

Interview: Pierre

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Transcriber: Myla Corvidae

Attendance:

Lucia Ruggerone – LR

Charlie Hackett – CH

Pierre

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised.

***CH: Right, Anyway yeah so listen it's really nice to meet you and listen your drawing is amazing. Would you mind if I share it? Is that ok?***

P: Yeah, just give me a minute though I've got the door open, I'm away to shut it.

***CH: Yeah don't worry that's fine.***

P: [*sigh – nervous*] see myself, bad hair day.

***CH: Can you guys see that?***

***LR: Yes, we can now. So I guess we can start from here actually, because this is quite an impressive piece of artwork and I took out my magnifying lense to try and read both the rows there and I did manage to read most of it. I have to admit but there are some words I couldn't read there.***

P: [*nervous*] I have a terrible handwriting but I thought it would be authentic.

***LR: No, no but, no it's fine I mean I.***

***CH: It's really fun, it's, it's cool. Is it meant to be a prison?***

P: Yeah it's our houses. So houses are just prisons. In in many senses.

***LR: Yeah, Can you, can you talk us talk us through you're uh.***

P: Yeah I mean it just kind of came to me as a blurb, you know there was a bit of tidying up done but yeah just this whole feeling that we're tied to our houses and this kind of usual ties that you have in life that are meaningless, but we just seem to hang onto it because that's all we have like having a house. Being, walking just by your house, most conventional way of life. So I think there was a bit of an idea behind that we don't have the freedom and you kind of the whole lockdown issue, probably made me think more about this. By why the usual, I guess it's not new a lot of people have the same questions you know, why are we doing this for? Just to have a house at the end and then that's it, tie ourselves down.

***LR: So you mean having the house ties you down or?***

P: Just going to work to pay a mortgage for so many years of your life [*amused chuckle*], just to have a house at the end and do nothing or, not everybody does you know, and then what do you do? You have a house, well done. [*sarcasm -laughing*] And you've I guess not everyone in the same situation but for us you know many things we don't do because of the house. There's things we don't do financially there's things we don't do with free time because the house needs attention. You know maintenance, garden, things like this and it kind of makes you think when you're in your house all day long actually is it necessary you know. Where it would be nicer to escape, I guess if you're not in your house every day it's nice to come back to it of course but uh yeah [*pensive/tired sigh*] it brought a few questions, I guess.

**CH: Yeah, for me lockdown was a bit like that as well. I felt imprisoned completely like totally.**

P: See this is the other thing I've got on my drawing at I don't know how to kind of. There's a few things in there that. It's funny because you do art and I've done art before, I mean I'm not an artist but you do art and you kind of find meanings in what you do which is what I've always liked about art once you start understanding the person who's done it and their history and how they've come to that development [*sounding happy*]. Certainly see this through some of the work ... shows me of some of the students and how their work evolves. For me it was the coin's got two sides, the person's got an angry face but the back of their face is actually a smile. You know this contrast, there's always two sides of everything and that's is how I felt all through lockdown. [*sounding pensive/more serious*] I was happy to be at home then also wasn't. I was happy not to be at work and not to see people but I wasn't and you know there was always a new kind of thing that made me think more about you know why am I walking and how I feel about walking and why do I walk and it's nice to be home and be with the kids all day long but actually it's also nice when you don't see them and appreciate them more otherwise after a few hours together you kind of struggle a bit. So kind of an idea about space as well.

**LR: So, are you saying that the lockdown and having to be at home made you reflect or reconsider what home means or was it something you were already thinking before the lockdown?**

P: No that's something I was thinking about before, as I get older I guess, as the kids are getting a bit older now, you know, what is home? I've always said always thought home is what you make with it and I've always said you know obviously over the past few years working in an engineering kind of background with the oil issues that there has been you know it's always been quite clear that I would give up my home tomorrow just to continue having my family around me. So it's not that important to me in a way, but it's certainly for as long as we have the kids here and to set them up with what they want to do. It's important to have that place and financial asset I would say.

**LR: Ok but you seem to experience that, well, reading into your artwork you even wrote there home sweet home but it's home sweet jail and then [*inaudible*] in the home.**

P: [*laughs - remembering*]

**LR: So you seem to be swinging between these two meanings or two.**

P: Yeah I'd say it's very contrasted. Yeah I do feel kind of prisoner you there's no escape, we have made a commitment to kind of made the mortgage and pay it and with the lockdown things are certainly not looking great for any change of life unless you're forced into it. I would say pretty sure that people who have safe walk space and safe environment will want to keep it that way. I don't think it's just lockdown I think Brexit as well is bringing a lot of issues in terms of being able to move

freely or to find other work. So I'm kind of conscious that I'm tied to it. It is nice to be able to have a home and afford it and so on but it is also a commitment which is a prison.

**CH: I love the detail of your guy with the chain on the money, it's so cool.**

**LR: But have Brexit and Covid made you feel, swing more towards the prison option or the prison.**

P: I think no, I think I have been very contrasted, I've kind of enjoyed lockdown in a way, it has had loads of advantages you know being with the family every day, being home every day, not having to run around you know like a headless chicken. To meet all the commitments of the children and be in one place and then rush to finish work and then going another place and so on so. It has brought quite a lot of time I think time to reflect. That's why there's a mirror in the house as well. [laughing]

**LR: Oh right that's a mirror ok.**

P: Yes it's not a family portrait [laughing]

[Everyone laughs]

**LR: And it's not a window with someone peeping in.**

[Everyone laughs]

P: No it's a mirror sorry it's a very [inaudible].

**CH: It's very ornate mirror in the prison.**

P: So yeah, I think that for me was yeah, to kind of express the fact that I've had time to reflect. It's not been in depth it was more when you asked me to do some artwork and actually I just thought you know those have sort of lingering there. It's not an issue it's not made me well or unwell or I've not thought about it in that depth but I certainly feel that lockdown has been a time of good things and more difficult things but for me overall it's been pretty much easier. I mean I'm due to go back to work next week and I'm just not looking forward to it.

**CH: Same here.**

P: I was going to say I don't miss my colleagues but be careful what you say Charlie.

[Everyone laughs]

**CH: I see you got I hate the Torry government written on a sticker above, why's that.**

P: It's just because it's been bugging me now for months. I'm a pro independent nearly Scottish person I will have been in Scotland, next year 24 years which will be the same amount of time I spent in France. I certainly am not associating myself to any kind of country but I just feel that the amount of Torrie (conservatives) that is governing Scotland is just despicable.

**LR: You mean the Torries in Westminster or?**

P: Yes Westminster also, I would not make friends with most Torries that live nearby my home. I know a few people who are Torries, you can't put everyone in the same box, some of them don't like the Westminster government either but no and all the media bias and everything. I hear people saying they believe in conspiracy theories and actually they don't look at the newspaper who are more of the left side of things like the independent and the guardian, you know things aren't reported in the same way as the BBC or the rubbish tabloids. Yeah, I find very much more politically involved lately in my life.

**LR: Is that an effect of what happened recently like Brexit and Covid put together or just one of the two factors or?**

P: Ah yes, certainly those two things are kind of a bigger issue. I mean I've never liked those governments from that kind of government. Certainly when you read about the Covid effect that rich people are getting much much richer and we are all being told to prepare for more austerity when those people are packing millions and it's difficult to understand why we haven't had a Revolution yet. I've found that completely that Scottish people are just so passive.

**LR: Scottish in particular or English in general.**

P: I think maybe the English, I don't know maybe a British thing yeah. I normally would be putting tonnes cow dung and burning tyres in front of Westminster but you can't do that you'll go to jail. It is a messy state at creation.

**LR: From what you write, you seem to having reflected a lot on democracy. There's something that you wrote, it's about the media and how it affect democracy. It's almost like you're saying something about the media and...**

P: None of those quotes are from me they're mostly from Noam Chomsky. [Laughing]

**LR: Ok wow yeah.**

P: I kind of like what he wrote and I kind of feel that it's all true. Many things are so true. The other quote I think is from Rousseau, premises of declaration of human rights.

**LR: There's one thing I wanted to ask you about what you wrote because I can't understand it very well. I understand it but I would like you to elaborate a little bit more because it's interesting. When you say that the smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit but to allow very lively debate. But you're talking about the spectrum of acceptable opinion. So, what is acceptable opinion, what are the borders of acceptable opinion?**

P: Well, I don't know I guess, everybody can define their own in a way. You there were so many things, the kind of easiest example that comes to mind is that you know all those things about planting trees. We should be very active about planting trees to save the planet but it's actually a minor impact and we should look at the oceans first. However people don't understand that so you let people debate about planting trees and make it you know first thing on the news, very important everywhere you go. You say planting trees is the best thing to do so it's in that kind of same breath I would say, you allow people to talk about meaningless things. You let them debate it very very actively and actually it stops them from asking the right questions. I think it's the same thing that the Tory government is doing. We have a lot of things happening that people are not aware of. Law's being passed but not being mentioned in any media, and instead we are debating some comment about coal mining in Scotland. You know this distracts people, makes them angry. I mean was those things happening in the background that nobody is picking up on.

**LR: Yeah, and has this been affected or exacerbated by Brexit and Covid do you think?**

P: I don't know I've not really thought about it like this. It's become very much a Tory issue but yes I guess it's same for Covid.

**LR: So is Brexit. I'm sorry to interrupt you.**

P: I think it's people are discussing things that you know aren't really that important. The whole Covid issue I guess, in the way it would affect me and the way it would affect other people is very

different. I mean I wouldn't be bothered if the pubs did not reopen but that's personal. I think there's a lot of debate on issues of Covid and the management of the crisis that is being brought up to us and debated and talked about when there has been so many other things happening like dodgy contracts being involved and money being made that's not being discussed at all. That are bigger issues I mean it's constant programme of pointing the finger. I think people don't understand when we spent thirty seven billion on a trace and the system. People do not understand what a billion is, they don't they just cannot fathom how big it is I mean and to this money you could make a new tunnel under the channel three times for the same amount of money. I mean we don't seem to talk about this, I don't know if it's BBC media bias but I just feel kind of often feel this. People talk about things that are to me not very important but they talk about it a lot and it's important to them or they don't understand the other issues that are current.

**CH: Pierre was kind of interested as well in your drawing in terms of the prison space and the home space. How did you feel when your parents? You're parents are in France are they not?**

P: yes.

**CH: And you were stuck at home, how did you cope with that?**

P: Yeah I mean it's been difficult, I know that we're always well. So they both got covid, and my mother is suffering from the effect of long covid at the moment which has been really difficult. She has been in quite a deep depression as well as being extremely tired and she has also head issues. In a way I always knew being there wouldn't help because of the risks of you know I could bring another variant or something and it's not even been any point, any need to go there. Certainly normally we would have visited them last year but we didn't and we would have visited them this year instead but we didn't so it's [voice breaking – upset] been difficult not to go there and spend time but the technology has certainly helped. It's been interesting to see people from that generation just getting really into video calling and how it's become important to them. I think for us it's something we use regularly, certainly I do. For my parents it's been a novelty and it's helped them a lot and it's been a good thing and a nice thing to do. I haven't, the fact that I chose to live here is still something I haven't made peace with [upset] but I cannot be and see them every few weeks or few months as if I was living in France. I mean I could be living in France even further away than in Scotland compared to where they are so.

**LR: Do you think that, what you were saying before about democracy and about the media. As a European do you find any differences between the situation here and the situation of Europe, or would you generalise your answer to mainland Europe.**

P: Yeah I'm not quite fully aware of what's happening in Europe in terms of politics and so on so I certainly couldn't comment. Also I'm sure corruption and everything it just as common in other countries you know when there's money to be made people will always use situations to do it. Certainly I know that things in France are not easy and I'm not sure the Government has managed the crisis very well and the only comment is quite interesting is to see how as being part of Europe each country has had to deal with it differently and I'm not sure being part of the European Union has been a strength for all of the countries. I don't know I don't really have that much of, I don't quite look as how other countries have done. When you look at the figures for you know the amount of people that have died the UK is really quite high so there are some things they haven't done that they could have done better in terms of closing borders and stopping flights and so on. Which Europe seems to have managed better.

**LR: You said you made peace with living here, I think I would like you to elaborate a little bit on it.**

P: Yeah, I mean.

**LR: Personal interest as well.**

P: Yeah I mean I'm kind of you know fully aware my family my grandmother is still alive and very old she's over 90 but also in pretty good health but my mother it's not in a great health and my father has had heart issues. Minor but still it kind of reminds you that things are not forever. So you know I kind of I know that at some point I will be faced with making a journey to France to see someone who is hopefully convalescing rather than attend a funeral but it's just a choice when you live abroad. Not to be around my family I don't feel I've needed them so its not you know. It's been nice to see them and spend time with my sister and nieces and so on but I'm certainly not somebody who would spend every weekend around my family. It's me I guess, as a person how I am, it's also how I've become from not being able to do it you know. I don't really know but I'm certainly not thinking I've made a bad choice it's been a choice and it's been just my life. It would have been difficult I guess under full Covid restrictions to have to make a journey and you know if I had to go and see someone in France it certainly would have made. There would have been more questions you know. Do I really need to go and how will everybody feel if I don't turn up when I could. It's just a difficult one. *[sounding down and sad]*

**LR: So you haven't been in France for over a year.**

P: No, not since I think 2019 we went there. When did the crisis start I've forgotten now, I'm not good with dates.

**LR: Early 2019.**

**CH: March 2019.**

**LR: No, 2020.**

P: 2020. I think so we were in France the summer of 2019, and thereafter normally we would have a holiday in Scotland so we didn't have a holiday last year and this year we managed to have one in Scotland. Now with all the restrictions lifted I am looking *[sounding more upbeat – hopeful]* at maybe to then spend some time in October but Charlie would have to cover for ... so I'm not sure of it.

*[Everyone laughs]*

P: So I might make a journey, I might consider it this year, maybe just on my own.

**LR: Did Brexit make you feel differently about your home in Scotland and if and how. Did Brexit impact you in any way?**

P: Oh yeah my work is hell now. *[laughing]*

**LR: Your work is what sorry?**

P: My work is hell, trying to get goods delivered and everything, yeah Brexit is yeah. Brexit makes me very angry because it's going to cost this country so much money and so many years and it's taking away so many opportunities for young people to travel. *[sad – resigned]* It is such a big mistake and the fact that it wasn't, you know the whole turning everything upside down by the government to say that the reason Brexit is a problem is because of the remainers because they didn't go and vote for example you know swinging things around. *[Upset]* Being sold some silly figures and just yeah. It's just, the impact is going to be for years on it's going to affect our way of life you know. The bills

are going to increase, price of food is going to increase. I don't think there's going to be any benefit in terms of business so I think it just everything is a loss.

**LR: Did that have a bigger impact on your relationship with this country. It's not your original country.**

P: I don't see Scotland as part of the UK. If Scotland became independent next year I would apply for citizenship. Certainly won't apply for UK citizenship. Yes, I just you know I think Scotland has got a much more open mind than most people. They are more friendly towards foreigners, I think. It's really unfair of me to say, I don't want to categorise English people, many are in the same but certainly the one that seems to be voting for this government. They don't seem to understand that the UK is mostly made of people who have emigrated, come to this country and over the years it's important to have immigration and so on. It's just the insular approach is quite a sad affair that people are led to believe they are better and they don't want to bring other people to work from other countries and benefit from the intercultural changes that bring and yeah. [*sounding resigned, sad*]

LR: Has Brexit has anything to do with this idea of prison that you express in your drawings?

P: No, no I don't think so. I think for me the prison was really really the commitment to the house. I've not thought about it like this but no I don't feel I'm a prisoner in the country. I know I can still move in Europe. I have thought you know I'll go over and then struggle to come back because there are so many cases of this happening, it's not the majority. Most people travel freely who have applied for settled status. I don't know you felt like this when you came back, you think I'm just gonna' get stuck and not come back. [*frustrated laugh*]

CH: Did you fill out your settlement status thing?

P: Say that again sorry?

CH: Did you fill out your settlement status form?

P: Yeah I did that months ago.

CH: How did you feel about that?

P: Well there was just the formality to fill out and actually it was alright. Out of everything it wasn't painful to do. I think I feel much happier in Scotland. I certainly don't feel like I'm not welcome here, I am indeed, feeling that I am welcome in Scotland.

**LR: But you have not tried travelling abroad.**

P: Not yet.

**LR: But I can reassure you I have travelled three or four times in the last few years. Even now the last time I travelled I was worried about people asking me about the settled status in the airport but landing in Edinburgh, no problems whatsoever, I spoke to friends who landed in London. Ok she was coming from Dubai, and there were implications of Dubai being on the red list for Covid bla bla bla but apparently she didn't get a really friendly approach to the extent that she missed her connection flight because of all the series of questions and hold ups that she encountered in London. Anyway so I think your, I was actually quite reassured about coming back because I was flying back to Edinburgh and not to England so.**

P: No I'm going to have to. Last year just before lockdown. I think end of 2019, I had applied for my children to have dual nationality. They always had it anyway but just to have the paperwork done with the French side of things so I got that done and then now the next step is to get a French passport. So now at the end of the year we all have to travel to London to renew my passport and I used to be able to do it in Edinburgh but now I need to go to London and so all of a sudden I go there. I can see us crossing the border, you know if the kids have a French passport they'll be alright but ... might get stuck, might be delayed, compared to us going so easily.

**LR: I don't know. I think it's still early days, I was quite surprise that when I landed in Italy and when they checked the passports. Me and my son have Italian passports and my husband is British so I thought he would have to go to a different que but actually that wasn't the case and they didn't even realise. So the person I asked at the airport I said so my husband has a British passport does he have to join a different que and she said oh no no absolutely they're saying que. I think it's still early days, I think people are not geared up. The airport staff I landed in Bergamo which is a relatively small airport in Italy near Milan so I think people are not prepared yet. I think it's just because it's early days, so far it's absolutely no problem and the same when I got to Edinburgh I thought I had to join a different que but that wasn't the case you know.**

P: They just don't have them in place yet probably.

**LR: I don't think so, I don't think they're organised yet but then I'm not sure it will carry on being like this because as it is it's just exactly the same as it was before which means Brexit even more of a joke but unfortunately it's not a joke. It's a shame because there are so many drawbacks and so many negative consequences, I mean I don't know if it's got to do with Brexit but my husband went to a shop yesterday for a big shopping and he said that he saw a lot of empty shelves and the prices have gone up just for food. I can't bear the thought of doing away with European food because it's the only decent food you can eat here.**

P: So yeah that's another thing that's widely unreported that there are shortages of food. That's mostly because of the HGV drivers, there's a shortage of 100,000 HGV drivers. They're talking about bringing 2,000 drivers from the army to help get the food deliveries to the supermarkets and so on. Just another little plaster for a major problem that nobody wants to come and work here. My daughter is working in a fruit farm here and it's also reported everywhere that there's fruit rotting on the plants because they cannot be picked so then to resolve the issue they are bringing more food from Europe because they cannot pick it with. There's no British workers prepared to do those jobs so it's just like you say it's a joke. These promises of great trade deals and a prosperous country is just a complete lie. So yeah I'm not sure where this is going it's just independent Scotland next year.

**LR: [laughing] You're very optimistic about it. I hope you are right, I don't know.**

**CH: I don't think it's going to happen for a while. I can't see it happening at the moment.**

**LR: yeah that's why I was asking you if Brexit had to do with this jail feeling and stuff. I suppose its something you said that its not so much for you but for your kids, next generation about not being able to travel as much and maybe not even to do what we did that we were from a different country that we came and worked a job here.**

P: When I first started looking to travel when I was much younger. You had to apply for permits and so on, and then that suddenly went away. So then you could just go anywhere in Europe pretty much and not get any, you know apply for any permits to work or anything like this. And now, I'm

sure it won't be so much of an issue but there will be some admin cost added and it will be a bit more difficult.

**LR: Yes a lot more difficult.**

P: Certainly for studying it's just not going to be possible anymore.

**LR: Well I am the Erasmus co-ordinator of the school, for social science. There is this awkward thing now that European students that come and study here, and I think there will be fewer and fewer. If I was staying in Europe I wouldn't dream of coming here, they have to come here with a visa. But they go out on Erasmus they have to be monitored for the UK. Not for the guest institute or for Europe but for the UK they have to be monitored as Tier 4 students so like you know extra block students as if they were coming from Africa or Asia. So I mean it's so awkward, I guess it's because we have gotten used to so many years of all being Europeans.**

**CH: That's terrible Lucia I can't believe that.**

**LR: I know, it's just awful and I mean I find myself writing these letters to our partners saying you know if we send a European student, who is studying here at RGU, if we send them to your university are you willing to monitor him or her as a Tier 4 student. The Europeans aren't even understand what I'm on about. They're like "What?", which for me is deeply alienating. So I know in a ways it's not so bad that the Erasmus exchange will cease in a years time because it doesn't make any sense anymore in the UK.**

P: No.

**LR: It's so sad, I find it really sad.**

**CH: Another thing I've noticed about your drawing is that you've used no colour it's very black and white. I mean obviously because it's a prison thing but is that like purposeful or?**

P: No, it's really no need to depict a colourful house. The point I was making is it's a jail and there's nothing really colourful about it. If I was a very good artist I would have put a window or...

**CH: You are a very good artist.**

P: No I'm not.

**CH: I was telling ... that I said you are a very very excellent artist. It's amazing, a very excellent piece of work.**

P: Yeah, I could have put something through the I think. Some colour through the window to represent an escape because that's the escape we've had here being so lucky to live in the countryside during lockdown. I have felt a lot for my friends and colleagues who were in flats in Aberdeen for example and they were told they were you can only able to go at such and such a time to exercise and so on. It was like this in France as well, there was times they could go out and distances they could go to in order to exercise daily and I think we didn't follow those restrictions here. Certainly, nobody stopping us going outside into the forest.

**LR: I love that you draw the picture and you're alone in the house and the house is really a prison and the feeling about it is quite bleak. When you spoke about your picture you also said the house is also good and so maybe you should tell us about the good bits about the house because your picture is only the negative parts isn't it?**

P: yes the contradictions, no the house is a home. You know I like my space outside, we tend to do our activities outside, gardening, camping, walking, sports. I certainly don't spend hours in my house contemplating how nice it is. I like my fire in the winter, I like my food, I like the kitchen. Yeah the house in itself is a burden.

**LR: Like right now you mean?**

P: It's a financial burden and this year we haven't done any work to keep it standing. Every other year I've had to fix leaky roof, broken roof, cracked walls you know. I've just finished some plastering yesterday on the opposite wall behind me, that's the last part of the house to be painted since we had the extension done 12 years ago. So it's taken that long. I don't do it with any pleasure. I don't mind DIY [laughing] but it's coming to a point after 10 years, we've had the extension 12 years, you can see things in the kitchen, we did the kitchen at the same time. Between two and three years we will need a new one and ... is like no, not going to spend money to get a brand new kitchen in the house. We said we would have a cheap kitchen for when the kids were young and it will be damaged and we might need new appliances that we cannot do without but I'm certainly not going to spend another thousand, two thousand pound into making the kitchen look better it will. It will remain the way it is and hopefully ... and I can use our money to do things we enjoy like travelling or going out. I mean going out walking not going out drinking, we do that as well, but looking more forward to doing some hill walking and stuff like this. So yeah, no, I don't know. I guess if you had given me more Lego characters I would have maybe put more people in the house but I don't know. I think we've all experienced lockdown differently. Certainly can't wait for the kids to go back to school and have a social side of their lives. I think because they're at a young age, having that has been very detrimental to their ability and the way they should be developing at that age. That we should be interacting with people.

LR: Were the kids alright during the lockdown or were they getting bored?

P: No I think it was just a constant war to try and remove them from getting braindead on their technology and spending far too much time. Our kids their generation I guess, they don't understand what it's like to be bored, they don't understand what it's like to be hungry. They always, if they want food they get it and they go through this watching the screen for hours and then realising the brain. If you stop then the brain demands something else, so it's food usually. You see this kind of inability to have downtime. We had a conversation with them, you're mind should be free of input so your brain starts to make it's own stories and you have a voice in your head. They just don't like it, they just say no that's not right, I should never feel like this ever. They don't understand how important it is for the brain not to have input. I don't know how else to say it. So it's been difficult, and it's been guilt as well, another thing about the contrasting aspect of lockdown I'm at home all day but I'm walking. Then in the evening there's still chores to do and because there's no forced activities on us like going to do a sport activity or going to a music class or going out, just to have something special. Then it was harder to create time for activities, bit of walking, walking with the dogs, walking as a family. We've tried a bit of this but I think feeling guilty I couldn't actually find the time to do things with them. So going from being very busy on the rat race, going to work, maintaining the house, doing shopping, doing cleaning to being less busy at home yet still not finding the time to do things and feeling guilty about it as well. Well as before I had an excuse I was very busy, but now I'm less busy but I still don't manage to find time to do things. Not that they want to do things anyway, that's another problem, we spent the whole holiday telling them what do you want to do things, lockdown is easing and not a single one has asked us to do anything.

**CH: Do you still see France or Europe as home still or do you see Scotland as home?**

P: Neither. I don't really. I certainly don't think I would feel at home in France, last time I was back people thought I was English actually. People don't understand the Scottish thing so you're always English in France. People thought I was an English person who spoke very good French.

**LR: Really. I thought you speak French like a French person.**

P: No so you can hear my French accent, but when I go to France and speak French they can hear an English accent, what they call English but my friend who is French who works in Paris with a lot of London businesses so he is very much used to the English accent, he tells me I do have a, when I speak French or when I speak English I have a Scottish accent. When I speak French I do have a Scottish accent as well. I don't hear myself with an accent at all, I think my Scottish is pretty good. It's only when I hear a video or, I think no I am still very much ooh la la the French.

**LR: Well I think the French intonation like the Italian is very hard to let go of or very difficult to.**

P: Well I don't think you have much of an Italian accent left, I think your English or maybe your Scottish but what you haven't lost is the reason why you speak. You still have the tonic accent, not yeah.

**LR: Yeah Intonation probably, I had the same comment from English speakers. I have a mixture of different accents, Italian and some words I use are not particularly British because when I learnt English I learnt a lot of American English and now I got a more Scottish intonation or phrases or whatever. My husband is Scottish so I think he's got a big influence and he has a very broad Scottish accent so that's kind of affecting me but yeah I know what you're saying. Although I've not been here so long as to not feel Italian. When I go to Italy I still feel Italian and it's a difficult one anyway so.**

P: Well what I found very interesting in France so I guess we have very busy lives and that's how we've done it and even when I speak to other people you know and they find out we've got three kids and six or seven pets and a garden and we do all sorts of sports and activities, they're like how do you fit all of this. Personally I don't spend hours in front of a screen usually. I do have a TV I do have a bit of activities on my phone, social media and stuff like this. When you go to France it's like how does anyone actually manage to do anything because it just seems [laughing] to be so slow and relaxed and spend so many hours in the kitchen. That's another conversation we're having all the time you know, French people are not obese, most of them aren't but it's getting worse but every time we go there we are fed so many meals and so much food and people are like, how is it possible to eat more. Everything we eat is cooked from scratch from fresh ingredients, there's no searching you know I don't think my sister knows what a ready meal is.

**LR: I know it's exactly the same in Italy, they eat so much and there are so many more obese people here than there it's unbelievable.**

P: That's the other thing, children shouldn't eat in front of a screen you should register the food you eat and you should prepare it. And there was a study done recent where they give somebody a meal that's made and they give the same meal to somebody but only the ingredients so in the end they're eating exactly the same meal but one person prepared it and the other one didn't. Over time the person who does not prepare the meal gets fatter. To just prove the point that you start eating the moment you start preparing food, you know your brain, body gets ready to take the food and then it gets processed in a better way rather than stored as fat. Fascinating.

**CH: Are your children bilingual?**

P: No my daughter's French is really good, but no I never managed to do it. I never managed to stick to trying to teach them when they were young. There was nobody speaking French in the household. Thinking back at the time as well I was mostly working in a supermarket, where shifts, shift patterns and long days and then very little input of French of people around me. So I would come home and read books and so on but it was really hard to just keep speaking French only French to the children. Never really tried hard enough.

**CH: I mean is this guy a portrait of you.**

P: No this is just a, hang on, I don't know if I've got the lego man. So can you see.

**CH: Oh ok.**

P: There you go, I drew a happy face at the back. Well it is me obviously.

**CH: So it is you.**

P: Well. It's mostly a representation of the contrast. The contradiction you know, happy hungry, two face kind of. You know that's kind of how I felt I think. Most of what I felt is this you know I'm happy about it but then things I'm not happy about it, and it just. I've been in two mind about things.

LR: Yes, were you worried about Covid?

P: yeah I think, we had a family member who passed away right at the start coming back from a cruise. From being early 60s and being pretty healthy. From six to eight months they have found better ways to support people in treatment so you could still get loads of cases of it and people would die from it. Sorry I've lost you for a second, there we go. I guess knowing, not knowing really who could get affected badly. It was strange and you were aware things were strange but it's certainly wasn't happy when the kids wanted to go out and you knew they were not respecting any kind of social distancing also they might not get ill they might bring it back so yeah. I think we kind of followed the guidelines and kept ourselves to ourselves and not mixing with neighbours and friends which was really sobering aswell. To be able to do this better planning. So that was a better aspect I think, we started to plan our meals better because we would only shop once a week. Whereas before because I'm going to Aberdeen every day, you don't need to plan that much, just top up regularly every day. That's something else I felt good about, I felt good about not driving the car. I think that was kind of a good thing, not spending and wasting time in a car, not wasting fuel in a car. That was a positive for me. I think it's been positive in helping us organise what we do better. I think after that we tried to cram too many things and we forgot what was important.

**LR: Did you miss social life?**

P: No, not that much. We've just been on a holiday in the Outer Hebrides travelling from Lewis to Bara and I did say I would just be quite happy to live an islander life.

**CH: Yeah it's beautiful isn't it. It's amazing.**

P: Just I'd be quite happy to live in a place where I have to work for my lifestyle not necessarily for money. I'm not afraid of graft you know, I don't need home comfort. I'm just happy to get on with things, be in a nice surrounding just keep things simple. I mean that's contrary because I would like things that are less simple as well. Sometimes that's what's been interesting, sometimes I do feel a hypocrite, you know compared to what I feel I would like to do and what I know I will achieve to do. You know there's a sense I won't be fulfilled, an aspiration that won't be fulfilled because I just don't have it in me to go and drop everything tomorrow and live like a hermit. Not as remotely as that but

you know I do want to be able to have access to have some money to do some travelling, do things that I would like to do so I wouldn't be completely happy living on an island. I would still like to escape it at some point. So it is how to describe it to you, and how I am in two minds about loads of things.

***LR: Like when your parents were affected by Covid, how were you feeling being here?***

P: Oh I was very worried, I was on the phone to them every day just to see how it was progressing, you're going to know after three days if it's about to get better or if it's about to get worse. My father was completely asymptomatic, so it actually had no effect whatsoever. My mother suffered from chest pain and terrible headaches. She seems to have lesions in her brain that could be Covid related. It could be one of the effects of Covid, it's not always on your lungs. So she's had loads of small aneurisms in her brain, leading to problems with her memory and feeling tired. She also has a long term illness which is immune system which attacks the lining of your bones, arthritis or something like this. So it's really difficult for them to say it could be part of this too. They are not a hundred percent sure it was covid or both the things interacting because she has immunosuppressant medication. So they don't really know but certainly she has suffered from when she had covid. She had mostly headaches, for just a day or two and then she started to get better. I think after five days you know we were kind of happy that she was not going to get worse in terms of the Covid affect that affects you lungs so badly. So she did I think after ten days she was better and then after that the realisation that she had long covid kind of came because she was always tired and feeling quite depressed. Again it's really hard for my mother to understand what depression is considering she has been dealing with an illness since she was in her 40s that has been debilitating. She's had two knee replacements she has two shoulder replacements you know. So she's been in a lot of pain and a lot of noting being able to lead a pretty normal life in terms of physical activities for so many years. When this comes on top it kind of puts you down even more. To feel tired all the time on top of headaches and already being reduced to little activity. And also things she was able to do she wasn't able to do. She does art classes, pottery, my mother has over the past few years developed a bit of an ability to do a bit of painting and a bit of sculpture so not being able to do those things suddenly was a big loss to her.

***LR: I guess you would have liked to be there for her to care for her?***

P: Yeah I guess there was a point where my father because he. My father has very terrible, not being able to stay in the house, never has. He's always gone out to walk dogs and shoot and fish and gather. He's a hunter gatherer, he would go out and pick up mushrooms and fruit, all the thing I like to do as well. Not to the extent where he would leave at seven o'clock in the morning and wouldn't be seen until seven o'clock at night and that was just his life. So not being able to do this, and he had a garden so he spent most of his time in the garden. They did allow you to go into your Garden in France because it was a source of food and it was deemed exercising physically, exercising your pets and tending your garden were ok activities. So that's where he would be, and mum was able to go and meet with him, you know it was not very far. So I think in a way he was able to be more at home for her than he would have been otherwise physically. So no I've never really felt you know, when she was really unwell, I did think, but then I can't because I might just make things worse. I just have you know and it's not a lot I can do either. I think since it's more since the symptoms of long covid that's you know few weeks ago she went really low with her depression and I think she went to a home for a couple of weeks to be seen professionally. The care system and the medical system in France has gone really really bad through covid and she did she went and got some exams done and she was shown her blood, her results were so bad she was at risk of a heart attack. They never told her, they just sent her home and she was feeling really tired. So that was on Friday and it wasn't

until Monday that she opened the letter and she saw this big red mark to see a specialist immediately. So they don't even do it for you, this would not happen here. I know that if you turn up at your GP and you got results for your blood samples being pretty bad they would call an ambulance and you would be sent to hospital. In France they just don't have the capacity to do that so they let you do your own care so you're just about to have a small heart attack, let's say a stroke. So you have your own care and you're at risk of a stroke but they just send you home to read your paperwork and make the decision yourself to contact a specialist and to get taken to hospital.

**LR: What if you're so ill that you don't have the energy to do that either.**

P: It's just crazy, it's really unheard of. It's normally quite a good system in France, but it's not as good as it is here. So yes I have felt at some point that I would inform my work that I would consider going if things didn't improve and to support and maybe work from home in France if I could.

**LR: We don't know yet, at least we don't know at RGU how much we will be working from home and how much we'll be expected to be there.**

P: Our business has made it very clear so I am going back next week three days a week from the office then at the end of the month and at the end of November we are being told to go back to our previous work pattern. So we working five days from the office, then I have to apply to work from home for up to two days maximum. I am pretty angry with the company choice where in a way where they are telling us you have to come back to the office where all of us have done more work. There was redundancies before we came here or during lockdown and we still have managed to deliver all our workload being very very stretched. So all of us are pretty angry to be told we can't work, we have to go back to the office, that's the best way to work.

**CH: It's mad you're right.**

P: The company is, we're a project based company so they do like us to be able to have those quick interactions and those very quick meetings. I understand that but not all parts of the business works like this, certainly not the department I work for. We have been told we will be able to apply for two days of working from home to start with, it might have to get reviewed so I have to pack away my angry side and just accept I'm not a decision maker in that company and I'm just a seller and very low. It's not my bosses fault, or anybody my direct report so I'll get on with what I've got to do and see where it goes in the next few months.

**CH: I know it's hard, it's really hard.**

P: As an energy company I just feel they want us to support local business, they want to pay for the monetization of the building and the parking. The brand-new car park they put there for us, just before lockdown which is an extra space of you know 300 cars which is, it's crazy! Because they want us to have more cars but we should reduce our footprint and you know.

**LR: it's all very confusing yeah. It's all very ambiguous about this climate change and what we will do about it.**

P: They want us to come, it's for our own interest where I work to keep using petrol and fuel. If I don't then our business means nothing. I guess it's the same if I was telling people to stop smoking but I have share in a company so.

**LR: Yeah, exactly. Although there was this document that came out yesterday about how start the danger is and how urgent it is to do things about. It was quite frightening to hear about to be**

**honest. I don't think you know anything Charlie but I think RGU are going to I don't know bring out some policies about our carbon print and.**

**CH: We'll all be in our sailing boats soon.**

**LR: I don't know I could literally walk to work, I could actually walk or take a bike.**

**CH: Yeah I've bought a bike through work, in fact I've bought two bikes through work. Anyway, listen should we call it a day?**

**LR: Yeah I would say I haven't got anything else to add have you Charlie?**

**CH: No, thank you so much Pierre.**

P: it's been interesting anyway.

**CH: And I really like your political take on what you've done here as well. It's really interesting, the quotes were really interesting.**

P: Yeah I have to be a bit careful, it is taking over my life and I have to.

**CH: Thank you so much. I love how you've written home sweet home jail and you've crossed out the jail.**

P: Yeah and that all the, I didn't want to just write all the comments as just a text so they're sort of hiding in the corners of the house because they're kind of hidden in my mind and always there but they always I don't think if you've noticed. I've kind of broke them down, they're not all linear. They start somewhere and finish somewhere else, so they're one way then upside down and it's kind of represents how it is in my head I guess. Where it's just not quite organised in a certain way.

**LR: That's fine so they're quotes?**

P: Yeah, it's not quotes that I have in my mind all the time but I knew a few that had an impact of me, so I did a bit of research and found a few more that I liked. That kind of covered some of my ideas.

**LR: I think it's Noam Chomsky you said Rousseau.**

P: Yes.

**LR: Okay, interesting. Yeah no and Chomsky intervenes quite often, and I almost always agreed with him I must say.**

P: Yeah I think it's quite an interesting view he has, quite a lot of philosophical subjects and his main work was a linguistic.

**LR: It is I know, very anti-capitalism and also you know and is also [inaudible].**

P: Yeah but that was the issue, the whole issue about Covid. Suddenly we have loads of money we don't know. For so many years we've been told its austerity but suddenly the money comes in out of nowhere and all our economy is based on making more money, more money, more money but actually if we don't pay any taxes the government don't get any money from the taxes but they still have the money. Money is nothing in reality, it's just doesn't exist.

**LR: It's a typical example, I was thinking bout this the other day, really what they were saying a philosopher, you create a system and then you become a slave of it. Not everybody is a slave**

***there's still somebody pulling the strings. Maybe they're not really pulling the strings of a system but they are in a place in the system where they get advantages where all the rest of us.***

P: That's why 80-85% of the British media is owned by seven or eight people who all have companies set up abroad and don't pay a single tax, because the Tories allow this.

***LR: Did you watch panorama last night? I thought it was sickening.***

P: No I didn't.

***LR: Oh gosh you better not watch it. It made me really sick and angry to hear how much money David Cameron got out of the green sale.***

P: 10 million on the green sale, but that's the thing though people don't know about the thing until they're exposed properly.

***LR: That's right they can't get their head around what a billion is. I can't get my head around what a billion is because you know I don't work in business I can't get my head round it.***

P: I buy things, you know I'm a buyer. It means nothing, I buy something for ten pounds. If I buy something for ten pounds I will look for the best deal and then at my work I go and buy, the other day I did a purchase order for nearly two million, just like that. In ten minutes I just spend two million dollars, it means something. People don't understand some people wasted a million, it's just a figure. They hear it all the time on the media, actually it means nothing because the government are spent several billion on PPE that they found out of nowhere. Then giving contracts to people who have wasted millions of pounds of taxpayers money. Again people don't seem to react to this, they don't really seem angry when they are about to be told you are going to pay 137 pounds more a year in utility bills and people are going mental. That's only a hundred pounds more a year but it's going to make a massive difference to people on low budgets. Most people are happy to think, actually those are the people who just don't have money and live on benefits already. I think people have a real misunderstanding of people living on benefits and this idea that it's their choice. I've found that certainly through some conversations with some people at my work who don't understand because we obviously through our family have some of our family living on benefits because of their disabilities. Part of the aspect of a survey being a career in the UK as a foreign person. That's how it relates to me, the study was European Carers in the UK.

***LR-CH: Yeah.***

P: So my nephews being disabled and living on benefits it's quite scary when families have got live on things like sixty pounds a week with two or three children but yet the government is not prepared to give them more money or nurses more money to give them a pay rise. They then go and spend things on a new boat you know, a hundred and fifty nearly two hundred thousand pounds have been spent recently on flags, on British flags. Then they've just re-decorated the Prime Ministers flat for a hundred thousand pounds worth of paint. You're just thinking we have to tighten our belts harder and they don't, they just don't.

***LR: No, absolutely they do not. So you think Scotland is different?***

P: Yeah I don't think there's as many issues with the Scottish Government. I'm sure there's a bit of it happening to and certainly the detractors of the SNP are trying to point out that they waste money. They just brought up they wasted two million pound on keeping Prestwick, and it's a shame they wasted so much money. David Cameron just wasted ten million on a taxpayer company.

**LR: By a crook company, a con company.**

P: And then nobody care about it. Yeah I'm sure there are a few bad things happening with the Scottish company as it is at the moment. I think it's a pretty left government in their approach and much more based on delivering the job of governing the country rather than trying to make money for their friends and all their [word unknown] and cronyism and also speak of.

**LR: Charlie you want to add anything else?**

**CH: I've got nothing else to add, listen thank you so much, thank you for being here. And going to all the effort, you originally made another piece of artwork before this and then you did this piece. So thank you so much.**

P: I have, my best piece of artwork is still in France and it was when I was a student. One night I just couldn't sleep and I ended up making cutting out through all my, I think they were the times, or one of those papers that were in English. I cut out rows and rows of things and glues them together and sort of expressed all my anger I felt in the world. I did show it to ... and she went nah terrible. I don't do it often, once every twenty years.

**CH: Ok thank you, bye.**

**LR: Thank you, bye.**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**