

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF

A POWERFUL STORY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the phenomenological nature of reading a potentially meaningful novel, and the resultant change in the reader. Seven co-researchers were interviewed. They were chosen on the basis that they had experienced the powerful reading phenomenon. The method used in this study was phenomenological research. The co-researcher's description of their experience was analyzed by means of a phenomenological protocol analysis. An exhaustive description of the structure of the phenomenological nature of a powerful reading experience was written from the protocol analysis.

The results of this study clearly show that there is an unanimous consensus between co-researchers regarding the nature of the powerful reading experience. The nature of the experience was found to be a complex, paradoxically interdependent, interconnected but universal experience for each of the co-researchers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Objective of the Study

What is the nature of an experience in reading a novel that is so meaningful and potent, that it has produced change in the reader's life? The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenological nature of reading a potentially meaningful novel, and the resultant change in the reader.

What thou has inherited from thy fathers
Acquire it to make it thine. (p. 172)

This quote from May (1967) may be interpreted as an offer of the experience of reading and the potential gains that it may hold. I am both interested in and committed to a legacy of literature. This legacy is both the experience of temporal life as well as that of eternal life. It is a legacy that is both finite and yet infinite. It addresses the self but also the non-self. I am speaking of the reading of literature which produces these powerful paradoxical, yet universal experiences in the reader. Paradoxical, defined for the purpose of this study, is that the concept stated, only has the fullest meaning in the face of its apparent opposite. For example, self and non-self. The self only has its fullest meaning when it is simultaneously experienced with the non-self. This is a statement that seems contrary to common sense and yet is perhaps true. When one is able to go beyond oneself and experience the other, then the knowledge gained from the other is brought back to the self only to be experienced and integrated with self-knowledge. This then adds to the experience of self. This definition of paradox is

also applied to concepts such as finiteness and infiniteness as well as temporariness and eternity.

Significance of the Study

Most literate people can mention at least one or two books which have affected them profoundly, which have expanded their potential growth and development and have provided not only instruction and knowledge but also understanding and inspiration. (p. 58)

This quote stated from Lester (1977) refers to the potential gains that one can achieve from the reading of literature. This can be tied to the topic of Bibliotherapy in Counselling. Shrodes (1971) defines Bibliotherapy as a process of interaction between the personality of the reader and imaginative literature which may engage his emotions and free them for conscious and productive use. McKinney (1976) states that Bibliotherapy can produce attitude changes, self-understandings, identifications with fictional characters and suggestions for problem-solving. Through discussion with the counsellor, clients can be made aware of conscious and unconscious needs. Bibliotherapy in Counselling also provides for a cathartic experience through identification, and a topic for discussion of feelings produced from the reading experience and how it relates to the reader.

A study conducted by Beattie and Czikszentmihalyi (1979) supports the importance of literature in the lives of people. They investigated the concept of a life theme. They construe the events in a person's life as being structured by an underlying theme. The life theme is a cognitive and affective system composed of a central existential problem, its perceived causes, and the methods a person attempts to use

for its solution. "A life theme consists of a problem or set of problems which a person wishes to solve above everything else and the means the person finds to achieve solution." (p. 48) It was found that often through reading a particular book, that people discovered the name of their problem. In many cases, it was mentioned with awe the incredible impact a given book had on their life. It was stated that they discovered from books that they were not alone, that others shared the same problems and that there might be a way out of their predicament. Books were aids used to experience and interpret reality.

The method used in this study was phenomenological research. There was almost no relevant research which described in detail the nature of the experience of reading a novel, and the effects of the experience within the reader. There was only one study, which was done by Colaizzi (1978). My study was modelled on Colaizzi's, in which he investigated the phenomenon of what he called existential change occasioned by reading, or reading-change structure. This study is different in that it is concerned with only fiction books, specifically novels or stories. Colaizzi included non-fiction books, and his method is also different than the method used in this study. Colaizzi used written reports whereas this study used interviews. Thus, at present there is no research which has been done on this specific topic. This study was aimed at probing into the phenomenological experience of reading a potentially meaningful novel and the resultant change in the reader's life.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In accordance with the phenomenological method, the review presented will make explicit the assumptions that this study is based on. The purpose for doing so is to reduce possible bias and to declare the theoretical assumptions which have guided this study.

As stated, there is almost no relevant research on this topic. Therefore, the literature review presented seeks to draw out assumptions about the experience which was investigated. I have presented authors concerned with how people can gain meaning in life, and how this is facilitated by the reading of literature. The assumptive review is followed by a review of Colaizzi's study. This is then followed by a summary of assumptions based on an integration of my own powerful reading experience, the motivation and inspiration for this investigation.

Nature of Man

Frankl (1963) has discussed the issue of the meaning of life. He states that it is not so much a matter of our expectation of life and what meaning it holds for us, but rather, what does life expect from each one of us. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. These tasks are very real and concrete, and they form man's destiny. Each person's destiny is different and unique. Frankl also asserts that each situation is

unique; it does not repeat itself. Each situation calls for a different response, and there is only one right response to each situation.

Sometimes this involves one taking action in order to shape yet follow one's fate, and at other times one is less active and more contemplative regarding one's fate. If attuned to one's fate, one appropriately chooses which response is the right one given each situation. In summary, Frankl states that the meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather detected. This existence is very much a spiritual existence as well as a worldly existence. He discusses spiritualism as not primarily a religious connotation, but more as a human dimension of spiritualism.

Basic Assumptions

1. Life means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems, in the form of life tasks.
2. Each person's tasks are different and unique.
3. These tasks form man's destiny.
4. There is only one right response to each situation.
5. The meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather detected.

For Maslow (1962) human nature is neutral or positive. Evil behavior is a reaction to the frustration of this intrinsic nature. This inner nature is not strong or overpowering, but rather weak, delicate, subtle and easily overcome by habit, cultural pressure and wrong attitudes toward it. Even though weak, it rarely disappears in normal, or even "sick" people. Even though denied, it persists

underground, always pressing for actualization. If this inner nature is encouraged and permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy and prosper.

Maslow also stresses the twofold nature of man, which he calls lower and higher, creatureliness and godlikeness. Neither can be denied; they can only be integrated. Integration is achieved by means of love, of intellect in the broadly human sense, by creativeness, humor and art. The ideal, authentic, perfect or godlike human being is an actualized person. By virtue of what he/she has become, an actualized person assumes a new relation to society. He/she not only transcends the self in various ways; the culture is also transcended. Enculturation is resisted. The person becomes less concerned with the culture and the society. He/she becomes more human and less a member of the local group. This description sounds like that of an universal person.

Basic Assumptions

1. Human nature is neutral or positive, yet delicate and subtle.
2. Positive inner nature can be suppressed by aversive conditions, but not abolished.
3. If encouraged, positive inner nature can grow and prosper in the form of self-actualization.
4. Man has both creature qualities and godlike qualities.
5. The actualized person integrates creatureliness and godlikeness.
6. The actualized person becomes what may be called an universal person.

May (1953) stresses that the mark of the mature man is that his living is integrated around self-chosen goals. He knows what he wants and he consciously believes in the value of what he is doing. The degree of an individual's inner strength and integrity will depend on how much he believes in the values he lives by. How can a person maturely and creatively choose and affirm such values? Beginning with a neutral or positive view of human nature, as does Maslow, May states that man is the ethical animal, but his attainment of ethical awareness does not come easily. Just as other aspects of man's consciousness of self, such as freedom, ethical awareness is achieved through the experience of inner conflict and anxiety. The story of Adam and Eve's loss of innocence parallels the child's innocence and egocentricity which gives way to self-consciousness and the realization of his own finiteness. This self-awareness involves conflict with the powerful parents which eventually gives way to autonomy in the form of freedom, responsibility and ethical choice. While courage is an aid to becoming one's self, it is difficult because of the pressure to conform, to be non-differentiated from parental definitions. How difficult this is in view of the threat of social disapproval as well as rejection, isolation and possible excommunication! The most courageous acceptance of all is that of man's finiteness and a responsible acting as a result. The demand is the courage to be and trust one's self in the face of death. It means acting, loving, thinking and creating.

May also stresses man's struggle to evolve on two levels. Man has both temporal life and eternal life to experience. He discusses the

reality of the present moment as well as that of the reality of eternity. The more awareness of self one has attained, the richer one's experience of present life. The most effective way to ensure the value of the future is to confront the present courageously. The future is born out of and made by the present. There is an eternal aspect to every creative act. By this, May means that qualitative significance of the act is timeless. This is because the existence of a thing such as eternal truth cannot be explained by the duration of time. The existence of something depends on its essence, not on time. Truth is discussed as a function not of the separate intellect, but of the whole man; one experiences truth as a thinking-feeling-acting unity.

May believes that the classics in literature (as well as those in any field) hold the essence of human experience in such profound depths that it speaks to us on a universal plane as the voice of our own experience. This helps us to understand ourselves better and enriches us by releasing echoes within ourselves which we may not have known were there. The more profoundly we can confront and experience the accumulated wealth in historical tradition, the more uniquely we can at the same time know and be ourselves.

Basic Assumptions

1. Man evolves on two levels, eternally and temporally (specific and collective).
2. An evolved or mature man lives by self-chosen goals which are rooted in self-chosen values.

3. Values are chosen and affirmed by means of ethical awareness. Man first experiences conflict, but through courage can know commitment.
4. Conflict surrounds issues such as autonomy, freedom and responsibility but ultimately is highlighted and intensified by the realization of man's finiteness.
5. The most courageous task of man is to accept his finiteness and to thus live responsibly, creatively and affirmatively.
6. Past, present and future interact with one another and become more meaningful in the face of self-awareness.
7. There is an eternal aspect to every creative act.
8. Man can experience truth.
9. Literature offers the experience of both universality and individuality simultaneously and profoundly.

Crites (1971) offered a theory of the narrative quality of experience. Stories give qualitative substance to the form of experience, because experience is itself an incipient story. He discussed two kinds of stories, the sacred and the mundane. A sacred story is a creation story which creates a world of consciousness and the self that belongs to it. Its sources are unconscious and causal to all life and culture. A mundane story is a story that is told, directly seen or heard. It is set within a world of consciousness and is the means by which people articulate and clarify their sense of the world. The sacred and mundane stories are distinct from one another yet not separate. All mundane stories are implicit in a sacred story and every

mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story. Some mundane stories sound out greater depths than others, but sacred stories resonate. People are able to feel this resonance, because the unutterable stories are those they know best of all.

The effect of temporalness of experience is included as essential to the constitution of sacred and mundane stories. The present is discussed in terms of three tensed modalities, that of a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future. This is because our sense of personal identity depends upon the continuity of experience through time. Our experience of past is our memory of it and our experience of future is our projection into it. Crites concludes from this that our sense of ourselves is at every moment to some extent integrated into a single story. We can also at the same time focus on the present which is the full experience of the current moment. In summary, the narrative quality of experience has three parallel dimensions. The sacred story, the mundane story, and the temporal form of experience, each dimension influencing one another.

Crites brings to our attention a special phenomenon, that of the intense moment when the sacred, mundane and personal experience are inseparably united. He describes this as a burst of light like a comet entering our atmosphere. This phenomenon is a simile of the thesis which I am investigating, that of the experience of reading a potent novel and the change it produces in the reader. Something conscious, yet unconscious; general to life, yet specific to self; and temporal, yet timeless happens within the reader. It is blinding and then

illuminating. Perhaps it is an internal explosion within the person which results in the restructuring of the person's life thereafter. Crites calls this conversion. It is a second awakening of consciousness. He states that the person's style must change. He must change steps, must dance to a new rhythm. Not only his past and future, but the very cosmos in which he lives is strung in a new way. The goal of the realization of a sacred story is to enable a coherence of social and personal time. It makes it possible to recover a living past, to believe again in the future, to perform acts that are meaningful for the person who acts. By doing so it restores a human form of experience.

Basic Assumptions

1. Experience is itself an incipient story.
2. There are sacred stories and mundane stories. Sacred stories are causal to life and unconscious, while mundane stories are conscious and articulate one's sense of life.
3. Our personal identity depends on the continuity of experience through time. This becomes "our story".
4. The narrative quality of experience has three parallel dimensions. The sacred story, the mundane story and the temporal form of experience.
5. When the three dimensions coincide and unite, a person experiences a second awakening of consciousness called conversion.
6. This produces an experience in which the person is able to live with more meaning in life.

Related Research Study

The study by Colaizzi (1978) is the most relevant research to this investigation. I will review Colaizzi's study in depth in order to familiarize the reader with the model of investigation that this study is predicated on.

Colaizzi (1978) studied a phenomenon which he called reading-change structure. He did a phenomenological investigation of existential change due to reading. In keeping with the phenomenological approach, the study began by first making explicit presuppositions about the topic of reading-change structure. The goal was to discover certain beliefs, hypotheses, attitudes and hunches concerning it. Colaizzi then stated what his presuppositions were. Next, pilot co-researchers were interviewed about their experiences of reading books that deeply affected them. As a result of integrating his presuppositional statements and the pilot co-researchers' responses, Colaizzi generated research questions (see Appendix A). Using the research questions, Colaizzi obtained his descriptions by means of written reports from 12 people who had experienced existential change due to reading. After collecting the co-researcher's descriptive responses, the data were analyzed phenomenologically by means of a protocol analysis.

The steps involved in the protocol analysis are as follows. First, all the co-researcher's descriptions, or as they are conventionally termed, protocols, were read in order to acquire a feeling for them. Next, each protocol had significant statements extracted from it. Repetitions were eliminated. Following this, meanings were formulated

from the significant statements. This involved creative insight in which Colaizzi leapt from what the co-researchers said to what they meant. The goal was to do this and still remain true to the data. This was repeated for each protocol. Then, the meanings were organized into clusters of themes. In order to ensure that the clusters of themes remained true to the data, they were referred back to the original protocols (descriptions) in order to validate them. At this point Colaizzi states that discrepancies noted among and/or between the various clusters were accepted on the conviction that what is logically inexplicable may be existentially real and valid. Next, the results of everything to this point were integrated into an exhaustive description of the investigated topic. The exhaustive description defined, is that it is a complete and accurate written reflection of the experience of the co-researchers' reading experience, based on the previous protocol analysis. Next, Colaizzi presented a condensed description in order to succinctly state the fundamental structure of the experience. A final validating step was to take the exhaustive description to each co-researcher in order to validate it for accuracy or any omissions. Any relevant new data were then worked into the final results.

Colaizzi found several ways in which people were able to gain more meaning and were changed by the reading experience. It was found that it was not a new world that is created by the reading, but rather a new aspect of one's own world is newly demonstrated as livable. The already known becomes seen in a new light. This may be likened to the releasing of one's actualization tendencies as discussed by Maslow. The person is

somehow freed and able to recognize a more imaginative self. New life modalities are provided by imagination. One's normal physical and temporal bonds become significantly loosened. Actual past things or fantasized new things all can be vividly present imaginatively. This is very consistent with and similar to both the views of Crites and May as discussed. There is also the recognition that every single moment can reveal the inexhaustible richness of life and existence. The meaning in the book also points back toward oneself. Each and every of the world-thing illuminations, illuminate oneself also. There is a recognition of the constantly emerging meanings of the book. The book seems to be a dynamic process of creating, signifying a sort of infinity of meaning. There is a questioning of and struggling with ideas, attitudes, feelings, expectations, etc. which is powerful and compelling. Eventually, the person feels that the author has established some truth. The meaning of the book can be extended through discussion with others. The content of the book can be highlighted as well as oneself as the interpreter of the book by means of conversation.

In summary, Colaizzi (1978) believes that we have access to the experience of such men as Christ, Blake and Freud through books. Literature serves as the intermediary for encountering and expanding ourselves. We should neither side step books, nor become entangled in them, but rather pass through and beyond them.

Summary of Assumptions

In the presentation of the ideas of Frankl, Maslow, May, Crites and Colaizzi, many concepts which are interconnected with and crucial to one

another have been presented. I am sympathetic with the ideas presented. They make explicit my own assumptions concerning the nature of the experience to be investigated. These ideas form the meaning of life both temporally and life eternally. To summarize, my view is closely aligned with Frankl's in that I think that we have inversed the true importance of life; that of life as a grand whole, rather than each of our fragmented lives holding the ultimate experience. Dickens in A Tale of Two Cities speaks of Sydney Carton identifying with an eddy that turned and turned purposelessly until the stream absorbed it, and carried it on to the sea. Both Frankl and Maslow reflect my view of man's nature and task of life. It involves the evolution of one's own life, and paradoxically, a concern for the evolution of all eternal life. Man has both his own life and eternal life to contend with simultaneously. As May suggests, this must be faced with commitment and courage.

Both May and Colaizzi directly address my viewpoint concerning literature in the lives of people. The experience of reading literature is the mirror and thus the reflection of life's meaning. It is the legacy of universal life metaphorically portrayed in print. The concepts of fate, truth, love, courage and infinity for example, are all vitally and powerfully addressed in novels written by such authors as Hugo, Dickens, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. The universal legacy is the continuing struggle for, search for and ultimate commitment to the realization of truth and experiences of the paradoxes of life. Paradoxically, eternal truth can be experienced in every right action.

The paradoxes of life are the experiences of both self and non-self, the experience of finitude and infinitude and the experience of God in self and God beyond self in the form of all being. The purpose of literature is not to hide in books, but rather to experience life and its paradoxes more fully because of books. We have much to learn from the struggles of others to gain a keen awareness of human motivation and the complexities of life's demands to form an ultimate commitment to a fuller experience of life.

To summarize, the nature of the experience of reading a powerful novel, based on my own experience, is that the book is not seen as a fantasy or an escape, but rather a reality of life reaching out, inviting, and compelling one to fully experience and integrate what is being stated. The reader paradoxically lets go of himself, while simultaneously experiencing himself more fully than ever. The meaning of the book is very clear, as well as how it relates to oneself is very clear. The reader is enriched concerning the understanding of all life. The reading experience changes the understanding, thinking, feeling and acting of the reader. The experience is very emotional and yet very insightful at the same time. The experience permanently restructures the reader, likening it to the blinding and then illuminating explosion of awareness that was spoken of earlier.

I have now presented a review which has drawn out assumptions about the nature of the experience that was investigated. I have also presented Colaizzi's study from which my study was modelled. I have made explicit my presuppositions concerning the experience under

investigation in order to rid myself of my biases. My presuppositions are an integration of the ideas of the authors presented and my own viewpoint. There is much similarity of opinion. The major differences are my emphasis of the paradoxical nature of life and on the universal experience of man. To conclude my review, I will now present a description of my own powerful reading experience. As stated, this was the motivation and inspiration behind my study of the phenomenological investigation of a powerful reading experience.

My Experience

I chose to read A Tale of Two Cities because I was told that the essence of the central theme revolved around the idea of acting for the good of others as one's main motive. I was interested in reading about this topic, so I read the book as it was highly recommended to me. I had no idea that this book was to be so crucial and far-reaching in its effect on me. I was totally surprised by its impact.

I was at a point in my life where I was very aware of wanting to be honest, committed and courageous concerning my values and the way I wanted to live my life. I despised my weakness when I at times compromised or I doubted my belief and commitment to what I sensed as truth, or desperately hoped to be true. I was unsure of and unclear of exactly how to live this truth. I also thought and feared that I was being told by others that what I wanted in life did not exist and that I was idealistic in my search and I would never attain my ideals because they were unattainable and fantastical. I felt caught and frustrated

knowing that I could not live in my present denial of and cowardice regarding what I really wanted in my life, and yet I feared there was no way to actualize my strong sense of and need for living a meaningful life. In my reading of A Tale of Two Cities, this struggle and search was hit head on with a world of wisdom and truth, and this blew the trap I felt I was in wide open with a profound explosion of experience.

After reading the first few pages of the book, I was fascinated and compelled. The beauty, dignity, humanity and truth conveyed to me left me incredulous, overwhelmed, delighted and fulfilled. I was at different times stunned with feelings of humility, spirituality and realization. Even one metaphor, or one sentence spoke of an infinite amount of wisdom to me. I felt, at least for a time, that I understood everything about myself and all life at several points in the book. I remember constantly switching back and forth to how this wisdom applied to me and how it also applied to the rest of life. I was aware of the paradoxical quality of meaning by means of my reading. I also felt strongly my universal connection and eternal connection to life. This book was set at the time of the French Revolution and yet I was identifying so perfectly and absolutely with its characters and the truth of which the book spoke. I felt eternally in touch with universal human nature and truth. This book also spoke loudly to me about fate, destiny and God. Many of the metaphors and passages became part of my being and allowed me to feel my connection and part in infinite life. I was again paradoxically aware, but this time of the meaning of life beyond myself and a wisdom and perfection much greater than myself, and

yet the meaning in my sensitivity to truth in life and my part in living my own life truthfully. I think that many of the feelings and thoughts that I had unconsciously or preconsciously experienced became vividly and powerfully clear to me as real, true and viable. I knew that what I had sensed and hoped was true was being written as truth, and more clearly than I had been able to consciously conceptualize. This had an incredible strengthening and inspiring effect on me.

Throughout my reading of the book, I could not stop thinking about what it was saying to me. Everything I did in my life at that time was somehow influenced by, or experienced from the perspective of the book. I constantly compared and tried to integrate my reading of the book with my life experience. The connections and perfection of correspondence amazed me. I talked about the book during my reading of it and after my reading of it constantly to friends. To this day, I often discuss the wisdom in the book.

The ending of the book had a particularly incredible effect on me. Reading the book had been powerful, revealing, beautiful and phenomenal in the many ways that I have stated. The end of the book not only intensified those feelings sharply, but it also shocked me so deeply and exploded in me so expansively that I still marvel at that experience. I was so emotionally overwhelmed at first. I felt all my cowardly defenses torn away by the truth, perfection, dignity and beauty before me. I felt both stripped naked and terrified for a time. I cried uncontrollably because I felt so much. I was forced to face some very beautiful feelings and some very terrifying feelings simultaneously.

Time was at that moment past, present and future for me. I lived my own past, present and future in those moments. I remember being shocked at the depth of my own feelings. I was struggling with the serious implications and meaning in Sydney Carton, a powerful character in the book, choosing to die for his love of a woman. He was finding eternal meaning in the squandered life he had lived. His integrity and courage in doing the absolute right act, which was to choose to die, terrified me, but also struck me so hard with truth, perfection and rightness. I felt so small and selfish next to him. His act pierced my being so cleanly and thoroughly. It so powerfully spoke to me about the meaning I wanted in my own life and my own death. I felt pinned against a hard, cold wall of absolute truth. His character demanded and challenged me to do what was right under all circumstances, no matter how trying they be. Carton faced truth and God and he died with peace in his heart and soul. I wanted to live and die with the certainty and peace that are implicit in truthful acts.

I then felt a demand, a desire and a glowing knowledge come to me that I would strive for absolute truth and that I had to live my life with commitment to truth, dignity, spirituality and courage. I knew something profound had happened within me. I was both fascinated and in awe of the realization that I had had no control over this powerful experience. I felt stronger, more knowledgeable, inspired, humble and more real. I knew that life had meaning and I had meaning as part of life. I also knew that there was a wisdom and meaning beyond human

life. This did not diminish my own existence, but demanded everything of me and yet offered everything to me.

After the intense emotion, I felt an intense realization and commitment to live in my own life the vast wisdom and experience gained from the book. I knew that what I had doubted as real, was actually real and it was up to me to be sensitive, courageous and willing to live this truth. Reading A Tale of Two Cities has been an important contribution to my search for understanding and to a fuller experience of life.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Co-researchers

Seven people were interviewed. The co-researchers were acquired by personal contact. Five of the co-researchers were colleagues, and the other two were family members. They were chosen on the basis that they had experienced the powerful reading phenomenon. The criteria for an acceptable interview were first to be personally effected by the reading experience; then the reader must have been changed by the power of the experience of reading the book. Another criterion was that there was sufficient time lapse, or distance from the experience. This is necessary because it enables the person to integrate and make sense out of the experience. If there is not enough time lapse or distance, then articulation of the experience in a clear manner is impossible. The last criterion was the ability to articulate the description of the experience in sufficient detail. In order to study the experience in depth, it must be described in enough detail. Two of the interviews were excluded because they did not meet the criteria of this study. One of the co-researchers had not had sufficient time to understand and thus articulate the experience. This person had only finished reading the book a few days before the interview and was still trying to sort out its effect. The interview was marked by co-researcher's confusion. Another co-researcher was off the topic of this study. This person had not been personally effected by the book, but rather was in admiration of its literary and academic prowess. Therefore, the interview was not

included. The other five co-researchers met the criteria of this study very well.

Phenomenological Interview

The co-researchers were interviewed and the interviews were taperecorded. A transcript of each interview was typed. The interview questions were those used by Colaizzi and a set of questions written by myself to further investigate my own assumptions (see Appendix A and B). In the interview care was taken to be attentive to the co-researchers' manner of speech, gestures, and nuances. This is imaginative listening, which is a process of being present to the totality of the person by being totally present oneself. This information is added to the actual transcript data. The co-researchers were open and honest concerning their experience, after the initial tension in the beginning of the interview. They took the interview seriously and involved themselves in the interview speaking powerfully and freely. They stated that they had enjoyed the interview.

Validation of Structure

After the completion of the protocol analysis, the exhaustive description of the universal structure of the powerful reading experience was taken to the co-researchers for validation of accuracy and possible additions. The co-researchers were told that the exhaustive description of their experience was aimed at reflecting their exact experience of reading the powerful novel. They were told that the goal was to articulate their experience as perfectly as possible. They were then asked to read the description in full with this aim in mind.

Afterward, they were asked to make any changes, additions or any comments at all. The co-researchers were very interested and helpful in this interview. Notes were taken on what they said and the appropriate changes incorporated in the final universal description of experience.

Procedure

The co-researchers were initially contacted by letter, which was followed by a phone call within one week. The interviews were arranged at the co-researchers' convenience. This was either in their own home or office. Both verbally and by means of written consent, the co-researchers were made aware that they would be asked to describe in detail their powerful reading experience. This involved asking two sets of interview questions. One set was that used by Colaizzi and the other set was created by myself to further investigate my own assumptions concerning the reading experience (see Appendix A and B). The interviewer restricted the responses mostly to reflection of the co-researchers' statements and feelings, in order to get a detailed description. The interviewer was aware of the whole person both verbally and non-verbally. The time period of the interviews was between 45 minutes and one hour. The interviews were taperecorded and then transcribed. The analysis of the data was done by means of a protocol analysis. The final description of the experience was taken to co-researchers for validation of experience. Any necessary changes were made.

Analysis of Protocols

The data in the form of typed transcripts were analyzed phenomenologically. This involved a protocol analysis using the steps that Colaizzi used. First, the protocols were read in order to acquire a general feeling and sense of them. Then, significant statements were extracted eliminating any repetitions. Statements were considered to be significant on the basis that they were directly related to the reading experience and its effect on the co-researcher. A table was then formulated composed of such statements (see Table 1). Next, meanings were formulated from these statements. This involved a process of creative insight in which a leap from what the co-researchers said to what they meant was made. The intent here was to go beyond what was given in the original data and at the same time, stay true to the data. This process was repeated for each protocol. Next, the meanings for each of the protocols were then organized and formulated into clusters of themes. Again, this involved a leap that must stay true to the data. A way to achieve this was to refer the clusters of themes back to the original protocols in order to validate them. At this point, discrepancies were noted among and/or between the various clusters, but ambiguity was accepted as the data must remain true. Colaizzi suggests that this procedure is based on the solid conviction that what is logically inexplicable may be existentially real and valid. This is consistent with the paradoxical perspective that has been presented. After the cluster of themes had been formed, a table was created (see results Chapter IV). Following this, an exhaustive description was then

written on the basis of the themes in an attempt to capture the flow and feeling of the experience. The exhaustive description was then condensed to as clear and as true a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible (see results Chapter IV). The final validating step, as discussed, was to return to each co-researcher the findings so far. As stated, they were asked to compare the description with their own experience and asked for any possible omissions. Any new data were incorporated into the final research results (see Chapter IV).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The original protocols are presented in Appendix C. The underlining in each of the protocols is representative of statements that are considered significant concerning the powerful reading experience. Table 1 was generated from the significant statements of each protocol that were common to all of the protocols. The common significant statements were then given a theme label. For example, number one is labelled hope. Each of the co-researchers in their own way, had spoken of the hope that they had felt after reading their novel. The significant statements in Table 1 show the actual sentences that represented hope for each co-researcher. Another example is that of number 21 which reflects the theme of inspiration and striving.

Insert Table 1 about here SEE LEAVES 55-64.

The themes from Table 1 were then organized such that they represented the flow of the powerful reading experience in both an ordered and interconnected/interdependent fashion. For example, the reader must first be ready in order to experience the involvement that the novel can offer him/her. Or, one must be validated before one feels affirmed and thus released from one's previous doubts. Care was taken to organize the themes such that they reflected the cumulative interdependence implicit in the experience. For example, it is important to reflect the

deepening of the intensity of experience in order to make clear the change that results within the reader. Following is the organized list of the clusters of themes.

Clusters of Themes

1. stuck
confused
doubting
2. searching
struggling
ready
3. enthusiasm
excitement
incredulity
involvement
4. identification with characters and experience
realness of characters and experience of life
validation of experience, feelings and thought
struggle with qualities revealed and learning
questioning
5. worlds fitting/meshing
recognition of matching truths
affirmation
release
justification
hope
6. humility
eternity
spirituality
universality
inspiration
courage
freedom
7. growth
maturity
new perspective
insight
integration of ideas
change in thinking, feeling and acting
strive for more, ideals
feel more part of life

The exhaustive description of the universal structure of the phenomenological nature of a powerful reading experience was written on the basis of the above organized clusters of themes. The exhaustive description to follow is the attempt to depict the universal structure of the reader's experience based on the protocol analysis as discussed.

Exhaustive Universal Structure

The person is experiencing doubt of one's own inner feelings and the validity of those feelings. There has been nothing or very little previously in one's life experience to encourage or consolidate those feelings. This results in a sense of being stuck or trapped. The person is aware of a lack of satisfaction and an incompleteness which prevents one from feeling that one is living as fully as one aspires to regarding one's values and vision of truth in life. The person has a strong desire, but as yet the realness of one's existence and the meaning of one's life is not clear enough such that one can live with commitment and be both guided and propelled only by one's own vision.

The person is both struggling and searching for the correct and fulfilling way to live life. One has a strong desire to be free of doubt and confusion and to feel the truth, realness and meaning of one's existence. Therefore, the reader is predisposed, in a state of hungry readiness to live one's vision and to be effected by the wisdom contained within the book.

The reading of the powerful story is like a missing piece of a puzzle. The reading contributes something very necessary to the

person's search for understanding. The person experiences intense involvement while reading the book. It is the prime focus of consciousness at that time. One feels an added clarity and substance of the vision which was previously dimmer fluctuating glimpses. Feelings of enthusiasm, excitement and incredulity at the brilliance of the wisdom in the book are experienced by the reader as the vision of how to live life more meaningfully becomes brighter, stronger, clearer and more consistent.

The reader identifies with the characters and experience of life in the book. The characters and the life in the book are experienced as real and lived by the reader and they validate the person's experience, feelings and thoughts exactly. What was previously doubted is now consolidated, encouraged and confirmed. The person feels stronger as the truth of the vision is validated, and with added understanding one feels a deepening of commitment to one's vision. The strength of vision and the commitment to the vision are however, challenged and tested by questioning which is brought on by the reading. Qualities that are being revealed to the person about himself/herself by the book cause the reader to question himself/herself as well as question the ideas presented in the book. This is experienced as difficult at times but most necessary and ultimately worthwhile. Paradoxically, the questioning has strengthened and encouraged growth in the reader.

The person's commitment to his/her vision deepens further still and the understanding of life becomes still more vivid as the person feels that the world portrayed in the book agrees perfectly with his/her own

experience. This is a recognition of matching truths. The power and excellence of the author's writing opens the person to the realization of the matching. The author's vision both matches the reader's vision and helps to expand and clarify the reader's vision. The person's inner experience of truth matches the truth presented in the book absolutely. Through this matching of truths, one is released from previous doubts. One feels hopeful that one will live the truth of one's vision and find this vision affirmed in life as it has been affirmed in the book. One feels justified to continue pursuing the vision of truth in life which one had once felt was threatened or illusory. The match allows the person to feel stronger, and encouraged to continue with the pursuit of his/her vision.

The knowledge gained from the matching visions and the identification with the characters and life experience in the book leads the reader to feel the deepening of his/her understanding of truth and vision with one's own life and the understanding of truth and vision in other life. The reader experiences feelings of humility, eternity, spirituality and universality from these understandings. The person feels the universal connection with all life, knowing that one is part of the eternal; that one is sharing life in a non-temporal and infinite way. The experience of identifying with the characters and life experience in the book allows one to feel that others have, at different times and places, experienced exactly what one is profoundly and absolutely experiencing now. With this knowledge one simultaneously becomes aware of the infinite, feeling that life is vast and boundless.

Humility, the feeling that one is a small part of the miracle of eternal life, is also experienced. Paradoxically, the self is experienced as more real and meaningful while the infinity of universal truth and eternal truth are also experienced as real and absolute. The experience of eternity, universality and infinity lead to feelings of inspiration, courage and freedom. The person is energized, encouraged, inspired and freed to continue to pursue one's ideals, truth and the realness of one's life experience and one's meaning because of the connection to grand life and its meaning.

The hunger and desire for life within the person has merged with the wisdom in the book to produce the fruition of growth and change. The person has merged with and integrated himself/herself with the book. There is a change in the thinking, feeling and acting of the person. The person is aware of a new perspective. The feelings of doubt are resolved and one is more able to pursue the truth of one's vision of life. Many insights and extensions of thought have allowed the person to mature and grow, to become firmly rooted in commitment to one's vision, strong with truth, tall with spirituality and vibrant with the feeling of eternal, universal life. One's own meaning of life is also more vivid, substantial and real. The person is inspired to strive for more, to live one's life more fully and to be more sensitive to other life beyond oneself. In doing so, one feels both more a part of life and a greater sense of spirituality.

Presented next, is the condensed description which is based on the exhaustive description and which attempts to reflect the fundamental structure of the powerful reading experience as succinctly as possible.

Condensed Universal Structure

The person is experiencing doubt of one's own inner feelings and the validity of those feelings. The person has a strong desire, but as yet the realness of one's existence and the meaning of one's life is not clear enough such that one can live with commitment and be both guided and propelled only by one's own vision.

The person is both struggling and searching for the correct and fulfilling way to live. Therefore, the reader is predisposed, in a state of hungry readiness to live one's vision and to be effected by the wisdom contained within the book.

The reading contributes something very necessary to the person's search for understanding. The person experiences intense involvement while reading the book. Feelings of enthusiasm, excitement and incredulity at the brilliance of the wisdom in the book are experienced by the reader as the vision of how to live life more meaningfully becomes brighter, stronger, clearer and more consistent.

The reader both identifies with the characters and experience of life in the book and lives them as real. This validates the person's experience, feelings and thoughts and allows the person to feel stronger and a deepening of commitment to one's vision.

The strength of vision and the commitment to the vision are challenged and tested by questioning of qualities that are being revealed to the person about himself/herself as well as questioning of the ideas presented in the book. This is experienced as difficult at times but necessary and worthwhile.

The person's inner experience of truth matches the truth presented in the book absolutely. One feels hopeful that one will live the truth of one's vision and find this vision affirmed in life as it has been affirmed in the book.

The reader experiences feelings of humility, eternity, spirituality and universality. The experience of identifying with the characters and life experience in the book allows one to feel that others have experienced exactly what is profoundly and absolutely experiencing now. One feels one is sharing life in a non-temporal and infinite way and this leads to feelings of humility. The person is energized, encouraged, inspired and freed to continue to pursue one's ideals, truth and realness of one's life experience and one's life meaning because of the connection to grand life and its meaning.

The hunger and desire for life within the person has merged with the wisdom in the book to produce the fruition of growth and change in the thinking, feeling and acting of the person. Many extensions of thought and insights have allowed the person to mature and grow; to become firmly rooted in commitment to one's vision, strong with truth, tall with spirituality and vibrant with the feeling of eternal, universal life. The person is inspired to strive for more, to live

one's life more fully and to be more sensitive to other life beyond oneself. In doing so, one also feels more substantial and real.

Summary of Results

The results have been presented in full. To summarize, I will highlight some salient points which strengthen the universal quality of the description. An important point is that the exhaustive description when returned to the co-researchers met with very little alteration. All of the co-researchers wanted one statement deleted. This was a specific reference to God. The line read "With this knowledge one simultaneously becomes aware of God, the designer behind the vast design." This is a powerful statement of the universal structure because each of the co-researchers independent of the others chose the exact same statement as not fitting into their experience. The co-researchers stated that they objected to the specific reference to God because it connoted a figurehead of God worship. They also found the sentence to be a mechanistic and rigid connotation of God. They stated that their experience was a spiritual experience and not a God worship experience. Other than this unanimous change, one co-researcher suggested the addition concerning the power of the writer and his/her contribution to the vision of life and one's own vision. When I referred back to the protocols, it was clear that this point had been overlooked. It was incorporated in the final results. The other alteration suggested was to change only one other phrase. The pervading reaction of the co-researchers to the exhaustive description was that it

was very accurate and complete. This reinforces the consistency and the universality of the experience of reading a powerful novel.

A further reinforcement of the consistency between co-researchers' experience and thus the universal structure of the powerful reading experience is the lack of variance between the protocols. Table 1 clearly shows that each theme is represented by significant statements from each protocol. There was no difficulty in finding significant statements to represent each theme for each protocol. For example, each co-researcher experienced the recognition of matching truths. Each person was reading a different book and experiencing different phenomena in one's own life but through their book, each person experienced a matching of one's own truth to that of the truth in the book. The recognition of matching truths then led each of the co-researchers on to similar feelings, which were experienced in different, yet individual ways. For example, feelings of release and freedom. Table 1 provides concrete examples in the form of significant statements that reflect an experience that is exactly common to all of the co-researchers, yet still experienced in unique and individual ways.

Following directly from the statement above, is the last important point. This is the paradoxical nature of these findings. The nature of the powerful reading experience is a paradoxically complex phenomenon. It is constituted by interconnections and interdependencies of components, yet there is also an uniqueness to the experience. In other words, the individual threads of experience of each person is woven together to create a common tapestry of experience. The co-researchers'

individual experience is like the threads, while the universal structure is like the tapestry. For example, this can be related back to each co-researcher's individual experience before reading the powerful novel. Each person was searching for understanding in one's life, but this search was manifested in different life experiences. Thus, the search was the same, yet different. The sameness was in the search for understanding, while the difference was each person's life situation surrounding the search. For example, one co-researcher was experiencing a marriage break-up, another a readjustment after finishing school and moving back home, and a third co-researcher was involved in a search for philosophical, spiritual realization of life. Thus, each person was at an individual, specific point in one's own life before one read the book, but each was still searching.

Another example is the experience of growth and maturity in which each co-researcher spoke of being influenced to grow, or feeling that one had grown and matured from the reading experience. Each person was spurred on to change one's life which is a common experience, yet each person acts somewhat differently in one's own unique life and thus the changes brought about are enacted differently by each person. One is able to experience something very specific and individual, yet simultaneously experience something exactly the same and common to others in life.

The complex interdependence and connectedness of the experience can be exemplified by further discussing the theme of change. The co-researchers experienced common feelings which led to the common desire

to change, which was in an unique way. Each co-researcher was inspired to change. Again, the inspiration is common to all, but the source of inspiration and the outcome of the inspiration are somewhat different. The one theme of change is involved with and connected to different aspects of the experience. For example, change only can occur when other feelings are experienced first. Change is dependent on the feelings of inspiration and freedom. Change is also an individual experience as well as a common experience. Change is also experienced in the dimensions of thinking, feeling and acting. Therefore, one theme such as change is complex and does not stand discretely on its own.

In summary, the universal exhaustive description when viewed from a distance is like a tightly woven tapestry of experience. The threads are interlaced in a complex, interconnected, interdependent fashion. However, paradoxically when studied closely, one can also see the individual, multicolored, multitextured threads that are so necessary to give life to the whole.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The investigation of the phenomenological experience of reading a powerful novel has produced an universal structure with several powerful implications. This experience is the same for each individual, yet it is experienced in an unique way. The paradoxical nature of this experience is an important consideration, as discussed in the results chapter. Each individual has an experience that can be exactly described and validated by others, yet one can experience one's own uniqueness more clearly and vividly from this experience. The results clearly show that there is an unanimous consensus between co-researchers regarding the nature of the powerful reading experience. Both the consistency in the protocol analysis and the validation by the co-researchers of the exhaustive description support this. There are no variations or blank spots in the tapestry of the experience. The results clearly show a complex, paradoxically interdependent, interconnected but universal experience for each of the co-researchers.

The importance of the universality of the reading experience is that it is exactly the same for each person who has experienced the powerful reading phenomenon. That is, an unanimous consensus of description of the experience which is common to each person. The value of stating these results of unanimous consensus as unequivocally as possible is that it allows other researchers to dialogue, check and

expand these results. This will enable others to further increase the confidence in these findings.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study are extremely consistent with the review presented in Chapter II. As suggested by Frankl, the co-researchers in this study were concerned with taking responsibility to find the right answers to life's problems and fulfill the tasks which life had set out for them. Each co-researcher was searching and struggling for this rightness and understanding of vision in one's life. This also relates to Maslow's assertion that if encouraged, positive inner nature can grow and prosper in the form of self-actualization. The powerful reading experience had a freeing and inspiring effect on the co-researchers which then encouraged them to strive for their ideals in life.

Frankl and May both discuss spiritualism in human life and the powerful reading experience as discussed contained a strong spiritual quality of experience. The exhaustive description included infinity, eternity and humility as part of the reading experience.

Maslow discussed the concept of the universal person. Each co-researcher was in touch with the commonness of all human life and identified with people and life experiences of different times and places that were written of in the books. This added to the understanding and self-actualization tendencies, in that one learned about oneself through the experience of other lives.

May's discussion of the desire to live around self-chosen goals and values and the attainment of self-awareness is reflected by the findings of this study. The co-researchers were much concerned with living their vision of life and living by their own values. The reading experience served to validate their values and this encouraged and inspired them to strive to attain this in life.

May also discussed the concept of eternity and truth both in people's lives and in reading literature. The co-researchers both personally and through their reading experienced the phenomena of eternity and the essence of truth. The reader was freed of the time dimension by reading. One was encouraged to pursue the truth in one's own life after the experience of recognition of matching truths from the reading. The co-researchers in this study experienced what May suggests is the essence of humanness, as if a profound depth had spoken to them on an universal plane as the voice of their own experience by means of the reading experience. This allowed the reader to experience greater life and self more vividly and truthfully.

The co-researchers experienced the phenomenon of conversion as suggested by Crites. They spoke of a new perspective or as Crites views this, a second awakening of consciousness, an explosion of awareness and understanding which was experienced by each of the readers. As suggested by Crites, this has allowed them to live with more meaning in life. The paradoxes of experience as discussed in this study are addressed by Crites. This was the feeling of consciousness yet unconsciousness, self yet other life and temporalness yet timelessness

in their experience of reading which then led to the change in their thinking, feeling and acting. Each co-researcher spoke of these paradoxical experiences in the interview.

The findings of this study are similar to those of Colaizzi, yet they add other dimensions. There is a sameness regarding what Colaizzi found concerning the finding that the already known becomes seen in a new light. The parallel in this study is the co-researcher's experience of clarification and strengthening of one's vision in life by means of the reading experience. Colaizzi found that there was a freeing of the person to recognize a more imaginative self and this study found the same. Another similarity is that Colaizzi speaks of the loosening of the physical and temporal bonds. This is similar to the experience of eternity in this study. The concepts found by Colaizzi of the infinity of meanings and the struggling with the ideas presented in the book are still other similarities between this study and Colaizzi.

The major findings of this study which go beyond, or add to Colaizzi's study are the findings of universality and the complexity of interconnected, interdependent paradoxical nature of the experience of reading a powerful novel and living life. Colaizzi focuses only on the individual experience and the resultant implications apply only to the individual. His findings seem to be less connected and interdependent and void of the paradoxical quality of experience. The findings of this study in contrast to Colaizzi's both show the power of the individual experience but also equally the power of the individual experiencing the other. A central and crucial component of these findings is that

paradoxically one cannot experience the self clearly without the experience of the other. One needs the characters and life experience in the book to identify with and experience the universal quality of life in order to more powerfully understand the self. Also missing in Colaizzi's study is the paradox of infinity and finiteness. One's finite life has meaning when paradoxically one is aware of infinite life. The paradox of temporalness is not highlighted sufficiently by Colaizzi. He does not mention clearly enough that one's life is experienced more meaningfully when the connection to eternal life is realized.

When contrasted with the findings of this study, Colaizzi's description of the reading experience lacks a unified, flowing depth of experience. His findings are strung together in a discrete and linear fashion. The findings of this study as discussed are of a deep, complex and interrelated nature. The findings of this study are like a gestalt, the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts.

A possible explanation for these differences in findings may be that Colaizzi obtained his information from his analysis of written responses to his questions, while this study obtained information by means of the phenomenological interview. Also, this study was only concerned with fictional literature while Colaizzi studied non-fiction.

Counselling Implications

The investigation of the phenomenological nature of reading a powerful novel has produced relevant and convincing information

concerning both the specific individual experience as well as the commonness between individual experiences. This study clearly shows that the reading experience can be very powerful in an individual's life, and that this is directly connected to the commonness of the experience and validation from other sources, such as the novel. Central and crucial to one's own validation is that others in life have the same experience or feelings too. It is important to consider these findings in application to Counselling.

When integrating these results into Counselling practice, it is necessary to keep in mind the paradoxical balance between the individual's understanding of self and the understanding that one has of other life. The goal of Counselling is to enable one to live one's life effectively and fully both individually and socially. I have concluded this on the basis of my review. In Counselling practice the understanding of the paradoxes of life should be incorporated. This is achieved in Bibliotherapy by means of the discussion of the meaning of and implications of the feelings produced in the reader caused by identification with the life and characters in the reading experience, and how they relate to the reader. This can involve such specific areas of focus such as attitude change concerning oneself or one's view of life, a clarification of self-understanding and other life understanding, as well as problem-solving activities of how to live more effectively in life. The counsellor and the client can continue the process of awareness which was catalyzed by the powerful reading experience.

Another powerful outcome regarding Counselling practice is the cathartic or extremely emotional experience of reading a powerful novel. This may be discussed on varying levels of intensity. For example, the novel although a powerful medium, may initially offer a somewhat safer point of reference because the client can focus on something other than the self. The client may initially tell the story of the novel without directly commenting on the implications for oneself if he/she chooses to do so. This may be a valuable comfortable starting point of focus, and as the discussion develops, the counsellor can shift the focus of the meaning from the book directly to the client's own life meaning and ways to live effectively. The discussion can also provide an opportunity to define and clarify the client's needs, values and aspirations or goals in life.

Another consideration concerning the findings of this study is that of which books to use in Bibliotherapy and Counselling. This study has been concerned with only literature in the form of powerful stories or novels. The nature of the experience which has been revealed in this study is not meant to be applied to the popularized Self-Help books or How-To books. The paradoxical and complex findings of this study cannot be assumed to be experienced in books other than literature or powerful stories. The new perspective and depth of understanding of self and other life can most likely only be experienced through a powerful experience as presented in literature.

A consideration for the counsellor is the complexity of the experience for the client. The counsellor must be aware of the power

and depth of the experience for the client. This is important concerning recommendations of books for the client to read as well as the discussion of the experience. First, concerning recommendations, the counsellor must be knowledgeable and sensitive concerning which books would be useful for which clients. The counsellor must be sensitive to which issues the clients are struggling with and which books would most effectively address that struggle. Another consideration is the readiness of the client. The results of this study have indicated that the client must be ready for searching. Therefore, the timing in the recommendation of the book is important. The counsellor must be sensitive to the client's readiness in order for the client to gain the most benefit from the experience. In this way, the book is an aid to the counsellor, not the solution, or vehicle of responsibility.

Second, in discussing the powerful nature of the experience, the counsellor must be aware that the experience may in some ways overwhelm the client. The counsellor should be sensitive to the mixed emotions and even initial confusion or fear of the client. It is important to discuss the fears, questions and struggles of the client as part of the experience. The insights and attitude changes and problem-solving results from facing some of the more difficult aspects of the experience first. It is important to thoroughly discuss the experience and its implications for the client and the client's functioning in life. It may be necessary to reframe or clarify certain conclusions that the client has gotten from the reading experience.

The timing of the discussion of the reading experience is important also. As mentioned, one interview was not acceptable for this study on the basis that the person was unable to clearly discuss the experience because the time period after reading the book was too small. The sample questions in Appendix D show clearly the co-researcher's confusion and inability to articulate the experience (see Appendix D). This person's interview consisted of personal thoughts and feelings, not a description of the powerful reading experience itself. The clients may need varying amounts of time to come to terms with their experience, before discussion can take place. Again, the counsellor must be sensitive to the right time to discuss the experience.

Different types of clients may benefit most from this experience. Verbal clients who themselves state an interest in reading may be potentially the most likely to gain the most from Bibliotherapy. As stated earlier, the articulation and desire to read are important factors. If appropriate, the counsellor may discuss attitudes or interest toward reading with a client. It is possible that clients who may think that they could not benefit from reading could actually gain valuable benefits. Or, it is possible that some clients are not aware of the potential gains from reading.

The possibility of group Bibliotherapy can be considered in addition to or in place of individual counselling. As stated, the experience is an individual experience, but it is also experienced commonly by others. The validation of one's experience and feelings is a key aspect, and this can be effectively highlighted by membership in a

group. The group members could powerfully validate one's feelings on a more intense level because of the numbers of people with the same experience. The benefits of group membership such as greater generation of ideas for problem-solving as well as contribution from varying life experiences may add to the benefits of Bibliotherapy in a group situation. This could be achieved with a focus on one book, or several books, depending on the goals of the group and the needs of the group members. For example, if one specific book was discussed, then each person could contribute one's own experience and understanding of the book to other members. Or, if discussion of the experience and applications to living differently was the goal, then different books could be discussed at one time. Benefits could be derived from either approach because ultimately the end is to live more fully and effectively from the experience and resultant consequences.

Another possible outcome is that one powerful reading experience may open the client to other experiences of the same kind. The co-researchers spoke of more than one book effecting them strongly when I first approached them about my study. They had to choose which experience to focus on. Possibly once one has had this powerful experience, it may motivate one to search for more knowledge and experience of the same calibre. This way the client and the counsellor can work together to choose other books for discussion.

In summary, the implications for Counselling application of the phenomenological nature of a powerful reading experience are both expansive and deep in scope. The client and the counsellor have much to

learn about concerning a better quality of life and an understanding of the vast paradoxes of one's own life and that of life beyond oneself. This will contribute to a personal evolution as well as evolution for mankind.

Analogue to Counselling

The powerful reading experience can be compared to counselling itself. Or more directly, a powerful reading experience can be viewed as an analogue to counselling. From this perspective, what does the reading experience offer as a model of counselling? The powerful reading experience was found to be a complex, paradoxically meaningful, interdependent and interconnected phenomenon. The counselling experience seems effective, powerful and constituted by very much the same tapestry of experience as woven by the powerful reading experience. In both cases, the reader and the client can be considered the antithesis of the Lady of Shalot. The Lady longed to be free of her confined, isolated state and to experience life directly and vitally. Her weaving of a tapestry was a substitute for the river of life. When the Lady left her weaving, she forfeited her life. In contrast, the tapestry of experience woven by both the powerful reading experience and the counselling experience is directed at a fuller, more real experience of life as its outcome. As the tapestry of experience is woven to achieve wholeness, the reader and the client become more real and more vital in living life.

Initially, for the reading experience to hold any power or potentiality for growth and change, the person must first be searching,

and ready for the wisdom and vision offered by the book. The same readiness must also be in the client when the client is in a counselling relationship. The client, like the reader, must be ready and searching for ways to resolve the confusion, doubt and trap that he/she may feel he/she is in. The client and the counsellor as a consequence may discuss such questions as What is the client searching and struggling for? What is the vision of life that the client has, or would like clarified? What are the self-chosen values the client wants to live by? What is the trap the client feels he/she is in? What is the client confused about or doubting? and finally, How does the client/mankind gain meaning in life?

As happens with the book when the reader becomes involved and enthusiastic when a validation and sense of matching truth occurs, so does the client when he/she feels that a connection is taking place in the counselling relationship. The counsellor is able through discussion to validate the experience and thought of the client, as well as the writer who helps to match the truth of vision of the reader as well as expand this vision of truth for the client and to help clarify the vision for the client. The counsellor clarifies and expands the vision of truth in life for the client while also matching the truth of vision for the client. As happens with the reader, the client feels hopeful, inspired, affirmed and more courageous. \

The counsellor also helps the client to work through the self-questioning and qualities that are being revealed to the client about oneself by means of involvement in the counselling relationship. As the

reader experiences, this is often difficult, but ultimately worthwhile. The counselling relationship is likened to the experience that the reader gains through the book from the characters and life experience presented in the book. The counselling relationship focuses on both the life experience of the client and the dynamics of the counselling relationship. While the reader integrates what is learned from the book to oneself and one's living of life, so does the client integrate what is learned from the counselling relationship to oneself and one's living of life.

The concept of temporality is crucial in the reading experience. The reader experiences tenses of past, present and future. The counsellor and client may also discuss past, present and future life experiences of the client in order to gain an understanding of one's vision of life. This understanding is achieved as stated in the reading experience by way of an understanding of the paradoxical nature of life. The client becomes in touch with self-understanding in the face of the realization of the connection to other life and its meaning. The paradox of temporalness in reference to eternal meaning and temporal meaning is important as is the paradox of spirituality in reference to finiteness and infiniteness and the paradox of self and non-self in reference to universality and uniqueness are both also important. The vision of counselling that I have is not one of a narrow, imbalanced emphasis on the self and the self's temporal, unique and finite existence, but rather a deep knowledge and integration of the self with eternal, universal human nature and the meaning of life in a spiritual,

infinite sense. This does not detract from one's temporal, unique existence; it only enriches and expands it. With the experience of spirituality, universality, and eternity and the realization of life other than oneself, one is able to feel both free and humble. One feels less burdened and responsible in a negative sense for all that happens in life. In some senses it is a freedom to realize that one is not prime cause for all that happens in life, nor is one the sole definition of life. However, paradoxically, one also realizes what meaning the self can have in life both in an unique sense as well as an universal sense. At this point, the sensitivity to and awareness of the fine-tuned integrated balance of the paradox of self and other and the fine-tuned integrated balance of the other paradoxes of life can be strived for and sought after. In the counselling relationship, this fine-tuned balance can be discussed by the client and counsellor working together to understand the issues of meaning in life, values and a vision of truth in life and living truthfully in life. The counsellor strives to facilitate the matching of truths between the client's vision of life and the life experience available to the client.

The goal of counselling is to enable the client to achieve a new perspective, a clarity and depth to one's vision of life and one's part in life by means of a growth and maturity in the counselling relationship. The growth and maturity reaches fruition by searching for meaning and understanding of the complex, interdependent and interconnected qualities of the counselling relationship and its integration with ongoing life experience. This involves a change in the thinking,

feeling and acting of the client, the counsellor and the relationship. The counselling experience, like the powerful reading experience, is one that involves immense emotion and insights with a meaningful, vital life experience as its potential outcome.

Further Research

A wider range of interview would be worthwhile to investigate. Co-researchers of varied ages, varied life experiences and different cultures would be valuable to interview. This would enforce the universality of the experience further.

The phenomenological experience of reading a powerful story once clearly and exhaustively described can lead to other more specific questions for research. The next question that I would like to investigate would be Is a particular book, or art in the form of literature, able to effect all people as powerfully and equally? For example, I would like to interview several co-researchers on their experience of reading A Tale of Two Cities. The implications for Bibliotherapy would be that if literature as an art form is able to effect all people with equal power and depth of experience, then the selection of books for discussion may be narrowed down to the highest form of art which is then the most efficient way of learning about the experience of living one's own life fully in relation to other life. As Tolstoy suggests in the quote that follows:

And universal art, by uniting the most different people in one common feeling by destroying separation, will educate people to union, will show them, not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life. (p. 190-191)

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TABLE 1

Significant Statements

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>1. It seemed to hold hope that they embodied and the energy they embodied was very important.</p> <p>2. I read it at a very crucial time of my life. I felt very stuck in terms of proceeding along conventional paths at that point. Trying to find new ways, so it's continued to speak powerfully to that freedom and unconventionalism.</p>	<p>1. It is my hope for old age.</p> <p>2. I was aiming at finding myself just in terms of who I was and what I wanted in life. I was experiencing a feeling of being trapped and worrying and fearing what would happen to me if I got out of it. I read it around the time of disillusionment with my marriage.</p>	<p>1. There is always hope for change. Hope for humanity generally and individual.</p> <p>2. I was ready to be effected, the book came at a low point, turning point in my life, wanting something that needed to be known, searching, wanting a new direction.</p>	<p>1. There was a sense of hope because he made it very clear how close he had come himself to . . .</p> <p>2. I was experiencing a lot of turmoil, indecision about what I was doing with my life, it was a period of change and readjustment - a crossroads. I was struggling.</p>	<p>1. It fills you with an incredible sense of hope and community that you didn't have before you read it.</p> <p>2. I came to the book after years of deep inner struggle and deep philosophical and spiritual speculation. Things I was searching for were being talked about as if they were real.</p>	<p>1. Hope</p> <p>2. Searching, Struggling (readiness)</p>

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
3. The book acted as a kind of validation for an intensity of feeling which wasn't validated by my social environment.	3. It was certainly underlined in the thinking that I had already had.	3. He validated for me my own upbringing, he validated sort of traditional Christian values, he validated that experience for me. My own life was something valid.	3. Taking what I'd suspected to be true, and then reading it as written and seeing that the vision that he had was so much greater . . .	3. The major worth and purpose of the book was the validation of what was previously thought to be nonapplicable feeling and thought, hadn't had any tangible evidence in the external environment that they were real. It confirmed deep inner feelings I've had.	3. Validation of - feeling - experience - thoughts
4. A number of things about the book excited me.	4. I was enthused about what I saw as a different way to remove oneself. I was enthusiastic about the book.	4. There was a sense of elation.	4. I couldn't stop talking about it because it was so incredible.	4. It became the most immediately positive thing I could discuss in my day. At times reading it was a joy that I almost couldn't stand, it was incredible.	4. Enthusiasm excitement incredible

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>5. While identifying myself with the type of energy, characters and situations that were portrayed in the book, it enabled me to make sense of a different range of experience.</p>	<p>5. I was suddenly aware of identifying with the bag ladies downtown. Eve who lost everything . . . and I remember identifying with her at that time.</p>	<p>5. I found part of myself in all the characters. They drew out feelings and emotions and corresponded to truths in myself.</p>	<p>5. It hit me very hard because I could see as I read through all the sins how they all applied to me. Dante was at a crossroads when he wrote the book and I identified with that because I was at a crossroads in my life at the time I was reading it.</p>	<p>5. I related or was afraid I was like Marius, so I went through some trying times while reading the book. Hugo has a tendency towards . . . which embarrassed me because I feel that's a tendency I also have.</p>	<p>5. Identification with characters and experience.</p>
<p>6. I'm really touched again by that sense of real resonances within me, real connection. The book affirmed a sense of . . . in a way that I didn't find affirmed in the world in which I was living.</p>	<p>6. It was a very emphasized vision that when we truly take responsibility . . . It was certainly underlined in the thinking that I had already had.</p>	<p>6. I listened to it and it said the things I needed for it to say. There was a truth to the way they were and who they were which corresponded to truths in myself and who I was.</p>	<p>6. Dante puts it and I agree with him, I see it as being true that people choose their own Hell.</p>	<p>6. Reading the book was joyously easy because it felt like what I was reading was right, what happened in the book was right and what I was doing was right. Comments of things that Hugo had said were exactly things I believed and knew.</p>	<p>6. Recognition of truth - matching truth.</p>

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>7. You could actually live your life in such a way that this made sense and you embodied some of this.</p> <p>8. It fit in that it didn't fit. It provided a framework I could relate to that was different from my social milieu and family. I could see another possibility, as affirmed in a way that I didn't find affirmed in any way in the world I lived in.</p>	<p>7. The characters seemed real. Her husband seemed to epitomize an enormous number of people that I know in my life and everyone's life.</p> <p>8. The world presented in the book fit with my perception of the world, a very realistic presentation of the world.</p>	<p>7. They were real people, were everybody who has ever lived, each person had validity, they belonged too.</p> <p>8. The structure that he created meshed with my own inner sense of what the world is, and I could fit into it.</p>	<p>7. His Hell is so explicit and gory in parts. Sometimes you learn by knowing what you don't want and a lot of the experiences of the characters were that.</p> <p>8. I know that it is the sense of life that I want to understand and I think it is the <u>only</u> sense of life ultimately. So it just fit perfectly.</p>	<p>7. The characters are as real to me as any of the people I know. I was in awe of the beauty and of the reality with which he dealt with ideas I was constantly trying to keep alive.</p> <p>8. Hugo presents a far different world, a world which I believe is far realer and far more truthful and one which I believe deeply.</p>	<p>7. Realness of characters and life.</p> <p>8. Worlds fitting/meshing.</p>

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>9. It moved me away from my social milieu quite radically and propelled me into a new one. It enabled me to make sense of a different range of experience.</p> <p>10. There was meaning and the book communicated draw and energy that was embodied in the book. The ideas presented in the book became important to me in terms of discovering my own meaning.</p>	<p>9. I mean I am really looking at those people with a much different perspective. I have a different attitude about myself and other people in general.</p> <p>10. Someone is still likely to be around and find me attractive if I'm involved with life. I learned change can happen at any time, sexuality goes on and everything has a cost, sometimes costs are . . .</p>	<p>9. The orientation was to see myself, my world and my everything through a different set of eyes, a changed perspective.</p> <p>10. I wasn't aiming at anything, wasn't looking for a specific thing, I merely found it as I went along. Gained a renewed respect for the interwovenness of all life. Good/ Evil - choices Dignity of human spirit.</p>	<p>9. And that's what reading that did, it made those words which were just words before mean so much more. It broke up the cloud and made me see things more clearly.</p> <p>10. I was experiencing a sense of humility and a greater understanding of myself and people afterwards. For the first time in my life I had a really true sense of humility and what God is.</p>	<p>9. I went to the book with a deep hunger for spiritual reality and I came out of the book with a deep appreciation of social reality. Hugo has managed to show me.</p> <p>10. Hugo's belief that the epitome of life was the realization of the infinite dove-tailed absolutely perfectly with my own hungers and beliefs. The book was a great aid to understanding history, social, etc.</p>	<p>9. New perspective.</p> <p>10. Meaning in life.</p>

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>11. It did influence me through 10 years or so of my life, in pointing certain directions out that I had to them sort of deepen and move on. The book was very catalytic for a lot of things.</p> <p>12. It in some ways formed a great deal of who I became following that. I can reflect back and see how much of an impact it had because of what I have done with my life since then . . .</p>	<p>11. If you trust people to grow they will grow, but if you keep protecting them . . . In a sense I feel like I'm kind of growing with that novel . . .</p> <p>12. I feel more courage in terms of how I live my life. I have a different attitude about myself and other people. I have an acceptance and deeper respect for . . .</p>	<p>11. I had a sense of growing up, of maturity, of having come a little distance.</p> <p>12. I became more as a person. It did remove me a little from trying to work out the tensions and just allowing it to be, not feeling so caught and spun around. A sense of discovery, new beginnings. It opened the doors to a bigger world.</p>	<p>11. To know that there are things greater than yourself and that you are part of the greater whole, to put into perspective, a growing up.</p> <p>12. It made me want to go on with my life in a different way. So that led to a lot of self-analysis, self-discussion and self-understanding.</p>	<p>11. After the book, I believe I matured, I believe I learned incredible things. And so reading the book was a good experience.</p> <p>12. I extended positively the spiritual understandings and I got rid of some of the worst parts of the depression. So the book began to make me feel socially valid and justified. It made me aware of . . . It made me realize . . .</p>	<p>11. Growth/ maturity/ opening up.</p> <p>12. Change in life/ influence.</p>

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
13. It's very kind of raw and rough . . . and that appealed to me and made it powerful at the time.	13. I think I probably read it in one sitting. It was easy to read, very captivating and pleasurable, it did not lag at all.	13. I was very involved, just savoring every word, phrase, expression. I could hardly wait to get back to the book.	13. It made a very strong impression because I couldn't stop talking or thinking about it. It was just so incredible.	13. I savored the book. It was the most delicious place I could go to and at times it was a joy that I almost couldn't stand. It was incredible.	13. Involvement.
14. The characters are continually fighting a battle against incredible odds and do it regardless of consequences because it seems to be the only thing with any real meaning. You could actually live your life in such a way that this made sense and you embodied it.	14. I feel more courageous as a result of that novel, I feel more courage in terms of how I live my life.	14. Sense of being stretched or pulled, it leads you to a better place and you are willing to go even if it scares you.	14. It made me think about what I should do, what I could do and what I had to face. Better get on with living your life.	14. It wasn't sheerly pleasurable, it was hard work to face these possibilities . . . I got a willingness to live life.	14. Courage.

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
15. There was a sense of real freedom, boisterousness and unconventionalism. It affirmed or encouraged some qualities in particular and their expression.	15. I am aware of feeling a release that came afterward, from the novel. The book affirmed for me that it is fine to be . . .	15. The other change was feeling a freedom to cut the ties of home and childhood. I could survive on my own because in my spirit there was life.	15. It just made so much sense. I talked about it to anybody and everybody I could. A true understanding and belief and commitment will lead to a lot of growth, it's not a blind belief.	15. The effect was one of justification, insight, freedom and release. It confirmed deep inner feelings I've been having.	15. Freedom/ release justification/ affirmation.
16. It in some ways formed a great deal of who I became following that. I can see how much of an impact it had because of what I have done with my life since then.	16. I see them as part of me, whereas before I just saw them really as kind of objects of observation. In a sense I feel like I'm growing with that novel.	16. Maybe that is one of the ways in which I am becoming now. Maybe that was a hidden goal or aim that came out of the book. (I saw that would be a good way to be.)	16. I was trying to understand what he'd had to say and how it applied to me and to life in general. Trying to remember what I had learnt while reading it and to keep using it.	16. I read the last third quickly because there was no need to hang on to the actual text, I could let go because the book had already permeated my being enough.	16. Integration.
17. . . . very fleeting, impermanent, sad, sort of nature very poignant sense being . . .	17. I have a tolerance and respect for other people that I would have either dismissed or distanced myself from.	17. Its temporality makes it so much more precious, you are more vulnerable, important and insignificant.	17. I had a really true sense of humility and what God is really about.	17. It made me aware of my own lack of development, the book had a humbling experience for me.	17. Humility.

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
18. The book power-fully reintro-duced into my life eternity or God, the whole notion of spiri-tual reality.	18. . . . but really had a sense of being very wealthy of spirit. I re-member identifying with her at that time. Yes, I got an eternal sense of life.	18. I felt involved in creation in some way. The overall impression was magnificence and glory of the human spirit.	18. It is a story about God, love and humanity. There is the di-vine in it. The topic it's about stays with you forever and it ap-plies continually.	18. He touches so much of what I believe to be spiritual truth. Hugo clearly shows that mortal life is experienced by infinite reality.	18. Eternalness/spiritualness.
19. Whole range of new concepts that I had to come to terms with Grappling all the time with that sense of meaning	19. And thinking, my God . . . before I had always seen it as not a choice, but inevitable, it had never occurred to me	19. It allowed me to look at qualities in myself that I didn't partic-ularly want to look at.	19. It hit me very hard because I could see as I read through all the sins, how they all applied to me. Led to a lot of self-discussion and analysis.	19. The book reminded me of my own self-doubts and my own negative dispo-sitions towards myself, which made it difficult but worthwhile.	19. Struggle with self-learnings qualities of self revealed.
20. It pointed out certain directions that I had to then sort of deepen and move on.	20. In a sense I feel like I'm growing with that novel. Beginning to question that. . .	20. It opened the doors to a bigger world, universe. There is joy and dignity to be experienced. No need to force life, it's here and I'm in it.	20. A true under-standing, belief and commitment will lead to a lot of growth and understanding.	20. I extended posi-tively . . . I disagree . . . in that sense my own diversion begins, but that is worth-while because it encourages new idea and thought. And so even in that Hugo has achieved a masterpiece.	20. Questioning/growth-springboard for more thoughts/insight.

Table 1 Cont'd

CR ₁	CR ₂	CR ₃	CR ₄	CR ₅	THEME
<p>21. You could actually live your life in such a way that this made sense and you embodied it. The book was very catalytic for a lot of things.</p>	<p>21. That being down at the bottom paradoxically can be being at the top. It was really okay. I feel more courage in terms of how I live my life.</p>	<p>21. A revitalization, a sense of how wonderful is life, how proper is death. There is joy and dignity. I became more as a person. A sense of having a chance. I could find my way.</p>	<p>21. It made me want to go on with my life in a different way. It deals so grandly with God and what life could be.</p>	<p>21. It inspired me to broaden my choice of . . .</p>	<p>21. Inspiration/striving for more.</p>
<p>22. Relating to nature, a sense of other types of wisdom and a sense of a broader community. Tenderness, compassion, love, care and concern. The very possible very full eternal on the other side.</p>	<p>22. I'm so impressed with how many people read that book and so much identify with her. - A universality.</p>	<p>22. They were real people, were everybody who has ever lived, each person had validity, they belonged too.</p>	<p>22. Not just one person writing, it's from a greater whole. In Heaven there is no hierarchy between people. They are filled to the ultimate joy they can feel. There are things greater than yourself and that you are part of the greater whole.</p>	<p>22. One has to learn to be with life and not disagree with life, there is that in the book. I got a willingness to live it, a life of quality and a life of intinite worth . . . The intangibility of our soul becomes something we can share through tangible matter.</p>	<p>22. Universal.</p>

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please try to recall a novel which you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impressions that it made on you.
2. What is it that allows you to feel sure that it made a strong impression on you?
3. Is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you first began to read it? What? And during your reading of it?
4. What were you experiencing before you were reading it? During? Afterwards?
5. Did you discuss it either with yourself or someone else before, during and/or after reading it? If not, would you like to have discussed it?
6. What difference(s) can you detect within yourself after reading it?
7. What made the whole reading experience easy or difficult for you? Enjoyable or disagreeable?
8. Is there anything you wish to add?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning in life?
2. Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself? What are they?
3. How did the "world" presented in the book, fit with the way you see the "world"?
4. What did the characters in this book mean to you?
5. Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life and its temporariness?
6. Did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality with others across history?
7. Were you in a state of life transition - was there something important in your life?

APPENDIX C

CO-RESEARCHER 1

- I - Please try to recall a novel which you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impressions that it made on you.
- CR - Okay, describe the strong impression. Okay, the book that I decided to tell you about is the Darma Bums by Jack Karouack. And I read that it was a very crucial time of my life. It was like post adolescence, early adulthood. And it uh, it in some ways formed a great deal of who I became following that. Uh, there was a number of things about the book that excited me. I guess that main thing about it was it provided some kind of framework that I could relate to that was different from my social milieu, my family and all of that kind of environment. That I felt very dissatisfied with at the time. And there were a number of elements in the book that were very exciting. Which were a specific way of using language in the book, the way it was written. The uh, sense of real freedom and kind of boisterousness of unconventional, somewhat anti or asocial, unconventional. Uh, and a sense of relating to nature. A sense of other types of wisdom, other types of knowledge that weren't readily available in the culture. And the book laid it out in such a sense that I could get a feel for ascribing to these values and principles that I could see as another possibility, another way of moving with my life.
- I - What I got is that it came at an important point in your life, so that was involved. You were also thinking of reaching out and broadening out from your family and the societal ways that you found to be limiting. The impression, or the influence is that it gave you somewhere to expand it sounds like and to follow different paths and understandings and to just grow. Is there anything else you want to add?
- CR - (CR agrees) (pause) Nothing comes to mind immediately. There was all, I just like, one of the critical things there is a sense of of community of a broader broader sense of community. That there were people out there that um provided a whole new dimension.
- I - What is it that allows you to feel that it had a strong impression on you?
- CR - That allows me to think, well at this point see it's that many years ago, but I return to the book now and then and I recognize

again and again how many ideas, how much of it I can reflect back quite clearly, and quite readily and see how much of an impact it had because of what I have done with my life since then. Because of A) both the activities I have involved myself with, very physically and concretely and the ideas that are contained within. As the years have gone by too there has been other dimensions that have been added, a deepening of the experience of, but I don't know that is particularly relevant. Because it follows on other information and, for example, um, in case it's relevant, uh, Jack Karouack his, who he was a lot of that entered into it. When I read the book, he was still alive. And he died about five years I guess, maybe four years after I read the book. I got into him. And knowing about his death and the way he died and all that gives me a different view of what was happening with him writing the book. And that's deepened my connection with it. Uh, I'm also, I just looked at it again, and I'm really touched again by that sense of real resonances within me, real connection. It emphasizes a real kind of tenderness and a lot of compassion, a lot of love and care and concern. Sort of that is groping its way through a very confusing world. A confusing world at that time of the mid nineteen fifties. Trying to find new ways. So it's continued to speak very powerfully to that.

I - One of the things I got is that it has had an enduring quality. That even now you say that when you look at it again, it still brings up those feelings for you. And also the idea that you say that it actually shaped some of your behavior or the way you have become. So when you reflect back, you see the connection of having read that and who you are now. (CR agrees) Even the idea, you have connected what has happened in the author's life and what you learned about that back to the experience that you had in reading the book. And it sounds like it was consistent, like it made sense what happened?

CR - Yeah, it does. Another thing about that, like looking at it again I see in some ways, the book appears at this point, I wouldn't say shallow, but it doesn't catch like some of the depth of what he was attempting to write about. What was going on then. And that is something that appealed to me and made it powerful at the time. Because it it's very kind of raw and rough and straight forward. It doesn't go into very abstract, it's not abstract writing at all, it's very concrete. The, um, most of the, any intellectual speculation is comes down in dialogue, that is very immediate and sort of rough, sort of intimate dialogue between a few main characters. Um, but on the whole it's like the way the language moves is very kind of direct and very clear. Well, some of that and along with the whole kind of underlying rebelliousness, no longer makes as much sense to me. But and it's in that context too that I can see like his disappointment in his last years before he died, um, you know

like some of the idealism of that book isn't truly appropriate. And if one was to, if I was to stay with it, it wouldn't make sense at that point. But it did very much influence me through ten years or so of my life, in pointing certain directions out that I had to then sort of deepen and move on.

- I - You use the word deepen, and also I get the feeling that there was that power there but it was timing. As you say, well given a ten year period, that's quite an extended period. I also get the feeling that you have matured. The deepening is that that may have started something but other things are continuing the deepening or the seeds that that might have been planted. (CR says right) But yet those seeds are still valid. (CR says for sure) Do you feel that you have said all that you wanted? (CR says I think so)
Is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you were first reading it? And then during your reading and after it?

- CR - Hard to recall for sure. My aim, I came to the book because I read another one that he had written earlier. Um, I don't think I had any particular idea of what I was going to find other than just a continuing kind of affirmation or sense of this unconventional possibility. Because I felt very stuck in terms of proceeding along conventional paths at that point. And I knew him to be someone, Karouack to be someone who was speaking for a different way of being.

- I - There was a further development of an exciting alternative, (CR agrees) That somehow in another book an alternative had been presented, an unconventionality, and you wanted to further pursue that? So that was your aim you might say?

- CR - I think so.

- I - How about during your reading of the book?

- CR - Okay, during it, this is somewhat speculative, but I would say that uh, it increased my distance from a number, most of my peers. Barring one or two. Okay, the book is to some extent built around the relationship of two men, that is quite ideal in some terms. And so it gave me a a sense of, a signpost in some sense about relationship bonding with another man. Uh, so even at that point, okay, there were one or two other people I could relate to, in some depth, but it moved me away from my social milieu quite radically. And propelled me into a new one in which I started sort of feeling my way, while identifying myself with the type of energy and characters and situations that were portrayed in the book. It enabled me to make sense of a different range of experience I guess.

- I - It sounds too like, okay your dissatisfaction with some of the ways you were living I guess was clear. And then in the reading of the book, it gave you I don't know if the word is impetus to actually try out something new. (CR agrees) And you seemed to leave behind that which was dissatisfying and try out something that was hopefully what you were looking for. (CR agrees) Would you say that would be your aim, that you were actually trying to live out part the life that was portrayed or the relationship -
- CR - Yeah, I would say so. And also, the life and relationships and those things on a fairly external level, but also the kind of intensity of life that was portrayed. Drive after that because the book does, it's generally a fairly up, well it's interesting because it goes up and down. It follows very clearly um, the kind of impermanent flow of thoughts and emotions that arise. So it's not entirely exhilaration and up, it's also down. But there is continually a real intensity of feeling that I related to very strongly at the time. And it's to some extent I guess the book acted as a kind of validation for that intensity of feeling which wasn't validated by my social environment, by my family.
- I - I get this image of a real give and take in that you were wanting to take something from the book, which was the offer of seeking out that more unconventional alternative. But also you had already had an intensity of feeling and you put that into the book and recognized it in the book of yourself. Do you follow my image? (CR says yes, that makes sense)
Did you have an aim after finishing the book?
- CR - Well, upon finishing, I don't know how immediate it was, but I did start enacting more of the book. Like it deals in part with a relationship with the wilderness, with mountains. I remember at that point hitch-hiking through B.C. and climbing in the Rockies. And just very much involving myself in the whole, that type of experience. And also moved me into a different reading in some sense. So there is a lot of references in the book to particularly Eastern sources of the Sutres and different Buddhist texts and Japanese Zen, a lot of Zen literature. And so it led me into readings along those lines. It led me into reading more North American poets mainly the poets that were associated, were some of the characters in the book. And so, it had that immediate kind of effect. It's hard to untangle a lot of it too, because I mean at that point, it was very fertile and I did make this pretty big shift in my life and part of that was then involvement with peace movement and a lot of radical activity as a whole. I mean it seems very interconnected.
- I - I think you have made yourself quite clear to me in that you physically started acting out some of the lifestyle alternatives. So there was that, and also the idea of being

referred to a lot of different people and their ideas. Your aim was to learn more about that. And you went out and did that. (CR agrees) Are you through there?

CR - Yeah, I guess there is also that element of of through living through and enacting some of the relationship stuff, uh, particular to the extent that I was able I guess as a Canadian to model after American, Californian and New York mix styles, uh some of that in letter writing and such and Karouack and that whole style that book and I guess the preceding one too. That style influenced like my letter writing, my communication and interaction with other people to some extent.

I - What were you experiencing before you were reading it? During? and After? You partly addressed that, is there anything more you want to add?

CR - (pause) I can't really get in touch. I think it's too long ago partly. To get into, I mean any further.

I - I'll just repeat it again to see if you do want to add anything further. (CR says yeah, sure) I got the idea that your experience was a developmental point that you were at. A dissatisfaction of your current family lifestyle, the societal things and even your relationships. Also I got the feeling that you had this intensity of feeling that wasn't being answered. So that was the precursor experience. When you read the book, it gave you alternatives and it tapped into what was already there for you. So that was during, and during you started acting out some of the things and seeking more knowledge. And after, you followed through with that by actually travelling. Your experience you were saying about writing differently, reading more and that is most of what I got. Is that what?

CR - Yeah. I guess one other thing comes to mind. I'm not sure if it fits quite to that question to some extent. There is also as I mentioned that sense of compassion and caring in there. And it was interesting to me I guess the experience of that being a possibility of having some kind of place in the world other than sort of straight social morality, and being a good boy. Um, there was a space opened up where you could kind of experience spontaneity and unconventional, free-wheeling activity. And at the same time that somehow be rooted in a caring. So again that is connected also with intensity of feeling and having some place for that. That caring and feeling can manifest.

I - It sounds like afterwards you were able to experience that kind of community more too. Is that what you were getting at?

- CR - Yeah, it moved into a whole new type of community because there were other people around at that time who were moving in the same sort of direction.
- I - In reading the book, did you discuss it with somebody else, or yourself while you were reading it and afterwards?
- CR - Yeah. I don't think I ever, okay well there is internal dialogue, yeah. That sort of excitement and uh, questioning like uh, whether this is real. Whether this is straight biographical or how much was made up. Questioning where are these people now that I have discovered them. How can I connect with them etc., etc. Because it's like basically a fictionalized account of real situations, real people. And then, I think with others, there was some kind of exploration, but not I mean mainly in terms of the content rather than anything underlying, or anything thematic. It was just like um material that provided a framework for what a number of us were sort of looking at.
- I - If you were in a group of people would you say I'm thinking about this idea or concept, what do you think about it? Is that how you would do it? Or would you actually say I read this book, have you read it? Or, this is what the book is about, what do you think about it? How would it have gone?
- CR - Both ways I think to a closer circle of people who may have also read the book, or other books by the same, by Karouack, or that other range, there would be assumed some of that common range of experience. It wouldn't be referred to as I read and this book, but it would be just already assumed. But if it were other people, that were perhaps people I was moving away from, or didn't know, then I would talk about it as this book, yeah it's really exciting. And I would present it and I did, I have over the years off and on to people. It has been very kind of exhilarating and expansive. Which also contains um, a good deal of North American approach to the East and Religion and to that range of thought. Um, to some extent I can only speculate how often, or how much I would have done that. I know that I would have.
- I - What differences can you detect within yourself, after having read the book?
- CR - There was a range of differences. There was a whole range of new concepts that were presented that I had to start working with, trying to come to terms with. The Eastern concepts of in that case, Zen Buddhism, the Buddhist thought, Eastern thought generally, that I started looking at. It also crystallized a break with the way I had been living my life. As part of my family and being sort of directed to a certain type of future,

through university and into job, blah, blah, blah. And I guess so it influenced to some extent the fact that I involved myself with studying English Lit. as opposed to going into Marine Biology or a science kind of. It seems it came more at a time you know it crystallized and focused other things that were happening. It enhanced commitment to work with sort of personal growth in some way as opposed to the technical, scientific world which was also open, accessible at one point. This was one of the elements that made me lean towards, you know, well I'd rather just find out who I am rather than follow this predetermined path. So.

I - The big difference is that it allowed you to consider more alternatives, and to make some choices based on that. Because it sounds like you felt you were being funneled into something. (CR agrees) And having read it, you, there was the ideas and the concepts that you had to learn more about, and to integrate into your way of thinking. But it sounds like the big difference was that you stopped and thought about what you actually wanted to do and made some choices that were quite contrary to what might have been predicted before that.

CR - Yeah, it was definitely an aid in that process.

I - As far as the changes too, I got that you maybe allowed yourself to live those feelings more freely. When you said about the compassion and the recognition of community experience, to me I got that and also living your life differently, making actual behavioral changes, you wanted. And to leave behind some of the things that were dissatisfying.

CR - Yeah, and very much a part of that I think is that I identified this other range of things with my parents' world. And this was a broader world of community that I could establish. Because and there was my parents' world, the specific family world, and then beyond that there was a world composed of what looked again like my family, only broader. And yet, okay, here was another possibility that may have been small in some senses, but was much more meaningful to me at that time. And this whole element of rebellion, was in that and the affirmation that the book gave of rebellion. At least it seemed like I wasn't, wouldn't be totally isolated if I was to rebel. There was some context into which I could move with that rebellion.

I - So there it wasn't like a kind of floundering. It was a viable alternative.

CR - Yeah, it seemed to hold some hope. Something other than just a really sterility and a deadend that I saw around me.

I - So the change was maybe you were feeling in a sense that low energy, oppressed feeling and hopelessness. And the change was that here was something that made you hopeful, and made you act towards something that was in you that you wanted to recognize. (CR agrees) What made the reading experience easy or difficult, enjoyable or disagreeable?

CR - One of the things that made it easy was the style. It really, as I mentioned, it's very direct, very straight forward, has humor, it's not at all convoluted, it's just like straight, very, very direct. So that made it very approachable, and easy to read all the way through. What else was there? (I say was there anything difficult?) Some of the ideas were new to me, unusual at first greeting, but that didn't make it particularly difficult because it wasn't necessary really to understand the ideas to stay with the narrative line. Which is a very, very simple narrative line. Yeah that's - (pause)

I - You found it quite enjoyable, was there anything disagreeable?

CR - No, I don't think so.

I - What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning in life?

CR - It's hard to say you know. In retrospect (long pause) One of the things that was important, that I haven't really mentioned yet was that it did open up as I say Eastern thought. And it did that in a very, it seemed like there was something in that that would be interesting to explore, and perhaps provide some kind of underlying meaning. There was meaning kind of just in the book communicated a draw and energy that was embodied in the book. The ideas that it presented in the book cross very interestingly in the dialogue the interaction between the two main characters, Jack Karouack and Jerry Snyder. And they uh, Karouack was a Catholic, he was raised as a Catholic. And he is continually trying to bring together the sense of Catholicism and Buddhism as his basic structure. And a lot of that as I mentioned, is connected with compassion. Where he talks about Christ's compassion and love for the world as being Buddha's love for the world. And he is constantly sort of bringing stuff together. Very and then Snyder, he doesn't, he is not all interested in Christianity. He is sort of into a very strict form of Buddhism, coupled with a kind of radicalism, social radicalism and humanism. So it was quite strange in the book and they I guess they come together somehow in the dialogue. And both kind of sides were attractive to me. And whether they find embodiment in some of the activity that was undertaken by the characters, that living in a community, living with friends, partying and just hanging out in the city and then the whole community from the

wilderness and in the wilderness would be kind of odd. So a lot of those ideas then became important to me in terms of discovering my own meaning. And will have been as I say for a long time, the book was very catalytic for a lot of things. But for a long time my life continued to revolve around bringing together religious, sense of religious and contemplation, on the one hand and social reform and radicalism on the other which was very much prefigured in the book. So, a lot of those concepts then became underpinnings for study that I could follow up on, that would flesh out a sense of meaning that is given to some extent during the book. The concept of emptiness and compassion and love and social justice. So those were all from and they were affirmed, and they were affirmed in a way that I didn't find affirmed in any way in the real world in which I was living. And interestingly in the book, like Karouack, who was the narrator, he was coming down and recorded this by head. He very well not very frequently, but three or four times in the book, he talks about he is also on this sort of journey through life. And he doesn't talk too much about what's gone before necessarily, but he keeps referring to Snyder as Jackie Rider and the other people he's coming in contact with as the Darma Bums who are going to, are teaching him the meaning of life. He has a real sense that he is constantly learning from the new context that he is making. So that kind of mirrors my experience, and learning a lot from the book. But he is always in the role of of the learner. So I guess grappling all the time with that sense of meaning. In opposition for example, to his family, who he revisits back in Northeast U.S. And has to sort of justify the weirdness of what he seems to be doing. And so in the book it kind of mirrors the same situation that I would find myself in taking on these ideas in the context of my social background.

- I - You have said a lot there. I got this feeling of like in your maturity now, what you know now you put articulately what you were experiencing probably just as deeply back then, but you can articulate it so much more clearly now. (CR agrees) There was that hopelessness back then, like that hopelessness was what is my meaning in life? The feeling I got is that what I'm at is quite meaningless. That entrapped feeling of I am destined for this boring thing that I don't want anyway. And then you found the alternative for some meaningfulness. (CR agrees) You have made it clear in some maturity and distance travelled and a lot of knowledge taken in. You alluded to a lot of important concepts, like a philosophy of life.
- CR - Yeah, that's right. A different sense of what I was involved with in, more reflective given that distance, that time between.
- I - Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself? If so, what?

- CR - I don't know that it revealed any new qualities particularly. You know affirmed or encouraged some in particular and their expression.
- I - How did the world presented in the book, fit with the way that you see the world?
- CR - The way I see it.
- I - Or saw it. I guess it would have to be saw it given back then.
- CR - It didn't fit. That's how it fit. (laugh) In that it provided a different way, world view. And it was a world view that was set up in opposition to the prevailing North American Cultural scene. Analogous to ? set something up for me, it's different.
- I - It fit in that it didn't fit. It was another alternative to what you didn't want.
- CR - Right. Yeah, with a sense of some kind of heroic sense to it too. That would be possible to actually do something other than what I was doing.
- I - How does heroic fit in? I am not clear.
- CR - It's that well the characters in there are are continually in senses fighting a battle against incredible odds. And yet do it regardless of consequences. Just because it seems to be the only thing with any real meaning to them. So they go out and do it.
- I - It's like that persevering because of the commitment. And desire, and you felt that yourself?
- CR - Ya, Ya that's it's worthwhile. That there is actually something worthwhile and you don't need to continue just out of habit or out of convention.
- I - So the heroic too is that even though the struggle isn't easy, it's worthwhile. (CR agrees) It's worthwhile because that is what you have to do.
- CR - Ya, Ya like the book as I said it's not always entirely up, but it always moves up and down. It has that sort of intensity that life is really being fully lived, and experienced.
- I - What did the characters in this book mean to you? You commented on the relationship, is there anything more?

- CR - There is the two main characters and then there is the whole circle of people that hung out together. In San Francisco and in that whole scene. And then there is a lot of you know, secondary characters that Karouack meets on the road and the forest rangers that he runs into. A lot of little vignettes about this person, that person. And they are all like really sharp and clear. And then there is also a bit about his family. And his visit with family, his brother-in-law and sister and bits about his mother. Then there are the two main characters. I think I have mentioned, touched on a good part of what they mean or represent including the kind of heroic stature. The type of hope they they embodied and the energy they embodied was very important.
- I - Did you actually feel that you somehow mirrored or were able to get that important relationship with another fellow in your travels? Did you experience something similar in your travels?
- CR - Yeah, I did. But it's like part of the book now, I guess partly in retrospect, in that it's somewhat shallow, doesn't go into depth in any of those kind of things. It tends, in some ways, again, along with the heroic kind of thing, very very clear characters, without a lot of subtlety in their relationships. But I found the time there was one guy in particular with that I hitch-hiked with and we hung out together and went hiking with him. You know did, anchored into some of that. So I did find to some extent, people to work sort of through some of those same spaces, um physically in the world and also through talking and relating to ideas. That was with some other people. There were always maybe two or three guys that I could relate to on that level. In which case to some extent the book was modelled for being.
- I - I am curious, when you went out to travel, were you hoping to get that? Or when it was happening, did you actually say in your mind oh, this is similar to - ?
- CR - Not so much directly, no. The nearest like to a direct relationship would just be a sense of well here I am, I'm out hitch-hiking and I am open to whatever experience comes along. And that's the way it is. (I say just that openness) Ya, just whatever is going on. And the more experience, the more intense, like that. (laugh)
- I - Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life and its temporariness from reading the book? And did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality with others across time and history?
- CR - It's very those are both two conceptually, but in terms of actually experiencing. Like I say a large part of the book uh,

Karouack in his musings and a lot of what he writes is a need for care for each other and given that everyone is dying, that everything is empty, everything is very impermanent and filled with a lot of sadness about that. And the idea that underlying all this is the sense of God or - emptiness. So those are very strong conceptually so I did relate to that but, see I am looking at it in retrospect when my experience of those things is so much deeper. And so it's you know I know that it was present. And I know that the book probably brought some of those things out. I guess that being in the mountains and reflecting of the book, going through some of those things, kind of heightened my sense of being. But, as I say, it's hard from this point where I feel like I feel those things so much more now, at the same time the book did sort of enter me on a path where those two areas have continued to deepen, because the book was a very big part of me turning to Eastern sources of wisdom. And that's where I say even conceptually, those are very strong, in the book and did cause me to start looking at that much more clearly. (I ask the two areas, you mean?) I mean sort of what, temporality and eternity, yeah, both of those.

I - As in eternity could be close to the God Idea, is that what you mean?

CR - Yeah, in that, okay let's see. (pause)

I - I was confused about what the two areas you were

CR - Yeah, those two, in the question.

I - You have a lot more definition and experience. (CR says yeah) After having read the book your experience of being, I guess world temporal life and the greater too, you can recall having experienced that too but not as clearly as you understand it now.

CR - Yeah, in thinking about it now I also am thinking that the book kind of opened up the possibility to experience say eternity or God or whatever, in a different way. Like it kind of reintroduced the whole notion to me, of spiritual reality. It's a very big part in reintroducing that in a way that was very accessible. It was other than just theorizing about it, either logical or sermonizing. It was a sense that okay well, you could actually live your life in such a way you know that this made sense and you embodied some of this. And so that was actually quite powerful, that kind of reintroduction into my life. Because I as a child, I had gone to church and Sunday School a little bit. But my family was on the whole you know they would say they were Anglican, but they weren't really practicing. And I didn't ever have much religion, as a child or as an adolescent, very little.

So the book kind of opened up a way to experience those things that fit, the stuff we have been talking about.

- I - Not only did you get a sense of it, you also began to act on that again, and live it. (CR agrees) And now you are much more involved in it too. (CR agrees) That is the end of the questions. Is there anything you want to add?
- CR - The only thing immediately, in the book there is a couple of times, Karouack meets these old bums. One in the gondola car and both and then another one later in Los Angeles. And both of them have these little pieces of paper prayers written on them, that they pull out in times of need and read. And Karouack is always sort of totally blown away by these sort of very Saint like hobos who he finds wandering around. The book is very much permeated with that whole experience of spirituality. And it does embody both those, the flip side there, and the very fleeting, impermanent, sad, sort of nature very poignant sense being and yet you know very possible very full on the other side.
- I - Another word, I don't know if you mentioned this yet, but you used the idea of here I am and an openness, sounds like a point is freedom too. It's not so narrow and confining like the other world. There is a fair bit of freedom that is possible to be experienced. Like you say there is a bit of both. There is the fleeting and then that incredible enduringness and the freedom involved in that too.
- CR - Some of things too that change over time is like that sense of freedom which is laid out in a large part physically, by the characters becomes in itself quite poignant because it isn't ultimate freedom. And is partly the reason why Karouack died the death that he did. Which is like there is so much hope and possibility but it never kind of deepens for Karouack. He got really lost and really confused and his whole vision collapsed and he died a very unpleasant alcoholic sort of death. Thirteen years after the events that took place in the book he was dead. Because of certain misconceptions and that you can see in retrospect in the book.
- I - When you were reading the book at that time, were you able to see some of the, like you used the word, shallowness, lack of depth, misconceptions. Do you recall reacting to oh there is a lot in here, I am going to make some changes because of it BUT, there is something that is not.
- CR - No, I don't think I did. That has come in retrospect. Snyder too, he has recently written a foreword to a book by Aiken Roshi (?) he is an American Zen teacher. Snyder wrote this foreword, Snyder is into this stuff. He is sort of the first

North American to really immerse himself. He went and studied in a Zen monastery for seven years. But until he said in 75 and he hooked up with Aiken Roshi, and he said that Aiken Roshi and this is 25 years after what happens in The Dharma Bums, that Aiken Roshi sort of convinced him and showed him that it was necessary to give up a lot of his Bohemianism, kind of radicalism and become more responsible. And drop a lot of the initial romanticism that he had had. So again, the whole past, the journey continues to unfold, for everyone involved in it. It's really interesting. In the foreword he kind of thanks Aiken Roshi for grounding his practice in a different way.

I - It's interesting about the journey. That's so true that there is obvious travelling points to be gotten through in that journey. Especially if you take them only at one point and you don't carry on down the road, they are incomplete (CR agrees), they are not the total picture (CR agrees), they can be faulty and cause a lot of dissatisfaction and problems too. But it is that journey quality in that you have to go through certain points to get where you are going.

CR - That's right. Ya and hopefully you make it. It's interesting just looking over that book again in the last few days, it's so poignant some of what Karouack is saying well we were there and we did it and we just experienced the best that there possibly was and nothing could ever interfere with that experience that we had. And even though as it turns out he died miserable, discontent, he still like put that out at that time and it's still has that incredibly reverberatory quality. And it's true at that point that it doesn't matter what came of him because the experience what he opened up and did was so powerful. Same with Neil Cassidy, know who he is? (I say no) He is another of the same bunch. He comes into the book with a different name too. But he drove for awhile Ken Kesey's bus with The Merry Pranksters. But he was one of the main inspirations for both Karouack and Ginsberg very close to both of them. And he died similarly, drugged out and drunk in Mexico or something after some of the Merry Prankster stuff. Again, these guys just that had a real vision of what was happening, the rebelliousness and longing for freedom, pursued that path but blew it in the end. Went off the deep end for one reason or another.

I - In me it answers I think and partly for you too, I hear you saying that you want that full experience, you want a really deep rich life, but it has to move forward and I don't, I'll speak for myself, I don't want the end to become ugly or wipe away. I always see more peace and fullness at the end. It won't be a falling off the deep end as you say, but a realization. That's what I hope. And I hear you saying that too. They had a lot,

but they were missing something. You are not intending to fall into the same thing.

CR - Yes. Yeah, Snyder made it through and Ginsberg too. They also just continued. Basically because they were able to hook up with teachers. They were able to I think that's the critical difference. Between say Karouack and Cassidy, and Snyder and Ginsberg. They were able to acknowledge they're not knowing and submit to teachings, submit to a teacher, an established situation. Say okay, I'm willing to learn. And I don't know that the others could do that.

I - It makes me think about when we were on that walk, about that idea of hearing what is being said. In that others have things to say and our ability to hear them and listen and take them in, it's important too. Again too that idea of community, a community of ideas is important. Because I don't think, again I speak for myself that I could come to know all alone.

CR - Yeah, yeah, the circle increasingly important. Sharing.

I - Okay, that's it?

CO-RESEARCHER 2

- I - Please try to recall a novel that you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impressions that it made on you.
- CR - Okay, I was thinking of the Book of Eve by Constance Barisford Howe. And some of the impressions that it made on me were, uh, a deeper understanding of the trapped position women feel caught in sometimes through marriage. And uh, I was enthused about what I saw as a different way to remove oneself. And it said a lot to me about responsibility, and responsibility to others versus self-responsibility.
- I - Do you want to elaborate what you mean by that? Responsibility to self and to others, which one was the new perspective?
- CR - The new perspective. Mmeh. I don't know if it was a new perspective as much as it was a very emphasized vision that when we truly take care of ourselves, take responsibility for our own happiness, that somehow other people don't fall apart. That they will then, it allows other people to take responsibility for themselves, in an adult fashion, if we are taking care of ourselves. So I don't know if it was exactly a new perspective, but it certainly was underlined in the thinking that I had already had.
- I - I see, that's clear, so you are saying that if initially, you answer for yourself, and if you are true to yourself, then that in a sense puts that responsibility on others to do the same. But if your behavior is guided by concern for other people and so on, and you are not answering to yourself then it seems to get all confused.
- CR - Right. Exactly. Yeah.
- I - So that was, the impression was that the strong commitment to self and following that was that it would follow.
- CR - Right. And also, it was an interesting novel in terms of agism. Because the thesis of the novel was that you really are not ever too old for change. So, I also liked that perspective of it. And I liked the perspective of, that everything costs us something, but that sometimes, the things that look like we are given for free, cost us more than what society says. I realize that I am not sounding at all clear. But Eve, in this novel, gave up, um, a middle class life to become a bag lady. And as a bag lady,

the cost involved for her to do that, to become a bag lady, was much less than the cost of being a middle class housewife, in a comfortable home.

I - This book was described to me a little, and the feeling I got from that was that in her supposed material environment, or whatever, she was actually a prisoner (CR agrees) but when she left that, she actually had more freedom. So the freedom was the cost in the supposed comfortable surrounding. (CR says right, right) Whereas she may not have had all the clothing and so on, she had something more valuable. (CR agrees) That's how I related to what you were saying. (CR says yeah) Does that finish your impressions that you want to share?

CR - I think so.

I - This is a delving in deeper. What is it that allows you to be sure that it made a strong impression on you?

CR - Um (pause) I think, you know when I was trying to think about it, I was trying to think clearly had I read this book in a period of deciding whether or not to come out of my marriage. Or had I read it very shortly afterwards. And I am not quite sure now, because this is some time ago. But, I have the sense of it connecting to that time. That somehow Eve's courage in throwing up the societal encumbrances of comfort, somehow is connected in my mind with leaving my marriage. So, I don't know if it was immediately before, or immediately after that I read it. But, whatever, I, in times around the disillusionment of my marriage, I felt, um, a kind of comfort and connecting with her. That things, when things get very bad, that in fact are better very often. So there was a strong sense of encouragement that came out of that novel.

I - Yes, it and sounds also like there was a confirmation, that whether you were just deciding to make that decision, or you had just decided it, even though there was a lot of pain, there was a confirmation that whatever you have done you have done for good reason. (CR agrees) (pause) Also, the time factor allows me to think that, that stayed with you. (CR says oh yes) That you can feel that strength of commitment and facing up to that situation.

CR - Yeah, and it was very strongly taken with the commonality of all women's experience. I gave that novel around to so many different women to read, including women like my mother, who have grade five education, and could identify with her totally. And you know other women with very different educational backgrounds and different um, socioeconomic backgrounds, all find it very relevant. When I came to work in this office, I had only been here a few days when I found out that the counsellor who shares

the office next to me, said she used to buy that novel by the dozens, and give it away to students as they came in. And then I discovered that another counsellor in the office also considered it one of her very favorite novels. And I'm so impressed with how many people read that book and so much identify with her.

I - You are saying that it has like the specific impact for an individual, but yet it seems to hit

CR - All women

I - across any category (CR agrees) so it has that enduring uh

CR - Yeah, a right a universality. And my aunt who barely speaks English, struggled through it, and has made references to Eve. You know (laugh) several times after that. Just uh (pause)

I - I think you started to allude to this, or you have already, in that is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you were first reading the book? And then during reading the book and after?

CR - Yeah, I guess finding myself to use a potential (laugh) phrase. Um, just in terms of who I was, and what I wanted in life. Um, and whether or not I could in fact survive on my own. And I do, you know, I certainly remember that period of finding myself in the world with a son to support and thirty dollars in the bank and nothing else at all. And feeling somehow okay and recognizing that, that, that it was okay. That I knew that somehow, or other that I could scrounge together enough to live on. That, that wasn't a problem. Whereas when I had had a husband, who was professional, but made a very average (laugh) kind of salary, I was always fearful of landing in the poorhouse. I would say, "Now what do you think, do you think we are going to land in the poorhouse, whatever that is?" And I would say "Yeah, I'm terrified of it." And somehow, you know like Eve, who lost everything, she didn't have a sense of being poor. But really had a sense of of being very wealthy of spirit, and it was okay. And I remember identifying with her at that time. And it really was okay to only have thirty dollars in the world.

I - Because you had a self-definition type thing. (CR agrees) I may be putting some words in your mouth, but I also get the feeling that um with the definition of who you are and knowing yourself, and you had a faith in yourself, and knowing that whatever you were going to do in the future would be founded on a solid feeling of who you were. (CR agrees) And you would move on. (CR says exactly) There was that hope. So that would be also then during reading the book and afterwards? (CR says

right) That kind of feeling? (CR says yes)

You weren't clear on whether your marriage break up was just prior to reading the book, or after. (CR says right) But, I'm asking, What were you experiencing before you were reading this book and then during and after? So it could be that, and then just generally?

CR - Well, I guess I was experiencing a feeling of being trapped in a situation that I didn't feel a hundred percent happy. And worrying and fearing what would happen to me if I got out of it. Um, and that just brought to mind something else that certainly at that time I was also experiencing, beforehand. Uh, a need to fit into society in terms of appearance. Not in terms of actions, because I think I've always been quite um, nonconventional. But nonconventional in a "groovy" way. (laugh) But certainly in terms of the way I looked and the way I decorated my place and so on. It was always with, conformity to societal standards. And there were passages, the passage where Eve found herself suddenly wearing boys' running shoes, and her clothes were tattered. And she ran across a granddaughter who was so shocked to see her in that condition. And I (pause) don't know why that was so important to me, but it was like the last hold out that anyone should see her in such reduced circumstances. So I guess that's what, uh, uh, I am aware of something very, very hazy here. But I am aware of that feeling of somehow a release that came afterwards, after reading that novel. After getting out of my marriage. That I was being seen at my very worst, when I had nothing to put on my back. And uh, somehow the worst that could happen to a person of my cultural upbringing would be to be left on my own as a woman of the world. And it would seem like I was cast out and nobody wanted me and that kind of thing. And there I was in that kind of embarrassing position, and it wasn't embarrassing once I was there. But it also was less embarrassing because I was aware suddenly of identifying with those women who were (laugh) bag ladies downtown. And thinking, my God, these are women with a real history behind them, and maybe their life was a choice. Before, I had always seen it as somehow not a choice, but inevitable. It had never occurred to me that some of them might have thrown aside other things to get there.

I - I get the reaction that people draw conclusions from for example your position, and they infer things about you which could be quite negative. Same thing like you see a bag lady on the street and because of her appearance you infer many things about her, but both in Eve you are saying and yourself there was a well thought out and firmly committed to point of view. And that was what was important. Is that what you are saying?

- CR - Yeah, I am. Yeah. I guess and also, I mean she, that also connects with another novel, Aborah, by Joan Barfoot, but which I have read more recently, but where the heroine is seen as as highly eccentric, nobody could imagine what she would be doing living all alone in the woods. You know, just as Eve would be seen as highly eccentric. But in fact, those women were very middle class women. The same as me, the same as most of the people I'm around, under the skin. But they were choosing to do something that seemed eccentric. And I like that. I mean it has given me a different vision of eccentric people. Truly eccentric not just groovily eccentric. But people that we really kind of finger as odd. But maybe ultra sane.
- I - So, in your afterwards, you seem to have a different attitude, about these women and also
- CR - Yeah, about myself. But also just about other other people in general. I mean I really am looking at those people with a much different perspective. (pause)
- I - Yeah, I see your, if I can put it into words, uh, just more, there is more depth and you are not as categorized. (CR agrees) There is that common feeling. Again it brought me back to what you were saying about they are middle class women even though how they appear. So it's like women are women and people are people, even beyond those eccentricities.
- CR - Yeah, exactly. Because, I mean I've always like eccentric people, but I've always seen them from kind of a distance vision. Like, interesting. And I've always been the kind of person who likes to find out everything about them. You know that's why I'm in Psychology because I like to know what happens inside people. But now I don't see them from a distance point of view. But they are interesting, they're interesting like I am. I see them as part of me. Whereas before I just saw them really as kind of objects. Of observation.
- I - That's really clear. (pause) Do you feel that you have answered the before, during and afterwards? (CR says yes) This book, did you discuss it with yourself while you were reading it, and/or with other people while you were reading it? Before, during and after?
- CR - I ran across it in a discount book store, and I liked the cover. A woman in a rocking chair with a cat beside her. I just liked the cover and it was Canadian, and I like Canadian stuff and I had never heard of it so I picked it up. Um, I think I probably read it in one sitting. Because it's a small novel. But I had certainly no sooner put it down than I was buying it for everyone. I mean I do remember going out and buying a dozen

copies and just sending them around to everyone. I was that enthusiastic about it. And I've done a lot of talking about it since. In fact, I have developed a group around the novel.

I - That actually ties into the strong effect, in that you read it in one sitting, you went out and bought a bunch of copies and then, as far as discussing it, you discussed it in a group situation. And with individuals too?

CR - Oh yeah, with lots of friends, with lots of individuals. I recommend it a lot to students who are coming in here.
" Sometimes for their mothers, sometimes as an understanding of their mothers, if they are young students.

I - Okay, that's pretty definite! (laugh) How about with yourself, while you were reading it? I guess because it was in one sitting -

CR - Yeah, I mean I'm assuming it was in one sitting. I don't actually remember sitting down with it, but I most often read for long periods when I'm reading. And I assume it was in one sitting. And if it was not, then it was one night and then the next morning, you know, something like that. And I think the whole time I was reading it, I was thinking what it would be like to be in her shoes and to be identifying with her.

I - So there was in a sense getting into her experience, and wondering what her experience would be like for you. (CR says very much so) That idea of going in and out of yourself and her. (CR agrees) (pause) In having read this book, what differences do you detect in yourself? You have mentioned an attitude change.

CR - Yeah, certainly an attitude change. Um, a tolerance and respect for other people that I would either dismiss or distance myself from. Uh, I have more of a sense that things will work out okay I feel more courageous, as a result of that novel, oddly enough. Yeah, I do. I feel courageous.

I - I'm smiling because that's been said to me a few times. That seems to be a common thing, that there is more hope, or there is more motivation and courage too. Is a difference also that you feel more part of people? You were saying that they were more objects and now that you feel they are part of you. Do you feel that is a difference?

CR - Yeah, I feel part of a group of people that I didn't feel part of before. Yeah, and also, I feel more courage in terms of how I live my life. I feel more courage also in terms of agism. I think when I first read the novel, I mean so that must have been

maybe, seven years ago, now at this stage, six or seven years ago, I wasn't thinking in terms so much of sexuality and aging. But now that I'm 41, I am now um, I'm more aware of my myself and my my, I was going to say my position in society, my my value, that's what the word I was searching for is. My value in society as a woman diminishing because of my sexual attractiveness diminishing. I mean that is something that has certainly come right into the forefront in the last three years of my life. Which wasn't there at all before, I took it for granted. That I would always have a number of men around me, seeking me out. Now, I don't feel that at all. I am certainly not aware of it and I don't feel it. I feel that is a part of my life that is over. And when I reflect on Eve, and the fact that there she was still being sexual when she was seventy. Again, I feel that courage. Well maybe that isn't over for me. Maybe I can get fat, or maybe I can be a bag woman, maybe I can not wash my hair for three months and someone is still likely to be around and find me attractive, if I'm involved with life. So that has become more important to me now out of that novel than it did at the time. But certainly it was always there in back, in the back of my head too. I mean, because I guess it was coming. I'm just at the right age for it.

I - You were saying that the worst possible thing was for a relative of hers to see her in that condition, but yet, there was that strong inner beauty, I guess you could say that was emanating out. So there is that issue of external beauty, but also, like you say that being involved with life and that energy and care being projected out. So even given her appearance, that sexuality was (CR says still there, yeah) So given even the most adverse conditions, you could recognize there was that in her. (CR agrees)

CR - It is my hope for old age.

I - The fact that growth and change, and hope, as you say is enduring.

CR - Yeah, because I very quickly get into that. I mean certainly at 41, I often now can get into that feeling of "Oh my God, my life is over!" You know, where do I go from here? I really am trapped and so on. And it does help me to reflect on that. That maybe it's not. That in fact Eve was awakening at 65 when she got her first old age pension cheque. And it was really fine. So maybe it will be fine for me too.

I - A thought that went through my mind is that you, that awakening, made me think this. That often people don't live life fully (CR agrees) until they do awaken. And that can happen at whatever age. But at least she did awaken, even if it was at 65. So that

is where the courage and inspiration come from. That it did happen, and for you too. (CR says yes) (pause)

What made this reading experience easy or difficult, enjoyable or disagreeable?

CR - I guess the fact that made it easy if this is what you are asking, is that it was a well written novel, without being literature. I don't think it, I mean I would never recommend it as a fine piece of literature. And yet, it was very captivating and very pleasurable to read. That novel did not lag at all, anywhere. Um, I guess what made it pleasurable was that I had the luxury also the time to read it.

I - It compelled you too, you were saying. You read it in one sitting. (CR agrees) I guess that made it easy. Like you say it didn't lag so you were compelled and it was over and done with. (CR agrees) Was there anything disagreeable or difficult for you?

CR - No, I don't remember anything.

I - What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning of life?

CR - Change can happen at any time. Um, that sexuality goes on even when we are older and not attractive. Um, that everything has a cost, but sometimes the costs are hidden. And when the costs are right out in the open and then things are easier to deal with. That being down at the bottom paradoxically can be being at the top.

I - Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself?

CR - Maybe (pause) maybe a kind of a, I don't know if, a new kind, well, I'm very impulsive, and certainly Eve did what she did changed her life in its entire direction on an impulse. She didn't plan her move out. She got her cheque, she picked up her radio, put it under her arm and left her husband within the opening paragraph. But it was not premeditated. And I think that I also make major decisions very impulsively, by gut reaction. And so I don't know, it's certainly not a new quality I recognize in myself. But a kind of a, an acceptance of of a spunky impulsiveness that. A deeper respect for my gut feeling.

I - Right like a trust.

CR - A trust in my gut feeling. Right.

- I - You are really answering what is calling out to you. (CR agrees and says yeah, I do) You respect that in her and now in yourself more.
- CR - And while I recognize that in myself more, that I am very impulsive somehow this affirmed for me that it is fine to be impulsive.
- I - How did the world presented in the book fit with the way you see the world?
- CR - The world presented in the book fit with my perception of the world. It seemed to me like a very realistic presentation of the world. Um, the characters seemed real, the um fact that there are feels like there are always people around to help us out and there are always people to criticize us. And that people in the world in general seem to be conservative and emphatic around responsibility. People really like order in the world, and do not like impulsivity. And that is how I see the world. That impulsivity and trusting a gut reaction is something that our world would deny us. And it certainly was that way in the novel, for Eve, and I think it is that way in the world generally. That there is a real drive to maintaining the status quo and to reminding people what their responsibility is. And it's always to everyone else, very seldom to themselves. (laugh)
- I - So that was the perception, but this book showed the other side. That indeed if you didn't go for the status quo, but did go for the gut feelings and recognize them, that's where the true freedom and comfort and satisfaction lies. (CR says for sure) What did the characters in this book mean to you? You have discussed you and Eve, is there any other characters you want to discuss, or more about that?
- CR - No, I guess, I guess her husband, who was an invalid, not able to take care of himself. Seems to me to epitomize an enormous number of people that I know. Not my husband because my husband was very encouraging of the break up of our marriage. But, it seems to me that in my life and everyone's life there are always people like Eve's husband whom we cannot hurt, whom we feel we cannot hurt, whom we feel we must protect. And I did think a lot about him at that time, and how in fact his life improved when it looked for all the world like this person was just going to drown. Things really did work out well for him. And uh, so I thought quite a bit about him. And I thought quite a bit about her son who was devastated at her leaving. And yet too, once given time, and once given the trust that he could adjust to it, did adjust to it, very well, and also came to see the situation. And he grew, it was like if she, I'm off on a tangent here, but if you trust people to grow, they will grow. But if you keep

protecting them, they never do 'cause you don't give them the chance to grow as long as you are protecting people.

I - It's like the idea of symbiotic relationship in that you both need each other, there is no freedom on either side. But if you answer to the freedom, then you yourself are more satisfied and the other person is challenged to do their own also. (CR agrees) Is there anything else you wanted to say about Eve or?

CR - I don't think so. (pause)

I - The last two questions connect together, so I'll ask them together. Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life, and its temporariness? The second, did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality across time and history?

CR - Yeah, I don't think I got a quickened sense of my own life, I mean I may have, but I don't remember that. But certainly, yes, to the latter part of that question. Yes.

I - In your answer you used the word universality (CR says yes), between women. That connection that they could feel, these women no matter what

CR - age, culture, right

I - that they could feel

CR - and identify with her, yes.

I - Is there anything else that you would like to add?

CR - Read it! (laugh) No, I don't think that I have anything else to add except one of the interesting things is that in a sense I feel like I'm kind of growing with that novel. And it was interesting because I, I probably have read it six times at this stage. I read it you know, fairly often, it seems. Once a year, or once every couple of years. And when I used it this past year in a group situation, and reread it just ahead of the group, I found that that some of my perceptions had changed. And it was, and another group leader who was co-leading with me also found the same thing. We were beginning to question that Eve could not have changed her life within her relationship. And at the time I read it I would have said that absolutely not, that she had to get out. Now I felt more in tune with um, with responsibility to others as well as herself. And could she have changed it without doing it so drastically to other people? So

it sounds like I'm countering everything I said, it's not really, it's just that I feel a little more questioning of how she did it.

(tape change missed a little bit)

- I - The main idea of listening to your gut reaction and feelings, you are questioning whether that could have been done within that framework. I guess that point is that owning up to that feeling, to what you really want out of life and that's what's important. (CR says yes) And whether that be done really radically, in some cases it may have to be, but maybe in other cases it doesn't have to be.
- CR - Yeah, like I think she could have done it, I mean now, I think she could have done it radically. She still could have maintained some contact with her son, for instance, you know. She cut everyone off totally. And I think that in a sense, now I am aware that that, by doing that in a sense she denied her granddaughter who she was very attached to, the chance to relate to her. And she denied her son the right to have some contact with his mother. And so I think she still could have done it in a radical way, but modified, somewhat. Without break, because in a way she also destroyed more for herself than she need have.
- I - Another way to look at it is that maybe she could have started off more tempered and if that didn't work, then have gotten more radical.
- CR - Or been very radical, follow her gut feeling, but then allowed herself to go back somewhat. You know, it's like pulling an elastic band far beyond where it stretches, so that it relaxes to a place not where it was, but to somewhere in between, so it's enlarged. And I think that she might have once she had done that, then allowed herself to absorb some of what she had had. She didn't. And I didn't see that at all when I first read it, but I do now. But not to deny her what she did.
- I - Is that everything then?
- CR - I believe so yeah.
- I - Okay, thank you very much.

CO-RESEARCHER 3

- I - Please try to recall a novel that you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impression that it made on you.
- CR - The novel I chose was East of Eden by John Steinbeck. And I read the novel shortly after I saw Cannery Row. I had read it when I was young. About 16 or 17. I was affected by it then, but didn't understand it. And read it again this year and understood it. And the impressions it made on me, very clearly and simply. The impression, the overall or overriding impression was that of the magnificence of the human spirit, the glory of the human spirit. Then there were many other impressions as well. But that's that overriding one.
- I - Could you mention some of the other impressions too?
- CR - Actually the word impressions is difficult to work around because it's the effect something has more than an impression. Unless you mean it it sort of imprints you with something, it impresses itself on you.
- I - It could be the influence or affect too. Or the feelings that you had.
- CR - Let's talk about the feelings that it calls up first of all. Um, I think one of the most significant ones was the power of evil and the power of good, that exist in a duality. And the choices that one can make to go one way or the other. The fact that things are not always set from the beginning. That there is room for change, that there is hope. That even though there seem to be stone cold laws written into man's dealings with man or the universe's dealings with man, or God's dealings with man, these are not hard and set rules. They can change on man's own taking of the situation of himself in hand and making a change. So in a sense it's renewal, a revival of the dignity of the human spirit. That he wasn't left alone to flap around in the universe doing what he was programmed to do. And that there was hope for humanity generally as well as with individuals. To take itself in hand to change, from choosing death to choosing life. Which is a revitalizing idea.
- I - For you then there is the idea of the choice, and it's a dignified, positive choice, in a growth sense in humanity and in individuals.

CR - I would say in a hope sense, rather than a growth sense.

I - Hope meaning?

CR - Meaning there is always a chance. (pause) I feel like I could elaborate longer on that, but need more questions to draw out of me what it is.

I - Do you feel finished with this one then?

CR - Right now, yes.

I - Okay, What is it that allows you to feel that it had a strong effect on you?

CR - I guess because I was ready to be affected. I think it probably came, well I know that the book and its substance came at at a low point in the sense of the turning about in my own life and wanting something. Wanting to know something that needed to be known. To find a new direction. Sort of a searching about. And the book like this sort of happened along. Well I chose it. But in a way it sort of came along, and I I listened to it and it said the things that I needed for it to say. But not simply because of the ideas presented in the book, but because of the way it was done. And it was done through the manoeuvrings of of people. Through the relationships, through characters, through humans interacting and so on. And I find when I'm reading a book of any kind if it involves the unravelling of human nature, the searching of the human soul for why and reasons for what it does and why it is the way it is. And I'm always, I'm always like I'm always impressed. I'm always open and wanting to hear, wanting to interact with the author. How, what is he doing, his people. And wanting to say yes that's valid, those are real people who have been understood in my life. I I was very impressed with the strength of the visual images that this author created through landscape and character. And it drew me in.

I - You said you were searching and thinking of in a sense making or going to make some choices. And then the book, the idea of choices that you, that seemed to really connect with you.

CR - That's right. The validity of making choices and determining your own life's pattern or flow of your life. That somehow it has an effect. Things are not totally arbitrary. That and also the sense of being somebody. Of having dignity as a human being regardless of cultural standards as to status. Or what culture determines as being valuable. I think that I was looking for a mentor or someone to say, to tell me about the dignity of the human being, body soul and spirit. And like his validity of

existing here in the world, in the universe. That he has substance, stature simply because he's alive he can be.

I - So as you mentioned, your main impression was the human spirit. (CR says that's right) And that as you say no matter what culture, whatever you come from, it's just your humanness and your spirituality too. That meaning from that.

CR - That's right. I think the other aspect of this particular book was that he hung, the author hung his, he hung his values, he communicated his his sense of the duality of human nature, its evil and its goodness and this tension. He hung it onto some traditional value that I could I myself held. So he validated for me my my own upbringing. He validated sort of traditional Christian values. And because I understood them and the references that he used to scripture and so on. The ones that I already knew and understood, and he validated that experience for me.

I - Not only is there that connection that you had, there is that affirmation and validation. You said that what you felt, he was talking about and reinforcing in some sense I guess.

CR - Well, perhaps not the essence as much as the form. There are many I mean there are many modern fiction writers who perhaps would be trying to communicate the same values, but they would be hanging them on different forms. And I shy away from those forms because I don't understand I don't relate to chaos. And he was hanging them onto forms of traditional structure. The values of family of generations, maybe generationality, whatever you want to call it, of fathers and sons, of the interference of God in man's existence. His meddling, his continual meddling with things that I wanted to continue to hear. Which actually raises the question as to whether whether, more an intellectual question whether you read fiction to validate what we already know, or do we read to learn and reach beyond? There must be a way that it works together, but I'm not sure. I really am not sure if the art form itself helps to keep us in our structures and forms that we already know and feel familiar with. Because I know that I would rather read a traditional novel like that than having chosen something by James Joyce. I simply cannot relate to the form, so that the idea is lost on me as well. So there is that problem with the art form itself. Whether or not we can really learn from fiction.

I - Well actually there is a question I think that might tap into that. I'll leave it at that for now, if that's okay. (CR says yes)
Is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you first began to read this book?

CR - I wanted a good read. I wanted a good story, something with a beginning, a middle and an end. That had character and plot and landscape and lots of detail. And I got it. (laugh)

I - Okay? (CR says yes) And during your reading of the book, what were you aiming at?

CR - I wasn't aiming at anything. I wasn't looking for a specific thing. I merely found it as I went along.

I - And afterwards did you have an aim after reading the book?

CR - No. I had an orientation, but not an aim. In a sense of a goal.

I - Do you want to mention your orientation?

CR - Well I think simply the orientation was to see myself, my world and my everything through a different set of eyes.

I - Set of eyes. How were they different?

CR - Um well referring back to the effect that the book had on me. The different set of eyes were a changed perspective. Um looking looking at things from a greater sense of stature, substance and because I was because I became more as a person, everybody around me also did. And I think I was happier to let them be dualities. To let them to let myself and the world and everybody that I knew roll around in those goodnesses and badnesses that that we all have. Without flailing against it, without saying this can't be. You can't have, you can't be bad, we're all so good and so on and so forth. But um maybe the sense that it did was remove me a little from a trying to work out the tensions and just allowing it to be. And uh feeling not quite so caught between and spun around.

I - In a sense I'm getting the idea that there was more tolerance or acceptance for those qualities.

CR - That's probably one word to use.

I - What were you experiencing before you read this book?

CR - Actually what I think I had experienced for about the six months before, about Christmas or so when I read this book, was a loss of a sense of place. And it had to do actually in some degree with moving away from a childhood orientation in a religious context. And I grew up as, being brought up in an Evangelical Christian home and had implanted in me many sort of traditional Christian values. And had kind of pursued that. And my married life as well and having left home always feeling that I had to in

some way hone in on a community where those values were respected. But in the last year, I felt an increasing distancing from from many of the expressions that these values were taking. Among friends, among church community and so on. And do what I was doing was cutting all cutting away my ties and leaving home, really for the first time. And in the process of leaving home I was madly looking around for mentors, or people who said yes, this is a good thing to do. This is a good this is a healthy direction, you won't die if you cut yourself off. You'll find your way, or there is a way. And you don't need to know everything right away. And I always turn to books for my mentors because I don't just find many people in my life who provide that.

I - What were you experiencing during your reading of the book?

CR - Well a great sense of involvement for one thing. I was very involved with the uh, I read slowly, just savoring every word, every phrase, every expression. Every time I came back to the book and uh read another chapter it was like returning to a stream of water. I I could hardly wait to get through the day or the business or whatever had to come first, to get back to the book. It was like I didn't want it to end and I wanted it to go on and on. I wanted the author to be my father, to be to tell me more, to tell me everything that he knew. I wanted to follow through the lives of the characters. And in that book you can because he brings you through birth to death in many of the characters. And what was the question? (I repeat it) Well I guess that was the experience during the reading. Was that this was something that you couldn't get enough of.

I - Then afterwards, what were you experiencing?

CR - Well immediately afterwards was I think a sense of completion of having gone away and come back, having been somewhere. Having seen the world, from beginning to end. Of having in a sense being involved, I guess I felt I had been involved in creation in some way. That reminds me that someone once said through the book that people who read fiction are people who are afraid of death. They need to know a beginning, a middle and an end. I guess that's exactly, in yes, in my reading I am always facing my own death and having to deal with the inevitability of it because it is something that I find so terrifying. That this should all end. So that is part of the process as well. And there was a sense of elation. Of having discovered, of having new beginnings, of having a chance, of feeling that one could survive on one's own because in one's own spirit there was there was life. And I don't want to use the word substance again. The experience of my own life was something valid. That was something that was needed or wanted by others and in relationship

with others I could find my way. And it didn't mean going back home. There was a new look.

I - Did you discuss this book with either yourself or someone else before reading and then during and after?

CR - Not before. Probably not during. But after. With -. And I did, I did talk about it to a few people but there was no one particularly interested. So no.

I - Would you like to have talked about it more?

CR - Oh yes. If I could have found someone who had also read the book, I was keen on talking about it. I would love to talk about it. (laugh) That's me that's part of the experience of reading the book, is to validate it with someone else's understanding of the book. That seems to be so important. But in this case, it wasn't possible.

I - And then did you have like an internal dialogue within yourself?

CR - Oh yes. Ongoing throughout.

I - Regarding some of the things that you have mentioned? (CR says yes) What differences can you detect within yourself after having read this book?

CR - I think probably greater acceptance of a necessity of evil and for death. Now those are intellectual ideas, but they're also emotional ideas. That they uh emotional in the sense that they they color how you see things. The other thing that was happening, or what came out of this. See this, I should mention, I should have mentioned to begin with that that I didn't read this book in isolation. I read it together with other books because I'm always reading about four or five at a time. So the process of a book changing perspective always has to be in context with everything else that is also coming in and going out. So it's hard to narrow it down and say this book did exactly this thing. I can really only say this is what happened while I was reading that book. This is what happened afterward. To actually narrow it down, I think is a bit presumptuous on my part. The other change that came out of it and the other influences during that time was feeling a freedom to cut the ties of home and childhood. The emotional ties which said that this is as far as you can go and no further. And opened the doors actually to a bigger universe and a bigger world. And it involved the change of religious orientation and the moving away to a different spiritual community. And a sense of growing up. Of maturing of having come a little distance.

- I - What made the whole reading experience easy or difficult for you? Or enjoyable or disagreeable?
- CR - Oh it was a totally enjoyable experience. Because of the style of the writer. Because he knew how to draw you in and not let you go till he had finished with you. And so I would put the responsibility for that his doing. That the whole experience even when it was horrifying was uh was good. Because it was so well done. And I just revelled in a well done book. Plus I guess I made space for myself to enjoy it. And it was important enough to make time for. Which meant putting aside other things in order to pursue. Did that answer the question?
- I - Yes. I got that it was mainly enjoyable because of the author, that even though you were struggling with some of the ideas which might have been difficult for you, it was still an enjoyable experience.
- CR - Oh yes. Because it was um there was a sense of being stretched or pulled. Which feels good. Like pulling tired muscles and they hurt but it feels good too. And I think that would probably aptly describe it. Was the expansion which you know is good which leads you to a better place. And so you are quite willing to go even if it scares you.
- I - What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning in life?
- CR - I guess I can reiterate some of the points I already thought I was making before. That there was a renewed respect for dignity, individuality of a human being as he confronts his world he is substantial. He is something. That he has an enormous capacity. And by he I mean me included, has an enormous capacity to do good or bad, to choose good or to choose evil, to choose life, to choose death. But that his choices are not as a robot would choose if programmed. That there because of the function of freedom in the world as a principle there is always hope for change. Of the turning away of the turning to. Which is good to know. What was the question again? (I repeat) Right. Okay. Then the other aspect, I think maybe one thing I haven't mentioned that I should, is the interaction of man with the natural world. The way he coexists and works upon and lives well on it or poorly on it but somehow never lives apart from it. And that what man does with his natural environment or how he lives in it is integral to who he is, and to what we become. So landscape and natural world are an important function and I probably gained a renewed respect for the interwovenness of all life. Of man with the soil and the water and the air. Because Steinbeck does such a good job of making man part of his earth. Of showing him as an earthly creature and a heavenly creature. Of really

putting him in that tension between earth and sky, where he sits. And I've always I've always uh believed that in an intellectual way but along came this to really to validate that sense for me. That it is okay to live in that tension because that's where we are.

I - Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself?

CR - No. It probably allowed me to look at some qualities in myself that I did not particularly want to look at. Then I found part of myself in all the characters, whether they were good or evil, whether they were mediocre, painted black or white, or red or brown, I saw myself in all of them. But some of the characters gave me longings, in the sense of wanting to be more like them. To see through their eyes, to have their sense of belonging in the world. Or their particular grasp of a situation. And I wanted to be like the Chinese laundryman in the worst way. Because he was able to remove himself from the immediacy of everything around him and to see everyone with a kind of laughter and I wanted to have that. I saw that that would be a good way to be. And maybe that was one of the maybe that is one of the ways in which I am becoming now. Or maybe that was uh kind of a hidden goal or a hidden aim that did come out of that book, which I hadn't really focused on before.

I - How did the world presented in the book fit with the way you see the world?

CR - It meshed. It had a beginning and an end. It had order and structure. It had good and bad. It had movement. In a sense the reason why I enjoyed the book so much was because the structure that he created, meshed with my own inner sense of what the world is. And I could fit into it. Whereas there are many modern novelists that I can't fit into it if it doesn't have anything to do with the way I see the world.

I - You partly got into this, but I will ask again. What did the characters in this book mean to you? Is there anything you want to add?

CR - What they meant to me. Well for one thing, they were real people. They were everybody who has ever lived. And they were people I could have lived with or have lived with. The way they were, the way he portrayed them in the book, painted them, like I mentioned before, I saw myself in all of them. There was a truth to the way they were and who they were which corresponded to truths in myself and who I was. They drew out feelings and emotions which plot and landscape don't do themselves. You suffered with them. Some you felt you didn't understand in the same way that you were limited in understanding of people around

you. But that each person had validity. Even the characters who were so infused with evil intentions that you were repulsed by their interaction with the world around them, other people. You had a sense that they too belonged. That the shadow side had to be there so that the light could show itself. And I guess in a way you felt a kind of love for them as well. Does that, am I answering?

I - Yes. From what you have said it's your own feelings as far as you as an individual related to those characters. But then also you are speaking of that human spirit, that your connection with each of those people maybe in different ways. (CR says yes) Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life and its temporariness?

CR - Yes. (pause)

I - Do you want to add anything?

CR - I think I have already probably mentioned that. A sense of how wonderful is life, how proper is death, how you can't have the one without paying the dues. But that there is joy and dignity to be experienced, that it is not a waste. Suffering isn't wasted, pain isn't wasted. That there isn't the need to force life to go in search of it or to say "If only I have time I will grapple with it." But that it is here, and this is it and I'm in it. And soon it will be over. And it's sort of its temporality makes it so much more precious and makes you so much more vulnerable and important in a sense and yet so insignificant in another sense. That generations roll on top of you. You are not lost in that, you have been something and that is imparted through your children and carries on. There is no waste. That nature.

I - Did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality?

CR - Yes! As I just said. The continuity of life, the proceeding of generations.

I - Is there anything in general that you want to add?

CR - I don't think so.

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- I - Please try to recall a novel that you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impression that it made on you.
- CR - Okay, the novel that comes to mind is, it's not really well it's Dante's The Divine Comedy. It's actually it's three volumes and uh, more an epic poem than a novel. But I guess it fits the class of novel. When I read it I was quite shaken by it because it hit a great depth in me. It is basically and once you get around the poetry side of it, it is basically a story about God and love and humanity. It's written on several levels. There is several different ways that you can interpret it. But the most important thing, the reason why it hit me so deeply is just because of what it says about God, and it just struck me. I mean for the first time in my life I had a really true sense of humility. And what God is really about.
- I - You said that you were shaken by it. And it also made you feel really humble. And you found that you got some sense of what God is about from that.
- CR - Yes. Um what else can I say? It's just, like I mean before things like that were words to me. After reading that, they had meaning. I mean I always used to wonder what is God and what is God about. Reading that I just you know like it just made so much more sense. I mean, and how love fits into it. Because the whole inspiration behind the book is his love for Beatrice. And just the whole idea of the a person that you love, one special person that you love, is I don't know, this isn't the right way to express it, but sort of like God personified. That through that person, you see divinity. And life is, I don't know, it's really complicated. (laugh)
- I - What you said, two things. Before you had thought about it. And now all of a sudden you feel that you have experienced it yourself. You said it had meaning and more experience. You are also saying that how this God comes clear to you is through the way it is portrayed by means of love. And it's the portrayal of love that makes you able to understand God more easier.
- CR - Not to me. It is how Dante portrays it, that's how he saw it. (I say okay) Because he wrote the book, his inspiration for writing the book was his love for Beatrice. (I say I see) And I mean there is lots more going on in it. I mean it's an allegory, so it's written on several different levels. And it's sort of,

like there is a basic story where he meets, he is out walking one day, and he wakes up and it happens to take place on the weekend, Easter weekend, so it's the Resurrection idea is in it as well. And he meets with Virgil who is like an old Roman poet, who is often seen as the, you know like although he came before Christ, he had some sort of idea that Christ was coming. So he meets with Virgil and Virgil is his guide for the first part. Like the book is written, Do you want me to go in this sort of detail? (I say sure) The book is written in three parts. There is Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. And through the first two parts Virgil is his guide. Through the last part through Heaven, Beatrice takes over. Because Virgil being a so-called heathen can't go into Heaven. It's sort of like because Virgil did not know Christ he came before Christ, he can't actually sort of cross the barrier into Heaven even though he isn't, he is kind of like neither here nor there. Like his place sort of the system where he is in his death where he is, according to Dante, according to the way the book is set out. It's sort of like a nether region, it's not in Hell because he didn't commit any great sin, but he isn't can't go through the rest of it because, I mean it is a Christian, it is truly a Christian story. There are others that they weren't, I can't remember any of the names, they weren't evil, but they are in this sort of nether region because they came before Christ. Simply that, through no doing of their own, they just came before Christ. And the whole thing, like the Heaven, the Hell and the Purgatory, the whole book like Hell, the people that stay in Hell are there, I mean there is no getting out of Hell once you are in Hell. It's because they refuse to accept responsibility for their sins. It has a lot to do with responsibility. And admitting your sins. I was just looking at it before I came over. Just to sort of refresh my mind about some of the details. It okay, there is the people, it's sort of like on one level, it's the people that are in Hell are there because they are so-called confirmed sinners. They see nothing wrong with what they are doing. They are evil, like they don't see that there is anything wrong with the way that they are. And then, it's all based around okay, there is what they call the Seven Capital Sins. And all the rest of the sins that you can commit come from these Seven Capital Sins. They are things like pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, lust. (pause)

- I - You said that they feel there is nothing wrong with the way they are, you said, pride, gluttony, it's like ultimate selfishness.
- CR - Yeah, yeah, exactly. Well, yeah, it's like he classes them into there is, there are the sins that are ultimate selfishness, and then there are the ones. There is, like it is sort of like there is the seven sins and the first three, pride, envy and wrath, which is sort of like vengeance, is those are selfishness. Those are love that has turned bad, it's you are actually going against

someone else, like you mean harm to another person. And there is sloth, which is sort of just laziness, like you know, sort of not believing and not caring about anything else, anything. Like sort of, so you do more harm to yourself sort of. Because the ultimate thing is God. And then the last three are sort of too much love because, gluttony is what he classes as too much love, it's overindulgence and lust is too much love of people. Because God is the ultimate, is the supreme and nothing should be placed above God. So does that make any sense? (I say yes) So the whole book is based on that thing of, that the ultimate, that the journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven and the final goal is God. And God is like when he gets to God, it's um, Beatrice is tied up in it. And it's like, one thing that, it's sort of like, I don't know at the end of the book, there is all the seats in Heaven, but there is no hierarchy in Heaven. Or there is no hierarchy between people. It's each person does what they can do their ultimate doing, whatever that is. And when they get to Heaven, it's they, they are filled with joy to the ultimate joy that they can feel. And some people feel more joy than other people feel. Or can do more than other people can do. And it's like, the thing about reading a book like that is that you can't get caught up in the traditional view of words like God and humility and pride and envy. Like I mean because there is so much more.

I - So that you didn't have a stereotyped connotation of them, but in reading them, they seemed to make real sense to you?

CR - Ya, I guess so, ya. But it's more like, I don't know, it's kind of like sort of like taking what I'd suspected to be true, and then reading it as written and seeing that, well Dante was just one other person, but the vision that he had was so much greater than just coming from one person. It's more kind of like the idea of you know, that all great artists have, that what they write, and what they do is so much more than them, that there is the divine in it. And it's not just one person writing down one, their thoughts. It's the that it does come from a, a greater whole.

I - What is that allows you to feel sure that it made a strong impression on you?

CR - Well, I know that at the time when I read it, it made a very strong impression on me, because I couldn't stop talking about it, I couldn't stop thinking about it. And it did change my life. It did point out, I mean it hit me very hard because I could see as I read through all the sins how they all applied to me (laugh). And it's sort of like as the book was written, it's not just when you die that you go to Hell or Heaven or you go through Purgatory. There is the side of it too, it's what

you are doing now as you are living that is Hell or you know or Purgatory or Heaven on earth. The idea of being, the grander idea of the book being that to achieve Heaven on earth. In that there are people who live in Hell all their lives. And people who are going through Purgatory. And to me what I felt, how, I mean I felt like I was okay, the first thing you have to admit is that you have sinned. I knew that I wasn't a confirmed sinner, that I didn't see that there was anything wrong because things were wrong. You know just because I wasn't happy with the way things were. And reading that book how I knew that it really had affected me, was that it made me think about what I should do, what I could do and what I had to face. And the reason why I hesitate to say that it definitely affected me is because as time passed you sort of backslide (laugh) sometimes. And it is sort of the effect although it never really truly wears off, it lessens with the distance sometimes. Until something else happens that brings it back. That way the effect is permanent. Does that make any sense? Did I answer the question?

I - Yes, that makes sense. One thing you did say is that it brought it immediately to your own life. You were saying that not only did you understand what was going on, not only is it about death, but it's about your own immediate life and what is happening there. But you are also saying yes it had a really strong effect on you at that time, but that you have setbacks or whatever, and you are not always moving as fast ahead maybe as you would like to be (CR agrees) but your want of it is still there and it gets brought back by different things.

CR - Yeah for sure. In other words, like then although the first effect is very strong. The there is a lasting effect. Does that make any sense?

I - Yes. Is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you first began to read the book? During and Afterward?

CR - A very superficial thing at first. It was just to see if I could read a book in poetry (laugh). I had never really attempted to read anything that sort of extensive in poetry. And then also, I had always heard about Dante and that's one of the so-called classics. I don't know, there was something there that I wanted to read that book. There was something there that made me want to read it. Partly because through all my reading, which I have done a lot of, it Dante's The Divine Comedy was forever being mentioned. So I thought that it was time I read sort of the original.

I - During your reading of it what were you aiming at?

- CR - Just understanding, trying to understand trying to see what he'd had to say and how it applied to me and to life in general. I think that's.
- I - And then after your reading of it?
- CR - To try and remember what I had learnt while I was reading it.
And to keep using it.
- I - What were you experiencing before you were reading the book?
During and Afterwards?
- CR - What do you mean? Do you mean in my life? (I say yes) Two years ago. A fair bit of turmoil a sort of, a lot of indecision about what I was doing with my life. It was a period of change. Because I had just finished school and I had come back here, home, and being away. It was kind of period of adjustment. I guess that's
- I - How about during your reading of it?
- CR - A far greater need to talk to people about what I was reading than I had ever experienced before. A lot of what, a lot of the reading I did before, was more just for me. You know I just sort of just read it and thought about it myself and didn't really discuss it that much except for other rare occasions and the books that effected me. But with this book it was more, it was the first book that effected me so greatly that I had to talk about it.
- I - After your reading?
- CR - I guess it just, what I was experiencing was the sense of humility. And realizing that I had to think about myself differently than I had thought about myself before. A sort of, you know like the humility sort of hit at my arrogance and just my general view of myself. What I experienced after reading that was a need to to go on, you know, in a different way.
- I - You were experiencing something quite different than you had before. But yet you felt a need to go on in a different way. (CR agrees) (pause) Did you discuss this book with either yourself or someone else, before your reading of it? During? and after?
- CR - Just yes.
- I - Before with somebody?

CR - With - mostly. Because as I said, it kept coming up in other stuff that I was reading and that other people such as - and - I guess, were reading and - at that time. It was, it kept coming up, so it was discussed a bit before it. And that's part of what led me to read it plus my own curiosity about reading it.

I - And then during, you were discussing it?

CR - Ya, ya, because like I said, I could not stop talking about it. Because it was just so incredible. So I talked about it to anybody and everybody (laugh) I could you know talk to about it.

I - And then after too?

CR - Well same thing. Just because of the great effect it had it was sort of, it just kept coming up in conversation. It's sort of the kind of book that does that. I mean the topic that it's about, it's something that stays with you forever. And it applies continually. As you understand more, you can understand more of it, more of what Dante was saying. It just keeps applying.

I - And then how about with yourself?

CR - Well like I said, it made me want to go on with my life in a different way. So that led to a lot of self-analysis, self-discussion. And understanding.

I - What differences can you detect within yourself after reading it?

CR - Okay, primarily, as I said the humility. And just a greater understanding of myself and people. And I forgot what I was going to say. I mean well that's basically it because that was so far reaching. I mean a true sense of humility is something that you've got to have before you can ever get anywhere. I mean if you are, you have to, a sense of humility is a sense of God, a sense of knowing that there are things that are greater than yourself and that you are part of the greater whole. And just sort of putting things in perspective. A growing up kind of thing, I guess.

I - What made the whole reading experience easy or difficult? And then enjoyable or disagreeable for you?

CR - Well, I'd say it was easy because once I got over the the stumbling block of reading poetry, it just flowed so easily that it was it was just a joy to read it. It was enjoyable, it was totally enjoyable. There were some parts of it that sort of got a little bogged down because there is a fair bit in the beginning of it, and I guess all the way through it where, 'cause on a

certain level what he was doing was writing a kind of a political satire at points too, where he was there was a lot of stuff about people who lived in his time, a lot of historical stuff. And a lot of that got a little boring which made it sort of difficult to wade through but the general essence of what he was saying was so phenomenal that it was very, it was easy to read, and it was very enjoyable.

I - That covers everything? (CR says yes) What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning in life?

CR - Well it deals with the most crucial thing about meaning in life, it deals with God. That's why it's one of the you know, I'd say there are maybe, I don't know maybe three or four crucial books that have been written and Dante's The Divine Comedy is one of them. Because it deals so grandly with just with with God and life and what life could be. Just I don't know, just everything. (laugh)

I - So, for your sense of meaning in life, it addressed it in uh -

CR - Well, I've always been greatly concerned as I said about God and you know, what is God, what is the idea of God. That has a great deal to do with my sense of the meaning of life. And uh, so it just fit perfectly. (pause) Is that?

I - I'm just waiting for you to finish. (CR says ya, no that's all) It feels finished?

CR - Ya, I'm not sure, say the question again. (I say question) (I say So you have mentioned God and -) Well, I guess that's about it. I mean it sounds, it sort of like you could go on for days about it, or you could just say that's. I mean it is it's just that it is so so concerned with God and just Divinity. A Divine sense of life which is, I mean my my sense of life. Or what I would like to understand life as being. It's not totally my sense of life yet. But I think that it is THE sense of life that I want to understand. And I think it is the ONLY sense of life that there is ultimately. I think that's it.

I - Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself?

CR - Like I said as I read it (laugh) I became fairly aware of being conversant with all seven sins. It did sort of did give me, I don't know it was through the sense of humility and understanding, it was like you know, I shouldn't, I make light of it, but it's like it did, I was very struck by it. By the qualities in me that were reflected in the book. I guess most people walk around in a sort self-deluded cloud a lot of the time. And reading something like that, well like reading that

for me, sort of broke the cloud up and made me see things a little more clearly. I guess that's all.

I - How did the world presented in the book, fit with the way you see the world?

CR - It fit perfectly. Because I mean it was just totally everything, like there are people who live in Hell all their lives through their own choice. See, like that's another thing, the way he presents it, you hear that expression that people live in Hell. Now it sounds like they are being put there. And it's not their own doing. That they are being punished for something. Whereas Dante puts it, and as I see, I agree with him, I see it as being true that people choose their own Hell. And so there was that, there was that part of it. And there was the sense that people who were truly penitent about their sins and trying to live a better life, and understand and grow. Well there aren't too many of those around but there are some people who have achieved a sense of God and truth and beauty and love. Which is what he saw as being the ultimate. Ultimate way people would live life if they believed in God I guess.

I - What did the characters in this book mean to you?

CR - The main characters in the book, there is Dante himself, there is Beatrice, there is Virgil, those are the three main characters I guess. Then there is the cast of thousands. Because there is all these, like I said, the historical figures, he mentions that are in Hell and Purgatory and Heaven. And Dante is, it is him. The whole thing, on the one level, on the individual level, it is his story, it is him. At that point that he wrote the book, he was going through a crisis in his own life where he felt like he was lost and not knowing where he was going, what was going on. And he was sort of at a crossroads. I guess that, I identified with that. Because as I said, at the time I was reading that, my life was sort of at a crossroads too. It was kind of like, I guess it is still at times, that way. But it's kind of like, what the characters meant, what he meant was just the thing of how all people have, I mean you've got choices to make. And you either live your life for truth and beauty and love and God, or else you forsake all that and live a Godless existence. The whole thing, and the other characters, the sort of minor characters, just show, I mean sometimes you learn things by knowing what you don't want. Not necessarily knowing what you do want. And sometimes it's a process of elimination. And a lot of the experiences of the characters in the book sort of for me it was kind of that. I mean his Hell is so explicit (laugh) it was pretty gory in parts. It's like, it's hard to say what did the characters mean to me. The main characters, I'm just thinking about that for a second. The only one that I could

because it all revolved around him, was Dante, himself, and what he meant to me, was an example of someone who was struggling, as I felt I was struggling, as I feel I am struggling. And just, he, there was also a sense of hope. Because of he made it very clear how close he had come himself to remaining in Hell and yet here he had all this vision. And it was sort of without sounding, I mean you know it's not, you know how religious fanatics are always saying if you believe in God all will work out. It's not that simple, it's definitely not that simple but there is that in that character of Dante. A true, true understanding and belief and commitment will lead to a lot of growth and understanding. And it's not a blind, that's the point which he makes very clearly, it's not a blind belief. I guess that's basically.

I - What you've said about Dante is that you very much identified with him. (CR agrees) (CR says the struggle) Then with the other characters it was so much that you didn't want to be like some of them. You didn't want that. (CR agrees and says that's basically it) Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life and its temporariness?

CR - For sure. Because, just the way the whole thing was written, that was very apparent. It was like along with the sense of humility and that came the idea that there wasn't time to waste. That you only had one life to live and however long it was, you had better damn well get on with living it. Because one of the great sins is sloth, and doing nothing about it. It's a waste, it is a great sin, a waste of your life.

I - Did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality with others across history and time?

CR - For sure. I mean Dante, just my feeling of connection with him and what he had to say and what he had experienced. He lived back in the twelve hundreds so there is a connection through that plus just what he was, also just the sense of God and life and eternity. And as I said just the sense of being part, the whole book is so involved with, there was Dante, the individual but what he was saying was so much grander and greater and applied to life in general. I just got a great feeling of the thing of being of my own uniqueness but of my part of being part of a grander, a far grander whole. And that's what he is directly concerned with portraying too.

I - Is there anything that you would like to add?

CR - Just talking about this now, it makes me, I have been feeling this for awhile now, I want to read the book again. It's the kind of book that needs to be read again, and again. And just

that it is truly a great, great book. I think most people
could benefit from reading it. That's about it.

CO-RESEARCHER 5

- I - Please try to recall a novel that you read that made an impression on you, or which in some way strongly affected or influenced you; try to describe the impressions that it made on you.
- CR - The novel is Les Miserables by Victor Hugo. The effect it had on me was one of of justification, insight, freedom and relief. Relief that that a book like that existed because I had been looking for something like that for a long time. Justification in that a lot of the things I felt, was searching for were being talked about as if they were real. And my daily experience I had always met with the fact that the things I was feeling weren't real. And disbelief in the sheer power and beauty of writing and I didn't realize that writing could be that dynamic in terms of experience, and that enjoyable in terms of experience. And just Awe. Awe at the confidence and the maturity and the perspective that Hugo had in writing it.
- I - So you're, part of it, was your own feelings about how you felt and what you thought about and so on.
- CR - Well I didn't come to the book as an innocent. I came to the book with years of thought and feeling behind me. And always approaching something that I knew was real, but hadn't had any tangible evidence in the external environment that was real. And Hugo's belief that the epitome of life was the realization of the infinite in life dovetailed absolutely perfectly with my own hungers and beliefs. And then as a someone who has been struggling with form, I for the first time in my life, appreciated form as being equal to content. His poetic style of writing suited perfectly what he was communicating. And rather than, rather than the poetic style being therein and there only for itself, the style suited what he was saying. There is no better way to write it than the way he wrote it. So it did two things for me. It confirmed a deep inner feelings I've been having. And also it opened me to a world of of literary reality that that I was seeking.
- I - What is it that allows you to feel sure that it made a strong impression on you?
- CR - Well I have I have no doubt about that because for example, the characters in that book were there for me before I read the book. And certainly there while I read the book, and there since I have read the book. And I believe the book is an experience of maturity, that is it has been written by a mature man. And I

believe it's a a path of maturity that I am going along. And so its its effect on me is is definite, there is no doubt in my mind that it effects me. Also, there is the other aspect about the book that I forgot to mention, that may be even more significant aspect is that it's an historical novel, and its historical impact freed me from a lot of lot of um, what's the word, claustrophobia, social claustrophobia was was eased for me by the book, because taken the historical perspective that that book came in, and realizing that the struggles that he was discussing that happened a hundred and fifty years ago, and realizing the situation that we have now, it it tends to opened me to an appreciation of history that I didn't have before. With the belief this here and now business that we exist in right now is part of the closedmindedness of the modern age. That to be open is to understand that what has happened and what is happening is ultimately part of what is going to happen. And that time doesn't exist in a independence of of any tense. That is past, present and future at once. And that to understand history is to get a perspective and and fully toned and multi-colored understanding of the present day and also to get a positive and hopeful sense of the future. But to view the time you live in as being correct insofar as it's happening right now, is to misinterpret what's happening and not understand what is going to happen. So it fills you with an incredible sense of hope, and incredible sense of community that you didn't have before you read it. And also, one other thing, I forgot to mention about the book is that it being a spiritual novel, as well as an historical, social novel, it it brought together to me to be one of the great ideas that bring God to man and that's the idea of compassion and tolerance. And that having realized infinite truth, what a man does is become incredibly understanding of the human condition, rather than intolerant and angry about it. However, not not believing and not having any perception of the infinite, leads a man to become very intolerable of what the world goes on, what goes on in the world. Because while he doesn't understand the infinite reasons for things happening as they do, he is still human enough to understand the injustice and the falseness of the life around him and is trapped by that. And further to make, I make a distinction between the the spiritual compassion, what I believe to be in Les Miserables, are composed to, as compared to the the so-called tolerance of the Liberal or the Unitarian belief system in the modern world, I would say it's quite contrary. The compassion of a Jean Valjean figure, which is one of the major characters in the book, compassion of a figure like that comes from a deep experience of something, not a tolerance, an allowance of anything. And so compassion comes from a realization OF things, not an acceptance of anything. We live in a world that has misinterpreted compassion with ignorance and that one is justified in any ignorant act because all acts are equal. Not so.

Compassion is a tolerance from knowledge and an understanding of the confusion that causes people to act the way they act, rather than an acceptance of all acts as being correct.

I - Just to summarize what you have said, before we go on, I got that there is a realness in the book obviously for you. And there is a continuity and then a depth. Because you've talked about history, you've talked about spirituality and then you have talked just about the realness of life in the book. (CR agrees) And that sums it up for you?

CR - The realness sure. I mean that's the whole point of of the book and of writing as far as I'm concerned. That the merit of true literature is that it deals with with the depth of the human experience and that's not merely an external social experience but a deep inner experience. And that the measure of realness in a book is the degree to which it helps one understand their inner self in the external world.

I - Shall I go on? (CR says sure) Is there anything in particular that you were aiming at when you first began to read this book?

CR - As I said, when I picked up the book, I didn't come to it as an innocent. I came to it after years of deep inner struggle and deep, deep, deep philosophical and spiritual speculation. And I was referred to the book by comments that someone who had read it had had made to me. Comments of of things that Hugo had said in the book which were exactly things that I believed and knew. And so I was, I was, when I picked up the book, I picked it up to see what experience of the infinite this fellow had had. And within three or four pages, I was in awe. I was absolutely in awe of the beauty with which it was written and of the reality with which he dealt with ideas which I was constantly trying to keep from being extinguished by the huff of ignorant society.

I - What were you aiming at during your reading of it?

CR - I was I read the book over a period of of about a year. I was in no rush, I savored the book. It was it was the most delicious place I could go to and at times reading it was a joy that I almost couldn't stand. It was so incredible. Um, so I was in no rush to get through it. It was always, no matter how rough things got out in the world, it was a particularly fine spot to to go and bathe myself in. So I was aiming to keep the book alive as long as I could. And then the last third of it, I read quickly because it was no longer a need to hang onto the actual text of the book. The book had already permeated my being enough that I could let go of it. I was aiming as I continually and still aim, I was aiming and striving to get a full understanding of the true nature of reality and not merely a become

successful at dealing with what happens in the world. I was trying to understand what is happening and what is reality. And the book itself was literary and social thought through the ages. It also has inspired me to broaden my choice of reading material in terms of historical work, in terms of of more literary work, in terms of of getting a sense of society from from a a more well rounded perspective. That's another interesting and I think brilliantly effective quality of Hugo in the book is that that I went to the book with a deep hunger for spiritual reality and I came out of the book with deep appreciation of social reality. And that Hugo has managed to show me that there is a very real social affirmative quality to spiritual experience, that one needn't take the modern Existentialist of modern Buddhistic attitude that God or spiritual vision has to come at the price of material, social joy. That in fact the experience of infinity is very much a socially triumphant experience, and not necessarily as the modern age and the Buddhistic age indicates a black and anti-social phenomenon.

I - I think you have answered the question of afterwards, what your aim was too? (CR says yes) What were you experiencing before you were reading the book? And during and after?

CR - Before, like before I even picked it up? (I say yes) As I think I have been saying, I I was experiencing in varied intervals incredible vision and exultation at my own discovery and understanding of of the nature of life, the nature of infinity. And at the same time I was experiencing a deep and dismal frustration and defeat at my inability to make sense socially of what I knew spiritually and intellectually. That's what I was feeling before I came upon the book. When I came upon the book, I I extended positively the the spiritual understandings and I got rid of some of the worst parts of the depression in the sense of the social inapplicability of what I was feeling. And so the book while reading it began to make me feel socially valid and socially justified when in fact that was the cause for my greatest depression. Was the sense of what I knew and what I felt and what I understood, didn't seem to make sense in a world that had no sensitivity to the things I was experiencing. And after the book, I believe I matured, I believe I learned incredible things. It's interesting for myself when I was reading the book, one of the key characters in the book, a fellow named Marius, caused me the most chagrin while I was reading it. Because Hugo, Marius ends up being the affirmative hero in the book in fact. The positive hope that the book ends on. And yet I related or was afraid I was like Marius because Hugo attacked Marius as being a dreamer, which is a word I have been accused of being. Which I shun and I will not accept that word. He described Marius's preoccupation with the infinite as as as being his avoidance of of the social. Well that's always been a fear of mine and so I

went through some trying times while reading the book. It wasn't a sheerly pleasurable thing for me. It was hard work at this point to face these possibilities that I too was avoiding the social through my need for the infinite. But at the same time, Hugo's central hero in the book is a fellow named Jean Valjean, who I mentioned already. And he, Jean Valjean, is what I would call a martyr figure. A figure who by the very nature of his spiritual superiority is left out of society, is an outsider, is the epitome of the the miserable, the person who society doesn't allow equal membership. And yet the equation drawn is the degree with his own spiritual strength, his own spiritual nobleness. That's a valid and I believe an age-old literary technique in literary idea. However, interestingly in terms of my fears about Marius, interestingly enough as the book ends, I begin to realize that sequel to Les Miserables is a valid affair, with Marius now as its new hero. Being that the spiritually understood, the spiritually noble man has got a place in society. And in effect it is an incredible compliment to society to have a spiritually noble individual as being an integral member of it. To view the spiritually noble man as necessarily being an outcast in society is to make a horrible statement about the nature of society. And finally to believe that virtue and that values of infinite experience and compassion and understanding are also socially attractive qualities for a person to have, to me would be an infinitely worthwhile book to write and life to live. And so the idea of the martyr as being the central hero of a book is one that I disagree with. And in that sense my own diversion from the book begins. But that itself is a is a worthwhile happening from the book. You know I don't think a person should be a slave of a book, but rather the book itself should encourage new idea and thought anyway. And so even in that sense Hugo has achieved a masterpiece.

- I - Your experience after too, as you have discussed, is an integration of a lot of ideas and a clarification I guess of what you are going to do.
- CR - Mmheh. I can't stress too strongly this one point. It's I think it's the, for me personally, it's a very central central point. And if I as I think it's the nature of a thinking person, a feeling person to try to get just beyond himself and make a statement of the book itself or the purpose of writing itself is that for me personally and then in the book in general, it is for me to be the most central to any of the questions and all of the questions you are asking is the fact that I as a sensitive, feeling, thinking and somewhat tortured individual was struggling with his own existence such that the major worth and purpose of the book besides its manifest and excessive joys and fruits and pleasures of just being involved in the reading of it. Besides that, the central most important thing in reading it was the validizing of what one previously thought was non-applicable

feeling and thought. To me not only is that the successful achievement of Victor Hugo, but it should be the goal of all writers to allow the human being to feel valid in his human inner feeling and not to feel neutralized or or dismissed because his feelings are not satisfied by social position and financial success. And that his deeper cravings for understandings beyond himself are are experienced when he reads this book. To me that that compassion, that understanding that one's inner feelings, one's infinite needs are recognized and part of the social fabric that, then it allows one to not stand naked in life, but rather dress himself in the social fabric and not feel the least bit false for doing it.

I - Did you discuss this book with either yourself or someone else before, during and after reading it?

CR - Before, as I said, I heard about the book and everything I heard, I was excited to hear that that had been written, which was what prompted me to read it. While reading the book I discussed it incredibly and even read passages to several different people because it was the most important thing to discuss. I mean no doubt I was delighted that that the Canucks had just beaten Edmonton, but I was much more delighted that Valjean had had just saved Cosette. So it became the most immediately positive thing I could discuss in my day. Afterwards I I find that not only do I discuss it, but I've suggested and in two cases purchased the book for other people. Not wanting to be Evangelic about it but but that there is certain things that I would like to say and discuss with people that I could more appropriately say and discuss them once that person had had that book. Which by the way I believe is another valuable and essential aspect to a worthwhile literary work is that it gives people a socially a socially agreed upon bridge between souls if you will have it, where we have both walked over this particular piece of territory, and our souls have both been touched by the same social phenomena. Which ultimately a work of art becomes. And now that we have got something tangible to discuss, the intangibility of our soul becomes something we can share through tangible matter. Which is what I think a fine piece of writing does.

I - What differences can you detect in yourself after having read this book?

CR - Well, as I said, I think the sense of social alienation has begun to subside measurably. I think there has been a maturity and for me in particular because before I got to the book, I was struggling with becoming a writer and until I read Les Miserables, writing because of the writing I had read and the writers I had known had stunk to me on a spiritual level. There was nothing but egoism and pomposity in the writing. And while I think Hugo has a certain amount of both egoism and pomposity

there is a much deeper worth that can come out of it. The value of reading a book like that has freed me to believe that writing itself is a valuable exercise. So in an ultimate sense the book may well be the the uh, impetus to what may well be my my life's work. And so what more can you say? (laugh)

I - What made the whole reading experience easy or difficult for you and then, enjoyable or disagreeable to you?

CR - Well if life can be made difficult by constantly feeling what you are doing is wrong or what is happening is wrong, then reading that book was joyously easy because it felt like what I was reading was right. And what I was doing was right. And what happened in the book was right. So what made it easy was its correctness.

I - And difficult, anything?

CR - Like I said, the difficulty in the book was coming to terms with fears I had about myself. There were were characters and things in the book that reminded me of my own self-doubts and my own negative disposition towards myself. Which made it difficult, but made it worthwhile too. Plus the other difficult thing was was this is minor, was Hugo has as I said, a tendency towards pomposity and and in a sense obscene literary indulgence. Which embarrassed me because I feel that's a tendency I also have. And I don't want to embellish my writing with pompous statements, but rather, I mean I think the most incredible effect that could come from reading a writer is the experience of reality. And pomposity tends to get away with that. And so that was it. But one other point I would like to mention as far as difficulty goes, something that wasn't difficult for me, but might have been before I read this book, was the very length of it. It's a thousand pages, over a thousand pages. And previously, I, like other people have thought that that you know a book like that is too great. It came to me, I mean too great in just sheer quantity, it's great in quality. It's by no means great in quantity, a thousand pages isn't much when you are discussing infinite ideas. I'd say that what keeps a person wanting a book to be short is the desire for the person to consume the book from themselves and digest it. In other words, here is another thing I have to swallow. And so a big big book is like too big a bite to swallow. But if you view the book as an experience of living, the size of the book is just the nature of life itself. And if you are not trying to consume the book and reduce it to part of your physiological makeup or psychological makeup, but in fact aspire to become part of the greater life that the book is then the length of the book is no object at all.

I - What was so important about this book for your sense of meaning in life?

CR - Well, I think I have been saying that constantly. It's and I stress it one last time, not only did the book give me sense of religious belief, and a sense of religious understanding. And that he touches so much of what I believe to be spiritual truth, I believe before I read the book and it was affirmed while reading the book, there is an appendix in the book where he discussed nuns and monasteries. And he so beautifully shows the flaws in the orthodox religious institutions and at the same time shows an incredible honor of their goal which is to understand God. That a book in this age of smug Atheism, of of modern day existential superiority of of of impotent little Neitzschian supermen running all over the place, it's beautiful to see a man who realizes that the best thing a man can do is understand the infinite. That was was great, but what was greater was the social understanding that went along with it. Because it's my belief that the infinite is nothing unless it's understood in social terms. And Hugo's magnificent accomplishment of understanding historical events, understanding Napoleon, understanding why Napoleon failed, understanding why men are like they are. And the need for society to wake itself up to infinite reality is exactly what I believe to be life's main purpose. And so reading the book was at the very least enjoyable and at the most a growth experience.

I - Did this book reveal any new qualities to you about yourself?

CR - (pause) Yes, it um, it made me aware of my own lack of development. Next to the maturity and the perspective and the rightness of Hugo, I felt very much like an angry green child who may feel and know things, but had no perspective or understanding as to where those things made sense in the world. And so it, the book had a humbling experience for me. It made me realize that while I was sensitive to the some very real reality, I was insensitive to some very real aspects to what it is to be a mature person in the world. There was a sense of a needing to grow up that occurred when I read the book.

I - How did the world presented in the book fit with the way you see the world?

CR - Again, I think I have been, I have anticipated the questions. It's it as I said, it brought home to me to be the major absence in the world, which is the sense of the infinite. Not simply God worship, like belonging to the church or whatever, but the sense of the infinite. That there is something real in the world that is fully the social experience. And that the social experience is incomplete, and in fact distorted without the infinite

understanding of life. That there is a an understanding to life that the social experience needs to include, which it doesn't include. And the torture of a martyr character like Jean Valjean further underlines that a deep and a beautiful man has very little chance of being understood because society exists from closed minded standards of hierarchy and of of position and measures a man not by his character but by his reputation. So that the phoney quality of society is revealed in Les Miserables, but not revealed in the fashion that the modern day child shakes his fist at society. It's revealed that society is phoney but at the same time, society is embraced and affirmed. Which is to me the most exciting part of the book. Because I don't believe society can be anything but embraced and affirmed. It is life finally and there is nothing that exists outside of society. Not even God. Because society is in fact the experience of God and has to achieve that to achieve its own nature. But to shake your fist at society is to shake your fist at life. And one can't do that. One has to learn to be with life and not disagree with life. And so there is that in the book.

- I - You have mentioned this, but see if you want to add more. What did the characters in this book mean to you?
- CR - Very much. I from the opening of the book there was a character, Bishop Digne, who was the best of what a truly religious man in the institutional sense can be. He was a Bishop in a church, but had no use for the hierarchy of the church. And was basically a man who lived in the honor of the idea of God with the knowledge that that worldly rewards were meaningless in the sense of the Divine that he was in belief of. His absolute compassion that came from that was to be a a beautiful experience of what the best aspect of organized religion in society can offer the world. And so rather than the smug intellectual view that I was taught in universities that you know that people in churches are ignorant fools who believe in this child fantasy God, and we wise disbelievers are superior. I I can see that in fact there is probably many very noble and great men in organized religion that should be respected rather than dismissed as child fantasies, people. Then there is Jean Valjean who is a beautiful figure figure of immense strength physical and spiritual. And yet to me, Jean Valjean is everything I don't want to be. I don't want to be a martyr. Not that I don't believe in martyrdom, not that I don't think martyrdom is maybe essential for the destiny of obviously the martyr. But that Jean Valjean's plight while beautiful while it was understood had to finally lead to a life that allows noble values to attain social position. And then there is as I said, there is even a minor character in the book, a fellow by the name of Grantere, who is part of this, belongs to this, it's the book is set in age just preceding the French Revolution. And there is these groups of young French

intellectuals who have idealistic views of how society should run. And are, and do give up their life for the cause. And at the same moment one of the members in the group is a fellow who in a sense is the predecessor of the the modern existentially alienated fellow. All he can do is get drunk and spit on the mouthed virtues of his fellows because he doesn't believe that it runs much deeper. But just one little minor character like that in the book shows so beautifully how how this modern age has taken one minor figure in a masterpiece like *Les Miserables* and turned him into the modern day hero. And no doubt Grantere is a has got his nobility in that his cynicism comes from a true nature of what is virtuous and not being fooled by a lot of mouthed virtue. Knowing that it has to be lived. But again, Grantere is a tragedy and we've turned this tragic existential figure into the modern day genius. Which I think it's just interesting to know that Hugo didn't miss that either. That we have taken his minor figure and turned him into a major cultural hero now. Then the women in the book. Because they are for the most part beautiful creatures who are victims of the male world. And Hugo's poetic sense of the female is phenomenal. He understands that the female holds within her person the embodiment of the infinite. And that truly the nature of man when he looks at woman is is fear. Because he has possessed the world from God and the woman threatens to return the world to God. And so because of the violent and repressive nature of men Hugo clearly shows them to be in the world very much violated and and tortured figures, victims of the male world. And yet his ultimate hero and heroine have love. And he, as I believe, beautifully and brilliantly shows that love is is the only solution to the social injustice in the world. And that when men find their strength to deal with women romantically, the tragic political economic existences that men live will will come to a halt. And that's not a major idea in the book it's rather a subtle theme that finally ends up in the conclusion of the book as being the only possible solution to all the tragedy that Hugo is attempting to reinterpret so that it can be understood as something other than perpetual violence. And so that love is the solution to perpetual violence is another aspect to the book that I find affirming.

I - Did you get a quickened sense of the meaning of your own life and its temporariness?

CR - (long pause) I don't think I did get that because I don't think I agree with the question. I mean I don't think the realization that I'm a mortal and will die leads to a quickened or a temporary sense of living. I think Hugo clearly shows that that the mortal life we live is embellished by infinite reality. Not embellished, but actually experienced by it. And rather than getting a quickened or a temporary sense of life, I got a

willingness to live it. And a belief that it is a life of quality and a life of infinite worth. And that the temporariness, that is to say the implied mortality that I have while that is necessarily true, it isn't lessened by the fact that it is true because there is infinite experience available in the mortal span.

I - Did you get a sense of the eternal nature of your own life and its commonality?

CR - Obviously. I I feel that Hugo, I mean his whole point is that men were dying all over the place in the French Revolution for values that meant something to them. And that life itself meant nothing in terms of just living it. That until values were the reason d'etre for living, there is no real life. And that life has life has a meaningless and bitter experience. Which is probably the reason why we have got these black morose existential figures running around like virtuous hypocrites because they through their brilliance they have denied the meaning of any real value in life. And therefore life is meaningless to them. And it's only good in the fact that you are alive. Which Hugo presents a far different world. A world which I believe is far realer and far more truthful. And one which I believe in deeply. So, again, one last thing there, is the ultimate worth of the book for me is that I find myself living at a point in history where eternal and spiritual values are have been almost fully ejected from the quality of social existence, living in an age of smug existentialism, where the individual is responsible only to himself, and is to make what of his life he can through his own mortal attempts. And through Hugo, I find that my own intuition and deep belief that life has much deeper meaning than mortals can see, that that it in fact is the becoming and true nature and true work of a human being to find infinite understanding of his mortal situation. That to me is the major value of the book. That while I can't find it in the modern day, I can go back a century or two, and find a very revered social figure who believed very deeply in infinite realities. And so society is inclusive of infinite ideas, and not exclusive of it.

I - Anything else you want to add?

CR - No.

APPENDIX D

UNTIMELY INTERVIEW

Example I

I - What was your aim after reading the book?

CR - Sometimes books take me longer to really integrate. When I was trying to choose a book for this you know I have read a lot of books in the past that have really influenced me and that I feel very strong now still even though I read them awhile ago. It's just that I found it too hard to choose one. So I decided to choose one I was reading now. Um (long pause), sorry I lost track a bit.

I - It was about your aim afterwards.

CR - The aim afterwards yeah

I - You haven't quite got the full impact yet?

CR - Yeah, yeah. Because I finished it a few days ago. And it's um, I find with a book like that that really means something to me; I'll remember part of it for a long time or whenever it's appropriate or whenever something comes up, in any of those areas that I feel that they are tapped. So that long term part of it would be. Not sure because it wasn't a positive book at all. So long term I would probably prefer to ignore it if I could. Um and read more positive things and read more more um. Because that book taps back more into my negative side.

Example II

I - What were you experiencing before, during and after your reading of the book?

CR - See it doesn't change anything for me in the sense that it doesn't change a direction or make me um. Like all the experiences I had before the book were there and the book didn't change any and that, it just kind of added a little piece to tying it all closer together.

I - What was that piece that helped to tie it together?

CR - (long pause) I feel I'm far too vague. But I don't know it's more like just putting a puzzle together and having just one more piece that fits in. And yet what that piece is (long pause) maybe it's a little piece. I can't I mean my mind is just scattering. I can't think of one piece.

Example III

I - What was important for you in this book concerning your sense of meaning in life?

CR - (pause) Trying to think of what else. I'm feeling a bit that I'm kind of being too vague and that I'm really not being that helpful. So I'm trying to. But I think you're doing a good job of trying to say it back to me and I say yeah O.K. that's what I'm trying to say. I'm not feeling that articulate.

I - Do you want me to help you a bit?

CR - Yes.