I don't know, you put some, but basically it's just about geometry of chairs, and then what we would do, the main game was to build that and then to visit each other. (Laughs).

GM38 - (Laughs).

R39 - That was before my younger sister was born so we were aged between four and seven. And even when we were not playing with each other I remember playing home, or flats, whatever, and building that and then putting toys in that so that you could somehow separate your space.

GM40 - You were saying something about being a stranger at home, or something, weren't you?

R40 - Um, No.

GM41 - something about feeling a stranger... but you didn't have that at home?

R41 - Oh, no, I meant, I meant I was saying a stranger in my own community, not at home.

GM42 - No, OK.

R42 - Yes, at home I was fine. But I mean, what I found very frustrating that there was pressure in family to be together all the time.

GM43 - For your family to be together?

R43 - Yes. So to be on your own and to have your space was kind of, for example, my parents when they were on their own they were like non entities, which I found really frustrating. And I felt that it's really actually, that made them unhappy. And then they could start to function and then,..... being happy when they are integrated in this whole, but I felt that being in the whole all the time was like, they were not independent.

GM44 - OK. So in your actual home, like in your house, your family home, you felt at home there, but you also felt this kind of pressure to be interactive with the family the whole time?

R44 - Yes, yes.

GM45 - And outside of the family home in the larger community, maybe even in the nation or whatever, that culture, there was some sense of not quite fitting in?

R45 - I don't know. I don't like that phrase.

GM46 - OK.

R46 - To be honest, and no, I mean, I mean I was, I had really good times throughout my school years, and I was one of how they say high achievers, or something, so it was more this kind of distance from the group, because what is average, what is above average, what is below average, so maybe I was a bit snubbed sometimes rather than that I didn't fit in. But I didn't feel that people don't like me.

GM47 - No.

R47 - But not to fit in the sense that maybe in some kind of sense, sometimes I felt that it was like, oh, I would like to be part of, but not really, I mean.

GM48 - So, let me say it this way. It sounds more like there was some, maybe some slight disengagement from, although there was a strong engagement of a certain kind, there is also some kind of slight disengagement from the everyday kind of stuff that might happen?

R48 - Yes. I think that it's more about that you want to connect with people you choose, and that they are not necessarily at your hands. So it may be you have to make a bigger effort and so it was, it was you know, even in that process going away from home was about finding, for me, better interlocked.

GM49 - OK.

R49 - And I'm just thinking about something else, yes, about being at home. I was OK, but at the same time when I look back, at a very early year I started to be very busy, in terms that I had a lot of obligations. So, and you know, when I look back at my Primary School I really can't understand how I was studying at home, I mean I was an excellent student..... but because I was going to the High School and it was like half days, and then another half would be my regular school, so when I look back, I mean, I can't remember you know, my time schedule, but if I count hours it seems that I spent at home very, very little, and that kind of habit I feel has, and I'm very uncomfortable when I'm very long at home. I mean, I can't be on my own at home.

GM50 - OK.

R50 - I would rather have some engagements, like activities, so I think maybe, you know, your question is like, not your question but your assumption, is right, there was this feeling of not being, I mean, I was comfortable at home, but being at peace, that's something else. I mean, I felt yes, this is my home, and I was very proud of my home, but being at peace, but that again, for me I found it, I was like not really feeling that I had enough space. Or that I can't do really what I want. But now, even if I could do what I want, I don't (Laughs).

GM51 - Now that you do have the space, you don't....?

R51 - Yes, yes. Or still I live in kind of a restricted space, yes.

GM52 - Did you think at any point that you might just settle in the same town? Just live your whole life fairly near your mother and your one sister?

R52 - No. Never. I really thought, yes, I never thought, oh, I will leave this town, I mean I never spelt it out, but I never envisaged, I never thought, OK, so, and even when I went to one university there in my home town, but in fact I knew that it's not right, that it's just impossible that I would stay all the way through and be in my home town, and at the same time starting something which is an intellectual going away in terms of knowledge, or I just felt that what I gain intellectually I have to gain physically as well, geographically. Like, there is between your ideas and your actually experience.

GM53 - That if you were in somehow kind of increasing your own knowledge, your education of something, that in a way that was talking you away from your roots? It was opening up something new, and you had to actually follow that geographically as well? you had to go some place?

R53 - Yes, and also to gain some knowledge I would go away, and I thought that if you make an effort then, you know, then this knowledge and that experience is more valuable, and you feel more appreciative of your own knowledge because you know, your whole, you are engaged in this experience as a whole person, not just sitting and reading your book. But if you make, it's another example, but if there is some theatre company you want to see in another town, or an exhibition in, you know, which is nine hours on the train away, I mean I would go and do that. And it was the whole of this adventure, would be that, but it's like, it's the whole process, it's not just seeing the exhibition.

GM54 - It sounds almost like kind of, living it?

R54 - Yes,

GM55 - Not just thinking of it, but actually living it?

R55 - Yes, because I was always concerned about this you know, that your intellectual mental world has to be somehow reflected in your practical realm, so there is correspondence.

GM56 - Yes, that's what it sounds like, a correspondence. I'd just like to ask one more....

R56 - But does it make sense what I'm talking? The direction which, I mean, I don't know...

GM57 - Yes, we're putting things together, it's very interesting. I was just wondering when you say home, what is the experience of home to you?

R57 - Which aspect do you mean?

GM58 - I mean, what is the experience, how do you know when you feel at home? How does it feel when you say I feel at home, or I'm at home?

R58 - Oh, OK. Well, where I feel relaxed and confident. When I know where I stand, I mean, enrich yourself, I mean, metaphorically. I mean, I feel in London, at home. When I know my way around, and when, if I'm, when I'm in trouble I know my way out of that.

GM59 - So, I mean it's more than this, but it sounds like a part of it is some kind of familiarity?

R59 - Oh yes.

GM60 - With a place, that's just one part of it? So then I'm thinking if you go someplace that's very strange to you, very unfamiliar, have you ever had the experience of feeling at home, having just that feeling of, wow, I feel at home here and I've never been here before in my life?

R60 - [Pause] I know what you mean, I'm just trying to remember. [Pause] I mean, another feeling I'm feeling more of is like when I didn't feel at home at all. Totally lost. I went for a time to Paris and I just didn't have anyone that I know around, and I just felt I have no connection with the world whatsoever, so I felt really like, where am I, what's happening. It took me a while to, though I'm not familiar with the area, but somehow to realise that I'm familiar with behaving in unfamiliar cities. But, I don't know. I mean, all places I, for example, Belgrade where I studied, or London, I feel comfortable with, though I didn't know them at first. But that was more about general, kind of feelings, but I mean, I don't think that familiarity really is, I mean, what you said, that I know really you know, a street, no, no, it's not that, it's more about, it's like styles.

GM61 - So what would you feel about the style of Belgrade and the style of London that you felt comfortable and eventually felt at home here?

R61 - Because it was, because I actually was a stranger, yes, that made me, I felt more easier to operate, I feel much more like, I mean, you don't carry so much meaning about yourself, you don't carry prejudices as much as in your home place. I mean this kind of, I think that there is this provincialism in that. But it's also, I don't know, the scale of cities, that in fact you don't feel terribly a stranger. Because I lived in Cardiff and I didn't really like it, it was too small, so the scale was very similar to my home town and

so I like the scale of those cities, that there are a million citizens, a metropolis, and I'm happy with that, with being comfortable with something which is so big you have to give up.

GM62 - Yes, and I'm also kind of wondering if you're saying about being a stranger in those kinds of places which can be fairly liberating because there are lots of other strangers?

R62 - Yes.

GM63 - It's not like everybody else knows each other, and you're the only one who doesn't know anyone?

R63 - Oh yes, that's right. That's true. I feel that there are lots of people like me here, so in a way I feel, even if I'm alone or a stranger, I feel more like in the company of others.

GM64 - Exactly. You feel you have company because there's lots of other people like you.

R64 - Yes.

GM65 - Let's move on and ask, we were talking quite a bit about sort of generally your move away and some of the things involved in it, and the experience of your house and how important that was. I'm wondering if you reflect back to your leaving home, why do you think you really left home?

R65 - [Pause] I mean, I changed my way of life. I just outgrew my own home. But I mean, literally physically I became too big (Laughs), but I think that you just start to, you know, first you want just your own room, then you want two rooms, then you want two rooms, bathroom and kitchen (Laughs), you know, you want to change the fridge, you know (Laughs), I mean, I think that kind of progression, but it wasn't the only reason. It wasn't the only reason. That was maybe the most obvious one, and what prompted some of the situation of my moving from my home. But, other reason was really, I don't know, searching for what you want. Going somewhere else, and that you have to go. I mean, it's not that you want to leave, I did at that stage, it's not about that you want to leave, but you feel that you have to go.

GM66 - Yes.

R66 - So, I didn't feel that I had to leave. I mean, the only reason why I left was really like I was living with my boyfriend then and it was like too, too difficult for us to fit all there, so the reason was very practical, but other reasons, later, and before when I left was about I have to go.

GM67 - Yes.

R67 - And I just, sometimes I remember my sisters complaining that now I'm staying there like a hotel guest, but then before they complained, oh, you are behaving like a hotel guest, you are not really part of, like, they thought that I didn't appreciate or that I don't notice their everyday work in the home, around the home, but that was much stronger. I think that was the final things that I have to go.

GM68 - So when you say that, when you make that distinction, which I think is a really nice distinction, about not wanting to leave, but really having to go, it makes me think that possibly there's two elements in that that reinforce that distinction. One is a looking for something?

R68 - Yes that 's right.

GM69 - And it also makes me wonder if there was also some regret about having to go, as well as the?

R69 - Yes. I think that there is more, yes, there is some kind of, yes, sadness. But, because it's like, you have to, I felt something that I had to wait, and is it sadness or is it excitement about something unseen. Because I think that it's about that I had to go, not about I have to go because I know where I want to go, but rather it's about I have to go because I really don't have a clue where I have to go. But, that's what's attractive about it, and I think it's about staying, and this sadness is about knowing how things are and I feel it's like going backwards, and going back and analysing what is more or less, like it's this question of how far you analyse it, but you know, it's going back to the library, if then libraries are a sad place, but I mean it's not, there is some kind of melancholy about it. Because, ... because what you lacked you loved, or you still love. But that's all, and I feel that's the problem about having to go, because you have to make a decision like leaving something that you loved.

GM70 - Yes, I understand that. And I understand what you said quite a while ago, there was a time when that was the whole world, and now you've realised the whole world doesn't end.

R70 - Yes, and it's not really.

GM71 - So, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

R71 - Sorry, could you repeat the question?

GM72 - So, you kind of look over the years since you left home, you kind of look back, what's it been like for you? The time since leaving?

R72 - OK, it's difficult, I must get the word.

GM73 - Do you.....?

R73 - I mean, I think there are a lot of you know, pay-offs, that's part of why I'm still here, but I feel that, not having home is difficult, and you know, because I did say, oh, I feel comfortable because I'm in the company of strangers, and I'm a stranger myself, but then on the other hand, there is this whole element which you are taking for granted when you are at home, and which functions without you having to do anything about it, which is like, I don't know, more pronounced. It's really feeling or that there are friends which you meet in the street, which you just bump into, or you know, hasn't happened to me here, except twice, ...accidentally, and also you could say that's because of the size of the town, but I don't think, it's not the case, I think it's about having this network of friends, family, relatives, all this army of people you met throughout your childhood and school years and university years, which existed even if you haven't really been in contact with them, when they were there, and not having them around you is sometimes quite difficult, I found, because you know, in fact you don't want to really communicate with someone, you just want to the feeling to be a part of it.

GM74 - Yes, it gives something?

R74 - Yes.

GM75 - Something you can take for granted almost?

R75 - Yes. I feel that it is taken for granted the whole, and lots of the time, at least I've felt very, the distance of that, because I've felt that oh, it's something which really I suffocate, I really can't stand this, ... or this, I don't want to grow to this point, but now, it's all terribly, I'm terribly sentimental about it.

GM76 - So when you do have, there can be this experience of it being suffocating, kind of like....., leave me alone, kind of, get away, give me some space, and if you don't have it, it can become like a longing for it?

R76 - Yes. It's quite embarrassing (Laughs).

GM77 - But, I'm wondering, you mentioned very briefly, and we haven't spoken about this, you mentioned you going back and forth, and I'm wondering if that's the way of addressing the feelings?

R77 - Yes. Yes, that's what I was doing when I left my home town for my university town. Because people often asked me, oh, which town do you prefer? It was a stupid question, you know, ..., it's like who do you love more, your mother or your father? Horrible question, and then because I was well behaved, I would say, 'equal' (Laughs), but, so at that times I think I felt very strongly that inside of the combination of the two is perfect for me, and that's what works best, and that I would be unhappy if I'm in the one or the other. The problem now is the distance is now greater and I can't really solve

the problem that easily. So, I go back twice year, but I don't know, I feel more and more disappointed when I go there.

GM78 - Do you?

R78 - Yes, things change and I don't feel that I come from that world anymore, so I'm quite worried about what in fact, is going to happen with this, because I feel that I'm losing it.

GM79 - So what you go back for kind of starts to fade?

R79 - Oh yes, yes. And it's becoming like my, that I can't be even sad when I'm there, I just feel like yes, OK, I have comfort and some consolation, but on the whole I don't have anything to do there. I just feel literally as a hotel guest, which is not in fact a nice feeling, it's more something you think.....

GM80 - I'm wondering if your feeling about home before you go, when you're in London, you think, I'm going home again, for a visit?

R80 - Yes, there is all this confusion of uses of the word, here, there, you, we, and going back and going home, yes. And in fact I have started to use, I mean it's also a question of language because I'm languages are different for different countries, so for me it means which language I'm talking, so I think 'I'm going home' in English when I'm referring to London. Yes, but I do feel that I am from here when I'm there, and that's how I regard it.

GM81 - And how about when you are here?

R81 - Oh, that's another problem. Then, yes, I'm regarded as coming from somewhere else, (laughs) and it's like, but I feel more comfortable with that now than before, because I felt that I had to explain that actually I'm not there anymore, but now I understand people more, what they mean by that, yes, I mean, fair enough I wasn't born here, or brought up, of course I don't so it's trying to, I mean, I'm sometimes using it and sometimes describing it, it depends what is better for me, but on the whole this whole idea of going home, it's a question of identify, and it's reflected most for me in my name, and I hate my name. I don't like to be called that name, so, because my surname is English and my first name is Serbian, so which is like, I'm half there and half here.

GM82 - Your name really reflects.....

R82 - Reflects that, yes, it's about space it's not just about names. It refers to space.

GM83 - The last thing I'd like to ask, the second last thing I suppose, is and I feel like you've answer this, but I'll ask it again in case there's anything you want to add anything

more. Do you think you'll ever return home? Home being the place you grew up in, or that country?

R83 - I mean, I'm plotting it all the time (Laughs).

GM - (Laughs)

R83 - It's just, at the moment I'm quite in touch, with myself, this kind of thing, and sometimes I'm more enthusiastic about it and how to do it. Because I know that I can't do it just like that. I have to structure it in some way, because if I would like to go to [place name] I know there is no home, so I'm in two minds about it. I'm in two minds about either to encourage the feeling in myself of there is no place like home, and in fact trying to destroy it, and in fact, I do live more my life like that. I don't have my home in terms of place, when I was referring to home, I'm referring to London, but as a space. I don't live in my home, I live and the majority of my things are in boxes, and I prefer it that way, in the way that I don't feel that I'm at home. That I feel that I could leave whenever, or I will move. So there is this persistent anxiety that in fact you can't relax, so it is the tension, the greatest need is that you want to relax, and at the same time that you can't, and you want to move on. So, I don't know, I'm in two minds. I think that if I were to go back home in the sense that would be ideally more than really, in some kind of project with some Utopian idea to satisfy my missing of home than the reality, but sometimes I think it's possible. But I feel that then it would have to be incorporated in something, I'm trying actually to negotiate the thing I'm working on, through my work, which in fact is all moving is about trying to find my work and trying to express myself, and it's how to manage those two different respects. But I don't think that that will be, that that will happen in such an obvious way, so that I don't move there physically. I think that it's not possible any more. There is some other stage I'm at so I can't move back and forward from home any more, it's like I could talk continents..... some kind of different..... I'm not quite, I can't really define it yet, home is not any longer an issue, I feel a bit understand, ...

GM84 - But are you saying that...

R84 - I know I am saying too many things (Laughs)

GM85 - Well, I wondering, kind of just putting it all together, if you're sort of saying that you find yourself thinking 'how can I somehow address both my needs here, that seem at times almost incompatible'? The one need to have some sense of home, where you can really relax; and the other need of being able to be open to the world and to keep moving and the excitement or whatever it is of that?

R85 - Yes.

GM86 - Thinking to yourself how can I somehow have both?

R86 - Yes, that's true. But so far I see it, I think by enduring this anxiety, and in this kind of contradiction and I'm, I feel that I can't resolve it, so basically I'm not trying to go back home or not trying to be at home. (pause) Yes, I think it's a continual battle.

GM87 - So, it sounds as though you're contemplating just accepting that tension?

R87 - Yes, yes, because you feel insecure because you feel unrooted, and not being able to root yourself again, and at the same time not being sure if you want to move somewhere because maybe you are half way somewhere else. But...

GM88 - I can understand that (Laughs). The last thing I'd like to just ask is just how you feel about talking about these things?

R88 - Oh.. How do I feel? Oh, I'm just trying not to be terribly emotional about it because I found

GM89 - You feel there's a lot of emotion around some of this stuff?

R89 - Yes, yes. I don't know around this stuff, but I know in me, and so yes, I found it very difficult, and I think that problem actually is the main problem when I communicate with people, that in fact if people don't understand where I'm coming from or if they don't understand where I'm not coming from, or that you know, there is a problem about origin, a problem of home, and having identify, if that's not clear then I imagine all sorts of misunderstandings, and you know, I found it quite, easier to communicate with people who are, who are coming from the same kind of problem.

GM90 - Yes.

R90 - That's what I feel.

GM91 - Have you experienced and recognised that there is a problem, that there is an issue here?

R91 - Oh yes, yes. There is. What I've found here is, most apparently is because I'm white, so people take me for granted, as if I am from here, where I suppose with black people, even if they are from here they are perceived like not being from here, and I feel that that's funny because I could be a bigger stranger than any coloured person or ethnic minority, I mean I'm an ethnic minority after all, but not to see it, and therefore my problems are not addressed.

GM92 - Exactly.

R92 - So, that's the issue more, but you know, this problem of home is also a part of the issue, another issue. But that's what I found most dramatically in direct communication with people because it's not obvious that there is a problem, and of course you don't want to come straight away and say, that is my problem, you know.

GM93 - Other people that have had the experience know it, it's almost like, other people who have had the experience who've left home and like you who are living in a place like London, they know, as soon as you start talking, pick up the theme, they know what you're talking about, they know the area that you're talking about, at a guess, usually. Other people who haven't had that experience don't get the problem, which is the issue?

R93 - Yes, maybe, or they got it but in a negative way I think. Because I could recognise problems people have here about not leaving home, and I see that really as a huge problem, so I see my advantage in that, and it's like how they can't see it and, but I feel that by doing this, I do see the benefits and I see what is the advantage of all that, but I do you know, maybe, because it's such a big change, moving countries, then it's totally clear, oh, that's about that problem, you know, I think that's too big, so on a very micro scale when you're just moving from one end of the street to another, then your problem is not really that apparent. And that's why I say even when I was living in the same home with, in the same town with my family, I mean there was that problem about do I feel in that town at home or not, or what am I going to do about this or, so yes. I mean I would anyway like to address that.

GM94 - I guess the thing that I was thinking of when you were talking, and this is true for me and may not be true for you, is that leaving home is a real opportunity and an adventure, very positive in a lot of ways, but there was for me, I don't know about for you, an unexpected cost? I didn't quite realise what I would be losing and that for me that's the thing that isn't very acknowledged, something lost?

R94 - Well, yes, don't say that.

GM95 - (Laughs)

R95 - No, no, I agree, but I dare to think about it, because I think that there is that and I think as time moves on I think the feeling of that grows stronger and stronger, and that actually for me it has inevitably gone, and it's gone because I left.

GM96 - But you had to go?

R96 - Yes, that's true, that's why I say it, I had to go. There is no other, the other way, so it's finally a way of compensation, damage and damage compensation (Laughs). But, you were saying something about people understanding, oh yes, that's what I just want to say, most of the time I am describing that problem, so I think that even if there are people out there who are like me and I mean I tried to show that I understand that I'm not disclosing myself, and especially with English people I find it really some kind of, oh my God, I shouldn't bring that up, but it is so strong so it always comes up, so there is no point, but yes, so I feel that like, oh, not being ashamed of that, but I mean it's like having some defect. Because it's like being an abandoned child, so you know you feel, oh my God, and you're like I have parents, and yes, we lived there and I did this, ... not quite like that, you know, in this kind of sense, you don't want really to disclose your ungrounding.

GM97 - So how does it feel to have spoken to me about it?

R97 - I just hope that I didn't come across as a complete lunatic (Laughs).

GM98 - No, I can reassure you that, I mean, everyone's story is different and everybody speaks about different things, but there's kind of a general theme, the feelings you've been expressing have been really similar experiences, and the general feelings of a lot of other people who have talked to me about it. Really a lot of similarities. I certainly don't think you're a lunatic at all. You're in good company. But you belong to a group that I've acknowledged as a group.

R98 - Yes.

GM99 - And it's something almost that you tend to be quite individual.

R99 - OK, I will tell you, I'm doing my Masters at the moment and it's connected to them, because the opposite of your subject, is cosmopolitanism, so I mean it's actually what does it mean to be a citizen of the world, and so what does it mean to be without a home.

GM100 - That's very similar to what I'm doing.

R100 - Yes, it's like the other side of the coin, of the same coin.

GM101 - Yes.

R101 - Because I think that the whole issue is very, you know, topical, because so many people are in transition, for all sorts of reasons, one for positive reasons, because of economic, because they change work or they are able, like North America or European Union, or others who have, you know, who have to go because of circumstances, for negative reasons, but on the whole they all finish by being without their homes and they are all in different situations, different cultures, and they still have to exercise their rights and their obligations. So, and at the same time, how to address this issue of home and it's like you know, do you go home and vote, or do you think oh, I don't care, I live here.

GM102 - So do you feel you have the right to vote here, is the other question?

R102 - I don't, but I am, I hope that I will have for the next general election. I would like to use this vote.

GM103 - (Laughs)

R103 - Yes, I choose my topic directly as a result of those kind of worlds.

GM104 - Yes, interesting.

R104 - you know, because if we are not talking about territorial, and if we are talking, when people say, what is your so what is your..... so being at home, that's also another issue, I think. It's related to actual space, ... but I think that it's tension, and a struggle of contradictions.

GM105 - Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

R105 - Yes, I hated 'Home Sweet Home,' urgghh. But, I don't know, but there are a few of those phrases, like 'there's no place like home,' I like that, but that's a bit, but I feel a little bit it's being rebellion, I think that and there is another one in The Wizard of Oz when she wants to go home, when she puts on her shoes and then she said something about home, ... maybe..... there is something about home, anyway.

GM106 - It just reminds me that there is a place... [TAPE ENDS]

GM5 - Continued to have a conversation quite a while afterwards and spoke about how there's this kind of impulse to go, an impulse to stay, impulse to kind of be at home and be secure and to be relaxed, and also the impulse to go out and be out in the world, have adventure, and it made me think that as well as the cost of going and the loss implied there, that there's also a cost of staying at home. What's the cost of not leaving?

Circumstances of leaving home

1. It's a very private story.
2. When I left my family home, my home town, or my country?
3. I started leaving home by going to a high school in another town, though just 15 minutes on bus, but for me it felt like going away.
4. When I was there I felt like I was somewhere else, not at home. It was major and important for me.
5. Then I studied on another town where I felt on my own but I came home weekends.
6. Then I left for another country for a year and returned to have my own home in my home town.
7. It was a circle and every stage was traumatic, but the most traumatic was moving back to the same town and living separately.

The idea of going back and reasons for leaving

1. I can't cope with that idea of going back.
2. The process was like moving in different directions, first moving in terms of growing up in the family and second geographical, home town, home country.
3. I left because I met someone who I decided to marry, and moved here.
4. But it was different, now I see that it was like an excuse rather than reason and I feel more and more sure that it would have happened anyway.
5. The marriage allowed something to happen that was inevitable.
6. I had been trying to leave the country for Italy and then this happened.
7. I originally came to the UK for 6 months and then returned home for a year and moved back here for good, I thought so at the time, 5 years ago.
8. The context of this moving is that the country I'm from is changing shape, creating a bit problem of what is home and this home is falling apart.

Needing to move

1. I was forced to move back to my family house and start from there because I couldn't afford university any more.
2. But I felt I couldn't cope with being back home so I decided to leave the country for Czecha.
3. It felt more important than my university at the time.
4. I probably could have stayed at home but it was unsatisfactory.
5. Every move I made was towards more independence and finally in Czecha I was able to support myself, which was great!
6. But I also needed my vocation so when I came to Britain I finished my university.
7. I was compromising all the time, trying to manage leaving home and my studies, both were important parts of my education.

8. One motivation all the way through was to have my own physical space where I could produce some mental space.

Home environment

1. I was brought up with 2 sisters and it took me a while to get my own room, that might have been part of it.
2. By the time I got my room I had to leave home anyway, at that point I wasn't capable of that, I needed more space.
3. For me it was about having my own space and being my own master, I don't know why that was so important.
4. I needed to be on a equal footing with others, to take my own destiny into my own hands, so I am making the decisions.
5. It is so important to me to feel that every decision I take I stood for it and planned it, and because home is very territorial it's the easiest way to prove this individual independence.
6. Home made that impossible, I could only define myself there by saying what I'm not, I couldn't put it in more positive terms in my family context because there were too many interests.
7. I'm the oldest and so am the ice-breaker. I made it easier for my sisters. My middle sister moved to Canada with her whole family and my youngest sister is still in the family house, even my mother has moved out. My father died.

The house

1. The house is hugely important for our family. The house is bigger than us. My mother inherited it so it was a burden.
2. We've talked of selling it but I am very against it, even though I don't live there.
3. The house evokes deep feelings in all of us, what work is done in the house, it gets very emotional and argumentative. Its so strong and ridiculous.
4. I think the house represents family in its ideal state.
5. We moved there when the family was whole and we had no idea any of us would leave it.
6. We had a happy childhood there and if anything happened to the house maybe we would question whether our family was ideal or not.
7. There was a strong picture that our family was ideal but it turned out to be just normal like any other family, but the house remains untouchable.
8. My mother remarried but it would have been anathema to move him into the house. So we are all leaving that house without being able to cope with something.
9. The house is almost like a museum to an ideal innocent time. We all keep our stuff there still and no one moves it.
10. I feel my sister who lives there is a kind of prisoner of the house. If she moves I don't know what we will do, it's unresolved.

What would happen to you here if that house was sold?

1. I think about that. They don't tell me what they think because they know I will react badly, I have in the past.
2. Something will happen at some point and it would mean I wouldn't have anywhere to stay in my home country.
3. It would feel awkward to stay anywhere else, with friends or my mother.
4. To go home and not stay in that house would feel like the ground has been pulled from underneath me.
5. There's something about that house that's grounding for me even when I live here.
6. I tried to interfere with some everyday management decisions there, from here, but I calmed down.
7. I try to be like a guest when I go there, try not to make it important and try to respect it as my sister's place.
8. The place is a bit spooky it's so important. It's like people don't really live there.
9. There is a feeling of restraint or tension, not to disturb anyone.

What would happen to you if the whole place was rearranged?

1. Now I would say OK, fine, what can I do? I can't control it.
2. I think the main issue is having the house or not.
3. I was thinking if I had money of buying the house.
4. I feel it's my mother's house, legally it is, but I also claim emotional ownership of it. That's the problem.

How did this house become so important in your family?

1. It has always required constant repair, always something to do on it.
2. There was huge efforts made to adjust when someone moved in or out, died, or we rented a part of it.
3. Sacrifice to the house was always a part of our family life. Sometimes my father had to stay with the builders while we went on holiday.
4. Also it's related to relationships, it is my mother's house, and originally my grandmothers, and my father wasn't welcomed there at first.

The summer house and war

1. We had another house, a summer house in the country, which we sold when the war broke out.
2. The war contributed greatly to the significance of the house.
3. The whole notion of home was heightened, it was the catalyst for the war.
4. Everywhere was all about home, where is my home, listening to all about home, watching other people's homes being ruined.
5. It created huge anxiety about that.
6. We could no longer go to our summer house because of where it was located, and we used to go every summer.

7. I tried to persuade my parents to sell it but they couldn't for emotional reasons, my mother especially couldn't cope as she was almost born there.
8. In the end we just lost control of the house, some other family moved in.
9. I moved to the UK and lost interest in the issue, and finally they just sold it.
10. My reaction was that it was horrible, wrong, and I thought how wrong I was to push for it, I felt so different once it was done.
11. In the meantime my situation had changed and I thought I could visit there easily from the UK, maybe even get control of it.
12. I saw it as continuing for me while my mother saw it as over, she'd never go there again, her emotional connection had been cut.

How did you feel when you first left home, did you always feel you'd leave?

1. I liked it, I'm curious, I wanted to know what was happening out there. And I always liked to go back too.
2. I will answer indirectly (tells story of being at a party).
3. I am a stranger here but I was also a stranger in my home country just as much.
4. It's obvious here that I'm not English, but in your home environment it's more difficult to see if someone is a stranger or not, feeling part of the community or not.
5. I'm very social and communicative but I was never part of the community, playing with other children in the street etc.
6. My sister and I loved playing a game about home. We'd build our own flats and then visit each other, I would even play this on my own using toys to separate the space.
7. In our home I felt fine, but I felt pressure to be together all the time, but in the community I felt like a stranger.
8. To have your own space, be independent, was not usual.
9. My parents were like non-entities and unhappy when they were on their own and I found that frustrating. They could function when they were integrated into the whole but I felt that was not independent.
10. I had a lot of obligations early on. I was very busy academically, I spent very little time at home and that habit persists. I am uncomfortable staying very long at home, I can't be on my own at home.
11. I like to have engagements, activities, although I was comfortable, there was a feeling of not being at peace at home.
12. I felt it was my home and was proud of it, but I didn't have enough space to feel at peace there, or I felt I can't really do what I want.
13. Now that I have the space at home I don't really use it, I still live in a kind of restricted space.

The larger community

1. I was a high achiever in school and enjoyed myself. But I had a distance from the group, I was a bit snubbed at times rather than I didn't fit in (she does not like that phrase) but I didn't feel people didn't like me.
2. There was a kind of disengagement from the everyday kind of activities. I wanted to choose who to connect with.

3. In that process, going away from home was about finding, making the effort to be better interlocked.

Did you ever consider staying at home?

1. No, never. I never spelt out that I would leave, but I never imagined staying.
2. I knew when I began university in my home town that it would be impossible to stay in my home town for all of it.
3. It was an intellectual going away in terms of knowledge, but I felt that what I gain intellectually I want to gain physically, geographically as well. There is a connection between your ideas and actual experience.
4. I also wanted to go away to continue to gain knowledge, there was that connection too.
5. You appreciate your own knowledge more if you make this effort to be wholly involved, to engage as a whole person, not just sitting reading a book.
6. I would go to exhibitions etc. in other towns, to make it a whole adventure, drawing in the whole process, not just seeing the exhibition.
7. I was always concerned that the intellectual world has to be reflected in the practical realm, there has to be a correspondence.

How do you know when you feel at home?

1. Home is where I feel relaxed and confident. Where I know where I stand and can enrich myself. I feel at home in London, when I know my way around and when I know my way out of trouble.
2. It involves a kind of familiarity.
3. I'm also feeling more of when I don't feel at home, totally lost. I went to Paris, where I know no one, and I felt I had no connection with the world at all, so I felt where am I, what's happening.
4. It took me a while to realise that I am familiar with behaving in unfamiliar cities.
5. I feel comfortable in Belgrade and London though I didn't know them at first. Familiarity is more about styles, not actually knowing streets.
6. In these places I felt like a stranger, which made it easier to operate, you don't carry so much meaning about yourself, you carry less prejudices than in your home place.
7. There is a kind of provincialism in that.
8. I lived in Cardiff and I didn't like it because it was too small, like my home town, the scale didn't allow me to feel a stranger.
9. I'm more comfortable with a huge city, a metropolis, which is so big you have to give up, it's liberating.
10. I feel there are lots of people here like me, so in a way I feel even if I'm alone or a stranger, that I'm in the company of others.

Why do you think you really left home?

1. I mean, I changed my whole way of life. I just outgrew my hometown.

2. Physically I became too big, first I wanted my own room, then I want two rooms, it was like a kind of progression, but it wasn't the only reason.
3. It was maybe the most obvious reason and what prompted some of my moving from home.
4. The other reason was a search for what you want. That I have to go somewhere else.
5. It's not that I wanted to leave, I did that stage, it's that you feel you have to go!
6. I didn't feel I had to leave, the only reason I left was practical, I was living with my boyfriend and we needed more space, but other reasons later was that I really have to go.
7. My sisters now complain that I am like a hotel guest at home, but they used to complain that before too, and that I don't appreciate all their daily effort, I wasn't really part of things, and that was the final point when I had to go.

Feelings of going

1. There was certainly some sadness about going but because I had to, it was excitement about something unseen.
2. It was a feeling that I have to go and I have no idea where I have to go, I had no destination in mind. But that's what's attractive.
3. The sadness is about staying, knowing how things are, like going backwards and analysing and going back to the library, there is some kind of melancholy about it and a question about how much to analyse it.
4. It's because what you lacked you also loved and still love. That's the problem about having to go, you have to decide to leave something you love.

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. It's difficult, I must get the word.
2. There are a lot of payoffs, which is partly why I am still here.
3. But not having home is difficult.
4. Though I'm comfortable as a stranger in the company of strangers, on the other hand there is the whole that you can take for granted at home that's missing. The things that usually function automatically become more pronounced.
5. You don't just bump into friends in the street, which is about having a network of friends, family, relatives, all the people you met through childhood on up, who exist even if you've not been in contact and now having them around is difficult.
6. It's not about wanting to communicate with them, it's just having the feeling of being part of it.
7. Yes, though it can be suffocating, I'm terribly sentimental about it now.
8. It's either suffocating from having it or longing for it, it's embarrassing.
9. I was addressing this the best I could when I lived in the university town and would go home for weekends.
10. A combination of these two is perfect for me, works best for me and I'd be unhappy with only one or the other.
11. The problem now is the distance is greater and I can't solve that easily. So I go back twice a year but I feel more and more disappointed when I go there.

12. Things change and I don't feel I come from that world anymore. I'm worried that I'm losing what I'm going back to find.
13. It's becoming more like a hotel guest, some comfort and consolation but it's not a nice feeling to have nothing to do with the place anymore.
14. There is all the confusion of which place to call home, when I mean London I say I'm going home in English.
15. I do feel like I'm from here when I'm back home, when I'm here I'm regarded as coming from somewhere else.
16. This whole idea of going home is a question of identity, and is reflected most by me in my name, which I hate.
17. Now with my surname in English and my first name in Serbian, I'm half here and half there, a reflection of the two spaces.

Do you think you'll ever return home?

1. I'm plotting it all the time. But I'd have to structure it and I'm in two minds about it, and how I'd do it.
2. I can't decide whether to encourage the feeling that there's no place like home, or trying to destroy it. I spend most of my life like the latter.
3. I have a space in London but not a place, a home, most of my things are in boxes and I prefer it like that.
4. It makes me feel I could leave whenever, there is a persistent anxiety, can't relax.
5. The greatest need is to relax, not have that tension, but at the same time I want to move, I can't relax.
6. The idea of going back is more ideal than real. More a utopia to satisfy the missing of home, but sometimes I think it is possible still.
7. But I feel now I'm maybe at some other stage so I can't continue to move back and forth and these are not the right options anymore. I can't define it yet, home is not the issue, its trying to have both the excitement and the place to relax.
8. It feels like a continual battle that I can't resolve, so I'm not trying to go back home or trying to find a place to be at home, just live with the anxiety.
9. It brings a feeling of feeling insecure from being unrooted and not being able to take root again and also not wanting to move to a place because you might be half way to someplace else.

How do you feel about the interview?

1. I'm trying not to be terribly emotional about it so I found it difficult.
2. It's a main problem for me when I communicate and there is a gap in understanding from the problem of origin.
3. If the problem of home and identity is not clear then there can be all sorts of misunderstandings.
4. I find it much easier to communicate with others coming from the same kind of problem.
5. People here take me for granted because I'm white. I could be a bigger stranger than any black ethnic minority but it's not seen so not addressed.

6. This problem of home is a dramatic part of the issue in direct communication with people, because it's not obvious to them.
7. I recognise huge problems people have here about not leaving home, they can't see that, and this is one advantage, I see the benefits of making such a big change, from one country to another.
8. Moving countries is a big enough change to make it totally clear, makes the issue about home much clearer.
9. But I don't quite dare think about the other side, what is lost by moving. And as time goes by that feeling grows.
10. For me something is inevitably gone, and it's gone because I left. But I had to go.
11. So it's a kind of damage and damage compensation.
12. With English people I always feel I shouldn't bring this up, it's too disclosing, but it's too strong, it always comes up. It's a bit like having some defect.
13. It's like being an abandoned child and making a point of saying I have parents, not showing my un-grounding.
14. (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.).
15. I hate the phrase 'home sweet home' but I like 'there's no place like home'.

Process of leaving home

1. This is a very private story of leaving family home, hometown, and home country.
2. Although I didn't explicitly always say I'd leave, I never imagined the possibility of staying.
3. I started leaving home by attending a high school in the next town, it felt like I was somewhere else, not home, and it was a major and important step.
4. Then I went to university in another town on my own and came home weekends, then I went to another country for a year and had to return due to finances.
5. It was a circle and every stage was traumatic but the most difficult was moving back and living separately in the same town as my family.
6. The process was like moving in different directions, first moving in terms of growing up in the family and second geographical, home town, home country.
7. I originally came to the UK for 6 months and then returned home for a year and moved back here for good, I thought so at the time, 5 years ago.
8. The context of this moving is that the country I'm from is changing shape, creating a big problem of what is home and this home is falling apart.

Motivations for leaving

1. I just outgrew my hometown. Physically I became too big, first I wanted my own room, then I want two rooms, it was like a kind of progression, but it wasn't the only reason, I changed my whole way of life.
2. Another reason was that I have to go somewhere else to search for what I want.
3. It's not that I wanted to leave or had to leave for any reason. It's that I really had to go! It wasn't the leaving from, it was the going to.
4. It was a feeling that I have to go and I have no idea where I have to go, I had no destination in mind. But that's what's attractive.
5. I couldn't cope with the idea of going back, of being back home so I decided to leave the country because it felt more important than my university at the time.
6. I left my country because I got married but I see that it was an excuse more than a reason and I am sure it would have happened anyway. The marriage allowed something that was inevitable anyway, I had already been trying to leave.
7. Every move I made was towards more independence and finally I was able to support myself, which was great!
8. I was compromising all the time, trying to manage leaving home and my studies, both moving and university were important parts of my education.
9. I'm curious, I wanted to know what was happening out there but I also enjoyed returning for visits home too, to see what was happening there.

Importance of physical space and independence

1. One motivation all the way through was to have my own physical space where I could produce some mental space.
2. By the time I got my own room at home it was too late, it wasn't enough, I wasn't capable of staying, I needed more space.
3. For me it was about having my own space and being my own master, I don't know why that was so important.
4. My sister and I loved playing a game about home. We'd build our own flats and then visit each other, I would even play this on my own using toys to separate the space.
5. My parents were like non-entities and unhappy when they were on their own and I found that frustrating. They could function when they were integrated into the whole but I felt that was not independent.
6. I had a lot of obligations early on. I was very busy academically, I spent very little time at home and that habit persists. I am uncomfortable staying very long at home, I can't be on my own at home.
7. I like to have engagements, activities, although I was comfortable, there was a feeling of not being at peace at home.
8. I felt it was my home and was proud of it, but I didn't have enough space to feel at peace there, or I felt I can really do what I want.
9. It is so important to me to feel that every decision I take I stood for it and planned it, and because home is very territorial it's the easiest way to prove this individual independence.
10. Having the physical space put me on an equal footing with others to take my own destiny into my own hands, so I am making the decisions.
11. At home I could only define myself negatively by saying what I'm not, I couldn't put it in more positive terms in my family context because there were too many interests impinging on me.
12. To need your own space, to be independent, was not usual.
13. Now that I have the space at home I don't really use it, I still live in a kind of restricted space.

The family house

1. The house was passed from my grandmother to my mother, so it has huge significance, it was bigger than us and a burden.
2. Sacrifice to the house was part of our family life, it required constant repair, adaptations when someone moved or died or we rented part of it.
3. The house still evokes strong feelings in all of us and we have deep feelings about any changes, even moving our stuff which we keep there.
4. I think the house represents family in its ideal state. When we lived there the family was whole and we had no idea any of us would ever leave it.
5. It maintains the picture of an ideal family and happy childhood, it is untouchable, if anything happened to the house we might realise we were just a normal family.
6. It's like a museum to an ideal innocent time. There's something about that house that's grounding for me even when I live here.
7. Even though I don't live there, I react badly to the idea of selling it but something will have to happen at some point and it will mean I will have

nowhere to stay in my home country. It would feel awkward to stay anywhere else.

8. To go home and not stay in that house would feel like the ground has been pulled from underneath me.
9. I try to be like a guest when I go there, try not to make it important and try to respect it as my sister's place. I feel my sister who lives there is a kind of prisoner of the house. If she moves I don't know what we will do, it's unresolved.
10. There is a feeling of restraint or tension, not to disturb anyone, it's a bit spooky it's so important. It's like people don't really live there.
11. My mother remarried but it would have been anathema to move him into the house. So we are all leaving that house without being able to cope with something.
12. I feel it's my mother's house, legally it is, but I also claim emotional ownership of it. That's the problem and if I had the money I'd think of buying it. If it's sold now, I'd have to adjust, there's nothing I can do to control it.

The significance of war

1. The war contributed greatly to the significance of our summer house, where we used to go each summer, because we had to sell it because of its location.
2. The whole notion of home was heightened and was the catalyst for war, where is my home, listening to stories about what is home, watching other people's homes ruined, everywhere was about home and it created huge anxiety.
3. My mother couldn't cope with selling that house but I encouraged them to, then we lost control of it because another family moved in.
4. When they sold it I felt it was so wrong and I was wrong to encourage them.
5. I had moved to the UK and begun to think I could visit there, maybe even get control of it again.
6. For me it was a continuing bond while for my mother it was finished, she wouldn't go there again.

The experience of being a stranger

1. I am a stranger here but I was also a stranger in my home country just as much.
2. It's obvious here that I'm not English, but in your home environment it's more difficult to see if someone is a stranger or not, feeling part of the community or not.
3. I'm very social and communicative but I was never part of the community, playing with other children in the street etc.
4. In our home I felt fine, but I felt pressure to be together all the time, but in the community I felt like a stranger.
5. I was a high achiever in school and enjoyed myself. But I had a distance from the group, I was a bit snubbed at times rather than I didn't fit in (she does not like that phrase) but I didn't feel people didn't like me.
6. There was a kind of disengagement from the everyday kind of activities. I wanted to choose who to connect with.

7. In that process, going away from home was about making the effort to find ways of being better interlocked.
8. My sisters complained that I wasn't really a part of things, the daily efforts, I was like a hotel guest, and that was the final point when I had to go.

Knowledge and Leaving

1. I knew when I began university in my hometown that it would be impossible to stay in my hometown for all of it. Going away was another form of gaining knowledge and I needed that connection between the two.
2. It was an intellectual going away in terms of knowledge, but I felt that what I gain intellectually I want to gain physically, geographically as well. There is a connection between your ideas and actual experience.
3. You appreciate your own knowledge more if you make this effort to be wholly involved, to engage as a whole person, not just sitting reading a book.
4. I would go to exhibitions etc. in other towns, to make it a whole adventure, drawing in the whole process, not just seeing the exhibition.
5. I was always concerned that the intellectual world has to be reflected in the practical realm, there has to be a correspondence.

Aspects of feeling at home in a city

1. Home is where I feel relaxed and confident. Where I know where I stand and can enrich myself. I feel at home in London, I know my way around and I know my way out of trouble. It involves a kind of familiarity.
2. I'm also feeling more of when I don't feel at home, totally lost. I went to Paris, where I know no one, and I felt I had no connection with the world at all, so I felt where am I, what's happening, and it took me a while to realise that I am familiar with behaving in unfamiliar cities.
3. I feel comfortable in Belgrade and London though I didn't know them at first. Familiarity is more about styles, not actually knowing streets.
4. In these places I felt like a stranger, which made it easier to operate, you don't carry so much meaning about yourself, you carry less prejudices than in your home place.
5. I lived in Cardiff and I didn't like it because it was too small, like my home town, the scale didn't allow me to feel a stranger. I'm more comfortable with a huge city, a metropolis, which is so big you have to give up, it's liberating.
6. I feel there are lots of people here like me, so in a way I feel even if I'm alone or a stranger, that I'm in the company of others.

Sadness of leaving

1. There is sadness about going but because I had to go there was also excitement about the unexplored.

2. The sadness is related to the idea of staying, where I know how things are, it's like going backwards, back to the library and analysing it all, with a feeling of melancholy and wondering how much to analyse it.
3. It's because what you lacked you also loved and still love. That's the problem about having to go, you have to decide to leave something you love.

The impact of leaving

1. There are enough payoffs to still be here but it's very difficult not having home.
2. Though I'm comfortable as a stranger in the company of strangers, on the other hand there is the whole that you can take for granted at home that's missing. The things that usually function automatically become more pronounced.
3. You don't just bump into friends in the street, which is about having a network of friends, family, relatives, all the people you met through childhood on up, who exist even if you've not been in contact and now having them around is difficult.
4. It's not about wanting to communicate with them, it's just having the feeling of being part of it.
5. Yes, though it can be suffocating, I'm terribly sentimental about it now, so it's either suffocating from having it or longing for it, it's embarrassing.
6. I addressed this best when I lived in the university town and would go home for weekends. A combination of these two is perfect for me, works best for me, and I'd be unhappy with only one or the other.
7. I can't solve the problem easily that the distance is greater so I go back twice a year, and I feel more and more disappointed when I go there.
8. Things change and I don't feel I come from that world anymore. I'm worried that I'm losing what I'm going back to find.
9. I'm even more like a hotel guest, some comfort and consolation but it's not a nice feeling to have nothing to do with the place anymore.
10. There is all the confusion of which place to call home, when I mean London I say 'I'm going home' in English.
11. I do feel like I'm from here when I'm back home, when I'm here I'm regarded as coming from somewhere else.
12. This whole idea of going home is a question of identity, and is reflected most by me in my name, which I hate but now with my surname in English and my first name in Serbian, I'm half here and half there, a reflection of the two spaces.

Living with it as a resolution

1. I continually plot my return home but I'm not sure how to do it and moreover, I'm undecided about it. The idea of going back can be more ideal than real, more a utopian fantasy to satisfy my missing of home, but perhaps it's also possible.
2. I can't decide whether to encourage the feeling that there's no place like home, or trying to destroy it. I spend most of my life like the latter.
3. My space in London is not a place, a home, most of my things are in boxes and I prefer it like that, it makes me feel I could leave whenever, but there is a persistent anxiety, I can't relax.

4. The greatest need is to relax, not have that tension, but at the same time I want to move, I can't relax. It feels like a continual battle that I can't resolve, so I'm not trying to go back home or trying to find a place to be at home, just live with the anxiety.
5. But I feel now I'm maybe at some other stage so I can't continue to move back and forth and these are not the right options anymore. I can't define it yet, home is not the issue, it's trying to have both the excitement and the place to relax.
6. It feels insecure from being unrooted and not being able to take root again and also not wanting to move to a place because you might be half way to someplace else.

Feelings of the interview and communicating about these issues generally

1. I'm trying not to be terribly emotional about it so I found it difficult.
2. It's a main problem for me when I communicate and there is a gap in understanding. If the problem of home and identity is not clear then there can be all sorts of misunderstandings. I find it much easier to communicate with others coming from the same kind of problem.
3. People here take me for granted because I'm white. I could be a bigger stranger than any black ethnic minority but it's not seen so not addressed.
4. This problem of home is a dramatic part of the issue in direct communication with people, because it's not obvious to them.
5. I recognise huge problems people have here about not leaving home, they can't see that, and this is one advantage, I see the benefits of making such a big change, from one country to another.
6. Moving countries is a big enough change to make it totally clear, makes the issue about home much clearer.
7. But I don't quite dare think about the other side, what is lost by moving. And as time goes by that feeling grows. For me something is inevitably gone, and it's gone because I left. But I had to go. So it's a kind of damage and damage compensation.
8. With English people I always feel I shouldn't bring this up, it's too disclosing, but it's too strong, it always comes up. It's a bit like having some defect.
9. It's like being an abandoned child and making a point of saying I have parents, not showing my un-grounding.
10. (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.).
11. I hate the phrase 'home sweet home' but I like 'there's no place like home'.

Circumstances of leaving home

8. It's a very private story.
9. When I left my family home, my home town, or my country?
10. I started leaving home by going to a high school in another town, though just 15 minutes on bus, but for me it felt like going away.
11. When I was there I felt like I was somewhere else, not at home. It was major and important for me.
12. Then I studied on another town where I felt on my own but I came home weekends.
13. Then I left for another country for a year and returned to have my own home in my home town.
14. It was a circle and every stage was traumatic, but the most traumatic was moving back to the same town and living separately.

The idea of going back and reasons for leaving

9. I can't cope with that idea of going back.
10. The process was like moving in different directions, first moving in terms of growing up in the family and second geographical, home town, home country.
11. I left because I met someone who I decided to marry, and moved here.
12. But it was different, now I see that it was like an excuse rather than reason and I feel more and more sure that it would have happened anyway.
13. The marriage allowed something to happen that was inevitable.
14. I had been trying to leave the country for Italy and then this happened.
15. I originally came to the UK for 6 months and then returned home for a year and moved back here for good, I thought so at the time, 5 years ago.
16. The context of this moving is that the country I'm from is changing shape, creating a bit problem of what is home and this home is falling apart.

Needing to move

9. I was forced to move back to my family house and start from there because I couldn't afford university any more.
10. But I felt I couldn't cope with being back home so I decided to leave the country for Czecha.
11. It felt more important than my university at the time.
12. I probably could have stayed at home but it was unsatisfactory.
13. Every move I made was towards more independence and finally in Czecha I was able to support myself, which was great!
14. But I also needed my vocation so when I came to Britain I finished my university.
15. I was compromising all the time, trying to manage leaving home and my studies, both were important parts of my education.

16. One motivation all the way through was to have my own physical space where I could produce some mental space.

Home environment

8. I was brought up with 2 sisters and it took me a while to get my own room, that might have been part of it.
9. By the time I got my room I had to leave home anyway, at that point I wasn't capable of that, I needed more space.
10. For me it was about having my own space and being my own master, I don't know why that was so important.
11. I needed to be on a equal footing with others, to take my own destiny into my own hands, so I am making the decisions.
12. It is so important to me to feel that every decision I take I stood for it and planned it, and because home is very territorial it's the easiest way to prove this individual independence.
13. Home made that impossible, I could only define myself there by saying what I'm not, I couldn't put it in more positive terms in my family context because there were too many interests.
14. I'm the oldest and so am the ice-breaker. I made it easier for my sisters. My middle sister moved to Canada with her whole family and my youngest sister is still in the family house, even my mother has moved out. My father died.

The house

11. The house is hugely important for our family. The house is bigger than us. My mother inherited it so it was a burden.
12. We've talked of selling it but I am very against it, even though I don't live there.
13. The house evokes deep feelings in all of us, what work is done in the house, it gets very emotional and argumentative. Its so strong and ridiculous.
14. I think the house represents family in its ideal state.
15. We moved there when the family was whole and we had no idea any of us would leave it.
16. We had a happy childhood there and if anything happened to the house maybe we would question whether our family was ideal or not.
17. There was a strong picture that our family was ideal but it turned out to be just normal like any other family, but the house remains untouchable.
18. My mother remarried but it would have been anathema to move him into the house. So we are all leaving that house without being able to cope with something.
19. The house is almost like a museum to an ideal innocent time. We all keep our stuff there still and no one moves it.
20. I feel my sister who lives there is a kind of prisoner of the house. If she moves I don't know what we will do, it's unresolved.

What would happen to you here if that house was sold?

10. I think about that. They don't tell me what they think because they know I will react badly, I have in the past.
11. Something will happen at some point and it would mean I wouldn't have anywhere to stay in my home country.
12. It would feel awkward to stay anywhere else, with friends or my mother.
13. To go home and not stay in that house would feel like the ground has been pulled from underneath me.
14. There's something about that house that's grounding for me even when I live here.
15. I tried to interfere with some everyday management decisions there, from here, but I calmed down.
16. I try to be like a guest when I go there, try not to make it important and try to respect it as my sister's place.
17. The place is a bit spooky it's so important. It's like people don't really live there.
18. There is a feeling of restraint or tension, not to disturb anyone.

What would happen to you if the whole place was rearranged?

5. Now I would say OK, fine, what can I do? I can't control it.
6. I think the main issue is having the house or not.
7. I was thinking if I had money of buying the house.
8. I feel it's my mother's house, legally it is, but I also claim emotional ownership of it. That's the problem.

How did this house become so important in your family?

5. It has always required constant repair, always something to do on it.
6. There was huge efforts made to adjust when someone moved in or out, died, or we rented a part of it.
7. Sacrifice to the house was always a part of our family life. Sometimes my father had to stay with the builders while we went on holiday.
8. Also it's related to relationships, it is my mother's house, and originally my grandmothers, and my father wasn't welcomed there at first.

The summer house and war

13. We had another house, a summer house in the country, which we sold when the war broke out.
14. The war contributed greatly to the significance of the house.
15. The whole notion of home was heightened, it was the catalyst for the war.
16. Everywhere was all about home, where is my home, listening to all about home, watching other people's homes being ruined.
17. It created huge anxiety about that.
18. We could no longer go to our summer house because of where it was located, and we used to go every summer.

19. I tried to persuade my parents to sell it but they couldn't for emotional reasons, my mother especially couldn't cope as she was almost born there.
20. In the end we just lost control of the house, some other family moved in.
21. I moved to the UK and lost interest in the issue, and finally they just sold it.
22. My reaction was that it was horrible, wrong, and I thought how wrong I was to push for it, I felt so different once it was done.
23. In the meantime my situation had changed and I thought I could visit there easily from the UK, maybe even get control of it.
24. I saw it as continuing for me while my mother saw it as over, she'd never go there again, her emotional connection had been cut.

How did you feel when you first left home, did you always feel you'd leave?

14. I liked it, I'm curious, I wanted to know what was happening out there. And I always liked to go back too.
15. I will answer indirectly (tells story of being at a party).
16. I am a stranger here but I was also a stranger in my home country just as much.
17. It's obvious here that I'm not English, but in your home environment it's more difficult to see if someone is a stranger or not, feeling part of the community or not.
18. I'm very social and communicative but I was never part of the community, playing with other children in the street etc.
19. My sister and I loved playing a game about home. We'd build our own flats and then visit each other, I would even play this on my own using toys to separate the space.
20. In our home I felt fine, but I felt pressure to be together all the time, but in the community I felt like a stranger.
21. To have your own space, be independent, was not usual.
22. My parents were like non-entities and unhappy when they were on their own and I found that frustrating. They could function when they were integrated into the whole but I felt that was not independent.
23. I had a lot of obligations early on. I was very busy academically, I spent very little time at home and that habit persists. I am uncomfortable staying very long at home, I can't be on my own at home.
24. I like to have engagements, activities, although I was comfortable, there was a feeling of not being at peace at home.
25. I felt it was my home and was proud of it, but I didn't have enough space to feel at peace there, or I felt I can't really do what I want.
26. Now that I have the space at home I don't really use it, I still live in a kind of restricted space.

The larger community

4. I was a high achiever in school and enjoyed myself. But I had a distance from the group, I was a bit snubbed at times rather than I didn't fit in (she does not like that phrase) but I didn't feel people didn't like me.
5. There was a kind of disengagement from the everyday kind of activities. I wanted to choose who to connect with.

6. In that process, going away from home was about finding, making the effort to be better interlocked.

Did you ever consider staying at home?

8. No, never. I never spelt out that I would leave, but I never imagined staying.
9. I knew when I began university in my home town that it would be impossible to stay in my home town for all of it.
10. It was an intellectual going away in terms of knowledge, but I felt that what I gain intellectually I want to gain physically, geographically as well. There is a connection between your ideas and actual experience.
11. I also wanted to go away to continue to gain knowledge, there was that connection too.
12. You appreciate your own knowledge more if you make this effort to be wholly involved, to engage as a whole person, not just sitting reading a book.
13. I would go to exhibitions etc. in other towns, to make it a whole adventure, drawing in the whole process, not just seeing the exhibition.
14. I was always concerned that the intellectual world has to be reflected in the practical realm, there has to be a correspondence.

How do you know when you feel at home?

11. Home is where I feel relaxed and confident. Where I know where I stand and can enrich myself. I feel at home in London, when I know my way around and when I know my way out of trouble.
12. It involves a kind of familiarity.
13. I'm also feeling more of when I don't feel at home, totally lost. I went to Paris, where I know no one, and I felt I had no connection with the world at all, so I felt where am I, what's happening.
14. It took me a while to realise that I am familiar with behaving in unfamiliar cities.
15. I feel comfortable in Belgrade and London though I didn't know them at first. Familiarity is more about styles, not actually knowing streets.
16. In these places I felt like a stranger, which made it easier to operate, you don't carry so much meaning about yourself, you carry less prejudices than in your home place.
17. There is a kind of provincialism in that.
18. I lived in Cardiff and I didn't like it because it was too small, like my home town, the scale didn't allow me to feel a stranger.
19. I'm more comfortable with a huge city, a metropolis, which is so big you have to give up, it's liberating.
20. I feel there are lots of people here like me, so in a way I feel even if I'm alone or a stranger, that I'm in the company of others.

Why do you think you really left home?

8. I mean, I changed my whole way of life. I just outgrew my hometown.

9. Physically I became too big, first I wanted my own room, then I want two rooms, it was like a kind of progression, but it wasn't the only reason.
10. It was maybe the most obvious reason and what prompted some of my moving from home.
11. The other reason was a search for what you want. That I have to go somewhere else.
12. It's not that I wanted to leave, I did that stage, it's that you feel you have to go!
13. I didn't feel I had to leave, the only reason I left was practical, I was living with my boyfriend and we needed more space, but other reasons later was that I really have to go.
14. My sisters now complain that I am like a hotel guest at home, but they used to complain that before too, and that I don't appreciate all their daily effort, I wasn't really part of things, and that was the final point when I had to go.

Feelings of going

5. There was certainly some sadness about going but because I had to, it was excitement about something unseen.
6. It was a feeling that I have to go and I have no idea where I have to go, I had no destination in mind. But that's what's attractive.
7. The sadness is about staying, knowing how things are, like going backwards and analysing and going back to the library, there is some kind of melancholy about it and a question about how much to analyse it.
8. It's because what you lacked you also loved and still love. That's the problem about having to go, you have to decide to leave something you love.

What's it been like since leaving home?

18. It's difficult, I must get the word.
19. There are a lot of payoffs, which is partly why I am still here.
20. But not having home is difficult.
21. Though I'm comfortable as a stranger in the company of strangers, on the other hand there is the whole that you can take for granted at home that's missing. The things that usually function automatically become more pronounced.
22. You don't just bump into friends in the street, which is about having a network of friends, family, relatives, all the people you met through childhood on up, who exist even if you've not been in contact and now having them around is difficult.
23. Its not about wanting to communicate with them, it's just having the feeling of being part of it.
24. Yes, though it can be suffocating, I'm terribly sentimental about it now.
25. It's either suffocating from having it or longing for it, it's embarrassing.
26. I was addressing this the best I could when I lived in the university town and would go home for weekends.
27. A combination of these two is perfect for me, works best for me and I'd be unhappy with only one or the other.
28. The problem now it the distance is greater and I can't solve that easily. So I go back twice a year but I feel more and more disappointed when I go there.

29. Things change and I don't feel I come from that world anymore. I'm worried that I'm losing what I'm going back to find.
30. It's becoming more like a hotel guest, some comfort and consolation but it's not a nice feeling to have nothing to do with the place anymore.
31. There is all the confusion of which place to call home, when I mean London I say I'm going home in English.
32. I do feel like I'm from here when I'm back home, when I'm here I'm regarded as coming from somewhere else.
33. This whole idea of going home is a question of identity, and is reflected most by me in my name, which I hate.
34. Now with my surname in English and my first name in Serbian, I'm half here and half there, a reflection of the two spaces.

Do you think you'll ever return home?

10. I'm plotting it all the time. But I'd have to structure it and I'm in two minds about it, and how I'd do it.
11. I can't decide whether to encourage the feeling that there's no place like home, or trying to destroy it. I spend most of my life like the latter.
12. I have a space in London but not a place, a home, most of my things are in boxes and I prefer it like that.
13. It makes me feel I could leave whenever, there is a persistent anxiety, can't relax.
14. The greatest need is to relax, not have that tension, but at the same time I want to move, I can't relax.
15. The idea of going back is more ideal than real. More a utopia to satisfy the missing of home, but sometimes I think it is possible still.
16. But I feel now I'm maybe at some other stage so I can't continue to move back and forth and these are not the right options anymore. I can't define it yet, home is not the issue, its trying to have both the excitement and the place to relax.
17. It feels like a continual battle that I can't resolve, so I'm not trying to go back home or trying to find a place to be at home, just live with the anxiety.
18. It brings a feeling of feeling insecure from being unrooted and not being able to take root again and also not wanting to move to a place because you might be half way to someplace else.

How do you feel about the interview?

16. I'm trying not to be terribly emotional about it so I found it difficult.
17. It's a main problem for me when I communicate and there is a gap in understanding from the problem of origin.
18. If the problem of home and identity is not clear then there can be all sorts of misunderstandings.
19. I find it much easier to communicate with others coming from the same kind of problem.
20. People here take me for granted because I'm white. I could be a bigger stranger than any black ethnic minority but it's not seen so not addressed.

21. This problem of home is a dramatic part of the issue in direct communication with people, because it's not obvious to them.
22. I recognise huge problems people have here about not leaving home, they can't see that, and this is one advantage, I see the benefits of making such a big change, from one country to another.
23. Moving countries is a big enough change to make it totally clear, makes the issue about home much clearer.
24. But I don't quite dare think about the other side, what is lost by moving. And as time goes by that feeling grows.
25. For me something is inevitably gone, and it's gone because I left. But I had to go.
26. So it's a kind of damage and damage compensation.
27. With English people I always feel I shouldn't bring this up, it's too disclosing, but it's too strong, it always comes up. It's a bit like having some defect.
28. It's like being an abandoned child and making a point of saying I have parents, not showing my un-grounding.
29. (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.).
30. I hate the phrase 'home sweet home' but I like 'there's no place like home'.

GM1 - So, could you begin just by relating the circumstances of your leaving home? When it happened, how it happened?

P1 - It's a very open question, isn't it? It depends what you mean by home, I mean the first home leaving was when I left home at 18 from my parents' home in Devon to go to university, and I suppose in some ways that was to leave home. My father died last year, but my mother is still living in the house that I grew up in and I've got stuff still there, and school books, old clothes, mementoes and all sorts of things, but I think now my home is my flat in Brixton, and my second home is in Kenya, and I have lived overseas for different periods of time and I don't know if that was home or not, so it's a bit complicated as to where home is. But first leaving home was definitely leaving the family home and going up to London.

GM2 - So you left Devon and moved to London for university?

P2 - Yes.

GM3 - And what was that like, that original leaving home? Is that something you had anticipated for a long time, or was it a last minute decision?

P3 - No, I think I was fairly desperate to go. I was desperate to get out of Paignton, Devon, a provincial town, Conservative with a big 'C' and a small 'c' as well. And in order to do that I had to get through A levels and get certain grades. I went to pieces during my A levels and I stopped doing revision, God knows what it was but the doctor put me on something or other and then after a while I thought well maybe I might as well just do them, and I did get the grades, and I went. And I remember thinking, it was a long time ago now, but I remember thinking, for a long time after that there was a sort of pang every time I went home to visit the parents, and then to get on the train and go back, of sort of separation, whereas I think at the time I thought people just go and that's it, you've left home.

GM4 - So, are you saying two things really, desperation to get out and once you got out you had sort of ambivalent feelings every time you would go back to London?

P4 - I don't know what those feelings were about actually because there was no question, I didn't want to live in that place any more and I didn't want to live at home, with my parents any more. I think it was sort of like a mini leave-taking each time, you know, I haven't sort of sat down and analysed it at great length, but I remember thinking about it at the time and then, well feeling like that quite a long time ago, but maybe it was the time when I was at university. Maybe the thing about leaving home is more gradual than I thought it was for me, you know, it took a few years and a few repeat runs.

GM5 - So the initial moving out of home was only the beginning of a process of actually leaving?

P5 - Possibly. Not that I thought it through. Yes, and it's not over yet because I'm very much aware that my mother's 81 now and quite, well I don't know, she has been quite

ill, nothing life threatening, since my threatening, but because she's still in that house and been there 40 years, and I've got power of attorney, and I've got two brothers but they're both a bit useless in their own ways, so I'll have to be the one to pack up that home. My original home. Either to help my mother move before she dies, or else if she dies. And I have had sort of dreams about, when I've been abroad particularly, over the years, about home, and going home and it not being quite the same, or that my parents moved house and being quite distressed about that, so....

GM6 - So this place of home is quite an important and powerful place for you in some ways?

P6 - Probably, probably in some ways. I don't really know in what way, because I mean I have spent three days there with my mother some weeks ago and really it sort of, you know it felt like time to go away again, that's how I see it in many ways, because I've left that place and I never want to go back, and in fact I bought a flat in the next town, hippy-dippy Totnes, as opposed to conservative Paignton. I don't know, I suppose it's got some memories, I don't know, I don't know if there's unfinished business, I don't know. I don't know if it's the place or what because emotionally I feel quite tied to the landscape and I know it's my roots down in Devon and everything, but in other ways it's totally depressive and I don't know what would have happened if I had stayed.

GM7 - It's an interesting question, what would have happened if you had stayed?

P7 - Yes, well it's like my mother once said to me, if you go on like this what do you think you'll be doing when you're 40, and I always have this lingering idea that she'd quite like me to marry the bank manager or something like that, which is all a bit peculiar, because she, although it's not peculiar in fact it's the other way around, because she has trailed round after her mother, her father died, her mother and her younger brother, all around Europe in the '20s and '30s, and she learnt to drive in Jamaica in the 1930s, and went to eight schools, two of them in France, blah, blah, blah, and therefore had lots of different homes and not so many roots, and wasn't particularly conventional herself, or I think quite snobbish and narrow in some the ways her family, but in other ways moving here and there, so I don't know why she's surprised that I'm a bit unusual, a bit unorthodox, rebellious, whatever. And certainly travelling, because she's the one who taught me to travel.

GM8 - So, I just want to back up a little, one of the first things you said was that you were quite desperate to get out of home, and I wonder can you say something about that, why were you so desperate to get away?

P8 - Well, I just felt smothered. Intellectually what could you do, you know? It's awful, there wouldn't really be, I just couldn't really imagine what you'd do in a place like that.

GM9 - It sounds almost like the way you had developed, there were possibilities for you that could never be fulfilled there?

P9 - Yes, and even when I'm old I don't think there can be, it's just I don't plan to go back to that town. I don't know if you know Totnes, it has Dartington Hall, and it's all

experimental arts and kind of la de da, so it's a very different sort of place though it's only five miles away.

GM10 - So the place you grew up in, from a family point of view is really quite settled, and still is 'home'...?

P10 - Very settled.

GM11 - And it still is a home, but never a home to you in some way?

P11 - No, it was home, it was just that when you reach adolescence, in our day they called it women's lib, and you know, like school, by the time, I only liked the academic subjects really because I thought well what's the point of this drama and pictures and sports and all this carry on, because I knew that the thing, my passport out if you wanted to do anything of any interest afterwards, that you had to have these grades, and you have to pass A levels and you need to go to university and live in a different place and have different horizons.

I think the spectre of the bank hung over quite a lot, I mean the Headmistress I remember she was very down on her girls who became bank clerks, but if you got to the stage of doing A levels, teacher training college, bank clerk, teacher training college would have been a way out, but I never had any desire to anything remotely like that. You know, we used to sit around reading anarchist books and being feminist and things like that in the sixth form, and I just knew I had to get away, so I did. Being left as well, being very left wing, because my parents are Tories, and having lots of rows, and tensions, that sort of thing. And my father would say typical things like, oh well we're all communists at 18 but you'll grow out of it, it was very provocative.

GM12 - So you had friends that felt the same, you all would talk about how you needed to get out of there?

P12 - I don't know if they all felt, I suspect that they didn't feel that desperate, because a lot were more conventional. I mean, my best friend at the time, I didn't go to school with, she was from a different school, and she stayed and she did get a job at a bank actually, and then she revealed she had this sort of, big, I can't remember if she told me by letter or by face to face. She had this big thing, oh, well I'm a lesbian and I don't fit in, and I remember saying, well, I sort of didn't know, but I'm not really at all surprised and didn't mind so I suppose I was an unconventional friend, but she in fact stayed down there and I did keep in touch for quite a long time, but at the time she had this regular girlfriend and they went to the pub and play darts, you know, it was even more small town and stifling than if she'd been conventionally married or whatever, because they were sort of reproducing some sort of laddish culture, so she was one of my closest friends. And others, some left, some stayed some went away. A couple went away but are now back living there and got in touch last year when my father died, but I don't bother to get in touch with them when I'm down there because I just feel that, well I think I feel that they'll think I'm weird. You know, it just takes so long to explain, yes I am married to this Kenyan Muslim and you know, I run a drugs project in Kenya and I hang out with all these heroin users all the time, and then I have this job and you know, it's just so far from being a primary school teacher in Paignton. Although that particular friend I quite regularly dream about her, two weeks ago I dreamt that she had a new life that was quite interesting, she'd got out of being a primary school teacher and

was doing something more interesting. Because I heard about her circumstances that you know, she had this unhappy relationship, she was in London for a while, then she was back and another friend said that she'd got this, she was in with this bloke who was really stifling and monitored her phone calls, and she said, oh, you'll never get through to her on the phone to reply to your, you know, to follow up a condolence card she sent me, which was true, I never did.

So I feel that a lot of people are still trapped or are very trapped and maybe they don't even conceive of it like that, but if they don't conceive of it like that, what have we got in common? And you know, another friend I met she said, no black babies then? I said no babies of any colour, you know. She didn't mean any offence by it and none was taken, but I thought well you know, it's a slightly naff comment to make really. So I don't know, I didn't particularly have a band of friends and we were all saying we were desperate to get out, I think I was much more desperate than them, (laughs) I mean I haven't gone back and they've gone back, you know, no one forced them to go back and live in the same town.

GM13 - So what do you think it is about you that makes you a little bit more desperate or something, or once you got out you stayed out?

P13 - I have thought about this a bit, and I think what I put it down to is when I was at primary school, which was a private convent, and my parents were C of E lapsed, my mother in fact refers to herself as a pagan, but nevertheless for sort of class reasons, I was sent to this private convent, and they started going on about hellfire and all of this, and I went back and told my mother and she said, oh, that's alright, you're not a Catholic so you don't have to believe that. And to me that was significant because when I was about 5 it was set up that things people in authority told me I didn't necessarily have to believe, and I don't know, it's just my idea that that was a turning point or set you up to think right, you don't have to believe what they say, you evaluate or you can say that doesn't apply to me because I'm a different category of person.

GM14 - That makes me wonder, makes me wonder well, if you had stayed, why would it have been stifling?

P14 - (laughs) To me it's a totally stifling town. There is a theatre, but it has Les Dawson and so on because it's on the sea front, you know, there are OAPs coming for the Summer Show, and there's no intellectual life. Politically, it's full of old people, and I'm going to be an old person myself in the not too distant future, but I don't know, sometimes I see people, I quite often see people, I do it sometimes in London as well, I look at this middle aged woman with her shopping bag and I think, is she older than me or younger than me? Particularly in Paignton, and I think maybe she's my contemporary at school and she's come out to buy her vegetables. In fact, I had a conversation with a friend of mine who's having a very unorthodox time here in London about weird lives, and he said, well you know, whatever you do it's better than just going to the library and treading off to the supermarket. And for a lot of people that is the sum total of their life because there really isn't anything else there. You know, there's quite a lot of nervous breakdowns, and who can be surprised (Laughs.). I mean, there's the public library, but there's no decent bookshop in the place, there's no theatre, I don't know if there's any cinemas any more, oh yes, there are these sort of multiplexes. The evening newspaper's totally illiterate, offensive comments and misprints, and if you read the letters page as I started reading recently and they're either total nutters or 'Atila the Hun' types. The countryside's nice, and even the air makes

you feel sort of, (whoosh sound) because it's very, sea air, and it's a very mild climate and it's sort of, soporific.

GM15 - So you describe a very oppressive kind of place, it's not that it's oppressive that there's somebody there telling you how to be, but it sounds like it's oppressive in that there's very little to do to fulfil yourself or something?

P15 - Well, I think so. Other people would do water sports, there's windsurfing or sailing, things like that, but since I've discovered the Indian Ocean there's no way that I'd go in the sea at any time of the year in the Channel. So you can do that, and you can do walking and naturey type things. And because I had quite a nice childhood in the sense that I was taken around to see cities, all the castles and beaches, public gardens, you know, we went on outings a lot. I've been everywhere, those sort of pleasant type places. So I think, I mean the thing is you feel, I mean I do, you feel isolated. Isolated because you're weird by having different views, and so on. And the thing about London is that you can be selective. All my friends really have lived in Africa at some point, at the minimum they've done two years VSO, and some of them have much greater ties than that. I don't think I've got any friends who haven't, no there's one, I've got one friend who's a doctor, but even her, I met in The Gambia when she was doing her elective to be a doctor.

GM16 - So if you had stayed it would have been very isolating because you would have stood out as pretty different?

P16 - Well, I don't know what would have happened because I really knew I'd have had to stop being different because, you know, what's the term I'm looking for, it's about, peer pressure and all the rest of it, or you'd be the weird one, I don't know, or you would have to join some sort of little group and be a provincial person and support the Greens or Friends of the Earth. That's the sort of thing that I imagine.

Or I can tell you, on this type of thing, my father befriended this guy in the pub who was a bit younger than me probably, and I think he's got a sick wife who's got some chronic illness or mental health illness possibly who says he does sort of development type writing and editing and was in Oxford, but has moved down there and did journalism and so on, and he used to have all these heart to hearts with my father in the pub, but he's not really making a living at it because he's my mother's gardener now. So, you know, he's sort of presenting himself in one way but he is obviously not all that successful and says he's lost a lot of contracts, and you're at the periphery rather than the centre and by moving from Oxford down there because he likes it, and you know, and has his own reasons for being there, but I think the fact that he befriended my father in the pub, or maybe needed a father figure, I think that was part of it, but it all depends on your perspective. Because my father left Cambourne in Cornwall, leaving home, and moved to the big city and a cosmopolitan and different place, which was Torbay, where he met my mother, and painted and did have some quite unorthodox views, but I always considered him to be pretty right wing, I mean I think I'm probably doing him an injustice, but well you know, if you get down to the detail and people are always quite an interesting mixture, very few people are just died in the wool political, you know, you put them in a box so easily, but to me it smacks slightly of loneliness or need or whatever, this guy befriending my father in the pub.

GM17 - So, I'm just wondering if, it sounds like one reason you had to go is this lack of opportunity, you would have found it quite stifling, and you would have ended up quite isolated because you were thought of as different. I'm wondering, what would that have done to you if you had been stifled? To have stayed in that stifling town?

P17 - I don't know, probably had a nervous breakdown.

GM18 - Would have been unbearable in some ways?

P18 - Yes, I think it probably would, because even now I mean I refuse to conform to certain things, you know, I'm 46, I've got a part time research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene. I turned down a chance of being a lecturer last year because it might be a trick to make you do more teaching which I didn't want to do, because I want to pursue my own agenda. I wouldn't be stifled by hierarchies within the London School, so I mean, even within my life which is so much more interesting than if I'd stayed there, I'm still kicking at the, what's the expression, kicking at the margins.

GM19 - What's that about for you, that kicking at the margins?

P19 - Something to do with a sense of self, not following other people's agenda. Not following fashions or fads, but you need to find out what's interesting in life, what interests you and what you're passionate about, and if you haven't got this thing then you have to invent something and then you have to make that yours because otherwise you be a bit... You just follow you know, if aerobics are fashionable you do aerobics, you know, going on holiday in such and such a place, and there's an awful lot of people who are like that, and I think that sort of negates itself, and negates your own creativity and your own sort of direction.

GM20 - And what's so important about being self-directed?

P20 - Well, there isn't too much point in living if you're not self directed really. I mean, otherwise you're just shuffling around, going backwards and forwards to the supermarket and teaching medical anthropology because that's the thing that I do to get the salary, you know, I mean what's the point? I mean, if I do make it to be old, which I hope and more or less expect to, I'd like to look back and say I've done interesting things, seen places, learned things and made some choices about it rather than just following a predetermined course.

GM21 - Or a course where you're just battered by the winds of change around you?

P21 - Yes. Yes, I mean there are some things you can't control, but the things you can I think you should control them.

GM22 - Can I just ask, I know what happened in terms of I know a little bit about your leaving now, but what happened after you went to university?

P22 - Well, the facts are I went and lived in hall of residence here in Goodge Street for a year, and then spent a year in rented accommodation with a group of friends, and then had another year in hall, and it was all quite nice really. I enjoyed being in the hall because you didn't have any responsibilities about cooking and all that, it was a mixed hall, there was lots of late night drinking and what one did at that time. I don't think

students are like that anymore actually. When you're 18 in London and just up from the provinces, you know, you do late night drinking, we did all the theatres, I mean, we had a lot of money in those days compared with students now as well. So, we went to all the theatres, used to go to the cinema, went to all the galleries, exhibitions. I used to come to Regent's Park quite a lot, walking. Parties and drinking and hanging out at LSE.

On the other hand it was a bit of a shock because I chose LSE, home of because it seemed more cosmopolitan, there were more foreigners around. But I got my come-uppance because I was doing anthropology and most of them were mature students, so there was like, an ex-heroin addict, somebody from South Africa who also wrote plays, and I think is quite well known now, and they were all sophisticated and a lot more into the subjects, because a lot of anthropology is a bit boring, about obscure teachings by white men in the 1940s and '50s or whatever. So I didn't particularly shine, but I did what was necessary and hung out with people of my own age who were doing different courses and went off and did all these different things around London.

GM23 - But you went to LSE because you wanted to be, to mix with the..

P23 - It was cosmopolitan.

GM24 - You wanted a cosmopolitan place? What was that about? What was it that attracted you to that?

P24 - I don't know. You know, it's the same thing, isn't it? Well, I suppose you can say what attracted me to anthropology, because it's human geography, that's the same thing as well, it's about travelling to different places. I don't know where it comes from but it's there. I remember being quite disgusted by the head mistress talking about tax and saying to me racist comments, and that sort of thing, the whole atmosphere of sort of, little England, we're talking about the early '70s here. It just sort of seemed very refreshing to see people from different places, different accents, whatever.

GM25 - It sounds to me a little bit almost like there's, if we look at it kind of generally almost, there was like some sort of sensitivity about what seemed kind of small and closed, a reaction against that towards whatever seemed more open, difference or something? What is the sensitivity in being drawn to foreigners? It seems to me that there's an opening there of some kind?

P25 - Well, I'm drawn to difference. I've managed to have a black boyfriend, and also Baltese boyfriend, and there weren't very many black people, people from other cultures at all in Torbay before I got away. And I think, yes, and also a keen sense of injustice, up to now my theory about why the Americans are heavily after Palestinians is that the Americans indeed are a nation of settlers who did displace the indigenous population and therefore at some fundamental level they don't see anything wrong with it. So from an early age I always wanted the Indians to win in westerns, because I couldn't see that it was fair. I thought you know, why are we supposed to be the best and what is all this crap about the Empire. It was there from an early age, maybe it was a sort of rebellion reaction, and then, but it must be something more than that because I was not an anarchist, although I'd read all this anarchist literature at the time because I could be outside, I'm not sure what anarchists do really, go to WTO meetings don't they?

GM26 - ... (Laughs).

P26 - Or go on Commander Brown's website. The Lambeth policeman.

GM27 - So there's some attraction in difference and some strong reaction to injustice, and why these things should come together in you is a mystery? How it came together this way?

P27 - Yes.

GM28 - It's a mystery that somehow happened?

P28 - Yes. I mean, it's what makes you you. Although I don't know if it's really injustice, or the little underdog, I always wanted the underdog. I think all of us do to an extent.

GM29 - So after your time in London at university, did you then begin to travel?

P29 - Yes, I went on a Kibbutz actually, this is one of the things I did. I went to India on a sort of student exchange type thing, not that there was an exchange the other way, but that was how it was billed. And I think when I went on the Kibbutz that was one of the sort of signposts to end up where I am. I travelled with a couple of other people around the Kibbutz and we got to the occupied territory, the West Bank, and realised exactly what they were, and they hadn't been occupied for that long then. You know, and on the Kibbutz we talked about things like don't go walking in the orchards because the Arabs will rape you, and Iran, and this, that and the other, and it didn't stop them even at that time employing them as cheap labour on the Kibbutz which is supposed to be a Socialist experiment, and I didn't especially like the Israelis or Israel, and that I was very drawn to what I saw in Arab culture and the Palestinians. I went to Sinai, which was under Israel at the time but is now part of Egypt, it was given back shortly afterwards.

From that point I developed an interest in Islam and all things Arab, and maybe sensing that you've got to go to the underdog of the underdogs (Laughs.) or whatever. But again it was like there's been this propaganda machine and I've read Exodus and I was sort of drawn to the idea of a Kibbutz, the Jews and they made their country and it was an empty land and all that, then you get there and you find that it's all lies really. And interestingly, my mother's been out there, not because she's Christian, because of her mate she went on a pilgrimage and being all of a Tory lady she's also very pro-Palestinian, and I think anyone who goes there ... and even if you are because it's incredibly propaganda machine, so you have to realise that there's all sorts of vested interest. So that set me on a course of an interest in Islam and Arabs, and just underlined the idea about underdogs and so on. And then I did a course in community development and so on, and then I got the job in Yemen, based partly I think on this interest that I

GM30 - And what is the sort of injustice that you reacted so strongly to or situation of the underdog that?

P30 - Well, I think I'm quite selective about it, I mean you know, everyone has their causes. For example, I did consultancy work, I did some work in Cambodia recently

and I was required to go off to tribe areas and find out about their situation and their health care needs, and I found all these people who worked very passionately and advocacy for these very repressed and marginalised minorities, and I said I'll do my best to represent your views and give a voice to the bigger project but I am here working for the World Bank at this moment, but it's not my cause, you know I'm not going to get, I regret it, you know, it's the Amazon and the deforesting and it was literally killing people off and destroying a beautiful, quite fragile country. And it, sort of, well I don't know if you can say it doesn't make me angry or it does make me angry, but there's no point in being angry as such. I think what you have to do is not give in in your mind, not let them get you to believe mainstream ideas and discourses and then make sure that in your work you don't do anything that's going to actually add to that, and at the moment I'm in negotiations about whether I'm going to go back to Cambodia with British Aid, they want me to go back to New York, but I said you know, the World Bank and generally I find it very difficult. I mean, I didn't say it in those words, but that's what I was getting at, that it's much more stuff about how you see your essential assessment and I think the World Bank might be getting a step too far from me. But it's quite, these days, well first of all there was world order of the fall of Communism and Socialism and Capitalism coming up, and now September 11th, you know my views are, it's quite hard to find any mainstream to be in really because I'm quite appalled about what's shaping up to be a sort of Islam versus West, it's like a new Crusade, and very, very crude and quite frightening, and every time I see someone in Islamic dress now in London, since September 11 I think, oh, that person's making a political statement. I just came through Brixton and there's all this kind of head scarves and skullcaps and things. But it's terrible that people just wearing their clothes or expressing a religious thing let it be seen like that, I mean, I don't know if that's how other people see it, but I think they must be conscious, they must be doing it in some sort of conscious way therefore they are, because they all do to an extent... I can't remember what your question was now?

GM31 - What I'm wondering now is if you held back, we talked a bit about your leaving and what it led to, and things you drawn to and drawn from, if you look back to your leaving home, what do you think was the real reason you left?

P31 - The one reason?

GM32 - Yes, what was really the reason that you left?

P32 - Well, I think it was the expected course anyway, I mean, once you, if you get O levels then you do A levels, at what point are you going to say, right, well I'm going to, well obviously someone like me wouldn't, because I had this goal, so I don't know if there is a real reason, I mean it was just sort of, it was a course that was followed. And once you're doing A levels then they start talking about well what are you going to do afterwards, and it's tertiary education, so the only teacher training college is in the university or the polytechnic, and hopefully it's not going to be to go and work in a bank. So unless you've got a special reason not to, then you sign up and you start the process and then you just go.

GM33 - But I guess what I'm thinking is deciding on the courses you did, O levels and A levels, already implied that you were going, because some people didn't mind, some people didn't do that and some people maybe did that and didn't go, not everybody left?

P33 - Well, I think nearly all my friends did. Even the ones who've gone back, they went to training college outside the South West.

GM34 - So you might have gone back and gotten training..

P34 - The only one who didn't go was the one who subsequently told me she was a lesbian and went to work as a secretary in a bank, did secretarial work, secretarial college.

GM35 - So another choice would have been to go get some training in a profession or something and then come back home?

P35 - Well I think the only place you could get training there, oh, you mean outside? Go and be a teacher or something?

GM36 - Yes.

P36 - Well if I was a teacher it's quite hard to get teaching jobs because lots of people want to live there and work there because it's a nice climate or pretty or whatever. I think they think it's I never considered it once I left, I never looked back. That's all I can say, well I'm sure I could say more but.

GM37 - You never looked back?

P37 - I used to have a nightmare fantasy about, I don't know, the spectre of a nervous breakdown because there's been quite a few in my family. I thought, OK well, if it all fell apart and I had some sort of breakdown or something, what would it be like to have to go home and live with my parents? But I only considered it as a sort of nightmare option, and my younger brother did in fact do that. In the end he became an alcoholic and he just sort of collapsed and he managed to get himself home and they looked after him. He was about 50 by then.

GM38 - So if you imagine that, having to go home for some reason, what would have been so nightmare-ish about that for you?

P38 - Well, I think all the things that I've talked about, but also the fact that if you go and live with your parents as an adult or you spend time in their space particularly, you're a perpetual child and I met a friend of mine, who's older than me, going to visit her elderly parents and how you regress, you're a teenager again, and your world shrinks.

GM39 - Your world shrinks?

P39 - Yes, and also you haven't, there's none of your props of home. There's the old ones that you discarded when you were 18, which I go back and visit, you know, the same bedroom, I've got swimming trophies from when I was a teenager, I've got school books in the wardrobe and it's all there around me, but hardly any of the things which I've accumulated since then.

GM40 - So going back would be going back to a much smaller world, and also a world that's quite dated?

GM41 - Like a whole gap of your experience wouldn't be there?

P41 - Yes. and if I went back now, and I may have, because I may have to go and look after my mother for some period of time, I think her world is getting smaller, and she doesn't really ask very much about my life and my troubles at all. So I hear an awful lot about bridge classes, not classes, bridge sessions and the horticultural society, the trials and tribulations of the garden, ... And she gets depressed herself, and she's been on antidepressants for years, she's had a sort of, reasonably interesting life. But it must be hard to get out, and it is hard to get out, being on your own. I know she complained about my father, him going to the pub and not being particularly sociable, but he was there everyday. She doesn't like travelling.

GM42 - Can I ask you something slightly different that relates to this, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, all the time since you've left home..... what's it been like for you, looking back over all those years?

P42 - Well, it's been my life. It's been quite interesting and I think I've been quite lucky, but I think you make your luck. Like when I went to Tesco's yesterday there was this slightly nutty woman, a checkout woman, and I made the mistake of getting in her queue, though I moved, but she started going about seeing the weather forecast and it had flashing thunder clouds over London and said, oh, I just know I'm going to get caught in it, and I said, well you've just come on duty you should be alright, and she said, no, no, as soon as I step outside it will start raining, and she started going on about her husband and whenever he cleans the car it rains, and I thought, oh God, people like that it must be always like that for them, you know. And I think there is something about creating your own luck or following your own instincts, or course and so on. I mean, until my father died nobody close to me had died. Nothing really terrible has happened to me, you know, I haven't been a victim of serious crime, I haven't been raped, I haven't been, touch wood, I haven't been robbed, and none of these, touch wood, things have happened, and I'm slightly suspicious in my way

[tape changes over]

P42 cont. - So I think you make your luck, and my life's been quite interesting at times, and if anything I worry about the envy of my friends.

GM43 - You worry about the envy of your friends?

P43 - I do, I do. I mean this is a very un-English thing, this is my other life coming in, my Swahili life coming in, I mean, my view of envy is that it's a very under credited emotion in our society, and that it's there quite a lot and is very destructive, and the culture that I'm married into recognises it and is very pre-occupied with it a times, they believe you can harm people directly through it and I sort of almost believe that myself. So if I think I'm lucky I tend to keep a bit quiet about it to certain friends. I've got a particular friend and we often talk about this, and in fact he does actually write text books for English language students, and he talks about..... which he says is the most disgusting, because his students come from all over the world, so he has quite set views on it, we have similar views on that. And you can see it sometimes in people, and as the Swahili say, envy doesn't follow reason. It's not a reasonable thing to feel because you

know, you envy somebody of something, you don't know what price they paid to get that thing, and whatever that is you probably don't want it yourself. Or you should go off and do it yourself. So a prime example is this other friend of ours who thinks he's envious who made a comment about one of these articles, I've written two articles in the text books, he said that he'd seen it and I said, well, why don't you write one? And he said, oh, I couldn't think of what to write, and you've done so much travelling, and I said, well one of them is about hedges, it's almost about garden hedges when I was writing about the staff room at work, it's nothing to do with travelling, and then I backed off because I thought well, this is prime stuff for envy isn't it, he's going to say well, I wish I, I'm envious of you having written one, he's not going to go and write one himself because he thinks he can't, but why does he think that? And maybe he can't, I don't know.

GM44 - So when you look back on your life, the way its gone, you feel you're lucky, although it sounds like, to some extent responsible for that luck, and to the point that others might look at your life and feel envious?

P44 - Yes, not because my life's been, well, I was going to say not because it's so wonderful, but you know, if I say to people I'm going to Lisbon next week and I'm going to Mali for 3 weeks in April, then I come back and I'm going to Brussels then I'm going to Kenya, you know, to people I meet in Tesco's, and their face crumples up and you know, and I say, well I don't know if you've been through Heathrow Terminal 4 recently, which I know better than Victoria Bus Station, you know, much better. So I think yes, I think to an extent there is that and yes, I think some are envious and some are not, but because envy doesn't follow reason, envy pops up quite unreasonably you know, it's not necessary that you have particularly it's just sort of, I've read all the Klein stuff ...

GM45 - (Laughs.)

P45 - We're talking about, 12 years ago that I read this, and but I do remember some stuff vaguely about, but it's not really derived from that, it's derived from the Swahili view of it, which is related to the evil eye thing, common and universal.

GM46 - Can I just ask something, you said a while ago that you, that when you have your original home and that actual house is still your mother's, you have your home in Brixton, and you also have a home in..?

P46 - In Totnes, no, hang on, I actually, apart from .. I have two cottages in England, we have three in Kenya.

GM47 - In Kenya?

P47 - Yes.

GM48 - So its it right to say that somehow you have been able to establish homes for yourself?

P48 - Yes, I think I'm very good at, if I have a job somewhere, of making my accommodation homely, but ironically when I travel these days I don't unpack because I think I don't really need to and it's sort of, quicker, you know, because if you unpack

you have to repack. So, if it's all a matter of two weeks, and I go to Kenya for 2 weeks to 3 months at a time, and I certainly don't unpack, but I keep my bag half packed, I have a suitcase that's sort of, has my hot country stuff packed, I have to take it out next week because I'm going to Lisbon, but I've got another bag, Lisbon's not hot enough for my usual purposes.

GM49 - So when you go to Kenya, for example, if you stay long enough, do you feel any of the feelings you had in your original home, feelings like you have to kind of, move on, get out sort of thing, or do you feel happy to stay there?

P49 - Well, I've been going there since 1979 and for many years, and I did my doctor research there and I married in, um, I was bored. I was very bored. Because it's sort of a tourist place and the women sit around and do lots of cooking and you know, you can't be doing interesting anthropological research on the news of the day but then in the mid '90s, we started the drugs project my husband and I opened our residential centre in June 2000, and now it's the complete opposite. I'm completely not bored. I'm completely swamped by this project and at the moment I'm grappling with the fact that my mental and emotional attention is more than 50% in this project my husband and the people there, with fundraising for it and worrying about particular clients and whether they've relapsed or what they're doing, so it's been a very big turnaround. And in a sense that's because I paid for the land to build this centre, it's not in my name, it's all in the project's name, but we raised the money to get it built, and my husband supervised its building, and people come and stay there for up to six months at a time, but then they come and go. So that's almost like another home to us, although I do know that it's institution and that if we dropped dead or resign or are sacked, something happens to not be employed, they could have some sort of coup on the committee, ... that it would go on, but in a sense it is another home, and my husband sleeps there most nights, tents and trees, cats and chickens.....

GM50 - So, would you ever see the possibility of settling in one place and being grounded completely in one place?

P50 - Well, I bought this flat in Totnes with the aim of living out my dotage there, with hubby I also bought it because I think it was a shrewd investment, you know, there's earnings and then there's all these out goings in Kenya ... but at the same time, I wanted somewhere just to put the money that would be safe, give us security. So that's the plan, but maybe we'll also spend plenty of time in Kenya. So when you say settling down, I have little settled bases, and I don't really see until, I mean all this stuff about retiring at 60, I mean, what are you going to do? So, I'm lucky I've managed to arrange my life so that my hobby is my work is my life. There isn't really any big difference and so I'll just carry on doing it unless it all goes pear shaped, or I get fed up with it or whatever. And then maybe it'll be Totnes if so or it'll be Kenya where there might be, I mean, no children, maybe it would be the nieces and nephews of my husband. We've talked about it, you know, and how they might look after us (Laughs.). Or we'll look after them, they are a pretty dire lot, actually, my husband's family, it must be said.

GM51 - So there may come a point where you, rather than having these homes in different places, you may actually kind of consolidate a home in one place?

P51 - I might have to because of finances. We might choose to, yes, I think that's it really, we might have to, maybe one in each place, and we've bought a plot of land ... as well. There's nothing on it, but that would be a rural home as opposed to you know, all these different homes which, anyway we must sell one, one to my brother-in-law.

GM52 - And there is this possibility that you would go home and look after your mother?

P52- Well, what do you do? If your brothers are a bit useless and you're the only daughter, I mean, I think I would feel obliged and I would want, you know, if it's years she just have to go in a home, but if it was months, but how would you know? You know, if she became very ill or some arrangement where you lived at home or you lived in your flat, that was the other reason for buying this flat in the next town, so you could hop on the bus to get there. And you can do freelance consultancy work and travel up and down from London, I don't know, but I'll keep the options open and make some provision. I'll have to decide when the time comes. I was quite worried a few months ago that the time might have come, it seems to have

GM53 - I'm wondering whether you can anticipate that given that you've even had dreams, something that's quite a nightmare scenario about home in the circumstances?

P53 - Well, I think I'll just have to deal with it because, you know, friends of mine who's mother has died maybe two years ago, she had some sort of most of it, the emptying the house and all that, and said, well the more that can be done before, ... but it's as broad as it is long really, isn't it? Because either you have to go and nag her and say, you put your affairs in order and let's chuck out the stuff in this wardrobe, or you know, have you thought about buying a granny flat, and what are you going to do with all this antique furniture, and you know, the lounge is never used except for when visitors come....., or do you wait until she's gone and then..... . She's actually done things like, she has done some things, she sold off her silver and stuff like that because she said that, and we quarrel and I'm little miss mercenary, I'm the least mercenary and most sensible than and that's why I've got powers of attorney and they haven't. So it would be tough, it would be tough and there'll be a lot of things, baggage, with my brothers.

GM54 - I want to ask just one more question, I'm wondering what, I'm not sure how to say this, but what do you mean by home, about having different homes, partly I mean what do you mean by home and partly I mean what do you mean by the experience of being at home?

P54 - Well, the thing that I feel in the place, I mean the actual place we go in and shut the doors within, and that's Brixton, my flat in Brixton. And when I'm in Devon I prefer it to going home to my mother, I've noticed that. And I'm sort of, quite at home in Brixton. So then, where you are at home as well is sort of, ... the world being at home if you like, and I'm at home on the Kenya coast, although sometimes I feel extremely uncomfortable there because people follow me round and try to get their children admitted to rehab and things like that, you know, and I might feel at home and I feel like I'm part of it, but at the same time I sometimes feel that my whole sense of self is being stifled, and I've even got this stupid name, they call me Mamma Susan, as this sort of term of respect, and you know, you only have one identity which you've got to keep up to..... and its another place sex stories and plans, on hard times

really. But I feel at home there and I feel accepted and you get a buzz out of being able to understand Swahese language well enough to be able to engage in topics with anybody at any place, and catching buses and understanding what's going on around me and I feel at home in being somewhere which I stand out in a way, but in a way sometimes I feel uncomfortable about that, and I also feel at home in Arab cultures, then I feel, I was at home in the Gaza Strip when I worked there, but although if you stay there too long you go bonkers, because they're all just bonkers, it's a big prison, and I suspect they're totally bonkers now, because they're being bombed as well, and they weren't being bombed when I was there.

So being at home is feeling at home, which is a slightly thing, the sort being in your own private space, though I don't really have a home in Kenya, although I've got these various properties, and (refuse/choose?) to live in one trying to sell. So I'm living in rented flats where I don't unpack properly and I've just got the kettle and a cup and very very basic and I don't really do cooking because I'm too busy doing things fitting out the home

GM55 - Can I just ask you, the place in Kenya and where you grew up, it sounds like they have some similarities, in that they are not cosmopolitan places really?

P55 - Well they are, Kenya's cosmopolitan and actually somebody pointed out, Kenya is rather like Brixton, isn't it? I mean, I suppose Nairobi probably has cultural things, I know it does. But I mean Kenya is like Brixton because it's a sort of, it's not very pretentious, it's very multi ethnic, people just get on with it. Yes, it's very, very mixed, and people sort of, rub along, and in that way it's quite interesting, there's lots of different worlds within a world, you know, like in Brixton there's a Portuguese community and in Nairobi there's Nigerians, Arabs, Sudanese women, Whites, Chinese, not just Jamaican, a lot of people from Eastern African.... and so a sort of very mixed area. It's quite vibrant in that way, and lots of social problems, um, sex workers on the corner now in Brixton, sex workers in Kenya.....heroin users, so.

GM56 - It just makes me wonder to say it very simplistically, it makes me wonder if the places where you feel at home and where you feel you can make a home are places that have a lot of difference in them, and your home or origin actually is a place that has quite a bit of sameness?

P56 - Yes.

GM57 - That you find quite stifling?

P57 - Yes. Yes, I mean up to now I think it's one of the few in places in Britain where even the newsagents are white and there are no Asian corner shops in South Devon anywhere. It's just so white, and Christian it must be said, because if you sent me to Christian parts of Kenya, I'd say no, no, I don't want to live there,..... and I feel very comfortable in Muslim cultures and I've lived in quite a few different ones for quite long times, The Gambia, Yemen, Kenya, Palestine,

GM58 - So it really makes me wonder about someone who grew up in a place that was so homogenous it sounds like, how someone who grew up in that environment became so attracted to almost the opposite?

P58 - My uncle and brother, my mother, yes my uncle and my mother both travelled, had travelled, and my older brother, who's 11 years older than me, he's my half brother, went off, well, he's travelled a lot.. USA, off to Canada, he emigrated, then he went to Japan, got ship wrecked on a catamaran, came back on the Trans Siberian railway, you know, my mother learnt to drive in Jamaica when she was 17, and went to all these different schools, and so on and so forth, so it was around that you do travel, you know, and probably not many people's mothers, particularly in that town, would have had a mother who's driven in Washington DC and learnt to drive in Jamaica, but being put down, this is the big family thing, I mean, she got very upset when I married my husband, and my brother and his third wife is Trinidadian, she's black, and Abudi, my husband, is only brown, and that's a quote from my mother. She was very upset about this. And the only explanation we could ever get out of her was that when she was on this boat going to Jamaica she danced with somebody who was brown, black you know, wasn't white, and this really caused a large furore she was told it wasn't done, if it wasn't done it wasn't done, and why was I doing something that wasn't done when she conformed and didn't do it when she was told it wasn't done, and would be taken off to the other side of the island, and I really don't know what it's all about, you know, if it was anything serious whether they were caught in the lifeboat like in Titanic (Laughs), I don't know quite what it is about, but that's the only explanation she gave, so there was also something about breaking that pattern maybe, I don't know.

GM59 - But it sounds like there was the influence of the world very much in your home?

P59 - Yes, the idea of people did travel, and live in different places, and my uncle lived in Washington, worked for the World Bank, and my brother was in Canada, then lived in Japan, and my mother had travelled, my father hadn't been anywhere and didn't like travelling. Although both on my mother and father's side are migrants, mining in Cornwall, so New Zealand, Australia, California, Canada, South Africa. All went in the late 19th Century, have got relatives all over, but that's different, that's migration.

GM60 - So is there anything that I should have asked and didn't? Or anything you'd like to add about this whole question or home, or leaving home?

P60 - I don't know, I mean, I was a bit surprised, but I suppose that you asked me and said the main thing was leaving home when I was 18, because at the moment my ongoing, my impression is oh, what am I going to do about .. (Kenya?).. you know, and I get these emails and I'm worrying about people there, and the fact that part of the time I'm away from my husband, and where is home now, you know? Is it there or is it here? But no. in a way we didn't talk about quite what I expected to talk about, but no, that's fine.

GM61 - Is that, you were thinking we were going to talk about where is home now?

P61 - Well, yes, because I think in my own mind I don't really, because when it ask it like that, then I did see it as that was, that was the first time I left home and that was my first home, it was home for a long time and it's still there as a home, but I think what I subsequently found out it is that you can make homes in different places but a lot of these different places are not actually home, and now maybe it's because of pulls, the fact that they've worked abroad and come back, ... got the idea that it was about that sort of surely most people, most middle class people go away to university, or most

people go to university, at least in my day, would then leave home, so virtually everybody, whereas I got the feeling that you were interested in bigger migrations than four hours on the train or whatever.

GM62 - Well, I guess the thing that interests me is that not everybody goes away to university because they're desperate to get away from home, they're desperate to get out, there's something in your experience that sounds to me as though, and correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounds to me as though there was something in you, something that was a part of who you are that just said, I've got to go? University was the first step, but it wasn't the final step?

P62 - No. It was just the route really.

GM63 - Even just like the O levels and A levels were a route, university was the route. You got to university and you found yourself attracted to difference, people who are, people that were different, always going to the different, the new challenge, the new horizon?

P63 - Yes, yes, yes. And it's still going on, because just recently, I mean, I went to Cambodia as the highlight of this rather boring assignment where I was just sitting in a five star hotel, just for 48hrs, ... and seeing real forests, with long houses, and so on, just sort of meeting other human beings, although I couldn't speak and they just came and stared at me, I mean, it was unusual in that sense, I was pretty freaky to them. And similarly, this job in Northern Kenya, amongst the [name of tribe] nomadic pastoralists, who look a bit like the Masai, ...and leather and little headresses and things, and that was a really sort of fun and interesting time. And they're both very vulnerable people, they're going to be, ...drought, fragile as a culture, a marginalised people, but I get a real kick out of people like that. And also, the fact that I get a chance to have a say on their behalf, like the Kenyans fairly settled, certainly semi-settled because they've lost their animals,..... and they have six churches (Laughs.) and primary school classrooms and the literacy classes,.....implying that the ones who were sort of roaming about with their cars and giving up their traditional culture are more intelligent. And I don't like that and I mustn't give in to that.

GM64 - But from my point of view, there is something about you that people like you, you're not the only one, but

P64 - Yes, I'm sure...

GM65 - So you've probably met a lot of these people in your travels?

P65 - Yes.

GM66 - But there's something about this group that you belong to and that I belong to some extent..

P66 - Have they got a name, this group? give it one?

GM67 - No, we'll have to give it one (Laughs.) and then we can rebel against it (Laughs.).

P67 – yes, quite, ... well, that's one thing, because I don't like being in an assigned group, I mean I know, well we are all unique, but..

GM68 - This is the loosest group possible. A very hard group to pin down or to get in one place. There's something about us, and I don't know what it is, but my impression is there's something about us, we're called out into the world, we're called to foreign places, and I don't know why that is. People that leave home and go to university, I wonder how many people where you grew up have this calling?

P68 - Well, I mean, none of the ones I've been, the ones who I know remotely what's happened, but I've never met up with this thing 'friends united', friends have said, oh, you know this thing on the internet, so what do I want to do that for then, they'll just think I'm weird and won't have anything in common with them, you know, the thing on the internet, where you're supposed to look up your friends?

GM69 - Oh no, I didn't know..

P69 - Oh, it's about it's about number six in the charts of websites visited or whatever. You can type in your old school and your year and be reunited with all your old classmates.

GM70 – Oh, what an idea (Laughs.)

P70 - But I just went to visit a primary school friend earlier this week, and there's another one who, the one who was envious because he hadn't written this text for the language text book, you know, and he spends half his time doing that. Yes, I think it's fairly hideous. And somebody just wants to contact you from the LSE and I thought, oh God, I'm not going to contact her, what will I have to say to her? And I think it was the experience of, well, who not became a lesbian, my lesbian friend, that we really tried but she just sort of became more and more small town, and I remember her girlfriend, who's 18, said, you really don't fit in here do you? You're just like a fish out of water, we were in Torquay downtown.

GM71 - What does it feel like to be talking about these sorts of things?

P71 - It's quite interesting. I quite like talking about myself. Yes, I mean I'll go away and reflect on this, that and the other. I've been a bit frantic for the last few weeks with different work things, I'm sort of trying to calm down a bit and to find the time. So, you know, it hasn't pressed any buttons which are really distressing, and you'd think the potential thing that's distressing is that my mother may die sooner or later, and I'm going to have to deal with my home and her home, and my difficult brothers. But I knew that before I came here, so I just told you it.

GM72 - Yes, you knew that.

P72 - Yes, there's nothing new there. I don't know, I'll have to think about it. I suppose it's just all confirmation really that ... I had one big insight once, I remember it I was on a train looking at all these people, ..., living on estates, nowhere really, I mean far worse than my mother's house, you know, there were no shops and there's no town centre, and you just have to get a bus so you can get to the small town centre, and I felt very sorry for these people there, and then I thought, oh, how patronising, I

thought well maybe they quite like living there, it's just because I don't it doesn't, it was like a revelation that some people actually seek it out and they don't particularly want to go anywhere, and whatever.

GM73 - And to not have one home base that you live your whole life, you know the name of everybody in the street, and know all about them, to not have that for some people would be quite difficult?

P73 - But I have lived in the same flat in Brixton for the last 18 years, and that's my base. So I go away and it's somewhere to come back to. And behind that to have, ... the same time and that's made it a lot easier I think to go out into the world, to be able to come back to somewhere.

GM74 - You'd get bored when you get some sense of security, but you also have that openness and a freedom?

P74 - Yes. Yes, because my friend who, the one who was envious, both his parents died and he travelled a lot and his brother accused him of running away from things, and he said that he realised just recently he told me this, that he realised that he was using his brother's place like surrogate parents and he was going back there, most people had parents to go back to, but he didn't and he went there and it was true that he didn't have a home. And he came back here and for ages he was living with his other brother who he didn't get on with, and I said, you know, why don't you buy a flat, and it took him an age to get round to it, and he's really sort of, ... what with having no parents and then the brother who he did get on with died, and the other brother is still alive, and he's gay, so he hasn't got children or a family, and he hasn't got a partner. You know, and he hasn't got a base, he hasn't got a home from where he can come back to, so I think that was a good bit of advice actually.

The circumstances of leaving home:

1. First I left the family home at 18 to go to university and I was desperate to go.
2. I still have possessions at my mother's but I'd say my home is now in Brixton and my second home in Kenya.
3. I have lived overseas at times and am not sure if that was home or not.
4. Going to university was a way to get out of my provincial conservative hometown.
5. Once I left, I would get a little pang each time I went home to visit my parents and then left again, a sort of separation, and at the time I thought people just left and that was it.
6. But there was no question I didn't want to live at home or with my parents.
7. Maybe my process of leaving took a few years and a few repeat runs.
8. And it's not over since I'll be the one left to pack up the house when my mother dies.
9. When abroad I've dreamed of home and it not being quite the same or that my parents have moved and being quiet distressed about it.
10. For some unknown reason that place is important to me, I don't know if I have unfinished business there or just memories, but I'm tied to that landscape though I could never have stayed there, too depressive.

What would have happened if you stayed?

1. I think my mother would like me to have a more conventional lifestyle.
2. But her life was not conventional, travelling all around the world with her mother, having lots of different homes and not many roots and although snobbish and narrow in some ways, still unconventional.
3. And I learned to travel from my mother. I don't know why she's surprised I'm unusual, unorthodox, rebellious or whatever.

Why were you so desperate to get out of home?

1. I felt smothered, intellectually. I don't know what a person can do in a place like that.
2. Even now I don't think that town could offer me possibilities, I'll never move back there. I bought a place only 5 miles away in a town that's much different, artistic and liberal.
3. I always just knew I had to get away, in my adolescence we sat around reading about anarchists and women's lib and I knew academics were my ticket out.
4. Politically I was very left wing and my parents were Tories so there were lots of rows.

My friends didn't really feel the same

1. My friends were mostly more conventional and not so desperate to get out.
2. One of my closest friends was a lesbian and she stayed and fitted herself right into the local stifling, laddish culture.
3. I don't get in touch with the ones who have stayed because I think they'll think I'm weird.
4. I'm married to a Kenyan Muslim and I run a drugs project there, it's so far from being a public school teacher there in the local school.
5. I regularly dream about a particular friend whose living that conventional life there, I dreamt 2 weeks ago that she got a new life, something interesting.
6. I feel a lot of people are still very trapped there. But if they don't even see it that way, what have we got in common?
7. Many of my friends who left have gone back, except me, I was different somehow.

What do you think is different about you?

1. When I was 5 the nuns talked about hellfire and I told my mom and she said that's OK you don't have to believe that, you're not a Catholic. That was significant because it set up the idea that I didn't have to believe people in authority.
2. I see that as pivotal, I learned that you can evaluate things or decide it doesn't apply to you because you're a different category of person.

What would have been so stifling about staying?

1. It is totally stifling for me. No intellectual life, full of old people. Anything is better than just walking from the library to the supermarket.
2. There's a lot of nervous breakdowns there and who can be surprised.
3. No decent bookshop or theatre, the local paper is awful, awful politics.
4. The countryside is nice but the whole place is soporific.
5. As a child we went on outings a lot, which I liked, so I've been everywhere there.
6. I would be isolated there because I'd be weird because of my views.
7. In London you can be selective, all of my friends have lived in Africa.
8. If I'd stayed I'd have had to become like them and stop being different or find some non-threatening way to express it, like joining the Greens.
9. It's quite a lonely off the beaten track place and I'd probably have had a nervous breakdown if I stayed, it would have been unbearable.
10. Even now I don't conform, I want to pursue my own agenda.
11. Even within my life I won't be stifled by hierarchies and I'm always kicking at the margins.

What's that about for you?

1. Something about a sense of self, not following other people's agenda, not following fashions or fads.
2. You need to find out what interests you in life, what you're passionate about. You need your own creativity, your own direction.
3. There isn't much point in living if you're not self-directed.
4. Otherwise you're just shuffling around, going back and forth, what's the point?
5. If I do live to old age I'd like to look back and say I've done interesting things, seen places, learned things, made choices rather than followed predetermined courses.
6. You can't control everything but you should control what you can.

What happened after university?

1. I lived in halls with other students and we did a lot of drinking, went to the theatre, cinema, galleries, the parks, I was 18 and just up from the provinces, so I did it all.
2. I studied anthropology with a lot of more mature students at LSE because it was cosmopolitan.
3. My wanting anthropology and a cosmopolitan study experience was also about travelling to different places. I don't know where that comes from.
4. I remember being disgusted by the little England attitude in my early schooling, racist comments, it was so refreshing to see people from different places, different accents.

Difference and injustice

1. I'm drawn to difference. I had a black boyfriend even before I left home.
2. Also, I have a keen sense of injustice. I always wanted the Indians to win in westerns because it seemed unfair.
3. I couldn't understand why we were supposed to be the best and all this crap about the empire.
4. It was there from an early age, maybe a rebellion reaction but it must be more than that.
5. I always wanted the underdog to win, it's a mystery why I should have this.

Travelling and values

1. I lived on a Kibbutz and felt very drawn to the Arab culture and the Palestinians, the underdogs.
2. From that point I developed an interest in Islam and all things Arab, the underdogs of underdogs, and I did a course in community development after that and got a job in Yemen.
3. Everyone has to pick their causes, I was in Cambodia and I couldn't get involved there.
4. The most important thing is not to give in mentally, not to believe the mainstream discourses or act in a way that supports that.

5. I'm appalled by the Islam vs. West thing, like a new crusade and very crude.
6. I'm thoughtful about the underlying values of the work that I choose to accept and turn down.

What was the real reason you left?

1. I think it was the expected course anyway. I don't know if there was a real reason, it was just a course that I followed.
2. Unless you've got a special reason not to, you just go and once I left I never looked back.
3. I had a nightmare scenario of what if I had a nervous breakdown and had to return to live with my parents, what would it be like? That happened to my brother.
4. If you return to your parents, even as an adult, you're a perpetual child and your world shrinks back to when you were young.
5. My mother doesn't ask about my life, my troubles, but I hear a lot about her little world, and she's had a reasonably interesting life but now is on anti-depressants.

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. It's been interesting and lucky, but I made my luck. The everyday misery of some people, they make it like that all the time.
2. There is something about creating your own luck or following your own instincts.
3. Nothing really terrible has ever happened to me.
4. If anything I worry about my friends being envious of me.

Envy of friends

1. This worry is from my Swahili life. This culture recognises how common envy is and how destructive.
2. It can harm people, so I keep quiet about how lucky I sometimes feel.
3. Envy is not reasonable because you never know what price a person had to pay to get something.
4. Envy sometimes comes when I've done something someone else wanted to do but for some reason they tell themselves that they can't.
5. It's mostly the amount of travel that gets to people when I mention it in Tesco's or something but envy pops up quite unreasonably.
6. I'm very lucky I've arranged my life so my hobby is my work is my life.

You've been able to establish homes for yourself?

1. If I have a job somewhere I'm good at making my accommodation homey.
2. But if I'm away for under 3 months I don't unpack or not fully, it's just easier.

3. I've been going to Kenya a long time, and I got very bored there.
4. It's a bit touristy and the women sit around cooking.
5. Now that we started the drugs project I'm completely not bored, I'm swamped mentally and emotionally. A big turnaround.
6. In a sense that rehab unit is like another home to us.
7. I bought the flat in Totnes with the plan to live out my old age there. But it's also an investment and security.
8. But it may be that we'll always spend plenty of time in Kenya too.
9. I have little settled bases. But I might kind of consolidate a home in one place, because of finances. We might have to choose to.

Returning to look after mother

1. It falls to me as the only daughter with useless brothers.
2. If it's years she would have to go into a home but if it's months I'd feel obliged to go back, but how would you know?
3. I'll keep my options open and make some provision. I'll have to decide when the time comes, it's worrying.
4. I'll just have to deal with all of it when it happens, or try to deal with as much as possible, the house, her affairs, before anything happens.
5. There would also be lots of baggage with my brothers to deal with.

What do you mean by home?

1. I mean the thing that I feel in a place.
2. I prefer going to Devon than going home to my mother's.
3. I'm quite at home in Brixton and the Kenyan coast, though it can also be uncomfortable the amount of attention I get there and the identity I have from the drugs project.
4. I feel like I'm at home there, part of it, accepted, able to speak the language, but also like my whole sense of self is being stifled.
5. I can understand what's going on around me and navigate the place and I also feel at home in being somewhere where I stand out a bit usually.
6. I also feel at home in Arab cultures.
7. Being at home is a feeling at home which is not necessarily the same as having your own private space.
8. In Kenya, although we have properties, I live in rented flats, very basically, and don't unpack.
9. Kenya is a bit like Brixton, cosmopolitan and not very pretentious, very multi-ethnic, people just get on with things.
10. It's very very mixed, there's lots of different worlds within a world, quite vibrant, lots of social problems.
11. I feel at home in places that include a lot of difference and my home of origin was stifling because it was so built of sameness, so white and Christian.
12. I feel much more comfortable in Muslim cultures than in Christian ones.

Impact of family

1. My uncle and mother and my brother all travelled a lot, so it was around that people do travel.
2. My mother was very upset when I married a Black man, and my brother's third wife is also Black. She says it's because she was not allowed to associate with Black people, it wasn't done, so why was her daughter doing it when she had to conform?
3. It's like I broke that pattern of conforming.
4. My father hadn't been anywhere and didn't like travelling.

Where is home now?

1. My ongoing concern is what am I going to do about mother and Kenya, and part of the time I'm away from my husband and it makes me wonder where is home now? Is it here or there?
2. I feel I've found out that you can make home in various places but many of these places are not actually home.
3. I was always attracted to what was different, the new challenge, new horizon, and that's still going on.
4. I took time out from my boring work in Cambodia to meet some real people in the forest, and we just stared at each other, couldn't communicate.
5. I've spent time with a lot of interesting tribes, vulnerable people and fragile cultures, marginalised people, I'm attracted to that, and the chance to have a say on their behalf, contradicting the idea that giving up on traditional culture is better.
6. I was the only one in my group that I know of who felt this way. When I go back home it's been said that I'm like a fish out of water.
7. I've had my flat in Brixton for 18 years so its somewhere to come back to, and that's made it easier to go out into the world. Having a home to come back to is important, to have a base to travel out from.

The feeling of the interview?

1. It feels quite interesting, I'll go away and reflect on things.
2. It hasn't pressed anything really distressing that I didn't know about before.
3. I'm reminded of a time I felt very sorry for all these people living on estates, no shops or town centre, and I thought how patronising, maybe they like it there, just because I don't. It was a revelation that some people seek that out and don't really want to go anywhere.

Desperate to leave home:

1. I was desperate to leave when I went to university at 18.
2. Going to university was the way out of my provincial conservative home town, for me.
3. There was no question, I didn't want to stay there or live with my parents any more.
4. I felt smothered intellectually, there were no possibilities for me there.
5. My process of leaving, of separation, took a few years and a few repeat runs, I would get a little pang each time I went away again after a visit home with my parents.
6. I always just knew I had to get away, in my adolescence we sat around reading about anarchists and women's lib and I knew academics were my ticket out.
7. My friends were more conventional and not so desperate to leave.

Not fitting in, not belonging:

1. Politically I was very left wing and my parents were Tories so there were lots of rows.
2. Even now I don't get in touch with the ones who stayed there because I think they'll just see me as weird.
3. The daily life there, the lack of intellectual life or creativity, it's totally stifling for me.
4. I would have been isolated there if I stayed because my views are so different.
5. Or I'd have to become like them and stop being different or find some acceptable and non-threatening way to express it.
6. It's quite a lonely off the beaten track place and I'd probably have had a nervous breakdown if I stayed, it would have been unbearable.
7. I feel at home in places that include a lot of difference and my home of origin was stifling because it was so built of sameness, so white and Christian.
8. I feel a lot of people are still very trapped there. But if they don't even see it that way, what have we got in common?
9. I was the only one in my group that I know of who felt this way. When I go back home it's been said that I'm like a fish out of water.
10. Many of my friends who left have gone back, except me, I was different somehow.

Being self-directed, independent thinking:

1. It's important for me not to follow other's agendas, fashions, or fads, but to have a sense of oneself.
2. You need to find out what interests you in life, what you're passionate about. You need your own creativity, your own direction.

3. There isn't much point in living if you're not self-directed. Otherwise you're just shuffling around, going back and forth, what's the point?
4. If I do live to old age I'd like to look back and say I've done interesting things, seen places, learned things, made choices rather than followed predetermined courses.
5. You can't control everything but you should control what you can.
6. There was a significant memory of my mother saying I didn't have to believe religious teachings of the nuns because I wasn't Catholic and that set up the idea that I didn't have to believe people in authority, you can evaluate things, or decide things may not apply to you because you're a different category.
7. I won't be stifled by hierarchies and I'm always kicking at the margins.
8. Even now I don't conform, I want to pursue my own way.
9. The most important thing is not to give in mentally, not to believe the mainstream discourses or act in a way that supports that.

Attraction to difference:

1. I'm drawn to difference. I had a black boyfriend even before I left home.
2. My wanting anthropology and a cosmopolitan study experience was also about travelling to different places. I don't know where that comes from.
3. I remember being disgusted by the little England attitude in my early schooling, racist comments, it was so refreshing to see people from different places, different accents.
4. I like to live in a place where its very very mixed culturally, there's lots of different worlds within a world, quite vibrant, lots of social problems.
5. I feel much more comfortable in Muslim cultures than in Christian ones.
6. I've spent time with a lot of interesting tribes, vulnerable people and fragile cultures, marginalised people, I'm attracted to that, and the chance to have a say on their behalf, contradicting the idea that giving up on traditional culture is better.
7. I was always attracted to what was different, the new challenge, new horizon, and that's still going on.

Injustice:

1. Also, I have a keen sense of injustice. I always wanted the Indians to win in westerns because it seemed unfair. It's a mystery why I was so sensitive to the underdog.
2. I couldn't understand why we were supposed to be the best and all this crap about the empire.
3. It was there from an early age, maybe a rebellion reaction but it must be more than that.
4. I lived on a Kibbutz and felt very drawn to the Arab culture and the Palestinians, the underdogs.
5. From that point I developed an interest in Islam and all things Arab, the underdogs of underdogs, and I did a course in community development after that and got a job in Yemen.

6. Everyone has to pick their causes, I was in Cambodia and I couldn't get involved there.
7. I'm appalled by the Islam vs. West thing, like a new crusade and very crude.
8. I'm thoughtful about the underlying values of the work that I choose to accept and turn down, making sure they are consistent with my own values.

Issues of home:

1. I have childhood possessions at my mothers and I'll be left to pack up that house when she dies, but I'd say my home is now Brixton, with a second home in Kenya.
2. When abroad I've dreamed of home and it not being quite the same or that my parents have moved and being quiet distressed about it.
3. For some unknown reason that place is important to me, I don't know if I have unfinished business there or just memories, but I'm tied to that landscape though I could never have stayed there, too depressive.
4. If I have a job somewhere I'm good at making my accommodation homey. But if I'm away for under 3 months I don't unpack or not fully, its' just easier.
5. I have little settled bases. But I might kind of consolidate a home in one place, because of finances. We might have to choose to.
6. I mean the thing that I feel in a place.
7. I prefer going to Devon than going home to my mother's.
8. I'm quite at home in Brixton and the Kenyan coast, though it can also be uncomfortable the amount of attention I get there and the identity I have from the drugs project.
9. I feel like I'm at home there, part of it, accepted, able to speak the language, but also like my whole sense of self is being stifled.
10. I can understand what's going on around me and navigate the place and I also feel at home in being somewhere where I stand out a bit usually.
11. I also feel at home in Arab cultures.
12. Being at home is a feeling at home which is not necessarily the same as having your own private space.
13. Part of the time I'm away from my husband and it makes me wonder where is home now? Is it here or there?
14. I feel I've found out that you can make home in various places but many of these places are not actually home.
15. The rehab project in Kenya is like another home for us. I had been bored with the the place and nothing interesting to do, but now I'm swamped. I think we'll always spend plenty of time there.
16. I've had my flat in Brixton for 18 years so its somewhere to come back to, and that's made it easier to go out into the world. Having a home to come back to is important, to have a base to travel out from.

Family relationships:

1. My mother's life was not conventional, travelling with her mother, lots of different homes, not many roots, yet there was an element of conformity too and I think my mother would like me to have a more conventional lifestyle.

2. And I learned to travel from my mother. I don't know why she's surprised I'm unusual, unorthodox, rebellious or whatever.
3. I had a nightmare scenario of what if I had a nervous breakdown and had to return to live with my parents, what would it be like? That happened to my brother.
4. If you return to your parents, even as an adult, you're a perpetual child and your world shrinks back to when you were young.
5. My mother doesn't ask about my life, my troubles, but I hear a lot about her little world, and she's had a reasonably interesting life but now is on anti-depressants.
6. I will likely have to return to look after my mother as my brothers are useless, but I'll also have to deal with a lot of baggage with them.
7. My uncle and mother and my brother all travelled a lot, so it was around that people do travel.
8. My mother was very upset when I married a Black man, and my brother's third wife is also Black. She says it's because she was not allowed to associate with Black people, it wasn't done, so why was her daughter doing it when she had to conform?
9. My father hadn't been anywhere and didn't like travelling.

I'll never move back:

1. I bought a place 5 miles away in a town that's much more artistic, liberal, with difference, with the idea of retiring there.
2. I'm concerned about having to return and look after my mother as I'm the only daughter and the only one capable of this.
3. I'll keep my options open about how I do this, if its months I'll feel obliged to go back but if she lives for years she'll have to go into a home.
4. A close friend is a lesbian and she stayed and fitted herself and her girlfriend into the stifling local laddish culture.
5. I'm married to a Muslim and run a drugs project in Kenya. It's so far from the local reality that I'll never go back.
6. I regularly dream of a friend whose living that conventional life there, I dreamt of her 2 weeks ago that she got a new life, something interesting.
7. There's a lot of nervous breakdowns there and it's not surprising, it's so soporific.
8. In London I can select my friends, and they all have lived in Africa.
9. I think it was expected that I leave, like anyone without a special reason to stay, but once gone I knew I'd never return.

Luck and envy:

1. There is something about creating your own luck or following your own instincts. Therefore my life's been interesting and lucky, nothing terrible has happened to me. Others' make the everyday misery of their lives and I worry that they can be envious of me.
2. I'm very lucky I've arranged my life so my hobby is my work is my life.

3. In Swahili culture there is a recognition of how common envy it and how destructive. It can harm people so I keep quiet about how lucky I sometimes feel.
4. Envy is not a reasonable feeling because you never know what price someone paid to get something and envy often comes when I've done something someone else wanted to do but wouldn't let themselves.
5. People who've chosen to stay in a conventional life usually get envious about the amount I travel.

Feelings of the interview:

1. It feels quite interesting, I'll go away and reflect on things but it hasn't pressed anything really distressing that I didn't know about before.
2. I'm reminded of a time I felt very sorry for all these people living on estates, no shops or town centre, and I thought how patronising, maybe they like it there, just because I don't. It was a revelation that some people seek that out and don't really want to go anywhere.

2. A desperation to leave home

- Going to university was the way for P to leave her conservative hometown that she was desperate to escape from.
- There was a mismatch between P’s values and the ethos of her home environment. This made her feel smothered intellectually, like there were no possibilities for her there, and desperate to leave such a conventional world view.
- Although P had friends who would also leave for university, some returned, and their leaving had a much less desperate quality to it. It may be that the combination of P’s values and her academic interests lead an element of social critique to her personal need to leave.
- It can be surprising to discover that leaving doesn’t happen all at once, it is a process of separating from parents and the family home. P was surprised to feel a pang of emotion when she would visit home and then leave again.

3. Not belonging in the home environment

- The daily life in P’s hometown lacked any stimulation for her and would have been a stifling place for her to live. It would have felt unbearable to be in such an isolated place, out of contact with the wider world.
- P’s views would have isolated her further in this environment and even now she chooses not to contact people who’ve stayed to avoid being seen as weird. The only other choice open to someone like P would be to try to assimilate, stop being different, and adopt non-threatening acceptable ways of expressing ones watered-down difference.
- P was the only one she knows of with this experience. Many of her friends have returned to live there and P feels a lot of people are trapped there and she wonders what she could have in common with them. Others recognise P’s difference and comment she’s like a ‘fish out of water’ in her own hometown.

4. Attraction to difference

- Although growing up in a homogeneous white Christian conservative environment, P finds herself strongly attracted to what is other than this in herself, people, places, and values. She is attracted to new challenges, new horizons and international projects.
- P was disgusted by small-minded racist attitudes and had a Black boyfriend while still living at home, and married a Black Muslim. She has worked with many marginalised and vulnerable people in other parts of the world.
- Academic choices can certainly reflect personal sensitivities to difference. P chose to study anthropology for the opportunity to travel

and be exposed to a cosmopolitan world so different from her upbringing. It is a mystery where that sensitivity comes from.

- P found it refreshing to be exposed to people from different places, with different accents when she moved to London to study. She continues to choose to live in places that are culturally very mixed and vibrant, worlds within worlds, and she feels more comfortable in Muslim than Christian cultures. It seems P has rejected all the expressions of her own culture in favour of adopting foreign expressions, or living between foreign cultures.

5. Self-directed rather than conformity

- It feels important for P to see her own sense of direction rather than conforming herself to other's agendas, fashions, or fads. P feels there's no point to a life that is not self-directed, controlling what one can control.
- It feels important not to be stifled by hierarchies and to resist mainstream discourses, not to give into the conventional and the received. P has a pivotal memory of her mother saying she didn't need to believe the nun's religious teaching because she was not Catholic and this instilled the idea that authorities didn't have to be believed, one was free to decide things for oneself.
- At the end of life, P would like to look back and see that she's followed her passions and done interesting things, made her own choices rather than followed predetermined courses. So, the desire not to conform and pursue one's own way has survived from early life to the present.

6. Valuing justice for the underdog

- P's advocacy for the underdog is another expression of taking a contrary view to her own upbringing. She has never understood why western culture was supposed to be the best, and is contradicting the assumptions of her culture by siding with traditional cultures, for example, always wanting the Indians to win in westerns, supporting the Palestinians, expressing a sensitivity to the plight of the oppressed and unfairly treated.
- P has used her career to speak on behalf of the underdog in various capacities. She has felt this sort of resistance and rebellion from an early age but it is a mystery to her where this sensitivity comes from.

7. Luck and envy

- Consistent with her belief in self-direction, P also believes that we create our own luck, by following our own instincts we have some responsibility for how our lives go. Therefore her life has been interesting and lucky and avoided misfortune, whereas some others maintain a kind of everyday misery in their outlook.

- P has arranged her life so her hobby is her work and she is concerned that others may be envious and has been influenced by Swahili culture in its emphasis on how common and harmful envy is. It is not a rational feeling and no one really knows the price a person has paid to get something.
- P experiences others envy mostly around the amount she is able to travel. She sees the envy as the confrontation between her way of living and more conventional ways of life and others seeing P doing things they want to do themselves but don't for whatever reason.

8. Feelings of home in various locations

- It is possible to make home in various places without those places actually being home. For P being at home is a feeling she gets in a place and not necessarily commensurate with having a personal private space.
- P feels at home in Kenya and in Arab cultures. She feels accepted and appreciates being able to speak and understand the language, able to navigate the place. She also feels at home somewhere that she stands out a bit, though if this results in too much attention and too fixed an identity, it can feel like a sense of self is being stifled.
- P feels that her houses in Brixton and Kenya are her homes, both being in very diverse cosmopolitan areas. P operates by having little settled bases but she realises that finances may force her to consolidate into one location for home. The important thing about home is that it gives a place to come back to, and that makes it easier to explore the world.
- When travelling for work, P makes her accommodation as homey as possible, though if its for a short period she doesn't even fully unpack. When she is here and her husband in Kenya, it is not clear where home is, so the feeling of being at home seems connected to this relationship.

9. The original home remains significant but will never be home again

- P's childhood possessions remain in her mother's house and when she is abroad she has had distressing dreams of her parents leaving this house, so the place remains very important to her though she would never consider moving back there. P feels tied to the landscape where she grew up and bought a place near this area but in a more liberal diverse town with the idea she might retire there.
- P will be responsible for looking after her mother in her old age and for packing up the family home when her mother dies. She is worried about how this will happen as she feels obliged to care for her mother if it's a matter of months but would not consider moving back for a longer period.
- P thinks about the conventional life she left behind, often dreaming of a friend who is living that life but in a recent dream this friend got a new life, a more interesting one. For P living there is like a trap and she feels her own life is so far from that reality that she could never return to it though she has a lesbian friend who stayed and has assimilated with her partner into the local laddish culture. An important aspect of living in

London is the ability to choose friends who have similar experiences and interests to her.

- P finds the local culture so stifling and unstimulating that it does not surprise her the number of people who have nervous breakdowns.

10. Family relationships

- Although P's mother had an unconventional upbringing, travelling a lot and living in different homes, she would like her daughter to have a more conventional life. P feels she learned to travel from her mother and can't understand her mother's problem with her daughter's unorthodox or rebellious lifestyle. Although her father didn't like to travel, P's mother, uncle, and brother all travelled significantly, so it was a known option to P.
- The issue of whether to conform is salient in P's relationship to her mother. One example of this is her mother's objection to P marrying a Black man because her mother had not been allowed to associate with Black people so why should her daughter be allowed not to conform when she hadn't been? Interesting transgenerational dynamics and their impact on children's life choices.
- P's nightmare would be to be forced to return home from a nervous breakdown and be looked after by her parents. This happened to her brother and P believes that if one returns to the parental home, even as an adult, one becomes a perpetual child and the world shrinks back to the childhood one, losing all the accumulated experiences of adulthood.
- P presents her family as one with unresolved communication issues. Her mother does not express interest in P's life experiences out in the world but expects P to listen to the little occurrences of her own conventional life, even though her mother has had quite an interesting life herself in the past. P also describes her brothers as having a lot of unresolved issues that will surface when her mother's affairs need to be settled.

11. Feelings of the interview

- It feels quite interesting, I'll go away and reflect on things but it hasn't pressed anything really distressing that I didn't know about before.
- I'm reminded of a time I felt very sorry for all these people living on estates, no shops or town centre, and I thought how patronising, maybe they like it there, just because I don't. It was a revelation that some people seek that out and don't really want to go anywhere.

GM1 – What I'd like to start with is just if I could ask you to begin by relating the circumstances of your leaving home?

P1 – Um, I was about 20-, 25, or 26, and I'd always wanted to travel and I thought, well, I'll start a career, then I'll travel and I'll come back, and I'll travel for a year, it's a custom of ours. I was working for a ... on maternity leave, and one of the workers came over ... and the previous person, who'd been overseas was to come back, it was time for them to come back, the person who'd been already over and I got talking and I'd said oh maybe I should go and she said maybe I should go, and we decided to go together and we said maybe Lisa should stay there. So I rang her and said stay there we're coming to join you. And she agreed. So we all kind of went, leaving poor old Jo, unhappy with a new baby. And that's how it happened really, so I left in July, in the winter, on a one-way ticket, and I think I wanted to stay longer than a year and I wanted work experience if I could, so it wasn't just kind of travel. I wasn't leaving Australia because I hated it, I loved Australia and I loved being there. I just wanted to experience new places, so that's how I left, that was the reason I think, ... I actually booked a trip to Africa and the Middle East but an overland trip for 3 months and that was actually cancelled due to the ... and I didn't find that out till I got to England, which was 4 months later... [inaudible] that was kind of a big part of the reason, I always wanted to go to the Middle East and Africa.

GM2 – So what was it about, it sounds like there's a slight difference, between your leaving Australia and travelling and maybe some people's, in that you didn't just want to do the normal thing of just a year, [no], you wanted to go in a more... way [yes]... what was it that attracted you to that, and not getting the return ticket back to Australia?

P2 – I think, I think it was just this thing of wanting to be open to whatever happens, and if I go there with a return ticket then that year would be a year and I'd have that experience of 365 days and I think I just wanted more of an adventure and who knows you know, because with this trip I thought maybe I could live in Cairo for a while and then that would be possible on a one-way ticket because then I would have to choose when to come home, rather than then having that decision taken in advance. So that was why and then I returned home in '88 which was our bicentennial for Australia, I went back in January and decided to, I went back in October, and that's when I decided I'd come back to London and work, and again I bought another one-way ticket. So there was two years travelling, working and travelling, and my last job was as a travel rep in Corfu and part of the deal was they would buy me a return ticket home but the company went bankrupt and I didn't get that but I went home anyway, I bought one from the ticket office, had the ... for 2.5 years I'd been away and I made the decision I'd come back to live in London and work, I mean I'd have preferred to be in Rome, or Cairo but I couldn't get work there, so that was the second decision, knowing that the only way I could live was really to live in England because I had a passport, visa, and so that was when I decided, made another decision to open-endedly live in Europe, to work and to see what would happen. And again that was a choice and a very positive choice because I had um, been working for two months in those two years, had lived here for over two years, knew people, but I wouldn't really know what it was like until I live and work because I just had had two years, I mean I had been working, but it was just kind of been good fun. So I decided I'd go back and work... and again, I mean I absolutely loved being home, it was absolutely lovely, and it was difficult to leave because 7

weeks is long enough to embed, and I was kind of restless as well because I should have been getting a job, I'd been home being spoiled long enough. I really found it difficult to leave that time, but even in those two years the flight times had gone down from about 44 hours the first flight to about 32, so you know, so already Australia is feeling much closer. And the prices had come down. I didn't know how long I'd be here but long enough to enjoy Europe.

GM3 – So when you stayed away for two years, for 2 and a half years, but that [provoked]? just over two few months? [yes] And you'd come back with the intention of staying for a few months and coming back? [yes] And that was long enough that it was kind of hard to leave again? [yes] And why was it that you decided to do that?

P3 – Oh, because I decided I wanted to work here, and live here. Yes, to live in London for a year or two, that's what.... I'd gone back to Australia and had a wonderful fun summer and then come back and I had a flat organised, you know all organised before I went away, well not my job but I was under the, because I get jobs very easily, and I just thought well how long will it take, I had 3 months and there was the money but I had a flat I was paying rent on, so going home to Australia was definitely a holiday. It wasn't going home to Australia and I might not come back, it was always I have some time I'll take a few months and I'll catch up with everyone and then come back, yeah.

GM4 – What was it that attracted you to London?

P4 – Um, London itself didn't seem that attractive actually, it was just a place I could work. What was attractive to living here was just to have a different culture, different lifestyle, I guess the things I love about London were just the travel possibilities. But it was still occasionally seen as a holiday job, you know, and I could travel a lot and theatre, I loved acting, and musicians, I love concerts and music, there's a lot to enjoy in London, but basically London was just a place I could work so I could keep travelling. That was the idea.

GM5 – And what is it about travelling that attracts you so much?

P5 – Oh God, (sighs) that's an interesting question. (pause) Hmmm. I find other cultures appealing, because the big thing when I came here was because I'm Australian, and when I was brought up, I mean I was brought up in a really English way I suppose, English culture and all those novels and history and so everything here seemed quite familiar in terms of visual images and the culture seemed quite familiar to me because the only shows we used to get on television were pretty much English, there were a few American but not very many. The culture kind of seemed quite similar and yet you come here and you realise, you know, two nations separated by a common language and that the problem was that people, thought I was different and, so that was very difficult and then I went to Italy and France where the language was completely different, and I was like oh!, great, you know, I'm a foreigner, that's fine. And to me that's the easiest thing and to think about the history, that's just wow, everywhere I went had amazing history and I loved that.... Cause previous years I'd really done exactly as I wanted, when I wanted, I mean I'd been working, but, even though I kind of just hung out, which is what I really liked, it was different when I worked because it was much, much more upmarket, only for about two weeks at a time or whatever. So it was a different kind of travelling, but it was ... to live in another culture... and it was like a relief to be

in England, and I'd come back after spending time in Italy, you know where you didn't speak any English at all, and my Italian is dreadful, but, you know, it was kind of hard, but I expected it to be hard and then coming back I remember the first day at work in this really traditional poncy publishing house full of class and hierarchy, feeling absolutely shattered at the end of the day trying to work out what it was that every one was REALLY saying and just realising that being here as an Australian was really difficult and I didn't expect that. And no one else expected that to be an issue. I worked quite hard and in a way the travelling was the nice thing. I don't know, giving me a respite from I don't know, from there, that kind of thing, a dichotomy between the establishment thing... Seems one way and yet it isn't at all. Yeah and I had quite a time travelling around because my partner lived in Brussels for three years and I would go to stay with him, going over or coming home, for the first year I spent every weekend in Europe, and then every second weekend and I just got sort of sick of travelling, I was just travelled out so I don't really care if we travel now or not. But, unless we go to Africa (laughs) ... but something about the travelling has lost it's, lost it's but we had the year out, when we did three months on the way to Australia and then three months coming back, and that was like six weeks, a month in each place, but I got quite tired, and quite tired of the consumption. The consumption of the culture, you know. Just having a fantastic holiday but you know, just having a sense of ... about it. In the end just not wanting to do that anymore. Not wanting to have a ... experience, as being hum drum. And that's probably because I've spent at least, I can't remember, but at least 12-13 years at least... [inaudible] countries if not more, and I think that's perhaps because ... [inaudible] but I don't have that sense of pressure all the time, that sense of ...

GM6 – So when you came here you had this experience of, correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounds almost like, a difference that wasn't completely different but a difference that wasn't... a difference almost wrapped in sameness [yes] and at that point you really enjoyed travelling to places that were really different, where the difference was really pronounced, like in the language, or in the culture, or something, the culture was different enough that you could relax [yes], something about that relaxing, [yes] and I'm wondering about that. Why...[did I relax] yes, and the strange difference in England was quite stressful or difficult-

P6 – Very, yes. In England I was in this situation where I was accepted as one of them, although I wasn't. And that created a massive problem in the workforce where my colleagues don't say 'you're due at this meeting at 10:30', they come up and they sit on your desk and they're ready they eventually get around to it they say oh... it's an utter.. these dreadful meetings, this meetings on at 10:30 and they'd move away, and that was their way of saying get to that meeting, you know. It would go on all day and I was just not used to that. So it was that idea that I was meant to be fitting in and I just didn't. I felt, felt constantly that I didn't fit in and that that was actually an issue that I didn't fit in. It gave me a lot as well, being Australian, because there were certain things, there were certain things that could benefit me, you know I could go smashing through the hierarchy, and people would say I just didn't know any better, they kind of allowed a certain amount of latitude but I suppose there were many times that I felt very angry that being Australian wasn't acknowledged as being different and that was always the times that I didn't get things. Where I just didn't understand what was going on. So it was enormous stress because I was expecting to be a Brit by people and I wasn't and I'm not, and I don't know if you've found this but I've found a fundamental difference between being brought up in a very open culture and trying to fit into a very subtle, don't really say what you mean and it's that whole feeling about growing up in a culture

and a culture gives you a meaning, and you just don't understand that I think until you're put into a very similar culture where you just don't understand the meaning, and I still don't. You know, I still don't get it. It's very subtle, but everyone else knows, like my partner will saying something [his name] will say something politely and I'll say, why don't you just...why not interrupt at the time... what? What? ... Of course, ... how can you say that? (laughing) and I just think Oh [her own name] ... [most of this section inaudible but about misunderstanding across cultures] Language. It's that sort of thing, people ask me a question and I just answer it. [background noise, inaudible] you know it creates that problem in a relationship. And you know its work, and it never changes that, you know you're attuned, you're attuned to something not being quite right but you think maybe it's your answer. You don't realise, and I think that's what I did realise when I travelled elsewhere and came back, that that was an expectation ... I didn't have it when I was in a different culture, I just expected everyone to be foreign, difficulties, I was more up for that and that was fine I was just kind of 'oh' and it took 13 years, it really did take years for me to feel you know 6 or 7 at least when I felt, for me to stop feeling just exhausted with Brits. And you know, Australians are, well they couldn't put me into a hole because they didn't know anything about my schooling, anything, I'd meet Australians and I'd know within seconds exactly where they grew up, where they went to school, what their parents did, I could just tell that instantly, that familiarity with the culture. It was amazing and that felt really good (laughs) You know, and Australian guys are so different, with them I can just like that, I can see, different than British guys or American guys, you might not like it but you can just see, and you realise, I mean now that's fine, the challenge in it is interesting ... it is quite exhausting living in a culture where all the subtexts are just (gestures to mean going over head).

GM7 – It sounds like partly you're comparing an experience of unacknowledged difference [yes] with acknowledged difference [yes] and when the difference is acknowledged, something about that is much easier to navigate in some way whereas this unacknowledged difference is crazy-making almost.

P7 – Yes and the other problem is that what comes in is a comparison with Australia. Which doesn't come in with a foreign culture, its allowed to be entirely different. But with here it's like, oh we don't do that in Australia and what you realise in retrospect is that what you're saying is I'm totally out of my depth here, there's nothing here I can grab onto, it's all familiar yet different and I need something I know to grab onto. You know, that's what you're actually saying when you're comparing, you're trying to kind of anchor yourself in some kind of familiarity, it's funny because I play tennis in a place which is very international. And the other day a very good friend whose Canadian, very funny, I had the balls out and was bouncing them around, and she said... and I thought she was ready and I said OK, and she thought I was saying yeah, up you, I'm going to just keep doing it.... [inaudible] and I'm having a lovely time, we get to the game and she says I'm just so fucked off with you and I said 'what?' ... and this whole thing has been going on and I'm miles away, and I'm having a lovely time but she thinks I'm trying to get up her nose, so she said to me well it's a matter of etiquette, and I said what's a matter of etiquette, not bouncing around or something? And she said, 'well in Canada!... and when I was in America I called an official over....' (in outraged tone) and I'm thinking wow, this is really odd, she's a very good tennis player but then she suddenly says, 'I just feel like I'm constantly on trial here, I constantly feel I have to prove myself to you, every time I come down here I feel I have to do that, every single time, everything I do about tennis is wrong, you think it's all wrong...' and I just thought wow, there is it, this woman is just feeling completely out of her depth on a

British tennis court. She got very upset, she got very precious she felt really misunderstood ... and it was a pivotal moment for me and I thought, well that's not me anymore. I can really see she's having terrible trouble and then her husband is a consultant here, and the jobs not going well so she may be leaving... going back to Canada or America or whatever so it's kind of even more reinforced. And it's just such an interesting because they went together that sense of almost panic in that sense of I don't understand and I want to understand, and came over with what's the problem I don't understand what's going on here, where I come from this is how you do it, but the thing is you're not there, you're here and here you better get used to it. It can sound very hard, but, and that's what was said to her ... don't pull that trick here, but it's very interesting, Just in the kind of, the context of playing tennis and how it can change...

GM8 – When you tell that story it makes me wonder about that Canadian woman, if she actually chose to live here, or if

P8 – No she hasn't her husband did.

GM9 – There's a huge difference there I think [yes]. You, for some reason and we haven't discussed that yet, where it came from, but for some reason, you wanted to go [yes] you wanted to go into difference [yes] and the kind of difference you found in London it sounds like, um, at times, left you grasping for familiarity [yes] I wonder what that is, for someone who values difference so much...

P9 – I think it was pointing to the fact that when it was combined with feelings of insecurity or pain, and stress, it became terribly difficult and I guess that's what the story with this Canadian woman is about, cause that's what's happened to her. Because she felt very pressured and I felt very pressured because I was at work and I was working in an environment where this was just constantly ...all this stuff that I ... was at me, was having a profound effect on my work and how I was at work. And then I went to work for a Canadian company and it was like similar things, it's kind of, the difference I didn't like which is in Australia, my experience of work in Australia, was that people earned respect they didn't assume respect, whereas in England, extremely incompetent people who'd gone to the right universities, could be in positions of power and I didn't have any respect for their work, while in Australia one they wouldn't be in those positions and two they wouldn't expect to just be respected because they were there and I found those kinds of things to be very problematic, I was used to working with efficient professionals and I didn't find that in England at all, in fact in my first publishing company, the culture was to lay around pretending you were doing nothing and then work feverishly when no one was watching you (laughs) ... it was a difference I didn't like and that was one of the problems of England, the culture is based upon things I dislike intensely, like class and going to the right university and all that stuff which I just don't ... a lot of the problems were around those areas that I really disliked... they went hand in hand.

GM10 – So, there are those kinds of differences that are very cultural for you, [yes] and having to deal with those, there's something about the familiar being attractive [yes]. Like there's something relaxing about just being able to assume this commonality or something [absolutely]. So what was it about that, that was comforting? Or ...

P10 – I think kind of like I still find it when I go home although Australia has changed immensely from when I lived there, it's just like my default position. There's something

just so utterly comfortable and easy about being with Australians regardless of whether I like them or not. It's that's what it is, it's something that's just like ah (sighs) I need to think about this. Now I get there and a friend of mine emigrated back a while ago and um, she would talk to me about things and because she was having to stay, it was huge for her, because I wasn't having to stay I could just laugh at these things and we both realised we'd become a lot more English and one of the things that appalled both of us was how incredibly direct and personal the questions were that people asked and how incredibly intrusive ... and she had breast cancer, and so all that was questioned, what was she going to do, and was she going to buy a house or rent a house, I mean it was quite extraordinary what occurred and it was very familiar, but after all that time here, it was 'oh' (exclamation) at this kind of thing, so the familiar also becomes less familiar the more comfortable I am here. And I am much more comfortable here, and if I am in Britain or Australia I'm much more comfortable with that, kind of thing, so, it does change but it is the familiarity, the knowledge that, on the other hand come back to Heidegger again, it's the idea that between you and me is safe and I don't have to worry about that space because I can talk to you, but there may come a time when this place becomes an amazing issue and then I won't look at you and I'll be working out how we're going to cross this space. I think that's what is about going home, I don't have to worry about those space issues, those environment issues, it's all comfortable, and I can just get on with being me. And of course me isn't me any more in Australia because I've lived here for so long. I mean, yes, I relax. And it is like that cause when I lived in Australia my friends had the same ideas as me, that was just taken for granted, that's how it's got to be and travelling because you meet a whole lot of new people and don't know their background, I was socialising with people I wouldn't have ever socialised with in Australia, so those friends here are much wider, T is quite like me and, it would never have happened in Australia, ... and you don't find that out till later, so that's, that's the other thing in Australia, that that would have been far more important, but coming back from being away, just that lovely sense of familiarity, overrides what I like more than not. Everything's just chilled.

GM11 – Yes, but (pause) it's interesting because on the one hand it sounds like you might end up, this might be a trivial point, but, it sounds like you might end up with people you don't expect to, in Australia, because everything's familiar enough that that doesn't really matter, it's OK [yes], and here because everything's so different that you don't actually know it till later [yes] um, but the thing that I was interested in was when you were talking about going back, about being away for so long, it sounded almost like there was ... [inaudible]

P11 – It's still very very familiar. The difference is I didn't work, so every time I've gone home I didn't work but this time it was 6 months on and off, and that was strange. Because the experience of Sydney was different than I remembered it as being and I would expect it in 6 months out of work, because I was doing my thesis, that that was the first thing that kind of made it different in Sydney. But I had friends who I see maybe 4 days every two years, where it's just like I saw them yesterday, and I don't have that here, and I have good friends here but they weren't really like that I don't think, there's just something about that, the happy days in my early 20s and they were my first chosen friendships ... so all of that, even though their lives were very different from how I remembered them, all that was really familiar. What started to be different was some of the things I took completely for granted about ideas, because my friends in Australia were much more polarized and in a way pretty left wing and what was left wing in Australia wasn't left wing here. So you'd get these kind of ... that you just

didn't think about ... so that kind of thing ... but that just kind of reinforces that I'm becoming more English than I thought I was, and that's OK, I mean I do notice in Australia, they gave me a lot more leeway than they gave my partner, who is English and they just thought he was completely bonkers because he was learning calculus, he wanted to learn calculus and in Australia you have to maths and you have to do calculus till the 6th form, A level, and so people just couldn't understand ... he went and hired a maths teacher, he came twice a week and spent 7 hours a day doing calculus and they just thought this is odd, ... (laughs) I thought he was mad as well... but it was funny, Pen, one of my friends, she was given a lot more pressure than I was.... [inaudible] Pen said I don't think I'll come and they were like 'come on Pen', you've got to hang out and you've got to meet people, you know, it's that kind of real thing, and so I was given a lot more leeway and that's one thing about Australia I didn't like, because there's a very strong pressure to conform... so there is little things which have changed and I've been back every 2 years anyway and I've kind of been through ... and all my friends are in incredibly long term stable relationships... and now becoming incredibly wild and going ... and then all the ones who were incredibly wild and you know partners left right and centre suddenly, you know, those kinds of things happening, so I think I've been through quite a lot of that by the time I've been back, so, it still felt, you know, I'm sure there's something about, till the day I die, about being Australian, because that's my earliest experiences and that's what I grew up with. That will probably be affecting me really for the rest of my life. I mean there will be changes and differences, like when I go home it feels like the twilight zone, which is really...all the ... are the same as here but the really posh ones here are like the back of beyond and you just think, ah, which one is that and it's kind of like familiar but I'm not sure if it's Australian familiar or English familiar and you don't know if it's I don't get it because I haven't been here for two years, or if it's that it's not here anyway, but there's a few days and when I drive the car I'm just driving extraordinarily automatically, I don't have to think, it's like 15 years ago, and it's a really complicated route and I think about that. So that's always there, even with the familiar, there's that kind of twilight zone familiar, you know 'which familiar' you know and there's no red buffers (?) why not? That kind of thing.

GM12 – Yes. It's almost like there's a kind of slippage [yes]

P12 – Yes, and it's that same with accents. There's British accents of a certain kind, and a very familiar kind of Australian, and I can't tell, there's certain times in Australia when I can't tell whether that one's British or Australian because their accent's familiar... you know, it's funny. So you know when I go home to Sydney I say home is London and when I'm here I say home is Sydney. When I'm at my parent's place home is always Sydney, and when I'm in Sydney home is always my parent's place. So home to me is always where I'm not. It may be where I can get to easily. I think it ties back into that sense of wanting to be different, when I was there wanting difference. But safe difference. Yes.

GM13 – And it makes me wonder kind of at that age of 25, 26, you felt that [yes] and just out of the blue? Until then you thought maybe you'd just stay in Australia?

P13 – No, I always knew I'd travel. When you're an Australian you usually travel at 18, if you're not going to go to university, or you travel at 21, 22, when you leave university... [inaudible] I went to university and while at university I'd decided I'd had enough of, I'd had a year off after university ... to do all that kind of work, at the opera house and kind of had a year off and then and got my job and decided that I would work

to get myself established in something and then leave, so I knew I wouldn't be coming back without any experience, I'd be coming back to a career. That it would make sense to have a few years of a job under my belt, that that would help if I wanted to work overseas and that has done.

GM14 – So when you were younger, did you think that you would leave Australia, and go...?

P14 – I didn't think, ... no, I, I mean I used to think it would be nice, I mean my aunt lived in Holland ... so I had family... my parents started travelling when I was young, they went to ... and China, so that was always in the air. And my grandmother, my mother's mother, was always travelling to bizarre places since I was a child, so, that was always there as something... And I had a grandmother who lived in London for two years. Yeah, so it was kind of in the air...

GM15 – People around you, other members of your family, or brothers, sisters, friends, they travelled, ended up... leaving Australia?

P15 – Yeah, but not my school friends, my work friends, at one point with Pen, my friend, in London ... [inaudible section] and all my friends, all of them, came to visit me here, which is really important that they knew how I was living here. That actually really helped because there were a few times I went home and found like why you living in pommy land [inaudible]... there were kind of issues for them... and after they had come to see me here it was like the familiarity that maybe I wasn't that different perhaps. And I've had another friend who lived in Japan and Russia and, they almost all travelled, but one of them didn't and she came to stay and that was interesting for me cause she was always, I think different, very Australian, and her father was from Germany and her mother was from France, and she came and loved all these things about England and all these things that I found incredibly difficult, like the subtext and she picked up on it like that (snaps fingers) and I couldn't get it, till it suddenly dawned on me that her father was German and her mother was French and that that's why she was so different she was just being European. And she loved it here... she was really, ... and she'd say I'm so bored, so French (laughs) ... It was very funny but she loved it, she's planning to come back. But it helped me to really understand her, so... maybe...

GM16 – So when you think back to your original leaving, going out, going back to stay for a bit, deciding to leave and stay there though it was very difficult at times [yes], I'm thinking of the underlying reasons or motivation of that, why do you think you did that? (laughs) Because of parents? (seeking clarification)

P16 – Yes (laughing) I think now there was a really... [inaudible] I had a very domineering father, and a terrible, terrible relationship with my mother in adolescence, and they just interfered. I had very very strong binds with them and I think, it wasn't on the top of my mind at all, but I really think I became myself, as I am today, because I could live my life away from my parents. And I think that was probably, that was certainly a side benefit, I mean I certainly didn't come all this way just to get away from them, but I think one of the big attractions was finding out who I was without any interference from them. That was a really big attraction. Um, ...it was incredibly... [inaudible] I loved the lifestyle there, and as I'm thinking about it now it's what I'm thinking about it now not then. It was all very positive when I left there and it was very important to me that it was very positive. I could go back to Sydney any time and be

happy... I didn't want to have to go back to Sydney because I couldn't get a job here. I always wanted it to be a very positive step and I always knew when I went back I would love it, and that was quite important to acknowledge that. That was one thing and there was a second thing, there was travel and just wanting to do a whole lot more of that... and London was the place to stay its where everyone who was anyone went... cause it was so dreadful at the time with that horrible conservative government ... [inaudible] the Labour leader got sacked and there were people who fled to England and stayed here. And there were other reasons artistically and culturally, and I worked in publishing, which I actually hated, but publishing, and everything was so much bigger.... And it was a time that just got extended and extended and it was 7 years before I actually decided I was staying and I better do something about my career ... but I have a different choice now because my partner's British and he won't go and live in Australia because his ... and I'm not sure, even if that wasn't the case, but I'm pretty sure if we went to visit Sydney, to just take a year off or... or wherever ... and I know that when we were there we not even for a second considered living there and that felt great. I was quite clear it was just on holidays because I think if I wanted to say... but I probably haven't, but ...

GM17 – So what about that, inter-cultural myth, staying a little bit but setting a limit on it though? What is it about that? [inaudible]

P17 – I think it's that expectation thing again, if things started not to work, you know, we could take 6 months time out, which I really wanted to catch up with friends and family, but that's all it was. If it was ever to be anything else I would go back with that in mind. I would go back and say I'm going to live here and I need a job and I need to get that organised, it was never that. And that felt fine, I did think it might not feel fine, but it felt absolutely fine [tape changes]

... she absolutely adores it now, I mean, and she had quite an invasive family, and I remember her ringing me up saying how her father is driving her mad, and I remember saying can you find something to involve him, and she said yes, I'll pretend I'm going to buy a car, (laughing) he'd love that, my father would love that too, so they both went on this wild goose chase of pretending to buy a car and he ended up saying he didn't think it was a good idea but anyway he felt involved. So I remember thinking 'gosh' my father wouldn't be put off by buying a pretend car. I think in fact all the reasons I've fallen out with my parents (?) is because he, he does all my brother's finances, they go and stay with my brother, 2 weeks at a time, my brother loves it, being with the family he thinks it's the best thing, having father look after his stock portfolio and my father rings me telling me to give my brother a lecture on his spending, you know, my brother's 47! It's that, it's just I can't bear that.

GM18 – What is it about, I mean your brother seems to find it OK, what is it about that you can't bear?

P18 – I think that my parents would just move in, not that my mother, my father would just move in, and just take over, and want to know everything about my life. And that just takes me back to being 15 years old and powerless. You know, I want distance from my father and he wants to be one of my friends. And I don't want that. I don't have to deal with that, here, because they come for a few weeks and that's very intense and then they leave again and that's it. And I tell them about what I want about my life, and it's no issue, I mean it is an issue when I don't want to see them all the time, I don't like, I mean I don't have kids or anything, I'm not used to all that attention, but, it would be

very difficult living near my parents and the relationship I have, and that is such a strong thing... and I guess it means I haven't really worked out why I've come all this way, I mean my brother loves it, my brother has always been agreeing with everything they've said and he probably just does whatever he wants anyway, whereas I'm much more lay this out on the table we have to have it out and that's absolutely not the way to treat my parents. He's definitely got the easier way and he likes that, he's lazy and he's perfectly happy having my father ... and my father looks after their money ... my father and he's always like how much do you earn and how much have you got and give all the money to me, and he'd want to arrange that – it would be very difficult. Very difficult because I would say no, but my father would take that as rejection, which would ... So that's a big and I think that's why I had a very bad time with my parents, a major source of conflict when I was there and I think that's why I (sigh) thank god I'm not staying because I don't have to work this out. Penny works hers out really well, she had cancer, it was very difficult at first, she just did not want her family get involved. Eventually she told them and it was fine, which amazed me because she decided to tell them what she wants and she was able to deal with that very well. But she doesn't really have the ... that my dad has.

GM19 – I'm trying to think in terms of your decision to leave and how you negotiated that and some of the things you've said you find difficult over here, and it sounds almost as if there's this slight echo of what you found difficult with your family, the situations that are kind of intrusive, or controlling, or um...

P19 – Yeah, yes, that's probably (pause) Yes, (pause) Um, ... true at all, in that sense...

GM20 – Yeah, it's different, but one of the things you were talking about was this assumption of the same [yes] which, when I imagine that I imagine it's a bit suffocating, like being really in your space, [yes] because all of a sudden your not ... any more [yes] which reminds me of...

P20 – Oh, OK, yes. I hadn't seen that at all but actually it's interesting that you say that because my partner um he's always, it's like he's almost completely disinterested in my life because he's, he just doesn't for a second think he should have anything to do with my life, if I asked advice it would be different but you know, but he certainly doesn't think he should have any say in what I do unless I'm proposing to get up and leave the country, but he is quite mystified by this and it kind of really annoys me but it also gives me a huge amount of freedom, he just kind of doesn't get in there. He interested but he's totally neutral, like it's nice of you to tell me but, but absolutely no expectation at all that he should tell me what to do or, anything, and it's such a joy, although it has it's down sides, sometimes I'd like him to be a little bit more in there, but it is interesting I think that I have chosen a partner whose absolutely opposite to my father in that sense, and my mother... I think it must be very important.

GM21 – Can I ask, that freedom, what that means to you?

P21 – That freedom. (pause) Um, it gives me the space to work out what I want. And then to say, but I've had the space to work out what I want to do. And one of the problems with the way I was brought up was the only way you could get that was in conflict with someone else, to say no, or that's enough, it was never not an issue, and I suppose it's that, that freedom, and I do take him into account all the time in fact, but that comes from me not from him. So that's more what I am or what I want, I have that

space to work it out, and I'm sure the only reason I decided to move back to ... was because ... it was just this heady sense of I can do whatever I want to do and I decided this is what I wanted and I told him and ... I said I'm not going to come to see you every weekend and he was like great, terrific, fine ... just tell me when to leave... (laughs) ... I don't have to worry about who I am the whole time, and just constantly having to, have someone in my face the whole time, and overwhelming, or intrusive ... I had an ex-partner whose mother was very controlling, who lived in Sudan and he went home to see her, it was just kind of a disaster, ... and when we were trying to work out who were are we were constantly battling against someone else's views of who we should be, its not based on what would YOU like and how can I assist and help that, there's all the difference in the world in that. About Australia... and my parents... And I don't like people telling me what to do, you will do this, you will do that. I don't like it.

GM22 – And what's so difficult about that?

P22 – I think ..., that's how I feel I was brought up like I was at someone else's beck and call. I'm perfectly happy to sit down and discuss something with someone and say well OK you're going to do this, and that's fine, put it in writing and I'll do it, that's fine, I've been involved.

GM23 – So what about when you're not involved, like when you were growing up, in some of those situations, what happens then?

P23 – I just fought, I just fought and fought and fought. And earlier I used to cry and cry and cry. And I used to be pulled into the lounge and cry on ... I think I realised very early on that, I mean I told my brother, my brother's role was very depressed when we was growing up, and my way was to take them on, I mean it was very dangerous because my parents never accepted that I was changing and growing I think. I had this terrible time with my mother in particular, but I did think I felt if I didn't fight I was losing, I would turn into something that wasn't me. And that's all it was at home for me really, fighting, fighting for me.

GM24 – All you could be was resistance, you didn't have the space to discover...

P24 – Yeah, yes, I think there was a sense of annihilation probably, I wouldn't have survived it otherwise. You know, it's was very dreadful what I had to go through in terms of how it had a profound effect me as an adult, I mean I didn't, the really bizarre thing about the way I was brought up was that I always ... I never went off and did what I wasn't allowed to do. Part of this was my mother being very violent to me and I didn't hit her back. And I think, why didn't I ever hit her back? I didn't hit her back and that's how I was brought up, you know. You don't hit, you just don't do that, and I never did it, and I should have. I wish I had. I think if I clocked my mother one, she would have been astonished, it would have shocked her, but I fought to a certain extent, you know it had a, I wish I'd fought more, you know just to run away, I used to run away a few times, ... [inaudible] There are things I could have done, now, now when I look back and I think why, why were you such a good little... girl, my brother you know... he used to lie to them and tell them what they wanted to hear and my parents actually really respected that! I think it drove him mad when he was a kid because he was failing and he just didn't tell them till it was too late and he did very very badly at school ...

[inaudible section about brother and parent's way of relating and how different it was from P's].

So yes, there was this sad thing about very very good little girl and you know I was brought up not to tell anything about what was going on, I was about 19 and ... a shrink where I had to tell what happened to me (?) fearing that God would strike me down because that's how I was brought up. Yes, there was a lot I could have done and I didn't... I wouldn't have even dreamt of doing it. My father didn't know about my mother hitting me and I didn't tell him because I didn't want more conflict. You know and I could have told him and I think now well, why didn't I tell him and I think I didn't tell him because I think he wouldn't have done anything. (pause)

GM25 – When you think about these things, do you think they tie into the way your life has gone?

P25 – Oh yeah, definitely. I mean that whole violent thing, that still bothers me, and ... that really bothers me that being brought up like that you tend to become really black and white yourself even though I'm aware of that, I am really black and white and my parents spoke to me sometimes like you wouldn't speak to a dog and I sometimes do that when I'm tired, I do it without any anger, I'm terrible with anger, and he... he's not like that... and we would have these fights and I'd shout and I'd scream and rant and rave and swear, (laughing) and he'd just say 'which planet have you come from?' and I just ... I had to cope with what do you do when he turns into ice in front of me and it took us a long time to realise that in our own families we relate like this. And I think that has been very important for me to learn other ways that don't involve screaming, shouting, black and white, and allow a whole space for other people's ideas and opinions, that's definitely a reaction, and then my family comes to stay and we have family dinners and [] thinks this is just the best thing in the whole world, I cook dinner and they all sit there and argue and he thinks it's good because he never had family dinners, he's absolutely relishing it and for me it just brings back year after year of being an adolescent, expected to contribute to family discussions when you're just dying inside.

GM26 – So it sounds like your relationship is one in which you can bring in difference for each other, to provide that.

P26 – Hmm, yeah, yes. We're just completely different (laughs)...every single day, absolutely everything, opposites, and it's interesting, we have enough in common to keep us going, but we're just so different. Because of the cultural thing as well, you can allow that, because you can say oh he's a Brit and she's an Aussie, and so that's fine, you expect us to be kind of different. It would be nice if there was more commonality actually ... yeah, what he loves to do and what I love to do are very different. His whole family upbringing, a very working class family, and all the values that go with being respectable working class, they are, I have to say, VERY puritanical. I mean in that sense my parents were very much freer, and he'd like to bring his children up the way my parents brought me up and I'd like to bring my children up the way he was brought up, but ... [inaudible]

GM27 – Can I ask one more thing, you touched on this, just to see if there's something you want to add to it, when you reflect upon the time since leaving home, what's it been like for you?

P27 – (pause) That's such a hard question because what I immediately think of is what would it have been like if I hadn't left home? That's a problem because I don't know, all I can say is that my life (sigh) I think my life up until I had the year off was fascinating, wonderful, and I just felt incredibly lucky. And I really felt that I had chosen so much of my life, and I had chosen well, that I'd chosen a partner who really added to my life, that I was allowed to travel a lot, that I had friends that yeah, I felt very privileged. And then after the year off, when we went back my partner became very depressed for a year and a half and I found that very difficult, I'm much better now because he's much better but that was when I didn't feel privileged and I felt quite desperate, because it was just like living with a black person, after that point, and that's about change again, because I couldn't choose to have him well, because it wasn't working, but up to that point I had felt that, and this would be a big difference between the way I was brought up, and how I live my life now, was choices, because that's the most wonderful thing, and I love it. It doesn't matter if I make wrong or bad choices, I can always just make another choice and I really relish that. I think that of being the theme of my life since I've left home. In particular according to ... because my partner sees choice as persecution, as absolute persecution, he thinks that choices are just like hell, whereas I love choice and that's how I feel, that's what's happened with my life, that I really have, up to that, up to [] being really ill, that I felt that ... it was fine at the time and that ...[inaudible, about partner's depression] well every day there's just times when you're up and times when you're down, I mean I remember feeling that very much and that's how I would, I mean that isn't easy at all I don't think it is easy living as a foreigner in another culture, I think it's not easy to find but it's also very privileged, for me it's been very privileged. And I'm very privileged to have my friends at home, in Australia, and that to be a part of my life ...

GM28 – Have you found there's been any unintended consequences to your leaving and living in a different culture? Anything you didn't expect?

P28 – I didn't expect to find it this difficult, definitely to this extent, no. I didn't expect to end up with a Brit, to be living with a British, I mean, I think my relationship with my family has actually become harder in a way, I used to think it was going to be easier, one conversation a week and three weeks every two years, but actually when I was home I thought that what it is is a very intense relationship and within my family it was very intense between me and my family when I was growing up, which I always hated. It's created an even more intense pressured relationship because there isn't time, and so I think that, that's been difficult, an unintended consequence, which perhaps should have been before but I didn't... And I think the other thing is that I live in a culture where women's friendships are not valued, and I actually really value my women friendships, and that feels a loss when I'm in Australia but not here, I'm just used to what I have here. It's different but it does feel like a loss not having my girlfriends. Having girlfriends is very important to me. That kind of whole scene really and a whole lot more ... [inaudible, about couples and friends] My relationships are much more important there which is probably why I got so, which is why the year and a half after I came back with [] was so difficult. It was hard to find anyone to talk to about it, like my girlfriends back home in Australia ... I felt quite alone with that. (pause)

GM 29 – You've touched on this. But, do you ever think of returning home?

P29 – Yeah. A lot. Short term. (we laugh)... But then again if you said to me you'd be living in London for the next ten years, I'd baulk at that as well, I wouldn't want that

either. I still hold this image of being a perpetual traveller ... the other thing that comes up that I've been thinking of is, is that it's kind of like that England is more complicated, a more complicated culture. And sometimes if I went home, that would be easy and wonderful, but there's something wrong with easy and wonderful... and then I think well it wouldn't be so easy cause I'd just ... that at all, but it just kind of feels like it's such a wonderful place and such a wonderful lifestyle. (sigh) There's something there, I don't know what it is but it's just complicated. And actually when I talk about it now it wouldn't be because my relationship with my parents there would really be complications, it would be very complicated, and it wouldn't be made easy. So anyway, I have this image, that every now and then I think of the sunset, and twilight and a beautiful sunny day on the beach, and the water, and the people, you know, a wonderful sensuous place. Something about that's easy, and it's got to be complicated, tough.

GM30 – Sounds like you recognise there would be complications, but that it's still a kind of complication that might be easy and that that's wrong (?)

P30 – Yes. And I think that that's what happened. When you live long enough in another culture that ... things become much more familiar and so you relax, and I have become very relaxed here now, you never quite fit in but then I go home and I'll never quite fit in there either. I don't think I'll ever fit in anywhere now, completely. And I don't mind that now. (pause) But then I don't, I think the problem is that since I left home, that's who I am, so I don't know if I'd stayed in Australia I still wouldn't feel I didn't quite fit in. And that's Ok because actually I don't want to fit in. You know, yuck, and people telling me to fit in, and I don't know if that's just a result of, I mean it feels like that, because that's what I am, that's all I know ...[inaudible]. I think it was OK when I was at home ... and suddenly it was alright but for the first time ever I got homesick for London. And I thought oh I can't wait to go back now, it'll be really nice, cause we're coming back at the end of that year and that kind of suddenly kind of made it alright now because I could have that balance of I could love being Australian and I could love being an Australian in London. Finally it was OK to be different without comparing. And I guess there's a sense of ease with that, what it means about being Australian and being in London. (pause, sigh).

GM31 – What's it feel like talking about this?

P31 – (pause) Interesting, I mean, but I think about it all the time actually. So it's not the thinking about it so much, perhaps thinking about them in different ways, and some of the links you were making and looking at were interesting, but I do feel quite shaky and quite raw, like you know, yeah, quite unstable or shaky, yeah, not in a dramatic way but that's how I feel now.

GM32 – Yes, I'm thinking some of the things you were talking about are difficult to articulate, and quite deep [yes].

P32 – Yes, there's a sense of that. Yes. Yeah. (pause).

GM33 – Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't covered, or...

P33 – The only thing I was thinking was that sometimes when I feel very very, alienated here, I think (laughs) ...I'm in exile... but I'm not, obviously, but that's how it feels sometimes, I'm an exile while I'm living here, and this isn't what I signed up for, it's

just that I know it's not exile, it's a choice, it's totally different than that sense of not choosing, that sense of abandon, it makes a profound difference in how you experience it, it's just that sometimes that's how I feel about it. I'm just in exile. And I often feel I've immigrated, in the winter (?). And that's really unfair because I'm going home, tell them you've immigrated kind of thing, but so there is that sense of who you are... [inaudible] it always happens when a different set of considerations come up, I mean you always have those considerations of who you are, but the feeling of being shaky, I think that probably really if I look at it that's probably how I feel most of the time, but a lot of the time I don't have to feel that because ... [inaudible]

GM34 – [inaudible] but the thing that's struck me is that when you've gone through difficult times, you've been able to hold onto something very familiar, and it does sound like when things are going well, you really don't belong anywhere, completely, and in some way that's OK [yes] but I'm just wondering then when you're going through difficulty, where do you find that familiarity, now?

P34 – I think I find it within me actually. I think I find things about me, that I value. Now, the basis of my becoming an adult and I think that's still there, in many different ways, but I guess those kinds of things. And my friends, you know, I always, have friends in Australia who I can ring and talk about things, so those are the things, I think, qualities I've seen in me that I like that I can hold onto.

GM35 – Is one of those qualities that you've learned to negotiate ... [inaudible]

P35 – Um, no not really that's one of the themes that's come up in therapy, and I thought was good, is this dangerous ability to adapt. I think I do that and I can be in a terribly difficult situation and I'll find a way to adapt and find something good. But I think for me I've learned, as I said earlier, the much more important thing is for me not to adapt. So now, I don't really value that... I'm sure it's been good in certain situations but I would value not adapting and taking a stand. I don't think I see it in that kind of summarized way, or ... I do have like when I worked in Corfu, the most appalling thing happened there so that used to be my bench mark, for when things were really bad kind of thing, I do have my benchmarks, like when [] was depressed that will never happen again, because I won't stay for that. And I do feel we got through these things. And we did that for the right reasons and that's probably more important than the fear of whatever it is that I'm facing. That if I'm staying around it's for the right reasons and there is another boundary... a challenge ... [inaudible] I don't really have a sense of negotiating, as well, because I have a sense of just doing it, not what I'd do otherwise, it just is. Cause I don't see any, I'm thinking of Pen and ... joining us in Africa and we'll do a safari together, that will be really really interesting because [] and [] are English and Pen is Australian and I live here, and she's just gone back so it's all going to be very interesting because we'll all spend tonnes and tonnes of time talking about our lives in minute detail and it will be really interesting to get a sense of that, because with Pen we shared so much here, tell her about my latest Brit stories, tell me about the bank, Barclays Bank was our favourite Brit story ... [inaudible, laughing] and that's much more likely to make me realise, oh, OK, the contrast for me, and it's always with an Australian or in Australia. Or I'll be somewhere else and then I'll come back, contrast really makes me see that, I don't think I see contrast in difficult times, because, I can usually only say afterwards wow that was actually really tough, you know, because its that adaption thing that says it is just my life and I have to deal with it, kind of later I

might go home, or meet an Australian, and think wow, god that's awful ... [inaudible] its much more likely that. I'm not sure if that's very helpful or...

GM36 – Yes, it is helpful. I'm just thinking there seems to be so much more, but...thanks very much.

P36 – Thanks for the opportunity. I feel like I might go and bawl my eyes out now, I feel quite teary. OK...

“Sarah” Meaning Units

The circumstances of leaving home

1. I was 26 and I always wanted to travel but thought I'd start a career first then travel for a year, that's our custom.
2. A friend was in Europe and me and another friend decided to come over and join her before she returned.
3. I left on a one-way ticket. I think I wanted to stay longer than a year, work if I could, not just travel.
4. I wasn't leaving because I hated home, I loved it, I just wanted to see new places.
5. I had booked a trip to Africa that was cancelled after I got to the UK, but I just wanted new experiences.
6. I always wanted to go to the Middle East and Africa.
7. I wanted to be open to whatever happens so I didn't want to be stuck with a return ticket, have the decision taken in advance.
8. I wanted more of an adventure, I thought maybe I could live in Cairo for a while.
9. I returned home after 2 years of working and travelling and worked for a bit and decided I'd come back to the UK and work and bought another one-way ticket.
10. I wanted to come to Rome or Cairo but London was where I could get work, so I came to open-endedly live in Europe.
11. That was a positive decision to see what it would really be like to live here and work.
12. I had loved being home, and it was very difficult to leave after being back 7 weeks. It was so difficult to leave.
13. The prices and times of flights had reduced so it didn't seem quite as far away.

Why did you decide to come back to London?

1. I wanted to live and work in London, see what it would be like for a year or two.
2. My going back to Australia was really a holiday since I had made friends here and had a flat organised and just needed to get work, it was all waiting.
3. London didn't really attract me, it was just a place I could get work.
4. The attractive thing was to have a different culture, a different lifestyle, and the travel possibilities.
5. I love the theatre, concerts, music, there's a lot to enjoy here.
6. But basically the idea was that London was a place I could work to keep travelling.

What attracts you to travel?

1. That's an interesting question.
2. Other cultures really appeal to me.
3. I was brought up very familiar with English culture and it seemed similar to Australian culture but I realised here, that there were really big differences though there's a common language.
4. In France and Italy it's easier to be a foreigner because the language is different and you expect it.
5. I loved all the amazing history in Europe.
6. It was hard being where they don't speak English, but I expected it to be, so it was a relief to get back there.
7. Then discovered, working in a traditional place, how tiring it was trying to work out what was really going on.

8. Being here as an Australian was really difficult and I didn't expect that. No one else expected that to be an issue.
9. It was hard work, and the travelling was the nice thing, a respite from the confusing inner workings of the establishment that I was not exposed to before, when I was here just hanging out.
10. My partner was on the continent so we travelled a lot back and forth, I got sick of travelling and I don't care if we travel now or not.
11. Unless we travel to Africa.
12. But the travelling lost it's appeal, I feel tired of the consumption of culture, I've had enough of it.
13. I could enjoy travelling to places that were really different but it was difficult in England, stressful, a mix of same and difference.

The experience in England

1. I was accepted as one of them, but I wasn't one of them.
2. There were massive problems at work because I didn't understand their style of communication.
3. I was meant to be fitting in and I just didn't fit, it was an issue.
4. There were benefits, because I could smash through the hierarchy, being Australian. They would say I just didn't know better.
5. They allowed more latitude but I felt angry that being Australian wasn't even acknowledged as being different, always at the times I didn't get things.
6. It was enormous stress because I was expected to be a Brit and wasn't.
7. There's a huge difference being brought up in a very open culture and trying to fit into a very subtle one, where you never say what you mean.
8. Growing up in a culture, that culture gives you meaning and you don't see that until you're put into a culture that seems very similar and you just don't understand.
9. I still don't understand it, the culture here.
10. Everyone else knows the subtleties, like my partner knows, and I'll ask, why not just say it this way, and of course you can't.
11. There's so much misunderstanding across cultures. I still can't help but express my culture, people ask a question and I answer them right out.

Difference with other non-english places

1. It can create problems in a relationship. It's work, it never changes, but you can be attuned to the something without knowing what it is. Something isn't quite right, but what?
2. I didn't have the expectation that I would understand when I was in other cultures, and they didn't either.
3. I expected everyone to be foreign, to have difficulties, I was ready for it.
4. It took me years, 7 or more, to stop feeling just exhausted with Brits.
5. They couldn't label me either, because they didn't know anything about my schooling or anything.
6. I met Australians and knew immediately where they grew up, went to school, about their parents, that familiarity with the culture.
7. That felt really good.
8. Australian guys are so different too, you can just see what they're about, so different from American or British guys.
9. Now that's OK for me, the challenge is interesting, it's changed.
10. But it is exhausting living in a culture where the subtexts are all just over your head.

11. Unacknowledged difference is much more difficult to deal with than acknowledged difference.

Comparing with back home

1. The other problem is that a comparison with home comes in, which doesn't come in with a foreign culture. It's allowed to be entirely different.
2. Here I say 'oh we don't do that back home' and in retrospect what you're really saying is I'm totally out of my depth here.
3. There's nothing here I can grab onto, it's all familiar and yet different and I need something I know to grab onto.
4. Comparing is an attempt to anchor yourself in some kind of familiarity.
5. With a friend I had this huge misunderstanding and didn't even know it. And she says, well in Canada... And it came down to she feeling she's constantly on trial here. She was feeling out of her depth on a British tennis court.
6. She got upset and precious and felt really misunderstood, and it was pivotal because I felt 'that's not me anymore!'
7. They go together, the sense of panic from not understanding and wanting to, what's wrong that I don't understand, where I come from it's done like this, but I'm not there, I'm here and I better get used to it.
8. It can sound hard and that's what was said to her, don't pull that trick here, but it's so interesting, how even playing tennis can change so much in national contexts.

You valued difference so much but ended up needing sameness here?

1. When feeling different is combined with insecurity or pain, or stress, it's very difficult.
2. Like at work, I felt so pressured, it affected my work and how I was at work.
3. In Australia people earned respect, didn't assume it. In the UK incompetent people could have power because of their class and I didn't have respect for them.
4. Back home they wouldn't have that power and couldn't assume that respect, it was a problem for me (P is comparing with home again).
5. I was used to working with efficient professionals and here the culture was to pretend you did nothing then work hard when no one was looking.
6. I didn't like the difference, the culture is based upon things I dislike intensely, class, the right university, a lot of my problems centred around those differences I really disliked.

The comfort of assuming commonality

1. I feel that comfort still when I go home to Australia, although it has changed immensely, but it's still my default position.
2. There's something so utterly comfortable and easy about being with my home people whether I like them or not.
3. It's something that's just like a sigh.
4. A friend and I talked about what we didn't like about being home and it didn't matter much to me because I was coming back here but it mattered to her because she was staying.
5. We both realised how English we'd become, how intrusive and personal they are back home.
6. I had been here long enough to be surprised by what used to be so familiar.
7. So the familiar becomes less familiar the more comfortable I get here.

8. I am much more comfortable here, so things change, but there it's a knowledge that the space between people is safe and known and not an issue.
9. I don't have to work out how to cross the distance between me and others.
10. At home I don't have to worry about those space issues, those environment issues, it's all comfortable and I can just get on with being me.
11. Me isn't me any more in Australia because I've lived here so long, but I relax still.
12. When I lived back home my friends had the same ideas as me, that was taken for granted, but here because I was travelling I encountered people I would never have socialised with back home, so my friends here are much wider.
13. And the difference between us only become apparent later because it's not against such a background of sameness.
14. It's really the overriding sense of familiarity and things being chilled that overrides everything else.

The experience of being home for 6 months

1. I have friends there that when we meet, after a long time, it seems it's only been yesterday and I don't have that here.
2. They were my first chosen friendships.
3. A difference showed up in some of the things I took for granted about ideas, they are more radical here and I'm used to that now, it's different from my friends back home now.
4. I'm becoming more English and that's OK, they give me more leeway than my partner, whose English.
5. There can be a lot of pressure to join in and to take part in things and to conform, especially if you're staying, not just visiting.
6. There's something about being Australian till the day I die because that's where I grew up and had all my formative early experiences.
7. The effect will be there the rest of my life even though going back is like the twilight zone, not too sure where you are but it's familiar, but is it Australian familiar or UK familiar?
8. And you don't know if you don't understand certain things because you haven't been home for 2 years, or if it's something that isn't there anyway, it's the other place.
9. When I drive it's automatic, I don't have to think about the route, though it's very complicated, it's like 15 years ago.
10. Like there's a kind of slipping one place into the other.
11. I even get certain accents confused when I'm there, is it Australian or British?
12. In Sydney I say home is London and in London I say home is Sydney, at my parents place home is Sydney and in Sydney I might call my parent's place home.
13. Home is always where I'm not. It may be where I can get to easily.
14. I think it ties back into the sense of wanting to be different, when I was there, wanting difference, but safe difference.

Always knew I'd travel

1. I always knew. And in Australia there's set times when you're expected to take a trip.
2. I decided to work and then leave so I could come back to a career with a little experience first.
3. It would also help to have some experience if I wanted to work overseas, and it has.

4. I didn't really assume I'd leave when I was younger, though I thought it would be nice to visit an aunt in Europe.
5. My parents travelled when I was young so that was always in the air.
6. My grandmother was always travelling to bizarre places since I was a child, so that was something around me.
7. None of my school friends travelled except to visit me here.
8. It was important for them to see how I lived here because my being here was an issue for them, they couldn't understand it.
9. A friend of mine, very Australian came to visit me here and her parents were both European and she picked up on the subtext thing much better than me, right away.

The reasons for leaving connected to family dynamics

1. I had a very domineering father and a terrible relationship with my mother during adolescence, they interfered.
2. I had strong bonds with them but I think I became myself as I am today because I could live away from them.
3. I didn't come all this way just to get away from them, but it was a side benefit.
4. But I did want to find out who I was without their interference, which was important.
5. I loved the life in Sydney it was very positive and I wanted to leave it when I felt that, so I could always go back and be happy there.
6. I didn't want to have to return because I couldn't get a job here, I wanted to be able to return and really love it there and I know that.
7. I wanted to travel more, so London was the place to go.
8. Politically things got worse and a lot of people left the country and fled to the UK and stayed, and there is more art and culture happening here.
9. And publishing was so much bigger here too, which was my work, though I hated it.
10. The time just extended till it was 7 years and I decided I'm staying.
11. My partner is British and we wouldn't consider going back to live there, which feels great.
12. When we go back it's quite clear it's just on holidays, because if I wanted to stay it would be much harder.

What's important about limiting the length of stay back home?

1. It's about what to expect, to have it set before going. If it was ever more than catching up with friends, I would go back with that in mind.
2. I would go back and say I'm going to live here, and I need a job, get organised, but it wasn't ever like that and it has felt fine, surprisingly.
3. My friend loves it back there now, after having to deal with her invasive family.
4. But that would be my issue too, all the reasons I've fallen out with my parents are about how they interfere, especially in my brother's finances.
5. My family loves being with the family, having dad look after his stocks.
6. My brother's 47 and I can't bear all that.
7. The thought of my father just moving in and taking over, wanting to know everything.
8. It takes me back to being 15 and powerless. I want distance from him.
9. I don't have to deal with that here. They come for intense visits and then leave and that's it. I tell them what I want to.
10. It would be difficult living near my parents with the relationship I have.
11. I guess it means I haven't really worked out why I've come all this way.

12. I'm much more confrontational with my parents and that really doesn't work.
13. I would say no to my father and he'd take that as rejection.
14. When I go home I just sigh and thank god I'm not staying because I don't have to work this all out then.

Intrusiveness and space

1. P's issue of intrusiveness with her father echoes her feelings of intrusiveness when sameness is assumed here in the UK, it's a bit like not having her space, not free anymore. P sees this, hadn't seen it at all but says it's interesting, then continues...
2. My partner is like almost completely disinterested in my life.
3. He doesn't think he should have anything to do with my life, he doesn't assume he should have any say in my decisions.
4. It annoys me but it also gives me a huge amount of freedom, he just doesn't get in there.
5. He's interested but totally neutral, it's a joy, though it has down sides.
6. Sometimes I'd like him to be more in there but it's interesting I've chosen a partner whose absolutely opposite to my father and my mother. I think it's significant.

The meaning of that freedom

1. It gives me the space to work out what I want.
2. The only way I could get that growing up was in conflict, to say no, it was always an issue to want your freedom.
3. I take him into account all the time but that comes from me, not his insistence.
4. I'm sure that's the reason I decided to move back here, it was just this heady sense of I can do whatever I like.
5. I decided what I wanted and told him I didn't want to travel to see him each weekend and he was fine, just tell me when to leave.
6. I don't have to worry about who I am all the time, constantly having someone in my face the whole time, overwhelming, intrusive.
7. I don't like people telling me what to do.
8. I feel I was brought up at someone's beck and call and I don't want that.
9. I'm happy to sit down and discuss with someone and be involved in the decision even if I don't agree with it.
10. When I'm not involved I just fight, earlier I just cried.
11. My brother got depressed and I took them on. And they never accepted that I was changing and growing.
12. I had to fight or turn into something that wasn't me. So home was all about fighting for me.

Early family

1. All I could be was resistance, no positive space, there was a sense of annihilation.
2. It was dreadful and has had a profound effect on me as an adult.
3. I didn't do what I wasn't allowed to do, partly due to my mother's violence.
4. I never hit her back and I wonder why didn't I? I was brought up never to hit and I didn't but I should have.
5. If I'd hit her she would have been shocked, I wish I had, and fought more, and run away more.
6. Looking back now I see things I could have done and I wonder why was I such a good little girl?

7. It's sad I was so good and brought up not to tell anyone about all this, till at 19 I told a shrink and thought God would strike me dead.
8. My father didn't know my mom was hitting me and I didn't tell him to avoid more conflict. Now I wish I told him, but I think I didn't because he probably wouldn't have done anything.

Connection to how life has gone

1. The whole violent thing still bothers me and how it makes me really black and white myself.
2. My parents spoke to me sometimes like you wouldn't speak to a dog and I sometimes do that when I'm tired.
3. I'm terrible with anger and my partner is not at all like that. And I had to cope with him turning into ice in front of me.
4. We finally realised that these ways come from our own families.
5. I've learned to allow a whole space for other's ideas and opinions.
6. My partner loves us having family dinners when my parents come to stay but for me it brings back years of adolescence, expecting to contribute to discussions when you're dying inside.

In your relationship you can provide difference for each other?

1. Yes, we're completely different. Opposites.
2. We have enough in common to keep us going but it's interesting.
3. The cultural thing gives us allowances, oh he's a Brit or she's an Aussie.
4. So we expect each other to be different.
5. It would be nice to have more commonality, what we love to do is very different.
6. He had puritanical working class values and in that sense my parents were freer and we each see value in the other's upbringing.

What's it been like since leaving home?

1. I immediately think what would it be like if I hadn't left home and I don't know.
2. Up until recently I think my life was fascinating, wonderful, and I was incredibly lucky.
3. I felt I had chosen so much of it, and chosen well.
4. Good partner, lots of travel, good friends, very privileged.
5. Then my partner became very depressed and I found that very difficult, I felt desperate.
6. The most wonderful thing is having choices. It doesn't matter if I make wrong or bad choices, I can just make another and I relish that.
7. Choice has been the theme of my life, whereas my partner sees choice as hell.
8. I don't think it's easy living as a foreigner in another culture, but it's also very privileged for me.
9. I didn't expect to find it this difficult though, or to end up with a Brit.
10. The relationship with my family has got more difficult even if I see them much less. I thought it would be so much easier seeing them so little.
11. Going home for so little time creates an even more pressured relationship while I'm there because there's so little time. That's been a difficult unintended consequence.
12. It feels like a loss to be living in a culture where women's relationships are not valued like back home, I miss those deep friendships.
13. There is a whole scene of social relationships, girlfriends and a network that I miss not having here.

14. That lack made it difficult when my partner was depressed, I didn't have those close relationships to have people to really talk to, I felt alone.

Ever think of returning home?

1. A lot, but short-term.
2. But if you told me I'd be living in London for the next 10 years I wouldn't like that either.
3. I still hold the image of being a perpetual traveller.
4. England is a more complicated culture and home is a little too easy and comfortable.
5. It is so beautiful there but it wouldn't be straightforward.
6. Sometimes I get an image of the sunset or a sunny day on the beach, the water, the people, a wonderful sensuous place.
7. Something about that's easy and I feel it's wrong, it's got to be complicated and tough.
8. I've lived here long enough to be relaxed here now, things are more familiar, I'll never quite fit in, or at home now either.
9. I'll never fit in anywhere now, completely, and I don't mind that now.
10. It's Ok because I don't want to fit in, people telling me to fit in, yuck.
11. I was at home and at the end of that year away, for the first time ever I got homesick for London.
12. It felt exciting because I could have that balance of loving being Australian and I could love being Australian in London. Finally it was OK to be different without comparing.
13. There's a sense of ease with that, what it means about being Australian here.

What's it feel like talking about this?

1. Interesting. I think about it all the time but not in this way.
2. Some of the links were interesting but I do feel quite shaky and raw, unstable.
3. A sense that some of it was quite deep and difficult to articulate.
4. Sometimes when I feel very alienated here I think I'm in exile, that's how it feels sometimes.
5. I'm an exile while I'm living here and this isn't what I signed up for.
6. I know it's not exile, it's a choice. Totally different than the sense of not choosing.
7. There's times I feel like saying I've immigrated, telling them back home, so there is that sense of who I am.
8. That feeling of shakiness, that's probably how I feel most of the time.
9. When things are difficult I find a sense of something to hold onto in me, something I recognise and value.
10. But I do have a dangerous ability to adapt.
11. I can be in a difficult situation and I'll find a way to adapt to find something good, and that's been of use.
12. The more important thing for me is not to adapt, to take a stand.
13. I have benchmarks for how bad it can get, to remind myself, offer perspective.
14. And when I'm with an Australian I can really connect with, like my friend who went back, I get a chance to draw contrasts between what it's like there and here.
15. Or when I go away and come back then I can see contrasts between things, I adapt when I'm living through it, so its only afterwards I can contrast it and see how difficult it was, for example.
16. Later, when I go home or meet an Australian and have the contrast, I might realise, yes, God, how awful.
17. I feel very teary and emotional now.

Leaving circumstances

1. My travels followed a custom but in an unc customary way, first getting a carrer and job experience, then travelling, but with a one-way ticket, hoping to stay longer, to work as well as travel.
2. I wanted to be open to whatever happens so I didn't want to be stuck with a return ticket, have the decision taken in advance. I wanted adventure.
3. After 2 years I returned for 7 months before buying another one-way ticket to the UK where I could work and travel from. To live open-ended in Europe.
4. I loved my home country, but also loved travel, wanted new experiences.
5. I was attracted to the Middle East and Africa, and wanted to work in Cairo or Rome but London is where I could get work.
6. It was a positive decision to explore what it would be like to live and work here but it was very difficult to leave after being home again for 7 months.

Other ideas around leaving

1. I loved the life in Sydney it was very positive and I wanted to leave it when I felt that, so I could always go back and be happy there.
2. I didn't want to have to return because I couldn't get a job here, I wanted to be able to return and really love it there and I know that.
3. Politically things got worse and a lot of people left the country and fled to the UK and stayed, and there is more art and culture happening here.
4. And publishing was so much bigger here too, which was my work, though I hated it.
5. The time just extended till it was 7 years and I decided I'm staying.

Attraction of travel

1. The attractive thing was to have a different culture, a different lifestyle, and the travel possibilities.
2. London didn't really attract me, it was just a place I could get work, where I had a flat all set up, some friends....
3. I love the theatre, concerts, music, there's a lot to enjoy here but basically the idea was that London was a place I could work to keep travelling.
4. It's interesting to ask myself what's attractive about travel.
5. I loved all the amazing history in Europe.
6. My partner was on the continent so we travelled a lot back and forth, I got sick of travelling and I don't care if we travel now or not unless we travel to Africa.
7. But the travelling lost it's appeal, I feel tired of the consumption of culture, I've had enough of it.

Difficulties of feeling different within assumed sameness

1. I was familiar with English culture I thought, it seemed familiar and similar to my home culture, but I realised here that there are very big differences though the language is the same.
2. It was so tiring trying to understand what was really going on.
3. Being Australian here was difficult and I didn't expect that, nor did anyone else and it was not acknowledged.
4. Travel was a respite from the confusion of not fitting in, it was difficult here with a stressful mix of sameness and difference, but easier in a non-english speaking place where I expect there to be misunderstandings.
5. I didn't have the expectation that I would understand when I was in other cultures, and they didn't either, we knew we were foreign and expected difficulties.
6. It was a relief to be where you expected to be different and were, it was clearer. I wasn't exposed to the inner workings of the English establishment when I was here before just travelling and doing odd jobs.

Baffling communication differences

1. I was mistaken for one of them but there were problems at work because I really did not understand their communication style.
2. I was meant to fit in, expected to be a Brit, but I wasn't and it was enormously stressful.
3. They couldn't label me according to my background, so they didn't know where I fit into their usual presumptions.
4. There were benefits, I could get away with things because they'd say I didn't know better, but then at the same time, when I didn't understand things, being Australian was not acknowledged as being different.
5. There's a huge difference being brought up in a very open culture and trying to fit into a very subtle one, where you never say what you mean, and I still don't understand the culture here.
6. Everyone else knows the subtleties, like my partner knows, and I'll ask, why not just say it this way, and of course you can't.
7. Growing up in a culture, that culture gives you meaning and you don't see that until you're put into a culture that seems very similar and you just don't understand.
8. There's so much misunderstanding across cultures. I still can't help but express my culture, people ask a question and I answer them right out.
9. It took my years to stop feeling exhausted by this, coping with subtexts that just go over your head. Funny that a friend of mine with European parents picked it up immediately when she visited the first time.
10. Now it's OK for me, it's changed, but dealing with unacknowledged difference is much more difficult than dealing with acknowledged difference.

Comparing with home culture

1. The other problem is that a comparison with home comes in, which doesn't come in with a foreign culture. It's allowed to be entirely different.
2. Here I say 'oh we don't do that back home' and in retrospect what you're really saying is I'm totally out of my depth here. There's nothing here I can grab onto, it's all familiar and yet different and I need something I know to grab onto.
3. Comparing is an attempt to anchor yourself in some kind of familiarity.
4. A friend got upset and precious and felt really misunderstood on a tennis court, and it was pivotal because I felt 'that's not me anymore!' It's interesting how even playing tennis has subtle important differences in different cultures.
5. They go together, the sense of panic from not understanding and wanting to, what's wrong that I don't understand, where I come from it's done like this, but I'm not there, I'm here and I better get used to it.
6. When feeling different is combined with insecurity, pain, or stress, it's very difficult, like it was for me at work.
7. Back home people earned respect, they didn't assume it, it was a problem for me that in the UK incompetent people could have power because of their class and I didn't have respect for them (P is comparing with home again).
8. I was used to working with efficient professionals and here the culture was to pretend you did nothing then work hard when no one was looking.
9. I didn't like the difference, the culture here is based upon things I dislike intensely, class, the right university, a lot of my problems centred around those differences I really disliked.
10. Australian men are different too, very upfront, and I could tell where they grew up, etc. and it felt good to have that level of familiarity with a culture again.

Comfort and familiarity

1. Being able to assume a degree of commonality is so comfortable and I feel it still when I go home even though it's changed a lot, it's still my default position.
2. It's like a deep sigh to be with people from my home culture.
3. It's an overriding sense of familiarity and things being chilled but in ways I'm becoming more English and noticing different things about my own culture from this point of view, for example, intrusiveness. I had been here long enough to be surprised by things I used to take for granted at home.
4. The familiar becomes less familiar the more comfortable I get here, so things change.
5. Me isn't me anymore back home because I've lived here so long, but it's still more relaxing there.
6. At home the space between people is known better and feels safer and I don't have to work out how to cross the distance between me and others, I can just get on with being me.
7. My friends at home were very similar to me and that was taken for granted but travelling has introduced me to people I would not have known back home, a wider network of ideas and difference that emerges slowly.
8. The things I don't like about home don't matter because I'm only visiting but to a friend re-settling there, they mattered.

Shifting realities of home

1. My first chosen friendships are at home and it's like yesterday when we meet and I don't have that here.
2. But I'm noticing a difference, I assume more radical ideas because I'm used to that here and it's a difference from my friends back home.
3. I'm becoming more English and that's OK. I notice the pressure to conform there.
4. I'll always be Australian because that's where I grew up and had all my formative experiences.
5. Although the effect will always be there, going back is now like a twilight zone, it's familiar but not always clear if it's home familiar or UK familiar.
6. There's a slipping of one place into another, not always sure if misunderstandings are because you've been away or because it's something from the reality of the other place.
7. I can still drive a complicated route there without thinking, but certain accents are confusing, it is UK or Australian?
8. Home is always where I'm not, in Sydney I say home is London and in London I say home is Sydney, at my parents place home is Sydney and in Sydney I might call my parent's place home.
9. Somehow this ties into the sense of always wanting to be different when I was growing up there, but a safe difference.

Always knew I'd travel

1. I always knew I'd travel. In Australia there's set times when you're expected to take a trip but I decided to work first so I could come back to a career and it would help to work overseas, and it has.
2. I didn't really assume I'd leave when I was younger, though I thought it would be nice to visit an aunt in Europe.
3. My parents travelled when I was young so that was always in the air and my grandmother was always travelling to bizarre places since I was a child, so that was something around me.
4. None of my school friends travelled except to visit me here and it was important for them to see how I lived here because my being here was an issue for them, they couldn't understand it.

Family relationships connected to leaving

1. My father was domineering and my mother violent, both interfering, I think I became myself as I am today because I could live away from them.
2. I didn't come all this way just to get away from them, but I did want to find out who I was without their interference, it was an important side benefit.
3. If I ever moved back I'd have to deal with my invasive family and we've often fallen out over that.
4. I can't bear that my grown brother lets my father control his finances.

5. It would be difficult living near my parents, it takes me back to being 15 and powerless, my father would take over and want to know everything. I like the distance of not having to deal with that here.
6. I've taken a more confrontational line with my parents than my brother and that doesn't work, my father takes that as rejection.
7. When I go home I thank god I'm not staying because it means I don't have to work all this out. I guess that means I haven't really worked out why I've come all this way.
8. P's issue of intrusiveness with her father echoes her feelings of intrusiveness when sameness is assumed here in the UK, it's a bit like not having her space, not free anymore. P sees this, hadn't seen it at all but says it's interesting.

Early family difficulties

1. My family experiences, especially around adolescence, were dreadful and have had a profound effect on me as an adult.
2. My mother was violent and I deeply wish I had hit her back, fought more, run away, she would have been shocked.
3. Why was I such a good girl, all I could do was resist, there was no positive space, there was a sense of annihilation.
4. It's sad I was so good and was afraid to tell anyone till I was 19 and told a shrink.
5. I didn't tell my father to avoid further conflict but I wish I had, though he probably wouldn't have done anything.
6. My brother got depressed and I took them on. And they never accepted that I was changing and growing.
7. I had to fight or turn into something that wasn't me. So home was all about fighting for me.

The role of family and difference in current relationship

1. My partner and I realised that some of our dynamics come from our family upbringings.
2. The violence from my family still affects me and makes me think in black and white but I've learned to allow space for other's ideas and opinions.
3. I'm terrible with anger and my partner is the opposite, he turns to ice.
4. My parents spoke to me showing no respect and I sometimes do the same to him when I'm tired.
5. My partner loves us having family dinners when my parents come to stay but for me it brings back years of adolescence, expecting to contribute to discussions when you're dying inside.
6. My partner doesn't believe he should have any say in my life, seems disinterested, and it annoys me but gives me a huge amount of freedom, so unlike at home.
7. He's so neutral and sometimes I'd like him to be more in there but it's interesting I've chosen a partner whose absolutely opposite to my father and my mother. I think it's significant.

8. We're completely different, opposites, but with enough in common to keep us going.
9. The cultural differences give us each allowances, so we expect each other to be different but it would be nice to have more commonality, what we love to do is very different.
10. We had very different upbringings and see value in each other's family experiences.

The importance of freedom and choice

1. Freedom gives me the space to work out what I want.
2. The only way I could get that growing up was in conflict, to say no, it was always an issue to want your freedom.
3. I'm sure that's the reason I decided to move back here, it was just this heady sense of I can do whatever I like.
4. Like in my relationship, I take my partner into account all the time but that comes from me, not his insistence and I'm free to decide what's right for me.
5. I don't have to worry about who I am all the time, constantly having someone in my face the whole time, overwhelming, intrusive.
6. I don't like people telling me what to do and I feel I was brought up at someone's beck and call and I don't want that.
7. I'm happy to sit down and discuss with someone and be involved in the decision even if I don't agree with it but when I'm not involved and just told, then I just fight, and earlier in life I just cried.
8. The most wonderful thing is having choices. It doesn't matter if I make wrong or bad choices, I can just make another and I relish that.
9. Choice has been the theme of my life, whereas my partner sees choice as hell.

The experience since leaving home

1. I immediately think what would it be like if I hadn't left home and I don't know.
2. Up until recently I think my life was fascinating, wonderful, and I was incredibly lucky I felt I had chosen so much of it, and chosen well.
3. Good partner, I didn't expect to end up with a Brit, lots of travel, good friends, very privileged.
4. When my partner became very depressed I found that very difficult, I felt desperate.
5. I don't think it's easy living as a foreigner in another culture, but it's also very privileged for me.
6. The relationship with my family has got more difficult even if I see them much less. I thought it would be so much easier seeing them so little.
7. Going home for so little time creates an even more pressured relationship while I'm there because there's so little time. That's been a difficult unintended consequence.
8. It feels like a loss to be living in a culture where women's relationships are not valued like back home, I miss those deep friendships. There is a whole scene of social relationships, girlfriends and a network that I miss not having here.

9. That lack made it difficult when my partner was depressed, I didn't have those close relationships to have people to really talk to, I felt alone.

Ever consider returning home?

1. A lot, but short-term, my partner and I wouldn't consider going back to live there, which feels great.
2. When we go back it's quite clear it's just on holidays, because if I wanted to stay it would be much harder.
3. It's about what to expect, to have it set before going. If it was ever more than catching up with friends, I would go back with that in mind.
4. But if you told me I'd be living in London for the next 10 years I wouldn't like that either, I still hold the image of being a perpetual traveller.
5. England is a more complicated culture and home is a little too easy and comfortable, for some reason it's got to be complicated and tough..
6. Sometimes I get an image of the sunset or a sunny day on the beach, the water, the people, a wonderful sensuous place. It is so beautiful there but it wouldn't be straightforward to move back.
7. I've lived here long enough to be relaxed here now, things are more familiar, I'll never quite fit in, or at home now either, I'll never fit in anywhere now, completely, and I don't mind that.
8. It's Ok because I don't want to fit in, people telling me to fit in, yuck.
9. I was at home and at the end of that year away, for the first time ever I got homesick for London which felt exciting because I could have that balance of loving being Australian and I could love being Australian in London. Finally it was OK to be different without comparing.
10. There's a sense of ease with that, what it means about being Australian here.

Adaptation and contrast

1. I do have a dangerous ability to adapt and the more important thing for me is not to adapt, to take a stand.
2. I can be in a difficult situation and I'll find a way to adapt to find something good, and that's been of use.
3. But when I go away and come back then I can see contrasts between things, I adapt when I'm living through it, so its only afterwards I can contrast it and see how difficult it was, for example.
4. I have benchmarks for how bad it can get, to remind myself, offer perspective.
5. And when I'm with an Australian I can really connect with, like my friend who went back, I get a chance to draw contrasts between what it's like there and here.
6. Later, when I go home or meet an Australian and have the contrast, I might realise, yes, God, how awful.

The feelings of the interview

1. Interesting. I think about it all the time but not in this way.

2. Some of the links were interesting but I do feel quite shaky and raw, unstable.
3. A sense that some of it was quite deep and difficult to articulate.
4. Sometimes when I feel very alienated here I think I'm in exile, that's how it feels sometimes, like I'm an exile while I'm living here and this isn't what I signed up for.
5. I know it's not exile, it's a choice. Totally different than the sense of not choosing.
6. There's times I feel like saying I've immigrated, telling them back home, so there is that sense of who I am.
7. That feeling of shakiness, that's probably how I feel most of the time.
8. When things are difficult I find a sense of something to hold onto in me, something I recognise and value.
9. I feel very teary and emotional now.

“Sarah” Themes

1. Leaving circumstances

- In P’s country it is customary for young people to travel for a year and then return home. P says she followed this custom but with important variations, first she secured a career and work experience, then she left but with a one-way ticket. The impression is she was preparing for a longer stay away from her country.
- P reports she loves her home country but also wanted to travel in a way that she was not limited by time. She wanted adventure and new experiences she could not get at home.
- P returned home for a summer with the intention that she would return to London to live without limitation. She experienced this as both a positive and a painful decision, to explore another culture was valued but leaving her home country was very difficult. London was seen as the best option for earning money and continuing her travel adventures.
- The manner of leaving and returning can be very important. P wanted to leave home when she felt very positive about it and didn’t want to be forced to return out of lack of work. She wanted to maintain the love of her own home city but emphasising the choice to leave and return under positive circumstances.
- P says that her time away ‘just extended’ and it wasn’t until 7 years away that she decided ‘I’m staying’. Although she had been staying all this time, there had to be a conscious choice at some point, a declaration that in fact she was doing this. The meaning of this is unclear.

2. Feelings about travel

- Although P loved all that London had to offer, the most attractive thing about London was she would work and travel from there easily. She is not sure what she finds so attractive about travel but it includes liking different cultures, exposure to history, and different lifestyles.
- The attraction of travel can lose its appeal and begin to feel like an empty consumption of culture. After a period of frequent travelling to visit her partner, P realised that she no longer enjoyed travelling to these places. She would however still be excited about travelling somewhere very different, like Africa.

3. Difficulty of dealing with unexpected and unacknowledged cultural differences

- Living long-term in London, in permanent work, exposed P to different layers of the culture and to totally unexpected difficulties in communication. She thought she was familiar with English culture and that it was similar to her own, but she found she could not understand what was really going on in the workplace.
- On the one hand P was mistaken for one of them and her different culture was not taken into account, which was enormously stressful when it was impossible to follow the nuances of the local culture. On the other hand at times her difference was acknowledged, they couldn’t locate her according to cultural stereotypes and they made allowances when she broke hierarchical rituals. So it was confusing when she was one of them and when she wasn’t.
- P now sees there is a huge difference between her open culture and the English subtle one. She feels that growing up in a culture gives you certain meanings that you don’t see until you encounter a culture that

seems similar but is impossible to navigate. It took P years to stop feeling exhausted by the effort to try to understand this difference and now it's OK for her and she has accepted that she will always express her own native culture.

- Dealing with unacknowledged difference has been much more difficult for P than dealing with acknowledged difference. In non-English foreign cultures there was no confusion, no expectation of fitting in. Foreignness was obvious, expected, and acknowledged and this was a relief for P. Travel was a respite from the confusing and stressful mix of sameness and difference she experienced in London.

4. The meaning of comparison with the home culture

- In a culture that is somewhat similar to the home culture, comparisons between the two begin, which is less likely if the other culture is entirely foreign, it's allowed to be entirely foreign.
- There is a panic about not understanding if one expects to, so one flees to the familiar and blames the other culture for not being like home. It is hard to accept these differences, to accept that one is here, not back home. If feeling different is combined with insecurity and stress, like in a work environment, it is especially difficult and comparison is a way to cope.
- Comparing can be an attempt to anchor oneself in a kind of familiarity when feeling out of one's depth. When it's all familiar and yet different it can be disturbing and grabbing something known and straightforward is reassuring. When observing a friend do this P was able to realise that she was no longer in that phase of adapting, things had moved on for her.
- When differences between the home and new culture also involve a difference in respected values, the comparison can be more longstanding. P did not like the work culture here based upon class and status rather than merit. This conflicted with her own values and the values she knew from home. There was a different attitude to work and this created conflict for P in her workplace. Not all differences are purely cultural it seems.

5. Shifting attachments of home

- P's first chosen friendships are all at home and they retain a special significance. Travel has exposed her to people she would never have chosen as friends at home, where there is more difference and not just similarity. P notices she assumes more radical shared ideas because of the influence of friendships here and that introduces a difference to her old friendships at home.
- P's home culture remains her 'default position' although much has changed there, she can still assume a deep commonality that is very comfortable and it's a relief to be with people from her home culture. She notices that the space between people is negotiated in a way that she knows and feels safe and she can concentrate on just being herself.
- Although P says she'll always be Australian because she had her formative experiences there, she notices she is becoming more English and she feels OK about that. She now notices different things about her home culture, the pressure to conform, the intrusiveness, things she used to take for granted are standing out as surprises. The familiar becomes less familiar the more comfortable she gets in London.

- Though she still feels more relaxed at home, P says ‘me isn’t me anymore back home’ because she’s lived so long in London. There’s a slippage of one place into the other, going back is like a twilight zone where what’s familiar might be from a home association or from London, and misunderstandings might be due to P being away for years or because it’s something rooted in her London reality.
 - P says ‘home is always where I’m not’, in Sydney she says home is London and in London she says home is Sydney, at her parents place home is Sydney and in Sydney she might call her parent’s place home. P says that somehow this ties into the sense of always wanting to be different when she was growing up there, but a safe difference. Like being able to proclaim I’m from somewhere else introduces a uniqueness for P, and a distance from what can happen at home?
 - P admits that she can overlook things she does not like about her home place because she is just visiting, this would be different if she was considering re-settling there. She notices she can return home after a long absence and still drive a complicated route without thinking. So while recent changes might confuse her, like is that an Australian or UK accent, there remains a deep knowing in her of her home place.
6. Expectation of travel but not moving
- P always knew she would travel but this is partially connected to the cultural expectations of young people in Australia. However, P postponed her travel experience in order to manage a sustained departure, open-ended tickets and acquiring work experience first, were two differences.
 - P didn’t assume she would leave home when she was younger. Her parents and grandmother travelled when she was younger so it existed as a possibility. None of P’s school friends have travelled though many of her work mates have. Many of her school friends visited P in London to try to understand her living there.
7. Family relationships and effects on later choices
- P’s family experiences, especially around adolescence where deeply difficult and have affected her profoundly as an adult. Her father is domineering and her mother was violent and P took a more confrontational approach to them than her brother did, but it did not work well.
 - P continues to regret not being more active, perhaps violent, towards her mother. She wonders why she continued to be such a good girl in spite of her circumstances and the contradictory behavior of her mother. All P could do was resist, she could not develop any positive space of her own, there was a sense of annihilation for P.
 - It’s sad for P that she was so good in her responses to family life and that she kept the secret of her mother’s violence, not telling her father and finally telling a mental health professional only when she was 19. She was afraid to tell anyone and thought her father wouldn’t do anything anyway. P’s parents never accepted that she was growing and changing so she had to fight or turn into something that wasn’t her. She has become herself as she is today only because she has been able to live away from their influence.

- P makes it clear that she did not move all this way just to get away from her parents, but it was an important side benefit to be able to find out who she was free from their intrusions.
 - P is aware that if she ever moved back she would have to deal with her parents and it would be very difficult living near them. She feels herself become a powerless 15 year old again and she likes not having to deal with that because she lives in London. When P visits home she is relieved she's not staying because it frees her from having to deal with the family dynamics. For P this means that she hasn't really worked out the reasons she has moved so far away.
 - P's issues of intrusiveness with her father echo her feelings of intrusiveness when sameness is assumed here in the UK. The experience is also one of not having her space, to be herself, to feel free to chose her own being. P acknowledges this connection and had not seen it before.
8. Dynamics of current relationship
- P and her partner recognise that their relationship is affected by each of their early family experiences, which in many ways were opposite. They find that they value aspects of what the other experienced in their upbringing. These differences are within the context of coming from different cultures, so there is an expectation that they will have different values and responses to situations.
 - P expresses a desire to have more commonality in the relationship, at least in shared interests and activities. Although they are opposites, P feels they have enough in common to keep them together.
 - An important difference between P's partner and her family experience is that he does not expect to have any impact on her life decisions, he can seem so disinterested that it annoys P, but she values the difference of having so much freedom. P thinks it's significant that she's chosen the opposite extreme to her father and mother in a partner.
9. The value of freedom and choice
- Freedom is highly valued by P because it gives her the space to decide for herself, and making choices it the theme of her life. Having a choice and making it for herself is experienced as wonderful, whether it's a bad choice or not is irrelevant.
 - In her family, wanting freedom was always an issue and could only be won grudgingly through conflict and resistance. P is certain the reason she decided to move back to London after her 2 years of travel was because of the 'heady' sense of being able to do what she wants. She doesn't have to worry about who she is all the time, constantly battle against being overwhelmed. Even in her relationship P experiences significant freedom and minimum intrusion.
 - P feels she was brought up at her parents beck and call and she does not react well to being told what to do. She needs the experience of being involved in decisions, having had a say, she can carry out the decision even if she disagrees with it. If decisions are imposed, she rebels, all she can do is fight.
10. Adapting and the usefulness of contrast
- Contrary to the themes of freedom and choice, P also experiences in herself a 'dangerous' ability to adapt rather than take a stand. She notices how she will find a way to adapt, find something good, in even the most difficult situations.

- Leaving the situation for another situation, or place, allows P the contrast to evaluate her adaptations. She adapts to what she is living through and only sees that clearly afterwards, when she has greater perspective.
- P has benchmarks of difficulty to try to remind herself and provide perspective, but she often gets greater clarity from contrasting her experiences with a fellow countryperson she can connect with.
- When P goes home, or meets another Australian, she gets contrast to evaluate what she has been experiencing here and might think 'how awful', but this allows her the space to decide again.

11. Experiences and surprises since leaving

- When asked what it's been like since leaving home, P immediately finds herself wondering what it would have been like if she'd stayed, and she stayed and she can't answer this.
- Until recently P felt she has chosen a life that was fascinating and she felt privileged. She has valued her friendships and travel experiences and is surprised she ended up with a British partner. She felt desperate when he became depressed and would not go through that experience again.
- P would not say it's easy living as a foreigner in another culture. She lacks the strong female relationships and social network encouraged at home and this makes her feel very alone when there is a crisis here. She is surprised that visiting home creates such a time pressure that her relationship with her family can be more difficult, whereas she expected it to get easier with the lack of contact.

12. Thoughts of home, but not of returning

- It is much easier visiting home when it is clear that returning is not an option. P thinks a lot about returning short-term but it is never a consideration to move back, and this feels easier for her. However it's not about feeling settled in London as she holds a self-image of being a perpetual traveller and would be equally unhappy to think she would stay here for the next 10 years.
- P finds England a more difficult and complicated culture and somehow that is more satisfying. Her homeland is beautiful and her own culture is very easy and somehow that makes it too comfortable, though she realises it would not be straightforward if she had to return to live there.
- P has lived in London long enough to be relaxed here now, things are more familiar, but she knows she will never quite fit in, or at home now either. P feels she'll never fit in anywhere now, completely, and she doesn't mind that because she doesn't want to fit in as that means people telling her to fit in, which she detests.
- During a year at home, for the first time ever, P got homesick for London which felt exciting because it meant to her she could have that balance of loving being Australian and love being Australian in London. Finally it was OK to be different without comparing. There's a sense of ease with that, what it means about being Australian here.

13. Feelings of the interview

- 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.
- At the end of the interview P felt very tearful and emotional and expressed a desire to go someplace secluded and cry.