

THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION
IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

By telling and retelling their life stories in everyday social interaction, adult learners describe times of continuity and change in their lives, and give an account of their self-formation. A disjuncture between the learners' life stories and events experienced either in their social context or in their inner life invites their reflection on its significance. Transformative learning occurs when reflection on such experience leads to interpretations which change the learners' meaning perspectives and their social practice. These changes are incorporated into a new version of the life story. Adult education approaches to perspective transformation have generally emphasised the interpretive role of critical reflection and thinking. Autobiography, as a metaphor for transformative learning, proposes that transformative learning also has the quality of a narrative constructed with imagination. Through ongoing interpretation of events in their inner and outer experience, learners compose their lives and their life stories.

The social context is a dynamic setting for autobiographical learning. Its structures and institutions concretise the learners' social and cultural tradition, which has been shaped by design and historical circumstance. Through the prejudgments of their tradition, learners perceive reality and construct corresponding lives and life stories. Theoretical approaches to interpreting life experience differ in their estimation of the value of the learners' tradition. In adult education theory and practice, Habermas' critical theory has been enlisted as a conceptual basis for perspective transformation. Little attention has been afforded to either Gadamer's hermeneutic consciousness, or Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics as ways to understand the interpretive activity which leads to the learners' self-formation and the re-invention of their life story.

Six former Roman Catholic priests participated in a cooperative inquiry, telling their life stories of remarkable change in life choice. They sought deeper self-knowledge, as well as an understanding of the widespread social phenomenon of Catholic priests choosing to marry. Their autobiographical accounts indicate that, as they gradually composed new life narratives, these learners gained personal authority as the authors of their lives. The stories also indicate that, at one time or other, a state of stagnation developed in the authors' lives. Despite the learners' lengthy periods of consciously attempting to resolve

the stalemate, it was an act of spontaneous imagination which illuminated a way through. The explanatory understanding of autobiographical or transformative learning proposed here claims that imagination, which bridges the domains of conscious and unconscious knowing in the author, is a partner with critical reflection in interpreting the life in its social context. Through transformative or hermeneutic conversation, adult educators may foster and promote the formation of autobiography and transformative learning. Further research, linking autobiography and transformative learning, would purposefully explore the role of other internal processes in transformative learning, such as feeling, and examine their relationship with imagination. It is likely that the acknowledgment of imagination as integral to transformative learning would lead to research which considers models of personhood other than those which emphasise ego as the conscious director of knowing and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although autobiography may purport to be the account of one life, it soon becomes apparent that the life is embedded in a web of personal and social relationships. This thesis is an account of research in which many lives are touched, in which many lives have played some part. In the foreground, are the lives of those whom I have called Dan, Luke, Mark, Matt, Paul and Stephen. I deeply appreciate and thank the five co-researchers who joined me in this research project. Our willingness to entrust our lives to each other, and to tell our life stories together is the basic ingredient in the conversation which brought forward a rich collection of narratives. Their early confidence that the project is worthwhile encouraged me greatly. Their willingness to wait during the long time it has taken to complete this thesis has supported me. I have had the privilege to listen to and read their stories many times. The beauty and courage of these stories of life is a source of delight to me. I offer my colleagues my gratitude, and my admiration. To Stephen, whose life became the major focus of this explanation, I extend my sincere gratitude for his generosity and openness.

In the near background, are the women who married Stephen, Paul, Matt, Mark, Luke and Dan. Though they are unseen, unnamed, and mostly unheard in the life stories, their presence is woven through the lives and narratives which are told in this account of transformation and transitions. I appreciate also their support and interest in this research project. A co-operative inquiry into their autobiographical learning would be of immense value in bringing to light their life stories too. Without their narratives, the phenomenon of the departure of Roman Catholic priests from active ministry cannot be fully understood.

Since we first met to discuss this research project in 1986, I have valued the capacity of David Boud, my supervisor, to listen to me, to encourage, to question, and to offer the kind of critical comment which opens doors to further research. I gladly acknowledge the patient trust he has placed in me to explore a variety of fields of learning in this study.

During my time of employment at United Theological College, I was fortunate to have two periods of sabbatical leave without which I could not have completed this work. I appreciate the generosity of the College, and the encouragement of Faculty colleagues, students and friends at the Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta. I am indebted to Ms Glenys Biddle and Mrs Lynette Thorn at Camden Library for their courteous and helpful assistance in locating books and articles for me through inter-library loans.

I began this study newly married. I made a foolish promise to myself that the project would not tax the energies of Kate, or become a source of extra responsibility for her in parenting, or be a disadvantage to our children, Daniel and Isabel. I realise that the extent to which this promise has foundered is beyond easy reckoning. I am profoundly grateful for Kate's encouragement, patience, and timely good-humoured impatience. In the long years of part-time study, she has offered me the space I needed to explore this research project, and has provided extensive practical help in the final stages of preparing this thesis.

I was greatly assisted by my friend, Peter Kelleher, priest and clinical psychologist, who generously volunteered to read this thesis in preparation for the final draft. I appreciated his questions about the research process, and his comments on some aspects of the phenomenon of Catholic priests departing from ministry. Due to his close scrutiny of the text and his helpful observations, I made some revisions to present a clearer text. I value his encouragement and support.

I have been glad for the interest, support and encouragement of my brothers and sisters, their partners and their children, and of all our friends. They, also, are part of my life and my life story of remarkable change. Their anticipation of the completion of this thesis has helped to make it seriously imaginable. I appreciate the help which my brother-in-law Paul Dunn gave me in converting the data on my computer files into a form suitable for use with our new computer.

I offer this thesis as a way to thank all who have blessed my life. They are part of my life and its story. Most of all, this work expresses my gratitude to Vera and Alex, my parents, whose courageous journeys in life are my greatest heritage.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i-vi
INTRODUCTION	1
ENDNOTES	14
 CHAPTER ONE AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS THE COMPOSITION OF A LIFE AND ITS NARRATIVE	
1.0 COMPOSING A LIFE	19
1.1 TELLING THE SELF IN NARRATIVE	20
1.2 LIFE AS NARRATIVE.	23
1.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS IDENTITY FORMATION	26
1.4 PERSONAL NARRATIVES AS COMMON PLOTS AND RITUALS OF LIFE	29
1.5 MAKING AND BREAKING THE NARRATIVE CIRCLE	31
1.6 LIFE STORY AS PERSONAL CONSTRUCT	33
1.7 ACCOUNTING FOR ONE'S LIFE AS FICTION	35
1.8 ACCOUNTING FOR ONE'S LIFE IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT	37
1.9 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND ADULT EDUCATION	41
1.10 SUMMARY	48
1.11 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A LITERARY FORM	50
1.12 THE SELF OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY - AUTHORITY AND AUTHORSHIP	51
1.13 IS THERE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IMPERATIVE?	57
1.14 THE FORM AND PROCESS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY	59
1.15 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON AUTOBIOGRAPHY	64
1.16 SUMMARY	69
ENDNOTES	70
 CHAPTER TWO RESEARCH INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	
2.0 A PRELIMINARY NARRATIVE OF THIS RESEARCH	72
2.1 THE CO-RESEARCHERS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE INQUIRY	80
2.2 INITIATING THE CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY	81
2.3 DIMENSIONS OF THIS INQUIRY INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	84
2.4 THE USE OF ARTISTIC MEDIA	84
2.5 METAPHOR ANALYSIS AND ELABORATION	86
2.6 PARABLE	89
2.7 CONVERSATION AS METAPHOR AND METHOD IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH	90
2.8 A GROUP PROCESS FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH	92

2.9	SKILLS FOR PARTICIPATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH	95
2.10	CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	98
2.11	THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL QUALITY OF THIS RESEARCH	98
2.12	AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IS IMAGINATIVE INQUIRY	100
2.13	AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH USES QUALITATIVE METHODS	102
2.14	AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IS TRANSFORMATIVE	111
	ENDNOTES	113

CHAPTER THREE SIX STORIES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

3.0	INVITATION TO A STORYTELLING	117
3.1	STEPHEN'S STORY	118
3.2	THE TRAIN JOURNEY	119
3.3	A TIME OF UNSETTLEMENT	121
3.4	A MOMENT OF VISION	127
3.5	A TIME FOR DECISION	128
3.6	THE CENTRAL METAPHOR OF STEPHEN'S STORY	131
3.7	STARTING OUT ON THE TRACK	131
3.8	STOPS ALONG THE TRACK	132
3.9	LOOKING BACK ON THE JOURNEY	134
3.10	STEPHEN ELABORATES THE METAPHOR	134
3.11	STEPHEN'S STORY AS PARABLE	138
3.12	DAN'S STORY - THE SEARCH FOR A PLACE OF INTEGRITY AND INTIMACY	136
3.13	PAUL'S STORY - A HEROIC STRUGGLE	147
3.14	MARK'S STORY - A SEARCH FOR A HOME	152
3.15	LUKE'S STORY - YEARNING FOR A PLACE TO BELONG	156
3.16	MATT'S STORY - QUITTING THE STAGE, AND COMING HOME TO HIMSELF	162
3.17	COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SIX LIFE STORIES	172
3.18	STORIES OF FAITH	172
3.19	STORIES OF PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION	176
3.20	STORIES OF FAILURE, SHAME AND GUILT	179
3.21	STORIES OF GRIEF	180
3.22	STORIES OF STUCKNESS	182
3.23	STORIES OF SURPRISE AND JOY	182
3.24	STORIES MEN TELL	182
3.25	STORIES OF IMAGINATION	184
3.26	STORIES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	184
3.27	SUMMARY	186
	ENDNOTES	187

CHAPTER FOUR THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

4.0	SETTING THE SCENE	189
4.1	ADULT LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT	190
4.2	SOCIAL CONTEXT AND THE FORMATION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY	194
4.3	CELIBACY IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD	197
4.4	THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE PHENOMENON OF PRIESTS RESIGNING FROM MINISTRY	206
4.5	SIX ACCOUNTS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT	210
4.6	THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF STEPHEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	214
4.7	THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL	218
4.8	THE VIETNAM WAR	222
4.9	BIRTH CONTROL	222
4.10	PRIESTS LEAVING ACTIVE MINISTRY	225
4.11	SUMMARY	234
	ENDNOTES	235

CHAPTER FIVE IMAGINATION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

5.0	THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	237
5.1	IMAGINATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	239
5.2	UNDERSTANDING IMAGINATION IN KNOWING AND ACTING	241
5.3	A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO IMAGINATION	242
5.4	IMAGINATION IN EDUCATION	245
5.5	IMAGINATION AS INTERPRETATION OF LIFE EXPERIENCE	247
5.6	IMAGINATION-INSIGHT	249
5.7	IMAGINATION AND ASSENT	252
5.8	IMAGINATION AND HERMENEUTICS	253
5.9	TRADITION AND IMAGINATION	256
5.10	ARCHETYPAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IMAGINATION	258
5.11	IMAGINATION IN TRANSFORMATION	262
5.12	SUMMARY OF VIEWS OF IMAGINATION IN KNOWING AND ACTION	264
5.13	IMAGINATION IN FORMS OF LIFE STORYTELLING	268
5.14	MYTH, PARABLE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY	268
5.15	METAPHOR, IMAGINATION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	270
5.16	SPONTANEOUS AND ELABORATED METAPHORS	273
5.17	METAPHOR AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY	277
5.18	IMAGINATION IN ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND RESEARCH	279
5.19	SUMMARY	291
	ENDNOTES	292

**CHAPTER SIX AN EXPLANATORY UNDERSTANDING OF
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING**

6.0	INTERPRETATION, IMAGINATION, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	293
6.1	INTERPRETATION	295
6.2	HERMENEUTIC CONSCIOUSNESS	303
6.3	TRADITION	305
6.4	CONVERSATION AND PLAY	309
6.5	QUESTIONING AND HERMENEUTIC CONVERSATION	312
6.6	IMAGINATION, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: SIX PATHS FOR A COMMON JOURNEY: SIX WAYS TO TELL A STORY	319
6.7	SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY : AN INTERPRETIVE STANCE IN THE TRADITION	321
6.8	FINDING ONE'S FEET ON STRANGE AND ROUGH ROADS : THE EXPERIENCE OF DISORIENTATION	323
6.9	GLIMPSSES OF A WAY AHEAD: EPIPHANIES AND TRANSFORMING MOMENTS	328
6.10	IMAGINATIVE EXPLORATION OF A NEW WAY	331
6.11	ARRIVING AT THE DESTINATION: A NEW INTERPRETIVE STANCE IN TRADITION	333
6.12	CONVERSATION AS A METAPHOR FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	335
6.13	TRANSFORMATIVE CONVERSATION	337
6.14	SUMMARY	340
6.15	IMPLEMENTING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING	341
6.16	CONCLUSION	342
	ENDNOTES	344

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1	DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE PARTICIPANTS	348
TABLE 2	SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' FIRST DRAWING	349
TABLE 3	SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' SECOND DRAWING	350
TABLE 4	SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' THIRD DRAWING	352
TABLE 5	SUMMARY OF METAPHORS USED IN LIFE STORIES	354

APPENDIX 2

PARABLES	357
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	367
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PREFACE

In 1983, I found myself undertaking a midlife sabbatical, engaged in the project of trying to make sense of the personal chaos I was experiencing. In my twentieth year as a Roman Catholic priest, I was constantly wearied by a malaise I could not name clearly, other than as a sense of loss. At the time, I was experiencing satisfaction in many dimensions of my vocation in the priesthood, and enjoyed a good reputation as a priest. Nevertheless, I had a pervasive sense that, like the woman in the parable (Luke 15: 8-10), I too had lost my coin, the coin of my vitality. I was constantly tired, caught in a cycle of exhaustion and recuperation. I knew that by simply doing less work I would not find a lasting answer to the question at the centre of my life. I was sure that I needed to review my life thoroughly. So, during my sabbatical, I determined to search high and low for what I had lost, hoping that I would regain what I needed to sustain my life as a priest.

I had a premonition that the road ahead of me would mean more than the recuperation of my lost vitality. Having been a dutiful son in the priesthood for so long, I was disturbed by my conviction that I must now claim what was my inheritance. The path which I set out on was the prodigal journey of an elder son (Luke 15: 11-32). I was both hopeful and fearful about where I might end up. In the hope of finding wise accompaniment on this journey, I had chosen to engage in some therapy and spiritual direction. For the sake of some professional development, I pursued simultaneously some courses in a Master of Pastoral Studies program. In this program, several of the course instructors encouraged us to articulate accounts of our life's journey by using journal exercises, drawings and clay. These imaginative and playful methods surprised me in proving to be very effective in my discovering and naming what had been troubling me. The assigned reading introduced me to the work of Jung and Proff, and drew upon developmental theorists such as Erikson, Levinson, Kohlberg, Gilligan and Fowler. These conceptual frameworks helped me name my experience and understand how my sense of self had been changing.

However, it was in a class on Adult Learning that I was introduced to “learning from experience”, and that proved to be my most stimulating learning discovery of all. I was excited to find new ways of perceiving what had been taking place in my life; ways which left me with a sense of dignity as a learner from life itself. The feelings I had in this class were much different from the mixture of shame, guilt, foolishness and ineptitude I had felt for a sizeable period of my therapy. I do not want to diminish the challenging effect that my therapy had on me, nor its contribution to my making a major change in my career. However, in the Adult Learning class I had discovered the reflective approaches to experiential learning of Boud, Kolb, and Mezirow in particular. These presented me with a way of working with the stuff of life that regards the subject of it all as a learner rather than as a client. I came to regard my newly emerging self-understanding and stance in life as an outcome of learning from my life experience.

For now I had come to see my life as having two important dimensions, rather than a single purpose. Although for some years I had found the exercise of ministry to be exhausting, I still had a deep seated desire to be a priest. At the same time, now I recognised in myself a similar deep seated desire to marry and to have the opportunity for parenting. Though marriage and priesthood are declared to be incompatible callings in the official policy of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic church, I developed the conviction that both vocations belonged in my life. I formed the intention to marry, accepting with regret the suspension from active ministry which my choice to marry would entail.

At the end of an extended sabbatical, I took leave from active ministry. I needed to let my new self-understanding and my decision mature. In explaining my choice for marriage to others, I expected to meet the disappointment and disapproval of many. I wanted to weather these storms before I married. After a year, content that my decision was genuine, I resigned from the active exercise of priesthood in the Catholic church. I married soon afterwards, in December 1986, and made a new start in life.

This change to my previous life choice constituted for me a major departure from my explicit and publicly affirmed stance within the Roman Catholic Church. It was a *remarkable* change because it contradicted important elements in the matrix of religious meanings and lifestyle which I had valued for a long time. My choice to marry was tantamount to expressing publicly my conscientious disagreement with the Roman Catholic church's requirement of celibacy for the exercise of priesthood. Implicit in my choice for marriage, was a declaration of my unwillingness now to accept the authority of the church to construct totally my personal and social identity. I had claimed a larger measure of authority for my own life.

From my reading and from conversations, I was aware that experiences of remarkable change were to be found in other lives also. I had heard of people whose changes appeared to be an almost total about-face. Some had become pacifist after a lifetime of engagement in military activities. Others, now conservationists, once had been exploiters of natural resources. I was impressed also by the example of feminists I knew. In the face of disapproval and threat, they had struggled for years to articulate new perspectives, and to develop a new practice for themselves in their work and relationships. I recognised, as an element common to these other remarkable changes in life choice, a major discontinuity in relationship with a significant social or institutional context for the person's life. Just as I had, these others had made choices which required a reconstruction of their personal and social identity. They too had changed at least some of their central values and meanings, and adopted a new stance in their generativity and relationships.

At the time of my exit from the priesthood, I had felt some responsibility to offer an account of my decision for change to my family and relatives. I also wanted to explain my choice to authorities in the Catholic church, and to colleagues with whom I had lived and worked. I earnestly wished to present a coherent explanation which would show my choice to resign to be responsible, truthful and understandable. In the official estimation of the Catholic church, a decision like mine is one of failure and desertion. Accounts of priests leaving active ministry are not offered publicly, not even within the Catholic church's media of information.

With the benefit of two years of sustained self-reflection, I had come to understand my new life choice principally as an outcome of learning from experience. This is how I presented to others my situation of change. Through reflecting on my experience of accounting for change, I discovered that what emerged was less of an explanation, and more of a new telling of my life story. As I offered my explanation to others, I sensed that my understanding of my story of transformation was deepening, and I desired to know my life better.

Some opportunities to tell my personal narrative came when I sought out friends to tell them of my journey of new learning and my marriage. At other times, I found that I was asked for an explanation so that they could understand the changes which had come about in me and between us. There were also chance meetings with former colleagues in the priesthood. Although many of those to whom I offered my account acknowledged it as creditable, I felt a certain frailty in the face of disbelief and disregard from others. I came to realise that, although my story lacked the clarity and firmness needed to compel their understanding, it appeared, nevertheless, to have a menacing strength. This was because it challenged the Catholic church's official interpretations of what motivates priests to leave active ministry and marry. Beyond my intention, my resignation seemed to confront some who remain in active ministry in so far as it called them to question their stories. I recalled that priests I had known, who had resigned, were considered by some other priests to have been rejecting the priesthood. I estimated that my resignation, too, might be perceived as disdain for the priesthood. I felt relief when people understood my narrative explanation, and rejection when some interpreted it as showing that I had acted unwisely, without care for others, and without loyalty toward the Catholic church.

On the other hand, some people expressed mixed feelings in response to my account. Some voiced anger at the Catholic church's persistent refusal to permit people, such as myself, to remain priests and marry. They expressed their grief at the loss of a companion in an enterprise which we had shared for a long time. Many showed concern about where I would find alternative employment.

Since my adolescence, when first I had told my story of vocation to gain admission to the seminary, I had had other occasions in which to account to church authorities for who I am and what matters to me. The story I was relating now was not the life story that I had told on any previous occasion. Though my new account differed markedly from past tellings, it still had connection with them. As a narrator, I desired and felt some need to show that, despite real changes, there was continuity between the self who undertook the sabbatical journey and my new self.

This latest account did not merely add information about my life, like the most recent entry in a diary. This new telling of my life story was qualitatively different because it was reinterpreting the events of my past, and reshaping the accounts that I had given previously. I anticipated that people who value consistency over coherence, might find my explanation and me less trustworthy because I had changed my story.

Though this latest version appeared to me to be the most coherent account of my remarkable change that I could offer then, I suspected that it was not the final account at which I might arrive. I discovered that the story I was telling was forming my life, as well as describing it. I was confident that as I understood better this process of mutual transformation, then my life and its story would become even more coherent. Thus, my story would be a persuasive explanation, and I too would be understandable and acceptable. Perhaps the explanation I would offer would even encourage and prompt some authorities within the Catholic church to take another look at its regulations about celibacy and priesthood.

This brief introduction to this thesis tells of my struggles to understand what had been happening in my life, and it tells of my transformation. Though my learning brought times of aloneness and pain, I also found great relief at having found at last what I had lost. A fuller account of my remarkable change, is to be found in Chapter Three, as the story of Dan. It describes my recovery from what had stifled my vitality, and my great joy in finding a life's partner.

As I began to live my new life story, I found that I had already started to construct and authorise a personal and social identity based on new meanings, beliefs, values, sense of purpose and social relationships. I sensed a continuing need and desire to find an explanation for my remarkable change, which I might offer to others as a worthy and credible account. This thesis reports the research project which emerged from my desire to give such an account.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports a co-operative research project which undertook to investigate personal transformation from the perspective of adult learning. The inquiry had its origin in my search for a way to explain changes in life choice such as my own, which is described in the Preface. I have named these changes remarkable. The brief description of remarkable change which follows notes its principal qualities. Firstly, remarkable change is not simply an expectable outcome of adult development. From the viewpoint of the person who makes a remarkable change, the decision to enact this alternative behaviour constitutes a deliberate and conscientious shift away from a previously valued important personal commitment. Secondly, the behavioural expression of a remarkable change in life choice contravenes publicly some institutional or cultural norm. Many accounts of these changes in life choice portray their authors as expressing a new sense of joy, peace and freedom (Edwards, 1987; McMahon, 1987; Jones 1990). As well, those who make such a remarkable change often claim to live with a greater sense of integrity as a result of their choice (Zijlstra, 1989; Loughlin, 1994).

I set out on this inquiry, wondering why some people make remarkable changes in the purpose and direction of their lives, while others who experience apparently similar circumstances appear not to do so. Having reflected at length on my own experience, I considered that personal choices for such alternative stances in life are not explained adequately as a change in physical wellbeing, or as stages of development in personality, cognition or moral judgment. Rather, I suspected that the phenomenon of changed life choice draws upon a plurality of processes of knowing, feeling, valuing and choosing. From my reading in the field of adult transformation, I became acquainted with explanations of remarkable change such as perspective transformation, conscientisation, emancipation, conversion, and conscientious objection. I found some explanatory value in each of these

conceptual frameworks. However, my particular experience of transformation suggested to me that there is still more to be said about the interior processes of knowing which influence this kind of transformative and emancipatory learning. 1

I was interested to learn how other priests had made what appeared to be a remarkable change similar to mine. 2 I wanted to discover, also, how people in general learn from experience to enact remarkable personal change within “ordinary lives”, whose course includes both persistent sameness and disabling disruption. I perceived that through times of celebration, achievement, failure, loss or deprivation, many people appear to construct a way forward for themselves, without much personal complaint or public recognition. Ironically, stories of such ordinary and personally significant learning, rooted in the experience of adult life, may appear at times to be so commonplace as to be unremarkable. 3

Researching adult transformation as autobiographical learning

Therapeutic intervention, spiritual direction, conscientisation, critical incident debriefing, clinical supervision, support groups, self-help literature, meditation, and various specific educational programs may all contribute to explanations of remarkable changes that occur in people’s lives. I set out to discover whether remarkable changes in life choice might be explained well, though not exclusively, as outcomes of adult transformative learning. I chose to focus on elements of self-directed learning from experience (Brookfield, 1985), and to avoid instances of personal transformation which emphasised clienthood and directive instruction. 4

From reflection on my experience of transformative learning, I noted that my discovery that I am the *author* of my life story was closely connected to my awareness that I have *authority* in my own life. It appeared to me that an important feature of the transformative learning in

remarkable change is that the narrator who accounts for it is indeed an author. Authorship is expressed through the learner's autonomy and authority in creating the life story, especially at specific turning points. It seemed to me that the ongoing making and remaking of life choices in adulthood has its principal source in autonomous learning from experience. With my discovery that my own explanations of remarkable change had a narrative quality, the focus of my interest in this research project moved from the initial desire primarily to investigate the phenomenon of remarkable change as adult learning. I adopted the metaphor of autobiography and took for my target an inquiry into what I have chosen to call autobiographical learning. ⁵ That is, I chose to investigate how people who make remarkable changes create meaning *autobiographically* from their life experience. This kind of adult learning appears to me to be self-directed, yet dependent on circumstance. It is feasible that adult learners who initiate remarkable change may have made quite different choices in different circumstances. Consequently, the learner's life and autobiography would have been otherwise. ⁶

Autobiographical learning

Autobiographical learning occurs while persons are engaged in the composition of their everyday lives. Though they may be hardly aware of themselves as authors, people regularly offer coherent accounts of both continuity and change in their lives. Within their life story they relate "stepping stones", those occasions which serve to promote the life's continuity; and "turning points", those decisive events after which the person's life is not the same again. It appears from the narratives people tell that, as well as the times of movement, there are also times of stagnation or stuckness, in which the person's response to life's events is repetitive and sometimes stereotyped. Transformations of this stagnation of personal awareness and social identity occur as author-learners construct new meaning from their interaction with life events, other significant people and their socio-cultural environment. The life stories people tell often show that significant adult learning is intertwined with other

people's learning, both in interpersonal relationships, and through participation in institutions of a particular culture or subculture. 7

In this thesis, I am proposing that autobiographical learning may be characterised in the following terms:

(a) As an outcome of moments of autobiographical learning, persons develop a sense of personal autonomy and authority in their life.

(b) A critical review of significant events in their experience leads autobiographical learners to awareness of how their values, feelings, ideas, imagining and choices have given shape to their life.

(c) As they discover their capacity to imagine constructively their life as other than it is, learners gain a sense of being the author of a life story which they are able to invent and re-invent. The quality of authorship, and the degree of authority to shape one's life are related to the strengths and limits of one's personal capacities, the enabling constraints of one's culture, the physical environment, and circumstance.

(d) This learning is facilitated by life storytelling. Imagining and critical reflection call into awareness tacit and symbolic dimensions of the person's knowing.

(e) Autobiographical learning, which encompasses reflection, critical thinking and imagining, leads to a transformation in the person's perspective and practice.

Obviously, life experience is not automatically turned into learning just because it is told in stories. Where stories and lives are repetitive and stereotypical, transformative learning from experience does not occur (Kepnes, 1982). Or people may collude to construct a "life script" for the sake of predictability (Steiner, 1974). In circumstances where life stories are

merely repeated, the subject in the narrative does not become the author of a life, although he or she may be convinced that both the story and the life are genuinely in their hands. The person, whose life follows a script fashioned within the social context, is likely to assume that everything is as it should or must be. As long as the narrator does not question the origin and function of their script, or imagine that their situation might be other than it is, the script remains a closed story. Closed stories, which obstruct autobiographical learning, are capable of being opened.

In this co-operative inquiry, autobiographical learning is taken to include all the processes by which the six participants came to construct their life story of remarkable change. The co-researchers came to recognise that the narratives of self-understanding and explanations of change which they brought to the inquiry had been generated in a variety of ways over a long period of time. In conversations with friends and in official interviews, in therapy and spiritual direction, in formal and informal educational settings, in reading and reflection, in silence, in journalling and in retreats we had questioned and searched for an understanding of our lives which did not exclude our learning from experience.

Chapter One considers the narrative quality of learning from experience, and the suitability of autobiography as a metaphor for transformative learning.

Co-operative inquiry into autobiographical learning

Chapter Two describes in detail the co-operative inquiry into autobiographical learning which I initiated, and discusses conceptual and methodological issues which the project raised for consideration. The account which follows immediately is intended to inform the reader briefly of the nature of this inquiry.

I gathered together five other men who had been ordained celibate priests in the Roman Catholic Church, and who had made the choice to marry. I invited them to participate in this inquiry by giving an account of their decision to marry, so that as a research group we might gain further understanding of our own life, and contribute to each other's self-understanding. Some of them had provided an account of their new perspective when they made a formal application to the Catholic Church for permission to marry. However, they considered that accounting for their remarkable change in that context had not brought to them a sense of being the author of their life story. 8

The group's intention was not to validate a particular theory of remarkable change, but to know deeply the meaning of our choices. I explained to the group my insight that imagination had been a major component in the transformation of my worldview and the taking of my decisions. I declared that part of my research agenda was to discover whether imagination had played some role in their learning as well. My co-researchers shared neither my adult learning perspective to explain the changes which they had made in their lives, nor my wondering about imagination's place in adult transformation. Apart from their immediate and concrete intentions to understand better their own decisions, and to make a generous and crucial contribution to my doctoral research, the members of the group expressed no clear expectations for the outcomes of the study. There was, however, a general sense of optimism that, as an outcome of the research, we would find a means to communicate our explanations to others, perhaps even to the hierarchy of the Catholic church.

After some preliminary negotiation about the purpose and direction of the research, we agreed to a basic research plan. We described our experience of remarkable change in a research conversation, reflecting on our experience and naming it from our present stance. Through active listening and questioning, we invited each other to tell the story in its fullest possible form, using several artistic and literary forms. Though each telling and retelling of our stories was, by itself, an incomplete and unfinished account, we began to see their

meaning accumulate. At times, there were obvious gaps in each person's narrative. The group members recognised that, despite our discerning questions, some of these silences would remain, at least for the time being. We expected that with the growth of trust in the group and deepened self-awareness in the narrators, these silences might find expression in a subsequent telling of the story.

I wondered again whether life stories would constitute strong enough explanations of change. As a comfort, I reminded myself that my transformation had come not primarily in the form of a logical explanation, but from telling my story. I grew more confident of the validity and dignity of the stories I was hearing. They were not proofs to compel assent. Yet, each narrative expressed a life in its own voice, enabling us to reach an understanding of the varied experiences and choices of their authors. Some similarities between the stories emerged also, more often as a surprise to us all. I began to see that diversity among the stories indicated a more genuine account of the author's self-understanding. This diversity also confirmed my intuition that imagination, as a process of knowing, had contributed specificity to their transformative learning.

It became clear to me, too, that just as artistic forms of self-telling had been at the core of the critical and imaginative process in which my autobiographical learning occurred, so too were they contributing now to our joint accounting for change. As we reflected on our experience together, we discovered that our inquiry itself was an act of autobiography, in its process as well as in its content.

Chapter Three presents the six stories of autobiographical learning. The stories tell how the locus of personal authority shifted in the lives of the co-researchers, how the learners questioned their ecclesiastical tradition in the light of their experience, and how each took the risk of composing their life and its narrative of continuity and ongoing change.

Autobiographical learning in the social context

In so far as accounts of remarkable changes in life choice contradict the dominant norms and tradition of the learner's social context, they possess a political and even subversive dimension, whether or not those making the choice intend it, or are even aware of it. Consequently, many who opt for remarkable change may be surprised or shocked by the degree of social resistance to their choice. The social context appears to require those who change significantly to provide a credible explanation for their choice, or accept the attribution of deviance. Cultural and institutional responses to accounts of disruptive personal transformation often represent them as untrue, unreliable, and indicative of the authors' culpable disloyalty to the group, as well as their emotional instability. Sometimes, accounts are suppressed, or simply ignored. As an outcome of our co-operative inquiry, I expected to reach an explanation of remarkable changes in life choice which could withstand the attributions of instability, infidelity and immaturity which they often attracted from those who disapproved.

Chapter Four describes Australian society and Catholicism as the social context for the transformative learning of the co-researchers in this inquiry.

Imagination and autobiographical learning

During my sabbatical, my life was being transformed as I constructed and reconstructed my autobiography in one imaginative form or another. 9 Reflection, prior to this inquiry, on my experience of change-making first prompted me to understand my remarkable change as a process of learning in which imagination had played a significant part. As I considered the events which took place in my remarkable change, I recalled that the discovery that I might choose freely for myself became evident to me through my telling the narrative of my life.

In the face of strong institutional resistance to my remarkable change, I aspired to provide a convincing explanation for it. I found myself asking whether my appeal to the “frail” power of imagination would afford a sturdy and persuasive explanation for personal transformations which threaten the established social and political order of the Catholic church. I was convinced of the potency of imaginative forms of life storytelling in my own experience. My discovery of myself as author of my life story was a turning point in my process of remarkable change. I wondered whether imagination is merely an instrumental aid to alternative forms of explanation, or whether it is an important dimension in the act of knowing which leads to significant change in meaning perspectives. I resolved to investigate the role of imagination in adult transformative learning.

In Chapter Five I present various understandings of the place of imagining in knowing. These theoretical propositions support the assertion that imagining plays a significant role in the composition of the life narrative, and in transformative learning. An evaluation of Mezirow’s (1978) paradigm of perspective transformation indicates that his emphasis on critical reflection effectively reduces imagining to the status of a preparatory technique. The literary forms of metaphor and parable are shown as constituents of the life stories and the autobiographical learning of the participants in this inquiry. **10**

Autobiographical learning includes the interpretation together of both the experience of learners and the tradition in which they approach that experience. In Chapter Six I propose that the hermeneutic stance of Gadamer provides a framework in which imagining may be seen to play a role in interpretation. Ricoeur’s phenomenological hermeneutics, and the -critical theory of Habermas are considered in relation to Gadamer’s hermeneutical consciousness.

Two explanatory understandings of autobiographical learning are portrayed. One seeks to set out a path to learning by using the metaphor of journey. The other aims to understand the internal processes of autobiographical learning through the metaphor of conversation. In concluding the chapter, I propose that, in the critical hermeneutic activity of autobiographical learning which leads to a new narrative and practice, imagining partners critical reflection and considers some implications of this research for adult education and transformative learning.

Conclusion

Although I have written this thesis as an academic report, at times it has an explicit narrative and even autobiographical quality. This introduction, and parts of the thesis which follows, risk the judgment that they are anecdotal and unacademic at times. Chapter Three contains a lengthy account of the six stories of transformation. However, my estimation is that to describe and explain a co-operative inquiry into autobiographical learning without locating the stories of the authors' transformation at the centre of the discussion would be to provide a sparse and artless account. Because each participant in the inquiry told his story in several forms, I have an abundance of data. Therefore, in Chapter Three, I have aimed to present the range of accounts of transformation, without being exhaustive. Additional information has been placed in **Appendices 1 and 2**. These appendices contain tables which summarise the drawings and metaphors, and report the parables.

In this thesis, therefore, I have become a narrator of others' stories as well as my own. I am encouraged, and not at all surprised, to find myself in the company of alert researchers who include narratives of their experience in their accounts of adult learning (Andresen, 1993; Brookfield, 1990a, 1993; Keane, 1987; Miller, 1993; Mulligan 1993; Reason and Hawkins, 1988).

Because the ethos and method of co-operative inquiry require that the participants in this project deem this thesis a valid account of the inquiry, my primary readers are my five co-researchers. Though I, and not they, brought to the inquiry the language and discourse of adult learning, it has been my intention throughout the inquiry to present an account of their learning that they would recognise as a valid explanation, and one worthy of their lives. The best estimate that I have accounted for their learning truthfully and with care is that given by their authors. I am glad to say that since we began I have had their assurance that my interpretations do them justice, and tell their lives well.

I am very conscious that this report to my collaborators tells a great deal about their lives. This seems to be inevitable and even necessary in a study of remarkable change and autobiographical learning. Some autobiographies are stories to protest fearlessly against a state of affairs; others contain a critical insight into their social context even though their primary intent is to explore self-understanding and personal relationships. The life stories told here span the domains of personal intimacy, social responsibility, and faith. They are stories about life told proudly and humbly, sadly and joyfully. Their authors are aware of their human vulnerability and the limits to their abilities, wisdom and virtue. In these stories, they gratefully celebrate the end of long struggles, and their homecoming. Their stories are those which are told among friends, but not broadcast without care. In reporting the stories of those resigned priests, religious women and men whom she interviewed, Turner (1992) considered it prudent to provide them with anonymity. Likewise, for the authors of the life stories which are told in Chapter Three, I have chosen to provide the pseudonyms of Stephen, Luke, Mark, Matt, Paul, and Dan. The reader may recognise my own life story in Chapter Three. I have chosen to adopt the pseudonym of Dan in telling my own account, in order to follow the same procedure for all co-researchers. I am aware that my own life story as transformative learner and as principal researcher occupy considerable space in the telling of this thesis. I chose the pseudonym Dan to enable me to focus on Stephen's story, and to allow me to gain some distance from my own narrative, especially in Chapter Three.

I have drawn upon the metaphor of conversation to portray both the style of this inquiry, and the processes of knowing which lead to autobiographical learning. Although this thesis is about transformative learning, it traverses the conceptual boundaries of adult learning into the larger discourses of literature, philosophy, the social sciences and theology. These disciplines have all been part of my own education, interest and profession. While I am aware of my limits in appreciating all of these fields of inquiry in depth, I am convinced, nevertheless, that the decision to call upon them to make a rich conversation about adult transformation is sound. This conversation among the disciplines has led to my deeper understanding of imagination.

To facilitate progress through this thesis, I wish to alert the reader to the fact that in its presentation, I have left detailed discussion of some important concepts till the later chapters. I have chosen this strategy to avoid an overload of theory at the beginning, which might well need some repetition in the later stages. This approach resembles the movement found in the cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), in which naming through abstract conceptualisation follows reflective observation on and interpretation of concrete experience. I invite the reader to consult the Endnotes to each chapter, in which I have sought to convey briefly and in a lateral manner information of both a factual and conceptual nature. The concepts of imagination, conversation, and autobiography which are central in this thesis are indeed part of everyday discourse. However, because I am using these common terms in uncommon ways, I reckoned it necessary to take considerable space to elaborate the meanings which I attach to them in the context of transformative learning. I have not taken it for granted that these central concepts immediately convey their richness and pertinence for this explanation of transformative learning. Chapter One proposes various descriptions of narrative and autobiography. Chapter Five elaborates the use of imagination, and Chapter Six offers an understanding of conversation as a hermeneutic act.

The narrative quality of autobiographical learning is both personal and social. The phenomenon of remarkable change, as exemplified in these priests' narratives, provides a

striking example of how the interaction of persons, institutions, society and culture constructs and reconstructs lives. Chapter Four is devoted to presenting a description of the social context of these autobiographical accounts, and the ways in which, through initiative and response, the authors interacted with their context in personal events and social circumstances. Tradition is understood as the pre-formed understanding of events which the dominant social context provides and prescribes. In Chapter Six, the role of tradition in the interpretive conversation which leads to autobiographical learning is described.

In writing this thesis as a story about life stories, I employ a variety of voices. At one time or another in this account, my own voice as narrator, interpreter, theory-builder and practitioner may occupy centre stage. Sometimes my voice is that of a participant; at other times, I am taking the stance of the principal researcher. The voices which speak from the various positions which I have occupied in this research, are to be expected in a co-operative inquiry. They reflect the movement I experienced from being in connection with, and distant from the other participants. In Chapter Two especially, I experienced tension in this change of stances, with my preference to trust narrative as a strong form of accounting in a struggle with the caution that advised me to attempt a more recognisable form of academic discourse.

The voices of the other co-researchers are also heard; the voices of participants in research inviting each other into conversation about change in their lives; as autobiographers, critics, explainers, analysts, poets. These voices advance and recede as the matter of the thesis changes from chapter to chapter.

In order to avoid ambiguity in the terminology used in this thesis, I wish to sound an early alert to readers. Autobiography is used in a *literal* sense to describe the authors' various accounts of their transformative learning. It is used *metaphorically* to portray the process of imaginative self-telling, in both the research setting and in the context of everyday transformative learning. Similarly, conversation is used *literally* in Chapter Two to describe

the group's *research process* of gathering and considering the accounts; conversation is also used in Chapter Six as a *metaphor* for the *processes of knowing and learning* wherein the transformation takes place.

I have often heard authors describe their characters as having a life of their own. As the principal researcher in this inquiry, I have felt a strange familiarity with what they are saying. Lives and life stories are not data to be marshalled; they require attentive interpretation within their context. This thesis has alarmed me at times by the way in which my attempts to shape and interpret it have met with some resistance; it has excited me at those times when meaning has seemed to disclose itself to me. My prolonged consideration of these stories has evoked and restimulated in me the work of grieving. Although this has made writing the thesis hard for me to approach at times, the outcomes of this study are joy, relief, and pride in the stories which I am presenting here.

ENDNOTES

1 Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1991) and Hart (1990a, 1990b) have both been significant contributors to the understanding of transformative and emancipatory learning. Both propose that, through critical reflection, adult learners may gain emancipation from factors that distort awareness and constrain social practice. Mezirow located distortions within the domain of the learner's perspectives of meaning, and Hart pointed to the dimension of social power to explain what constrains knowing and action. For Hart, especially, emancipation is likely to be manifest by the learner's subsequent engagement in collective action aimed at social transformation. Collard and Law (1989) have criticised Mezirow's use of Habermas' theory. They argued that Mezirow's explanation of perspective transformation fails to emphasise the emancipatory outcome of social action in adult learning. In this thesis, the term transformative learning is preferred to emancipatory learning when referring to remarkable change. Although there are liberating qualities in the transformative learning of each co-researcher, the participants in the research project did not set out to learn collectively, nor did they choose to undertake collective action connected to their remarkable change.

2 Despite the Catholic Church's reluctance to discuss publicly the social phenomenon of priests leaving the ministry, various explanations for the choice to exit from the priesthood have been proposed as a result of psychological and sociological research,

undertaken principally in the United States (Jehenson, 1969; Schallert & Kelley, 1970; Kennedy, Heckler, Kobler & Walker, 1977; Greeley, 1972; Schoenherr & Greeley, 1974; Dellacava, 1975; Hunter-Papp, 1988). There has also been a number of personal accounts of leaving the priesthood (O'Brien, 1970; Parer, 1971; Hastings, 1978; Miles, 1986; Bonnike, 1988; Nelson, 1991; Castle, 1993). The policy of mandatory celibacy has been debated since the early days of Vatican Council II (Blenkinsopp, 1969; Groome, 1982; Schillebeeckx, 1985; Rice, 1990; Sipe, 1990; Dominian, 1991; Fichter, 1992; Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992; Vogels, 1993).

3 Edwards (1987) presented accounts of men and women who have made a "radical change" in their life. It is obvious that much of what appears in popular literature and communications media, portrayed as biography, life story or autobiography is not necessarily an account of remarkable change.

4 Usher (1993) cautioned that the use of the word "learning" to describe their ongoing accounts of experience is foreign to most people. He advised researchers to be aware that naming people as "learners" may be either oppressive or liberative. My approach to personal transformation in this thesis values the perspective of learning and the identification of those who have made remarkable changes as autobiographical learners. At the same time, I appreciate Usher's apt use of the metaphor of "reading". This metaphor fits well with the literary metaphor of autobiography. Usher's metaphor suggests that the person's "reading" of the text of their experience contributes to personal transformation and to the articulation of a life narrative.

5 Autobiographical learning, as I came to describe the transformative learning of remarkable change, is similar to what Brookfield has described as self-directed learning; "in which critical reflection on the contextual and contingent aspects of reality, the exploration of alternative perspectives and meaning systems, and the alteration of personal and social circumstances are all present" (1985: 15). Each of these three aspects of learning may be expected to recur in the cyclic lifelong movement of both adult life and its narrative. There is also some resonance between autobiographical learning and reflective learning (Boyd and Fales, 1983); studies in perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981, 1990; Taylor, 1989); reflection on experience (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985), transformative education (Boyd and Myers, 1988), and faith development (Fowler, 1987). The "poetics of self-creation" (Randall, 1992) and life stories of religious conversion (Griffin, 1980), also show features common to narratives of transformative learning.

6 The study of transformative learning might well be approached through metaphors other than autobiography. For example, "breaking through the cocoon" of social ideology also expresses some of the dynamic quality of transformation (Kennedy, 1990: 100). Examples of Australian adults reporting significant personal transformations occur in collections of autobiographical accounts which are drawn together by the metaphors of "opening the cage" (Franklin and Jones, 1987), "the deep end" (Zijlstra, 1989), and "the search for meaning" (Jones, 1990).

7 Brookfield (1987a) discussed how diverse kinds of personal relationships may be a fruitful source of transformative learning. He noted that, in the context of intimate relationships, the ability to interpret experience with a partner through that person's eyes may contribute notably to significant personal learning.

8 A priest who requests the Catholic church's permission to marry is required to present an account of his life which portrays his ordination as invalid. With this official permission to quit the priesthood, the chances for employment by the church increase for the resigned priest and his wife, who are considered thereby to be in good standing in the Catholic community. Many priests recognise this dispensation as a mixed blessing. Although it facilitates employment and social acceptance, the judicial process involved in gaining the permission to marry effectively denies the worth of the priest's account as a story of transformation. The process serves principally to validate the Catholic church's institutional control of priests. Further discussion of this matter occurs in Chapter Four.

9 During my sabbatical I took opportunities to learn greater self-understanding in a variety of imaginative ways. Besides individual and group therapy, I undertook Progoff Journal writing, and joined classes in ceramics and massage. I had regular access to spiritual direction and retreats, and engaged in workshops in Enneagram, Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Psychosynthesis. Countless conversations, alone and with other searchers for meaning, were also a rich source of self-awareness for me. All of this experience led me to consider that my remarkable change had been promoted substantially by imagination.

10 I prefer to describe imagination, neither as a separate faculty of knowing nor as an instrumental first step in a progression towards critical thinking. Imaginatively speaking, I prefer to see it one of the partners in a dance of knowing which embraces critical thinking, emotion, valuing, and the rehearsal and enactment of choice in one's practice. That imagination contributes to the construction of personal and social change has been axiomatic for some time, especially among practitioners in psychology and education. Some explanations and examples of how imagination may be perceived and employed as a genuinely formative power in human knowing and learning are to be found in imagery and imagework (Glouberman, 1989); adult education (Mulligan, 1993; Neville, 1989); Psychosynthesis (Weiser and Yeomans, 1988); Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Grinder & Bandler, 1976) and the Intensive Journal (Progoff, 1975). Sloan (1983) argued for a holistic way of understanding imagination. While stressing that imaginative speculation is essential, Brookfield (1987b: 132) nevertheless appeared to assign to imagination an instrumental role prior to critical thinking in self-directed learning. Elsewhere, in many other explanations of personal and social change, imagination appears to be avoided, neglected or at most taken for granted.

CHAPTER ONE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS THE COMPOSITION OF A LIFE AND ITS NARRATIVE

The question “Why?” lies at the heart of human consciousness. People seek an understanding of the circumstances and events of experience which do not fit into the interpretive frames they usually use to make meaning of them. They look for a new explanation which renders them meaningful, and makes possible the exercise of authentic choice in those circumstances. Whether the discourse of inquiry and reflection is scientific, artistic, or mystical, our most adequate response to the request for an explanation is a story (Elsbree, 1982). Autobiography is such a story of explanation. It is a story of the self constituting the self, that leads to growth in the author’s self-understanding, and positions the author for authentic choices in life.

In the search for adequate explanations, both theory making and practice in adult education draw freely on the domains of horticulture, literature, science, art, philosophy and the human and social sciences (Candy, 1986) for their metaphors and paradigms. From the field of literature, I have chosen autobiography as a metaphor for transformative learning. Even though the study of autobiography and its relation to transformative learning is sparsely represented in the literature of adult education theory and practice, the interest of adult educators in narrative, story telling, biography and autobiography is increasing (Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Denzin, 1989; Brady, 1990; Brookfield, 1990a; Edwards, 1994; Neville, 1994; Willis, 1994).

Throughout this thesis, autobiography signifies both the literary form of life story, in which autobiographical learning is expressed, and the process of learning through which the transformation takes place. From its Greek derivation, autobiography means literally to write (graphein) one’s (autos) life (bios). Many life stories are written, some composed only

after many years of living. However, these features of autobiography do not infer that autobiographical learning is confined to the literate, or that this learning occurs only towards or at the end of one's life. Far from being the last word about one's life, accounts of autobiographical learning are better understood as the latest word, likely to be revised and reconstructed in the light of ensuing experience.

In this first chapter, my purpose is to show, by consulting a variety of philosophical, psychological and literary approaches to autobiography, that the metaphor of autobiography offers a rich description and explanatory understanding of transformative learning. It serves well the purpose of being a metaphor for transformative learning. I propose that, as a literary form, autobiography is a particularly effective vehicle for disclosing imagination among the processes of knowing which compose a life story. Some questions which refer to the authorship of the life narrative, and the epistemology of autobiography are discussed also.

The value of narrative to explain how a person's fundamental standpoint has changed is not always obvious. In times of rationalism, when the connection between imagining and thinking is ignored or denied, story is likely to be regarded as only a story (Novak, 1975). In the following sections, I have set out to show that imaginative and critical self-narration is found in a wide range of approaches to understanding and explaining human lives. In a broad sampling of understandings of narrative and autobiography in the human and social sciences, the dimension of composition, which employs both critical and poetic ways of knowing, is affirmed as a central dimension of personal and social transformation. As the description and construction of a human life, autobiography portrays the self in transition, and the process of transformative learning (Denzin, 1989). Within the variety of theoretical and disciplinary standpoints, there is a notable convergence in their understanding of narrative, story, autobiography and account. 1

1.0 COMPOSING A LIFE

People often assure us that their life, or at least some significant time of it, has a story to it. It is probable that they are alerting us to the fact that there have been changes in their life which they have considered, worried over, resisted, planned for, or just simply accepted with resignation or relief. A respectful request for the story of their life is likely to gain a ready response (Kotre, 1984), even though few people regard themselves as authors, or consider that their life story is formed through autobiographical learning (Usher, 1993). Accounts of personal relationships, of crises faced and managed, of a search for life's meaning, or of achievements in sport, politics or business are examples of people composing their lives.

Public narratives of this kind are often the fruit of conversation and reflection, told within a group (Bateson, 1990), with the help of an editor (Franklin & Jones, 1987), or in the presence of an interviewer (Edwards, 1987; Kelly & Reddy, 1989; Jones, 1990). These first person accounts of various noteworthy changes and transitions in their personal and social life are not usually the final or even a full version of their life story. These stories of change portray lives being composed through improvisation. The narratives account for their authors' personal capacities and limits in facing the changing social contexts of their life. They reveal the influence of circumstance and opportunity upon the choices which individuals make in constructing their life. On the other hand, "everyday autobiographers" in private conversation may make little explicit attempt to compose their life and its course. Many appear to want to hold on to their story, fearing to lose its plot. Despite their understandable desire for continuity and predictability, people are nevertheless plunged into the experience of "creative makeshift" and the need to re-invent their lives.

"One of the striking facts of most lives is the recurrence of threads of continuity, the re-echoing of earlier themes, even across the deep rifts of change, but when you watch people damaged by their dependence on continuity, you wonder about the nature of commitment, about the need for a new and more fluid way to imagine the future" (Bateson, 1990: 8).

Bateson's (1990) study of the transformative stories of five women, told in a group conversation, resonates well with the ethos and method of this thesis.

“The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives. They are autobiographical, not biographical, shaped by each person's choice and selective memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they are shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience” (1990: 33).

Bateson denied that the creative synthesis which women make in improvising their “interrupted lives” is a matter of uncovering hidden meaning in one's life.

“Because we are engaged in a day-by-day process of self-invention - not discovery, for what we search for does not exist until we find it - both the past and the future are raw material, shaped and reshaped by each individual” (1990:28).

Bateson regarded the lives which she studied as “works of art, still incomplete, ... parables in process, the living metaphors with which we describe the world” (1990: 18). Although “continual re-imagining of the future and the reinterpretation of the past” (1990: 29) may appear to be idiosyncratic and even egocentric, Bateson argued that its value extends beyond personal meaning, in so far as it is grounded in an ethic of responsiveness and connectedness (Gilligan, 1982).

The metaphor of “composing a life” as an explanation of changes in life choice is like to the metaphor of autobiography in pointing to the dimension of imagining and artistic authorship in re-inventing lives.

1.1 TELLING THE SELF IN NARRATIVE

For Bruner (1987), autobiography, formal or informal, is to be understood as the ways we go about making our lives, and constructing the life story we tell. Both the *narrative we tell*

and the *life which is told* are constructions of the human imagination. The telling of one's life is, therefore, an achievement of both self-awareness and self-interpretation.

Although the life narrative is indeed the work and play of the author's imagination, his or her purposes, perceptions and interpretations are influenced by the culture in which the life is grounded. The culture, indeed, provides some degree of both stability and diversity in the shaping of life stories by authorising,

"a tool kit...replete with not only a stock of canonical life narratives (heroes, Marthas, tricksters etc.) but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives; canonical stances and circumstances, as it were" (Bruner, 1987: 15).

Contextual influences so affect the life, its story and its subject that,

"...eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organise memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life. In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about our lives'" (1987: 15).

Despite this mythic and cultural influence on the construction of the life narrative, people still consider that their life and its story is changeable. Evidence of this is readily found in Western cultures, in the many instances of personal instruction, talking therapies, self-improvement literature, and the various group processes which are directed towards acquiring self-management and enhancement.

Narratives do change. Bruner (1987) argued that for a stable life narrative to change, there is required an incident of "trouble" which disrupts what is normally sanctioned. In so far as the *agent* in the narrative enters into the ensuing crisis, successfully resisting and transcending social and cultural restraints, he or she thereby becomes the *subject* of a narrative in which a new order is legitimated. The troubles which effect these turning points in an individual's narrative may be perceived variously to be due to personal heroism,

deviance or pathology. Bruner (1987) agreed with Turner (1982) that disturbances in personal narratives are really individual representations of crises at deeper levels of the culture. This view of phenomena of disruption, such as the exodus of priests who make remarkable changes in their life story, contrasts with ecclesiastical interpretations, which regard the event as solely a matter of individual deviance and failure.

Bruner's firm conclusion is that the cognitive structures, by which we compose our autobiography, are established in the person's childhood and family setting. They have a durable quality despite changing personal and social circumstances.

"I believe that the ways of telling and the ways of conceptualising that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future" (1987: 31).

For a change to occur in the habitual narrative which we have come to regard as our "life", Bruner asserted that there would need to be some remarkable "metaphysical change" analogous to the changed metaphysical conditions "needed to bring autobiography into existence as a literary form" in the first place (1987: 30). Accordingly, change within an individual's autobiography would imply major changes in the author's cognitive and interpretive frameworks, along with the stimulus of some "trouble" or disorienting life experience, and favourable cultural circumstances. This description of change in life and its narrative shows some similarity to autobiographical learning, as I have described it in the Introduction.

In the narrative, the emergence of the agent as its author seems to parallel the historical development of story forms (Bruner, 1987). In the modern novel and autobiography, the protagonist's consciousness, with all its uncertainty and confusion has replaced the omniscience of the narrator of earlier times. The *narrator* of the modern story is also the *author* and the actual *subject* of the story. However, this empowerment of the subject as author does not imply that autobiography is idiosyncratic. Bruner maintained that, "life

stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life stories: tellers and listeners must share some 'deep structure' about the nature of life'...(1987: 21).

In a community which knows what constitutes a life, a person learns to construct their life and its story. In extraordinary circumstances, through an act of authorship and artistry, a person may reconstruct their personal identity in a new life narrative.

1.2 LIFE AS NARRATIVE

There is an inherently narrative quality in experience (Crites, 1971). People actively interpret and reorder the events of their life course in a narrative, structuring their sense of self in terms of past, present and future tense. The tenses or temporal dimension of the plot of the personal narrative shows that authors need to reach closure in their experience of life's events. Thus, the narrative changes because it tells what happened next.

Crites proposed that personal narratives, which may seem to be such specific accounts of individuals coming to know their identity in the circumstances of their life, are, nevertheless, radically influenced by communal sacred stories or myths.

"A sacred story in particular infuses experience at its root, linking a man's (sic) individual consciousness with ultimate powers and also with the inner lives of those with whom he shares a common soil" (1971: 304).

Myths, which so influence personal consciousness, are beyond individual awareness. They cannot simply be told. The expression of the myth requires some form of ritual enactment. However, any particular ritual expression of the myth does not exhaust its meaning. Through its ritual enactment, myth effects the forming and reforming of individual and social identity. When transformation occurs in the cultural consciousness, or a conversion takes place in individual consciousness, a dramatic change may follow in the personal narrative.

"The stories within which he (sic) has awakened to consciousness must be undermined, and in the identification of his personal story through a new story both the drama of his experience and his style of action must be reoriented" (1971: 307).

A narrative which connects the "remembered past and projected future" preserves a sense of continuity for personal and social identity. By means of predictive stories or "scenarios of anticipation", a narrator approaches the future. Such imaginative intimations may address the future with alarm and reluctance, or with a sense of planning and resolution. Either way, in time, these stories may turn out to be unfulfilled forecasts. Nevertheless, they indicate an author's imaginative attempts to continue, and to modify the life story beyond its past and present circumstances.

In proposing that persons order the events of life experience in narrative to gain self-understanding and to have an explanatory account to offer to others, Crites (1971) appears to suggest that there is an "autobiographical imperative". The personal narrative thus formed provides the "most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present and anticipated future at that time" (Cohler, 1982: 207). This imperative to construct a coherent narrative of the life course emerges primarily because changes and transformations, both expectable and unpredictable, have already occurred within the person's experience and now call for an explanation. Transformations which represent major discontinuities in a person's development, "require considerable self-interpretive activity in order to preserve a sense of continuity in the personal narrative which fosters cohesiveness or congruence" (Cohler, 1982: 215).

Autobiography is such a self-interpretive activity. It recognises the temporal dimension of the changing life course, names the content of the transformations, and portrays the process through which learning occurs. Though Cohler's (1982) interpretive approach to the life course as narrative is concerned primarily with personal development, it affirms the suitability of autobiography as a metaphor for transformative learning.

Although he emphasised its coherence for its author as a vital characteristic for a life story, Cohler (1988) agreed with Ricoeur (1977), that for it to have public significance, a life story also requires the quality of narrative intelligibility. Autobiography consists of more than an idiosyncratically coherent account of the author's past, present and expected future. Indeed, for the narrative to be a publicly creditable account, it has to be followable and self-explanatory.

Cohler (1988) agreed also with Crites' (1971) assertion that time is a central construct of narrative, noting, however, that the temporal dimension of what makes a life story followable varies from one social context to another.

"Across all cultures, there is concern with the issue of coherence or consistency in the life narrative or story, reckoned over some period of time, although not necessarily the linear one characteristic of our own culture. Belief in the importance of portraying a story of the life history as a narrative emplotted within a particular culture appears central to continued adjustment; failure to maintain narrative coherence leads to a sense of fragmentation or depletion" (1988: 558).

Western cultures, since the Renaissance and the Reformation in particular, have come to regard the self in terms of individual identity rather than "as a part of a corporate identity defined, as in Indian culture, over a series of individual lifetimes" (Cohler, 1988: 558). The interaction of the author's ability to construct meaning and the influence of cultural and mythic influences is an important factor in autobiography, even though the author has little awareness of it.

Because transformative learning is likely to become evident publicly through observable changes in perspective and behaviour, it may generate an expectation that the learner will provide some account of it. Even when *these changes appear to have no public relevance*, the need remains for the learner to explain and understand one's new behaviour, at least for oneself (Crites, 1971; Cohler, 1988). Thus, the act of autobiography serves not only to describe change and learning. It also brings followability and coherence to the life story, and

to the sense of self. Autobiography composes a life by ordering and reordering its meaning in time by connecting past, present and future.

1.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS IDENTITY FORMATION

Murray's personology (1938), and Erikson's (1963) theory of personal development are the principal conceptual foundations for McAdams' (1988) description of the lifelong work of identity formation. He chose the metaphor of *biography* for identity formation, asserting that people "in their quest for identity, are impelled by the desire to construct their own biographies" (1988: 25).

In preference to understanding identity formation in terms of predictable stages (Sheehy, 1976) or maturational change (Gould, 1980), McAdams (1988, 1993) viewed it as a life story. The principal function of the composition of this life story is to "solve personal problems by integrating unconnected segments of information into more cohesive representations" (1988: 53). Revision and reworking are to be expected as the personal narrative moves toward coherence throughout the life course.

The biography of identity, or personal narrative, begins in late adolescence with the coming of formal operational cognition (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958) and continues throughout adulthood. At times changing markedly, the narrative holds together the author's ongoing experience of variety and sameness, stability, crisis and transformation. At the core of identity lies the personal myth which, for the author, holds the key to life's coherence and intelligibility. From time to time, underlying patterns of meaning emerge and the author revises the life story in both major and minor ways, so that the "late reorganises the early". McAdams described the interpretive process of identity formation in the following way.

"A matter of both individuation and integration, of separation and connection, and of autonomy and interdependence, identity formation involves separating oneself from

one's past and environment and, paradoxically, finding new connections to the separated" (1988: 29).

Similar to Crites (1971), McAdams recognised the influence of myth on the construction of personal biography. From his empirical research into life story, McAdams (1988) identified various *imagoes* or characters within the plot.

"The stories we tell ourselves in order to live are populated by characters whose roles personify profound identity truths" (1988: 176).

He suggested that imagoes of the self are akin to the archetypes which Jung discussed. Like archetypes, at times they appear in the life story as opposites, in a dialectical relationship which finds integration in moments of significant identity formation. McAdams saw some similarity also between imagoes and the "life scripts" of the transactional analyst Steiner (1974). However, he disagreed with Steiner's view that these elements of identity were essentially destructive of authentic living. Steiner found only constraint and distortion in the imaginative process of life story because he understood scripts to lead to compulsive and repetitive interactions in a person's life. Any personal narrative appeared to be something prescribed rather than authored. Consequently, Steiner's (1974) aim in therapy was to replace the blueprint of scripts with healthy and spontaneous living.

McAdams (1988) observed that, over the life's course, within the personal narratives which men and women construct, there is an interplay of the dimensions of agency and communion (Bakan, 1966). In mature age, these and other apparently opposed pairs of energies may integrate within the life story. He considered that communion and agency may be integrated within personal identity as generativity, which is "the desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self" (Kotre, 1984:10). Following Erikson's (1963) proposition that the eighth stage of personal development is one of *ego integrity vs despair*, McAdams (1993) expected that people in the later years of their life would make a major review of their personal narrative. In midlife, people already generally show some concern about how their life story will end (Kotre, 1984). It is likely also that a major

review of one's life and identity will accompany circumstances such as those that surround the making of a remarkable change.

In a later work, McAdams (1993) proposed that people live in terms of a *personal myth*, which holds the key to the interpretation of their life, because it constructs both the story and the life it portrays.

“First and foremost, it is a special kind of story that each of us naturally constructs to bring together the different parts of ourselves and our lives into a purposeful and convincing whole. Like all stories, the personal myth has a beginning, middle, and end, defined according to the development of plot and character. We attempt, with our story, to make a compelling aesthetic statement. A personal myth is an act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present, and anticipated future. As both author and reader, we come to appreciate our own myth for its beauty and its psychosocial truth” (1993: 12).

Frye's (1957) analysis of mythic structures in the narratives Western literature served to show that the orientation and atmosphere of the personal myth may be ironic, romantic, comic, or tragic (McAdams, 1993). Each person's myth is characterised also by an affective *tone*. This tone is acquired within the first two years of life, and affects the content and manner of telling the story. Early formative influences on personality development (Erikson, 1963) are tempered by the influence of cultural imagoes which the personal myth also draws upon to fashion personal identity.

The personal myth lies embedded within the various accounts which an individual may offer as an account of their life. In achieving coherence among these accounts, the personal myth slowly draws together the events and episodes of life into a purposive unity, bringing healing and vitality to the life story. Although the construction of the personal myth is founded in both conscious and unconscious knowing, McAdams does not espouse the view that personal identity is to be *discovered within* some ancient myth. He prefers to state that “we make ourselves through myth” (1993: 13).

Though each story and its process of identity formation is unique, McAdams (1993) noted that there are also striking similarities among stories. However, he rejects an “inside-out” typological understanding of identity formation, on the grounds that the course of our lives is so clearly influenced by the socio-cultural context.

McAdams (1988, 1993) shows well the constructive role of the personal myth in the formation and reformation of personal identity, within the dynamic interplay of personal history, cultural myth, contextual influences and life’s circumstances.

1.4 PERSONAL NARRATIVES AS COMMON PLOTS AND RITUALS OF LIFE

Just as Frye (1957) derived his theory of mythic structures from a survey of Western literature, so also did Elsbree (1982) develop his concept of generic plots. He identified in the stories of classical and contemporary literature the following five plots or archetypal actions; establishing or consecrating a home, engaging in a contest or fighting a battle, taking a journey, enduring suffering, and pursuing consummation. He proposed that these generic plots are to be found also in the everyday stories which people tell of their lives.

"We not only borrow other people's and culture's basic plots and adapt them to our purposes; we resort to stories as ultimate kinds of personal evidence. When we really want to explain why we married or divorced, left a job and chose a school, became pacifists or hawks, accepted a faith or became skeptical, we tell a story or series of stories. After our abstractions and generalities have failed to convince or to be clear, we recite the parable of our personal experience" (1982: 12).

These five plots are found at one time or other in the life stories of Stephen, Matt, Mark, Luke, Dan, and Paul which are told in Chapter Three. In particular, the plots of "the journey", "the endurance of suffering", and the "pursuit of consummation" are common characteristics of these six stories.

The life stories which adults tell do not only describe and name the archetypal movement within the life (Elsbree, 1982). The stories serve, in fact, as *rituals of life* for the storyteller, enabling a new personal and social identity to emerge. The imaginative activity of telling our story, in which we gain an understanding of our life, involves our *passing over* from one state of self to another. As a ritual of transition, the life story ordinarily enables the narrator to move through the steps of separation, liminality, and reincorporation within their social context.

"In lifting us out of ourselves and placing us in a liminal state, stories allow us often to lose our pseudo-species and to have new identities, see new possibilities, forget who we are" (Elsbree, 1982: 11).

Archetypal movement within the life story is signified by a change in plot. In Chapter Three, the changed plots of their life stories reveal the transition and change of identity of each participant in this inquiry. Elsbree suggested that each of the five archetypal actions "has its analogue in the stages of a human life and in fact is often enacted in the spirit and by the characters of this stage" (1982: 133). Though there is something of a common direction in the plotting of life stories, this does not infer uniformity in narratives. Throughout lives and life stories, the archetypal plots may be seen to recur cyclically, though in different circumstances each time. The central tendency towards consummation is woven in and through the archetypal actions within life stories

"This pursuit of consummation is the archetypal action in all lives that reach for some final shape, find an absorbing commitment, or wither without one" (1982: 133).

The movement toward consummation throughout the life story is controlled by what the social context allows as "imaginatively possible" for the author. Indeed, in certain historical eras, the imaginative action of authors is unable to construct a life story with the ritual capacity to lead to consummation, and a return to incorporation in their social context. In this situation,

" many readers will find their hope in what Tolkien calls the 'secondary world' of fantasy and fictions like his own *Lord of the Rings*. If the 'primary world' is too grim, chaotic, or absurd to be confronted except by narratives which have these

qualities, many creators and their audience will necessarily look for escape. Yet even in that escape, they - or we - obliquely confront our present condition and our passion for some affirmation: by taking part in stories, we affirm we have a nature and are capable of imaginative action, despite the absence of theological or ideological guarantees and certainties. The making and sharing of stories returns us to ourselves as creatures who have this ability to construct and to find some grounds for hope in that ability" (1982: 134).

Elsbree has shrewdly observed that the "full pattern (of ritual) implies a society, an acceptable or coherent group, to be brought back into..." (1982: 129). Where the social context is unacceptable or unaccepting, the author of the life story "is simply left on the road, still eluding others' attempts to impose identities on him..."(1982: 130). The outcomes of a journey of autobiographical learning may include the emergence of an identity which cannot be incorporated easily within the social context from which the learner set out. This is the situation for most priests who have made the remarkable change of life choice which I described in the Introduction. As the six accounts of autobiographical learning gathered in this inquiry show, each of the narrators has constructed a new story which is seriously imaginable as a life, even though the social context of the Catholic church does not welcome the narrative. The alternative narrative, which each author constructed imaginatively, has become a *ritual of life* from which a new identity emerged.

1.5 MAKING AND BREAKING THE NARRATIVE CIRCLE

The narrative quality of life, in the context of religion and psychoanalysis, has been addressed by Kepnes (1982). He proposed that in reaching a coherent life narrative through psychotherapy, a client gains a new sense of self-identity. Essential to this psychotherapeutic process is the dynamic of interpretation, which reconstructs the story and affords the possibility for a changed personal and social identity.

"Psychotherapy is the art of bringing this root narrative first to articulation and then retelling it in such a way that new possible ways of being in the world are opened" (Kepnes, 1982: 27).

Thus, "present events call for a revision of past history" (1982: 29). Kepnes perceived in both psychotherapy and theology a *narrative circle* of telling and retelling.

"We use narratives to order our lives and we find that narratives begin to order and control us. Great or traumatic events require a reordering of our personal story and this story, in its turn, helps us to reorganise our lives and see new possibilities. This story proscribes and prescribes certain forms of action and behaviour" (1982: 29)

In neurosis, this narrative circle of telling and retelling becomes vicious when it takes the shape of pathological repetition. Another form of stuckness which leads to repetitive living and self-telling is the "vital lie". The process by which persons, in response to fears in childhood, construct out of fantasy a "vital lie" or character for their identity has been described by Becker (1973). Hillman (1975a) argued that people may become trapped within their stories. The way out from the "compulsion to repeat" is first of all through memory. Recalling traumatic events, the person tells the story of them.

"The next tactic moves through the imagination. Here psychologists and theologians attempt an 'interpretive repetition', a retelling, what Hillman calls a 'revisioning of story'" (Kepnes, 1982: 32).

In psychotherapy, the narrator collaborates with the therapist to revision their story into what Hillman (1975: 140) calls "a more intelligent, more imaginative plot". The retelling, which imaginatively reinterprets the life story, constitutes an opening into a new narrative and identity.

In the context of family therapy, White (1989) has developed a strategy to elicit from family members a "unique" account of their distress as an alternative to their current story of distress. By questioning them, the therapist evokes from them a new narrative which they construct imaginatively. This new story is not a predictable outcome of the narrative which the family members first present. Thus, the conditions within the family story, which cause distress for persons and their relationships, are revisioned through imagination.

"Imagination plays a very significant part in the practices of externalising the problem, both for the therapist and for these persons who have sought therapy. This is particularly important in the facilitation of conditions for the identification of

unique outcomes, and for the performance of meaning in relation to them. It is important that the therapist imagine what could possibly be significant for the person seeking help, and not be blinded by his/her own criteria of what would be significant for new developments in her/his life and relationships” (White, 1989: 19).

Once it is established, the narrative circle orders life at personal, familial, institutional and cultural levels of human experience, and maintains the story. Just as a personal narrative may suffer from a vicious circle of compulsion to repeat, so too may a dominant social construction of reality. Breaking a vicious narrative circle, to construct one which restores and heals, requires the dismantling of the former construction based in *fantasy*, in favour of a reconstruction through imagination (Knowles, 1985).

1.6 LIFE STORY AS PERSONAL CONSTRUCT

The Personal Construct theory of Kelly (1955) proposed that each person forms some central “personal constructs” out of their usual expectations, attitudes, feelings and ways of understanding their lives. People interpret their experience of life events through these frames of reference and “construct” their lives in an ongoing fashion. Life stories show the presence of the author’s personal constructs. Although personal constructs are stable, they are changeable both in their quality and number. When experience disconfirms the person’s constructs, in time a new interpretation of events may emerge which leads to the retelling of the life narrative. It is through a series of stories that the ongoing interpretation and integration of our life experiences is expressed (Viney, 1993). Her use of personal construct therapy with elderly people presents an insightful picture of the place of telling and retelling stories in the reshaping of a life at any place in the life cycle.

“The ability to retell stories, which can be described as the capacity to learn, seems to be characteristic of everyone, wherever they are in their life span” (1993: 35).

She recognised that the retelling of stories is necessary for both the *integration* and *disintegration* of the coherence which the person has constructed within their varied experiences.

“Integration is therefore a defining characteristic of stories, or narratives, but it can vary from being tight and inflexible to loose and easily changed over time. Good or bad stories can be identified, not so much in terms of the degree of integration they provide but in terms of the paths of living that they open or close for those who tell them” (1993: 1).

The stories people tell about themselves bring social repercussions. Therefore, the possibility for life stories to change toward openness is diminished or enhanced by the social context in which the story is told. In so far as what people tell about their life is acceptable, and becomes what is told about them in public, they gain social support for that identity. “To live in a culture in which none of our stories were told would be to very soon lose any sense of identity” (Viney, 1993: 2). In some situations, the life stories of individuals or particular groups may go unheard, if their presence in society evokes guilt or embarrassment. Or their story may be misrepresented in a stereotype. Viney (1993) perceived elderly people to be such a group in Australian society. I have already noted that people, whose remarkable changes in life choices are perceived as socially disruptive, may be excluded from telling their accounts of transformation.

Alternatively, the invitation to tell a life story indicates that the hearer acknowledges the narrator’s right to interpret events. By validating those aspects of the story which open up the narrator’s life, and by gently invalidating those dimensions which appear to close up the story, the personal construct therapist aims to evoke a new account (Viney, 1993).

Even though life stories may not attract social approval, they still provide an internal authorisation for the author’s actions. The stories assert and defend what the author affirms as normative. The conscientious reinterpretation of a life story may lead at times to a post-conventional stance in politics, morality and faith (Fowler, 1987; Jones, 1990). Retelling may bring isolation from one’s peers, yet connection with a new community of interest and shared perceptions. It is this serial interpretation of our lives and retelling that constitutes psychological development through the life span (Viney, 1993).

Viney's (1993) psychological approach to stories, and to the significance of retelling them, resonates well with the understanding of autobiographical learning which I presented in the Introduction. In describing the theory and practice of personal construct therapy, she has explained what therapists might do in attending to the constructs that appear in the life stories of both their elderly clients and themselves. The metaphors and images which thread through these stories are treated as cognitive structures, and the recognition that personal constructs are constituted as images and metaphors before they become concepts appears to be only implicit in the theory and practice of personal construct therapy. Although she proposes the processes of narrative as self-formative, Viney (1993) does not envisage the retelling as a *poesis*, in which empathy and imagination in both participants work and play in the therapeutic conversation.

1.7 ACCOUNTING FOR ONE'S LIFE AS FICTION

"The very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady light, of being a socialised character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practised in the ways of the stage" (Goffman, 1971: 244).

The dramaturgical perspective on social interaction proposed above asserts that persons as characters follow rules of participation, and perform within prescribed roles. Following this metaphor for social being, Murray (1985: 173) argued for the legitimacy of "approaching the everyday processes of life construction through frameworks derived from fiction". Enlisting Frye's (1957) classification of Western literature into four mythic forms, Murray described characteristic ways of telling life stories.

Within everyday social contexts, the mythic structures of comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire/irony are evident in various personal narratives. Examples of the romantic form of mythic structure in life story may be seen in the literature of typical "life passages" (Sheehy, 1976). Murray (1985) argued that the influence of the four mythic forms on everyday accounts of personal lives, may be observed, for example, in speeches made at such

ritualised events as marriage, retirement from work, funerals, and civic celebrations of remarkable personal achievements.

Events such as retirement or the exit from the priesthood, for example, may be construed by one narrator as a tragic event, the result of evil obstructions to the person's high and noble aspirations. Or it may be portrayed by another as comic - the withdrawal from a dramatic struggle for achievement, in order to devote more time to domestic interests.

"Alternatively, one could retire with an ironic perspective on the unrealistic ambitions one commenced with (satiric), or, having successfully fulfilled the goals of one's career, one could disappear from public life to a distant location surrounded by nature (romantic). The way in which the event of retirement is emplotted by oneself and others is likely to determine the basic nature of an individual's biography" (1985: 183).

Autobiographical learning in common turning points of social life may lead to various accounts and to different outcomes. Because there is a "fruitful instability" in an individual's self-awareness, in their personal relationships, and in their public participation in their cultural context, it is to be expected that the process of emplotting one's life anew will reinvent the account given publicly on a particular occasion.

The social context of autobiographical learning is more than a geography or staging for the life story. It is obvious that the degree of freedom to construct one's life within the rules and the roles of the social context varies from one to another. Chapter Four shows that for the social role of the Catholic priesthood, tradition and the social context provide a firm template for the public shaping of an acceptable identity and life story. Where the exit of people from a public role is esteemed to be a fall from grace, there is likely to be no formal rite of passage other than that of their being disgraced publicly. Their life stories, told in one mythic structure or another as expressions of transformation and learning, generally go unheard. A silence may mark their exit, or some summary discrediting account which ignores the specificity of their life story. Priests who exit from their role are suspended from the exercise of ministry, face a form of "exclusion by silence" which acknowledges only minimally even their disgraced status. This form of institutional exclusion resembles the

circumstances in which the authors of the six life stories presented in this thesis exited from the priesthood. 2

The presence of a mythic structure in an account suggests that, although life construction is undertaken consciously, it also reflects unconscious influences. As a metaphor for transformative learning, the fictional nature of autobiography aptly discloses critical and imaginative processes through which the transitions in self-understanding have occurred.

1.8 ACCOUNTING FOR ONE'S LIFE IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

"Accounting is the activity in which people... make themselves accountable to one another" (Shotter, 1984: 182).

In his explanation of how personality is formed, Shotter (1984) underlined the interactive influence which interpersonal, institutional and social contexts exert on the construction of the life story. He proposed that the very nature of social participation, in which personal and social identity are formed, requires an autobiographical awareness. In order to be acknowledged as responsible and reasonable participants in social activity, people are required to account for their activities in such a way as to be intelligible to others. Indeed, as people mature, they are expected from time to time to give an intelligible account of themselves in order to gain authorisation for their personal and social activity (Shotter, 1984). In the stories people tell to authorise their lives, they refer to their "states of mind, beliefs, desires, imaginings and such like" (1984: 11), so that what at first may appear to others to be problematic may turn out to be familiar. Thus, the social account is a fictive and interpretive construction which enables persons to maintain or enhance their standing in society.

However, giving an account of one's life is not restricted to, or accomplished best by those who enjoy literature, or even the literate. The conceptual abilities needed to render a flow of life events into a socially creditable form are developed by individuals through their socialisation. People acquire both a reliable intuitive knowledge of the normative quality of

everyday social activity, and an ability to know what constitutes a creditable story (Shotter, 1984).

The accounts we give of our activities are evaluated by others. As a consequence, if our accounts are creditable, we gain status as full and competent members of the social setting. Thus, the self-understanding which we express in the account of our life is grounded in understandings which we hold in common with those other persons, groups and institutions which accredit us. The education and formation in the tradition of the Catholic priesthood, which informed the six accounts of autobiographical learning reported in Chapter Three of this thesis, is a good example of this joint formative activity. Throughout their seminary education, they accounted for their lives and gained the Catholic church's evaluation that they were worthy to be ordained. Their stories of subsequent transformation show how they became critically aware of personal and institutional distortions in their accounting for their lives.

To explain how individuals reach a shared understanding through joint experience Shotter (1986) adopted Vico's metaphor of "common place". The "common place" is constructed jointly out of the interaction of the "places" of all the agents engaged in social practice. Shotter argued that the common understanding is based on participants holding common feelings about their shared experience. Thus, individuals, groups and institutions acting regularly within the enabling constraints of their social context jointly construct and maintain their social relations and identities. Ongoing social practice serves to stabilise the social identity of the participants. Whenever events in joint activity disrupt the regular social practice, there is a possibility that the "common place" may change. Based on new common feeling about the experience, a new understanding and social practice may be expected to emerge. A major change in theology and practice appeared to occur in the Roman Catholic church during the 1960's. The impact of this change in the social context on the lives and stories of the participants in this research project is elaborated in Chapter Four.

Where persons enter into social practice as novices, they experience whatever enabling constraints are already constructed by more socially competent others, whether these be individuals, groups or institutions. At that time, they live within an established tradition of theory and practice. This tradition, as orthodoxy and the norm for social practice, is reflected in the accounts people give. It qualifies the self-understanding which individuals articulate. Thus, individual life stories show the influence of a social narrative. In the Catholic church's social narrative, prior to the 1960's, the priest's social identity had been emphasised over his personal individuation. This emphasis was found in the church's practice of seminary formation, and in the everyday lifestyle of priests.

Through their joint social practice, individuals acquire a commonly acknowledged sense of which feelings, values, symbols, understandings and choices are appropriate in any particular context. The constraining enablement of the common place determines the parameters of what is socially possible. What is socially possible becomes whatever is legitimised jointly as intelligible, acceptable and appropriate. In the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic church, celibacy has been legislated as a requirement for the ordination of a priest, and marriage as an impediment to it. Nor may marriage be chosen subsequently to replace celibacy, except with the penalty of the priest's exclusion from the exercise of that ministry. Although this *status quo* may appear to be thoroughly resistant to change, it does not mean that this common understanding and practice is fixed and immutable. Social reality is multiple and complex. On occasion, the accounts which people give of their lives may persuade others to negotiate a new common practice. As persons achieve more or less competence in joint activity, they may acquire greater or less capacity to influence the common place. Thus, change may occur also in what is socially possible. 3

An action which affects aspects of one's social identity, such as the choice for marriage made by the six autobiographers in this study, is evaluated in terms of what is socially possible in the current circumstances. Deviant behaviour requires justification and carries the risk that the person will be assigned a new social place of lesser status, or even excluded. The

accounts which priests who marry give of their actions are usually regarded by Catholic church authorities as warranting their suspension from active ministry. 4

The formation and transformation of personal and social identity depends on social interaction which is rational, reciprocal, ordered, and open (Shotter, 1986). Social power is experienced as the competence and credit which a narrator gains through having their contemporary account socially acknowledged. The extent to which new accounts, which contradict the common place, are likely to be resisted or welcomed, depends partly on whether the authors have sufficient social power, and partly on the extent to which the accounts challenge the interests of the more credited and competent participants in the joint activity. For at least twenty five years, the phenomenon of a large number of dissenting accounts has failed to change the social practice of the Catholic church.

The account which a person gives of their life choices forms an important component of autobiography. It may appear from the unique quality of autobiography, that life stories are composed individually and without reference to a common place. Shotter's (1986) explanation of the origin of social identity helps to show that autobiography is an act of autonomy in authoring one's life, within the enabling constraints of interpersonal and social relationships. To reach an account which will be authorised, adult learners need to discover enablement within social constraints. It appears that Shotter (1986) regarded the construction of a creditable account as a rational achievement rather than a poetic one. However, by emphasising that shared feeling lies at the root of the common place in social interaction, he acknowledged that life accounts have a foundation which is not purely cognitive. The life stories told in Chapter Three show that their authors experienced for a considerable time the constraint of ecclesiastical tradition. However, by being open to the experience of their feeling states, and by reflecting on that experience, they encountered images of alternative personal and social practice. A new account of their life story was composed because these alternative images, paired with a critique of the Catholic church's tradition, led them to re-evaluate their own authority in relation to the authority of that institution.

Autobiographical learning implies some significant contradiction or rejection of social constraint. Some autobiography may show also a confessional quality, seeking reintegration in their social context for the deviant author (Spender, 1980). Other autobiography, however, may repudiate the former social setting entirely, telling instead of a hard journey made to an entirely new land of promise.

1.9 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND ADULT EDUCATION

The literature which reports the construction of theory and the development of practice in adult education is substantial and extensive. Within this field, there is considerable emphasis on learning from experience. The themes of reflection, critical thinking, self-directed learning, perspective transformation, and emancipatory learning are consistently under consideration. Those who contribute to this literature include Mezirow (1981, 1990, 1991); Schon (1983, 1987); Kolb (1984); Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985); Brookfield (1985, 1987a, 1990a, 1990b); Hart (1990a, 1990b); Boud, Cohen & Walker (1993); and Neville, Willis & Edwards (1994). Much of this research and practice is based on a reading of critical theorists, principally Habermas. With this philosophical foundation, there has been an emphasis in most adult learning research on critical self-awareness in transformative learning, and critical social consciousness in emancipatory learning. The presence of feeling states, intuition, imagination and other non-cognitive factors in knowing, and their participation in critical reflection has also been noted (Boud *et al.*, 1985; Brookfield, 1990a, 1993; Hart, 1990b; Mezirow, 1990, 1991; Neville, 1989; Mulligan, 1993; Killen and De Beer, 1994).

Models of adult transformative learning may be differentiated by the emphasis they place on epistemology and on personhood. While one model may propose that transformative learning is to be understood primarily as an epistemological event, with important consequences for identity and agency, another model may envisage transformative learning as principally an act of personal formation or individuation.

Models which portray transformative learning as primarily the critical evaluation of ways of knowing within the social context, see as its outcome the abandonment of distortions which impede genuine communication and community. As a result of critical reflection, the learner's interaction with their social context is informed by emancipatory knowing, which provides a foundation for new forms of personal identity, social relatedness and reflective practice. These models may emphasise either communal critical reflection on praxis as the means to achieve emancipation from social-cultural oppression (Freire, 1970), or critical reflection on life accounts within a group (Haug, 1987; Finger, 1989), or critical thinking for individuals and groups (Brookfield, 1987, 1990a, 1990b); or individual critical reflection to discover epistemic, psychic and sociocultural distortions in the learner's meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1990, 1991).

By contrast, Boyd and Myers (1988), Saul (1991) and Boyd (1991a) have asserted that the process of transformative learning is one which entails personal individuation. Personal transformation is a "fundamental change in an individual's personality involving conjointly a resolution to a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in a more fully realized personality integration" (Boyd, 1991a: 203). The personal differentiation and integration, which transformative education brings, lead to new self-understanding for the learner, and a new way of being and acting in the world. In Chapter Five, which deals with the role of imagination in transformative learning, more attention will be given to the implications of the contrast between these models.

The focus on critical thinking adopted in much research into transformative and emancipatory learning has placed rationality and ego-consciousness in an eminent position. Lately, however, evidence that greater attention is being directed to the *poetic* dimension of knowing has come with the burgeoning interest of the human and social sciences in storytelling and narrative. The approaches outlined in the preceding pages of this chapter illustrate the extent of this interest.

I am proposing that the composition of the life narrative is a work of imagination and critical reflection, and that autobiographical learning is a way of knowing which is both poetic and critical. It is important to note here the use of the term *poiesis* in the context of adult learning. Groome (1991) has turned to Aristotle's analysis of the three ways of knowing to illuminate the processes of transformative education. He has noted the particular emphasis found in each way of knowing.

“Each one is a mode of engaging intelligently and virtuously in the world: *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*. They give rise respectively to theoretical/scientific knowledge that is an end in itself, to practical/political knowledge of how to live in society, and to productive/creative knowledge of how to make things or art” (1991: 43).

Aristotle's understanding of knowledge is related closely to his theory of society and his theology. *Poiesis*, which Aristotle described as informing the production of works of art or craft, included domestic work and those arts generally practised by women and artisans. Consequently, it was regarded as the lowest form of knowing. Groome (1991: 46) rejected those elements of Aristotle's epistemology which are “class biased and sexist”, and emphasised the creative and imaginative qualities of poetic knowing. In the light of his own analysis of contemporary philosophy, Judaeo-Christian theology and democratic social practice, Groome has reinterpreted *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*. He proposed that transformative education needs to employ and weave together all three ways of knowing, holding “all three activities in a symbiotic unity - the theoretical/contemplative (*theoria*), the practical/political (*praxis*) and the creative/imaginative (*poiesis*)” (1991: 48). The poetic dimension of autobiography refers to the craft of improvisation in living, and the artistic capacity to make a coherent story of one's life. This does not infer that the author has exquisite literacy skills. It does mean that the autobiographer's account is intelligible and gains public acknowledgment as being “a good story”.

The domain of adult education awaits further lucid explanation of transformative learning which incorporates adequately the poetic and the critical dimensions of knowing. Chapter Five considers the role of imagination in knowing, and its relation to critical reflection. These two dimensions of knowing are obviously not the only ones which ought to find a

place in an explanation of transformative learning. A comprehensive explanation of the processes of adult learning ought to include the dimensions of critical thinking, artistry and authorship, conscious and unconscious knowing. Mulligan (1993) has sketched out an ample model for understanding the internal processes of experiential learning at work in personal transformation. He proposed a dynamic synthesis of the dimensions of sensing and intuiting, feeling and reasoning, imagining, remembering and willing. 5

The understanding of imagination as knowing which I have drawn from this research project, and which I present in this thesis, does not offer as prominent a place to all of these factors as Mulligan (1993) does. Nevertheless, I affirm their presence as partners in the construction of a life and its narrative through autobiographical learning. In Chapter Six, the metaphor of a conversation of partners between various internal processes of knowing is used to illustrate the process of autobiographical learning.

Adult education literature which links transformative learning and the life story is rather minimal and recent (Denzin, 1989). Several writers have chosen the path of autobiography to retrace the steps of their *own* learning as researchers and practitioners (Andresen, 1993; Brookfield, 1993; Miller, 1993; Edwards, 1994; Willis, 1994). Before proceeding with his life narrative of teaching practice, Andresen aptly stated some cautions about autobiography.

“Autobiography remains, in much conventional academic discourse, a disputed, even a suspect, element. Its particularity, its (purportedly) unrepresentative and ungeneralisable nature as data, the temptation it offers for narcissistic indulgence or fantasy reconstructions, are all familiar pitfalls” (1993: 60).

Despite these potential hazards, Brookfield (1990a, 1993) also endorsed the use of autobiography as a means to articulate and know one’s journey of learning to be an adult educator. He asserted that the validity of its use is especially confirmed when one’s personal narrative is brought into dialogue with soundly based theories of practice. As a further measure, he urged practitioners to support their self-scrutiny with a collaborative examination of their assumptions.

To explore his emergence as an educator for human development, and to evaluate the quality of his practice, Willis (1994) used a process of "reflective autobiography" to hear his own voice. He drew attention to the danger that such self-telling may lapse into self-congratulation or pleading for recognition. However, he resolved that he may avoid this risk by locating his autobiographical act within the framework of reflective practice. Although he took hold of the dimensions of autobiography which recollect and order experience, Willis paid little attention to the poetic quality it offers through imagining (Brady, 1990).

Finger (1989) described a biographical method for researching adult learning from the standpoint of the learners. Through their critical consideration of their experience, adults gain awareness of the assumptions they bring to their lives and learning. The emphasis in this thesis similarly approaches the life story from the stance of the learner. 6

Noting that gerontologists had established the practice of life review with elderly people, and undertaken extensive studies of reminiscence, Brady (1990) asserted that the autobiographical act is not restricted to those facing the ending of their life. It is likely that the inclination to reinvent one's life surfaces each time an "ending" signals a transition within the life course (Bridges, 1980), or a "turning point" (Denzin, 1989). Brady's (1990) exploratory thoughts about autobiography as a form of adult learning have stimulated further thought in other researchers (Nelson, 1994; Willis, 1994). His theoretical framework (Brady, 1990), and that proposed by Randall (1992) best approximate the one which I present in this thesis.

The act of autobiography, undertaken at significant times throughout the life course, consists of three dimensions; re-membering, ordering, and imagining the self. Re-membering is "a second reading of human experience", and not a mere recollection of details (Brady, 1990: 45).

"A new mode of being takes shape in the act of memory. The truth of the self begins to be revealed, and new avenues of learning are opened by means of this revelation. The past that I recall in autobiography has lost its flesh-and-bone structure, but it has won a new and more intimate relationship to my life. Now, after being long

dispersed throughout the course of my lived time, my 'bios', I can discover myself and draw myself together in the present time (Gusdorf, 1980)" (Brady, 1990: 46)

Re-membering thus provides a foundation for the cosmological dimension of autobiography. This refers to the ordering of the self and one's life into a whole, "of reconstructing the unity of a life across time" (Brady, 1990: 47).

Imagination is as significant for adult learning as is memory (Brady, 1990). In its turn, imagining leads autobiographers to revalue their life and to create personal meaning through the interpretation of their experience. By connecting authors of life stories with the metaphor and myth of their lives, imagining draws them into the "deep reaches of ourselves and with the world of our experience" (1990: 50).

Autobiography contributes to adult learning by integrating affective and cognitive ways of knowing. Far from being an act of self-indulgence, it serves the search for genuine and critical awareness, and leads to a deeper understanding of what conditions the learning of others.

"Is this not the issue which is at stake? Is this not our destiny as human beings: to learn, to grow, to come to know ourselves and the meanings of our life in the deepest, richest, most texture way possible? An act of autobiography is among the most natural acts we perform as human beings. It is an act which recalls the self, and makes an accounting of it, and trusts it enough to respect it as both the subject and object of our thought and discourse. Do such acts not belong in the very center of our attempt to learn and develop as human beings?" (Brady, 1990: 51).

The clearest echo of the proposal of this thesis that imagination has a central place in transformative learning is found in Randall (1992). He turned to the world of archetypal psychology and narrative for his metaphors for adult learning. Drawing largely upon Hillman's (1975a, 1975b) "re-visioning" of psychology, Randall proposed that adult transformation amounts to a poetic "re-storying" of one's psyche or soul, retrieving it from the influence of a dominant myth. He argued that transformative learning requires more than a review of past experience; "the stories of our lives...encompass both our interpretations of

our *present* experience and our extrapolations about our *future* experience as well” (1992: 67). The *poesis* of self is the making of soul through imagination.

“What I am interested in, then, is how we make our souls in our imaginations through the stories we tell and internalize about who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going” (Randall, 1992:172).

Re-storying means that the literary *genre* in which the plot has been cast undergoes a change. For example, a story once told by a victim becomes the story of a survivor or even a victor. Although this poetic transformation may be undertaken in the context of costly and time consuming formal therapy, Randall considered that there is an informal therapy, which is life itself. The means by which this "peculiar brand of therapy" brings about the "re-storying of our souls" are "events themselves, relationships, education, and, finally, religion" (1992: 177). As with formal therapy, the processes of informal therapy involve a telling of the narrative, its interpretation, and the re-storying.

“This sort of re-storying - or ‘re-genre-ation’ as it were - is of numerous varieties and is initiated in numerous ways, all of which, however, may be organized in terms of the degree of *intentionality* at work within us in the process” (Randall, 1992: 173).

Learning which emerges from the author’s response to life’s disruptive events, both fortunate and unfortunate, is principally reactive and unintended. However, there is an obvious intentionality in learning through relationships, and in the critical reflection on cultural assumptions and personal paradigms which leads to perspective transformation. Not every perspective change is a genuine act of re-storying. For example, although a religious conversion may bring a marked change in behaviour, it may amount only to substituting one mode of prescribed life for another. Conscientisation shows the intentionality which leads to re-storying (Randall, 1992).

The life stories in Chapter Three are examples of the phenomenon of intentional re-storying. Randall’s (1992) description of the informal therapy of lived experience, which achieves an imaginative re-interpretation of the mixture of everyday circumstance and choice,

significantly correlates with the transformative learning which the autobiographers in this inquiry identify in their narratives. Though it is not cast in the form of therapy, transformative learning may have therapeutic outcomes for authors as they reach towards an authentic account of life events.

In portraying adult transformation as "the re-storying of our souls", Randall (1992) intended to emphasise that critical, intentional and aesthetic dimensions are to be found in the process. The remaking of the life story is primarily, therefore, an act of *poiesis*.

"While the poetic dimension can acknowledge the political, psychological and other dimensions of the learning process, it is able to gather them up into an interpretive context that is simultaneously both warmer and wider" (Randall, 1992: 181).

Likewise, autobiographical learning, which shapes and reshapes the life narrative, embraces the poetic dimension of artistry and authority.

1.10 SUMMARY

Autobiography is formed as an ongoing act of construction or fiction. It is initiated in adolescence and continued throughout the lifetime. In and through processes of transformative learning, the life narrative is composed. Autobiographical learning, therefore, is not concerned with the discovery of a hidden, true self, but with the construction of the author's life and a creditable life story which accounts for transformative learning. Thus, it is a story in the making, an account of a life in progress in which the author, narrator and subject are the one person. The author-learner, witting or not, reworks and reinterprets earlier accounts of their identity. Therefore, autobiography is a critical construction, a work of fiction, of imagination, of art and play.

Though the primary discourses of most of the writers consulted in the preceding section of this thesis are other than that of adult learning, nevertheless, there are points of strong agreement in their writings with what are the principal themes of this thesis. A summary of the main points of the approaches presented in this chapter now follows.

- Even though myths, master stories, or traditions govern personal and social life by providing a repertoire of archetypes, roles, and definitions of what is socially possible, people's lives are interrupted by events in such a way as to require some ongoing improvisation and re-invention through personal narrative.
- People appear to be motivated to construct a personal narrative for their own sense of coherence, as well as a social narrative for the sake of their inclusion within their social and cultural context.
- Life stories are told and retold. Repetition may indicate a social context of stability or repression, a time of personal stagnation, or it may be a symptom of the storyteller's pathology. Breaking a vicious personal or social "narrative circle" requires an interpretive activity which draws upon the person's or group's capacity to imagine alternatives. Autobiography is such an interpretive activity.
- The composition of the life story draws upon both conscious and unconscious knowing. It also is informed by cognitive, and a variety of non-cognitive internal process of knowing. The presence of imagination as a way of knowing which leads to transformative learning is not widely recognised in the literature of transformative learning.
- The importance of affect in dismantling a narrative and establishing an alternative is increasingly acknowledged, although it is not yet sufficiently accredited as a crucial dimension of knowing.
- For stories and lives to be reshaped, there is need for a critical awareness of how social and cultural context enables and constrains human experience.
- The act of autobiography contains the element of artistry. It is a poetic act in which the author brings order to disruption in experience, and to the diversity within the self. Autobiographical learning is achieved through the integration of various dimensions of knowing.

In summary, there is notable agreement among the writers consulted in this section of the chapter about the validity and the limits of the processes which generate and regenerate the life story, account, personal narrative, personal myth, and autobiography. There is also a significant convergence of understandings that autobiography is the activity which composes one's life, as well as being an account of transformation. These assertions support the employment of autobiography as a suitable metaphor for transformative learning.

1.11 AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A LITERARY FORM

Autobiography may be understood as a narrative description of the *content* of autobiographical learning. It may also be construed as a way of understanding and explaining *processes* of personal transformation and emancipation. The intention in this thesis, in presenting autobiography in a literary as well as a literal sense, is to employ it as a metaphor which may disclose something about adult learning which other metaphors do not. To ascertain whether this metaphor is appropriate and fruitful in this way, it seems important to ask two kinds of questions about autobiography.

Questions which refer to the *subject* of the autobiography concern the relationship between the character and its fictional characterisation. Is the learner to be understood as the character, narrator and author of the account? How are consistency and complexity in this self, learner, author and character of the autobiography to be understood? Is there a unitary coherent self who composes the autobiography? Is the autobiographical learner such a unitary self? Again, if autobiographical learning involves a movement toward authorship and authority, in what sense and to what degree is the authoring of life and its narrative autonomous?

Questions about the *autobiographical process* are concerned with what kind of knowledge autobiography is. Is autobiography a genuine representation of a person's life? Is an autobiographical account truthful? Is it fiction? Can it be truthful if it does not purport to say everything that is true? What constitutes coherence or intelligibility in a life story?

The first set of questions concerns the identity, agency and autonomy of the character or self who tells the life story; the other epistemological questions refer to the process of autobiography or “autobiographing”. While it is useful to distinguish these two dimensions in autobiography for the sake of questioning its aptness as metaphor, they are virtually inseparable. Considered together, these two dimensions promise to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of autobiographical learning.

The first set of questions, which concern the self of autobiography, authority and authorship, the unity of the self, and the autobiographical imperative, is addressed in the two following sections.

1.12 THE SELF OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY - AUTHORITY AND AUTHORSHIP

The cognate dimensions of authoring, artistry, authorship, and authority which emerge in the poetic and critical enterprise of autobiography, are central to transformative learning. It is not surprising, therefore, that an array of questions about authorship presents itself for consideration.

- What does it mean to become the author of one's life and life story through autobiographical learning?
- Is the attainment of autonomy through emancipation from the influences which have socialised and "prescribed" the learner an integral part of autobiographical learning?
- Does autobiographical learning entail, at least on some occasions, a re-formation of the character? Is there a new integration of the Ego within the personality of the learner?
- How does the learner's life story relate to archetypes and myths? Are the "stories we live by" variants of archaic stories, or are they stories which we compose and tell as unique individuals?
- Is the life story a work which is co-authored?

From the review of literature presented in the first half of this chapter, it may be seen that within a general consensus there is some variance among those who consider seriously the form and process of narrative. It is not my intention to examine each and all of these questions separately and in order here. Responses to these questions will present themselves recurringly throughout the thesis as the life stories are presented, interpreted and discussed. Nevertheless, questions which come under the general rubric of authoring and authorship may be considered initially.

Having its origin and course within the constraints, resources and circumstances of a given yet changeable social context, the life story provides an account of personal transformative learning. Though it is a personal statement, autobiography is uttered for public hearing also (Shotter, 1986). The autobiographer addresses the social milieu to assert a new social identity with the intention to exercise a new style or degree of autonomy. The warrant for this new identity and authority is that they are outcomes of learning from experience. It may be the case that, in some solitary telling and retelling of the life story, such as journaling (Progoff, 1975), autobiographers and learners may recognise the change in their identity and agency for the first time. However, it is also likely that awareness of one's transformation comes to some learners initially in the act of offering an explanation to others in one social context or other. Authorship emerges through conversation, whether it be internal or external.

In autobiography, the movement from being only a narrator to being an author accompanies the transformation from being a person about whom a story is told, to being a subject in one's own story. What appeared originally as a more passive and prescribed way of participating in one's life story and in the social context is transformed into the person's becoming the author of their life narrative (Bruner, 1987). In the context of socio-cultural oppression, Freire (1970) has argued that, through critical reflective thought undertaken together, persons could be socially transformed in such a way as to become together subjects and authors of their common history in the making. Thus, dimensions of autonomy in personal transformation and social emancipation emerge in autobiographical learning - some gradually, some suddenly - and are expressed in the life story which is told and retold as it changes. 7

From the standpoint of transactional analysis, Steiner (1974) has described "life scripts" as individual forms of distorting interactions which people regularly acquire in the context of significant social relationships. Through script analysis, a person may reject the fictional script to which they subscribe in favour of new autonomous and authentic ways to participate in their social context. Because he considered that it is an unauthentic fictional

construction of life that generates scripts in the first place, Steiner regarded access to autonomy and authority in one's life as having nothing to do with the authorship of a life story. In terms of autobiography, the life scripts are stories prescribed in a narrative circle which needs to be broken and remade (Kepnes, 1982).

Authorship as autonomy emerges in autobiographical learning. The narrator becomes an author who claims some authority for the course of the life story, as well as the right to account for their own transformation. Authorship means that a narrator learns to compose a self-authorising story, instead of merely repeating a self-alienating account. Authorship also signifies that the person is becoming self-authorised to live their life, and to construct their ongoing autobiography from learning within their social context.

The learner's autobiography is wrought in the context of a dynamic interaction of social and intrapersonal forces (Kolb, 1984; Jarvis, 1987). Sometimes by reacting to events in the social environment, sometimes by proactively seeking out contexts for emancipation and development, the learner constructs the life narrative. The fact that the life story is also a form of communication to others, which seeks at least some degree of social acceptance, implies that the autobiographical learner does not enjoy an absolute autonomy. Although authors of life stories may have a strong sense of self-directedness, their authorship and authority are all the while exercised in the face of constraints which arise from the circumstances of that particular time and place. Even though transformed meaning perspectives of the life story now "allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrating understanding of one's experience" (Mezirow, 1990: xvi), the articulation of a life story of learning is influenced, nevertheless, to more or less degree by constraints within the social context.

As may be seen in the six stories presented in Chapter Three, the course of a person's learning may be restricted by complex social-cultural dynamics. Indeed, the socially constructed "dictionary and grammar" of social discourse, which govern the composition and communication of the life story, may even veto the learner's articulation of the

experience of transformation. Or it may provide no tools to reflect critically on the events of experience in the first place. In these cases, an important outcome of autobiographical learning for the author is the critical and imaginative rewriting of the "dictionary" which the learner has used to describe and critique experience until now.

By fashioning an account of transformation, the author, at least implicitly, stakes a claim for a place of greater social autonomy. Whenever the author's new account gravely contradicts the meanings, values and norms of the social context, that account and its implicit claim for greater social autonomy is likely to be regarded as unacceptable. A possible outcome in this event is the author's loss of public autonomy through partial or total exclusion from participation in the social context. The authors of the six stories presented in Chapter Three experienced a major loss of public autonomy through their suspension from active ministry within the Catholic church.

In autobiographical learning, authorship signifies also the art of improvisation, re-invention and narration. The poetic art of composition of a new life story embraces the capacity to be silent and to attend to the events of one's experience, to feel deeply, to imagine freely, to think critically, to choose with integrity and to give a "good account" of one's life (Kolb, 1984; Groome, 1991; Shotter, 1986). The metaphor of autobiography reveals something of the paradoxical nature of transformation which other metaphors may not. Autonomy and authority come to the learner through an artistic or poetic process rather than through either an act of intellectual sophistication, or sheer determination "to make up one's mind". In Chapter Six, a close inspection of the six stories shows how new life choices occurred as the fruit of autobiographical learning. As the authors learned to admit the validity of feeling as a way of knowing, to collaborate and play with the gift of the imagination, and to reflect critically, they proceeded to form their new life choice.

The question about whether autobiography is autonomously authored or co-authored directs our attention to what we understand transformative learning to be, and to how we envisage the personhood of the learner. In transformative learning, the author appears to be both reactive to triggers for reflection which issue from the events of experience, and proactive in

the search for adequate ways to understand and name the phenomena of experience (Jarvis, 1987). The learner's persistence in these processes contributes significantly to emancipation from various constraints in knowing. Because the autobiographical learner generates a new account and shows evidence of autonomy within their life, it may seem common sense to assume that the learner is the sole and independent author of both the transformation and its story. Influenced by Freud's portrayal of personality development as the formation of Ego out of Id and Superego, some models of transformative learning emphasise the critical self-reflective capacity to gain new meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). They, thereby, give the impression that the learner's conscious rationality is the sole author of the narrative. Even those models of learning, which recognise that the social context relativises the autonomy of the learner, emphasise ego-consciousness as the shaper of the autobiography (Jarvis, 1987).

By contrast, an alternative perspective on human agency and authorship is shared by Assagioli (1974, 1976), Jung (Campbell, 1971), Avens (1980) and Hillman (1975a, 1975b). The understanding, common to Eastern and Western thought, that personality is polycentric, rather than solely a conscious executive ego (Avens, 1980; Fontinell 1993), prompts the assertion that autobiography and autobiographical learning are the outcomes of intra-psychic relationships and conversations. The composing of the life story is the work and play of several hands. Following Jung (Campbell, 1971), Boyd and Myers (1988) would expect a change in the plot of the autobiography in the second half of adult life, because the multiplicity of psychic structures in the self makes its presence felt more insistently at that time.

There are some qualities of paradox in a polycentric view of autobiography. Although the dialogical movement towards individuation among aspects of the psyche construes a more authentic integration within the self, its outcome consists in multiplicity rather than in a simple unity. The ordering of this "messy multiplicity" is neither chaotic disunity nor a hierarchy of psychic components of the self under the control of rational ego (Fontinell, 1993). Yet, this ordering does not diminish the importance of conscious ego in serving the

integration of the self, especially in the interface of outer and inner worlds. Autobiography and autobiographical learning respond to the need for “some sort of integration, coordination, unity, or wholeness of being (which) is both more or less inevitable and a necessary and sufficient condition for personhood” (Flanagan, 1991: 276, quoted in Fontinell, 1993: 373).

Also, although the transformed life story brings to the author a relative autonomy from personal and social constraints, at the same time, the ego’s accountability to the other structures in the psyche cannot be denied. The story about Ramakrishna, which is told by Ram Dass and Gorman (1985), illustrates this approach.

“Ramakrishna, the great Indian saint, likened the situation to a coach in which the driver (the ego) sits atop in command of the horse. The owner (the higher self) sits quietly within. Because the coachman has never seen the owner, he begins to think himself totally in charge. But when the owner makes himself known, quietly but firmly, the coachman perhaps begrudgingly but ultimately in his best interests relinquishes his fantasy and becomes content in his role of ...what? Of servant, it turns out” (1985: 44).

This perspective suggests that autobiography, as the construction of a life and as self-telling, is a phenomenon that shows the “co-authoring” activity of ego with other aspects of the psyche. Randall’s analysis of the “poetics of self-creation”, concluded that we co-author our lives “in partnership with some other ‘author-itative agent’: whether humanity, nature, circumstances, fate, God, reality as a whole, or whatever it is our philosophical propensities may lead us to call it” (1992: 169). He proposed, further, that when we become aware of how we narrate our selves, it becomes possible for us “to critique the plot-lines by which our self-narration has previously been carried out, and the genre by which we have hitherto been transforming the events of our lives into experiences and hence into the stuff of our souls”(1992: 170). Critical awareness of the myths, plots, and master stories which exert a shaping influence on the construction of life and its narrative positions the learner to exercise greater personal authority in re-storying the soul. However, autobiography, in so far as one plot replaces another through critical reconstruction of our lives and their stories, is an exercise of authority in a relative and collegiate sense.

1.13 IS THERE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IMPERATIVE?

The review of the literature of narrative and life story in the earlier part of this chapter indicates that, although the practice of self-telling is acknowledged widely, the ways of understanding the autobiographical project differ markedly. Far from it being an accomplishment of the literate, or a form of self-disclosure for famous people with extraordinary events to celebrate, mourn or explain, autobiography is understood in this study to be an important constituent of everyday lives. Telling the tale of a life is a skill which everyone possesses (Bruner, 1987; Shotter, 1986; Stanley, 1992). Does the capacity to tell a life story, together with the widespread practice of life storytelling support the assertion that there is an "autobiographical imperative"?

Shotter (1986) argued that to maintain and to enhance one's place in society, each person is required to give a creditable autobiographical account. Through social interaction individuals learn the skills to provide an account of their life in accordance with social expectation. In this view, the trigger for this autobiographical imperative has its locus outside of the narrator, or at least within social interaction.

On the other hand, Curtin asserted that there is an internal necessity for autobiography because, "autobiography in some form or another, is not a dispensable luxury but a necessary activity for anyone who wishes to accede to full self-awareness, to full self-possession of his (sic) own person" (1974: 346).

In order to explain why autobiography is such an essential poetic enterprise for human life, Curtin (1974) pointed to the dynamism of consciousness, in which he noted complementary movements of intention and reflection. Whereas intentionality leads to multiplicity and possible fragmentation of the self in its temporal activities, reflective recollection creatively brings about a coherence of the self. "In autobiography, life is in the process of elaboration of itself" (1974: 344). Thus, the scattered self is gathered through the symbolic activity of the life story, "as an irreducible and unrepeatable individual who exemplifies the universal

characteristics of the human condition in an unique manner" (1974: 345). In the story of the self, consciousness captures both the oneness of the self and its temporal, concrete diversity.

"The story is, then, the still point of consciousness gathering together the turning world into an act of creative recollection in which the one and the many, the eternal and the temporal, reflective self-presence and intentional self-deployment coincide" (1974: 346).

Through autobiographical consciousness, persons engage in the "essentially philosophical and religious preoccupation of ultimate self-creation and self-knowledge" (Curtin, 1974: 46). He concluded that in human consciousness there is an imperative to reach for and elaborate a coherent self through the construction of the life story. Of course, other writers are less willing to underwrite the existence of such a coherent self, or to agree that the function of autobiography is to compose such a self. The assumption that the author of autobiography is a unitary self, having a single voice, appears to strike opposition from at least two sources. Some feminist writers argue that the coherent self of autobiography is found predominantly in the Western male form of the life story. The description of human lives as linear and unitary has been challenged by Bateson (1990) as especially inappropriate for women's "interrupted lives". From an archetypal perspective of the self, Hillman (1975a, 1975b) has argued for a polycentric approach to the authorship of life stories.

There is a broad consensus that, at some time or other, people experience some impetus to reshape their lives (Crites, 1971; McAdams, 1988; Shotter, 1986). The circumstances which stimulate the articulation of a life narrative are various. Whether by internal necessity or for the sake of social incorporation, for the sake of social emancipation or for personal therapeutic transformation, or some combination of these reasons, there appears to be both a need and a desire to construct a life story which aims the author towards living a life free from the domination of social, psychological and epistemic distortions (Mezirow, 1990; 1991).

1.14 THE FORM AND PROCESS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The literary form of autobiography has been proposed as a valid metaphor for transformative learning. It would appear to be so, since well-established approaches to transformative learning bear a common humanistic assumption that first person narratives may be valid and truthful accounts of learning. In these approaches, personal accounts of transformative learning describe the self in the process of integration, gaining freedom from distortions, and engaging in authentic practice (Keane, 1987; Brookfield, 1987, 1990; Fowler, 1987; Boyd and Myers, 1988; Mezirow, 1990; Miller, 1993). Some accounts of emancipatory and transformative learning are elicited and expressed through imaginative forms such as journal writing (Progoff, 1975; Lukinsky, 1990), metaphor analysis (Deshler, 1990), storytelling (Noddings, 1991; Stafford, 1991; Tappan and Brown, 1991), or an eclectic use of meditation, psychodrama and Ericksonian hypnosis (Neville, 1989).

The validity of autobiography as a metaphor for transformative learning may be examined by considering it as a literary form. Distinctions between autobiography and cognate forms of literature are not always clear or universally accepted (Gilmour, 1992). He noted that a useful distinction between autobiography, memoirs and reminiscence presents the former as having the self as its focus, while the latter two refer to one's interaction with others. Lloyd (1986: 170) further distinguished autobiography from memoirs, third person biography and fiction, by defining it as purporting "to present the truth about the self as grasped by itself". Autobiography claims to express self-knowledge as distinct from the opinions and assertions which other people may offer about one's life. Furthermore, "an autobiography is as much the expression of a present self as it is the representation of a past one" (Lloyd, 1986: 170). Barbour (1986) noted that recent literary studies have challenged traditional approaches to autobiography which assumed that the self of the text corresponded to the narrator's historical life. Lloyd (1986) questioned the claim that the account portrays the truth about the self. Some questions which arise in this inquiry are: Is autobiography a valid account of a life, and of transformative learning? Is there total correspondence and coincidence

between the "I" who authors, and the "me" who is the character of the autobiography, as a common sense understanding of autobiography would assume?

From her examination of three famous autobiographies, Lloyd noted that,

"The common thread running through the philosophical autobiographies of Augustine, Rousseau and Sartre, is the attempt of a living self to make an object of itself, to grasp itself as a complete being without paying the cost of death" (1986: 183).

While Augustine sought to present such a complete and coherent picture of the self through retrospection, Rousseau was confident that he could express transparently his unique living self by declaring fully the inner movement of his soul.

"Here it is not so much that the act of writing represents an already existing object as that it constructs one. But the self it constructs is supposed to be as transparent in all its individuality to others as it is to itself" (Lloyd, 1986: 180).

Rousseau expected his reader to be able to reconstruct his life imaginatively and to know the author's authentic self from what he had presented in the autobiography.

However, Sartre regarded as illusory any attempts by the living subject to communicate the truth of the self in autobiography. By writing, as it were *post mortem* from a vantage point in the future, Sartre preferred to see his life as already completed. Thus, the self became an object. Yet, the writer of the autobiography is not that same self as when it was a living subject. Lloyd concluded,

"If we are convinced by Sartre, both Augustine's retrospective view of a stabilised self and Rousseau's attempt to get the subjective and the objective to coincide, through being known as he really is, have to be seen as illusions. In both cases, though for different reasons, the autobiographical attempt to construct or reconstruct the true self falls apart; the putative object is undermined by the conditions of its true realisation. Of our living selves, we cannot be objective knowers" (Lloyd, 1986: 184).

Indeed, Renza (1980) has asserted that the very conditions of autobiography as the public presentation of life under the constraints of language require the writer to adopt a *persona*.

Thus, the intended portrayal of the richness of the writer's inner self is rendered impossible. This assertion appears to cast in a dubious light the validity of autobiography as an account of transformative learning.

In the face of what appear to be pessimistic views of autobiography as a truthful and valid account of the author's life, Barbour (1986) has proposed that, when the dimensions of character and characterisation are considered together, there is greater reason for confidence. Less interested in the coincidence of the textual self and a pre-existing character, Barbour (1986) showed more preoccupation with the validity of autobiography in terms of the character's moral self-evaluation. For him, the central aspect of the account's truthfulness need not be literal and factual truth.

"Truth in the most exhaustive and exact factual sense is not required for the project of self-evaluation, for the autobiographer's omission of certain facts, erroneous memory, or even conscious distortion of the past may still reveal what is most central in his character" (Barbour, 1986: 308).

Barbour's claim that truthfulness in autobiography is safeguarded by the quality of the author's moral self-evaluation in expressing self-knowledge, seems to be contradicted by those who assert that the genuine articulation of one's life has necessarily a fictive quality. Can the autobiographical account be both fictive and truthful? Given that autobiography need not constitute a complete and realist correspondence between a pre-existent self and the textual self, what are the implications for the validity and truthfulness of accounts of transformative learning, such as the stories of this inquiry? Barbour's (1986) response was to stress the importance of the quality of moral self-evaluation in autobiography. To the degree that an author with the capacity and determination to avoid self-deception, actually faces his or her own evil and ambivalences, he or she will arrive at a more truthful life story. Brookfield (1993) showed a similar confidence in self-scrutiny, especially when it is undertaken among peers, and with reference to the accounts which others give of their learning.

Another approach which values the form of the autobiographical project comes from Mandel (1980). Denying Crites' (1971) assertion that the fundamental narrative quality of human experience is temporality or existence in and through time, Mandel directed his attention to the meaning of the *autos* or self who narrates. He argued that the capacity to narrate one's life consists in expressing those metaphors which are central to the meaning of that life. Though metaphors in the life story are expressed consciously, they have their source in the unconscious, outside our human consciousness of time. So, the truthfulness of the life story is not dependent on accurate temporal recollection. Also critical of Crites' (1971) point of view, Olney (1980) argued that what is more important for autobiography than memory is the author's sense of *bios*. This quality of *bios* in the life story,

“extends down to the roots of individual being ; it is atemporal, committed to a vertical thrust from consciousness down into the unconscious rather than to a horizontal thrust from the present into the past” (Olney, 1980: 239).

From this standpoint, the life story represents the author coming to awareness of identity through a process of interaction with myth and metaphor. This learning from experience resembles the processes proposed by Hillman (1975a), Lageman (1986) and King (1990). From his consideration of the viewpoints proposed by Olney (1980) and Mandel (1980), Barbour concluded that there "may be several narrative qualities of experience" (1986: 312).

Autobiography has two selves, according to Spender (1980). Though aware of oneself from the inside, the author may choose to describe only the historic and publicly observable self. Spender, writing in the 1960's, asserted that though "one suspects that ours is an age when many people feel a need to confess the tensions of their inner lives" (1980: 122), the abundant modern autobiographical literature showed a scarcity of intimate revelation. Because the direct and open revelation of this inner self is risky, "it is understandable that most people who write their autobiographies write the life of someone by himself (sic) and not the life of someone by his two selves" (1980: 122).

When a narrator does choose to reveal this inner self in autobiography, the account has the significance and manner of an explanation, justification or confession. Spender argued that

this confessional form of autobiography is the author's way of coming to terms with isolation and exclusion from his or her social context. The classical Confessions of literature tell the story of the transformation of one who has erred, or who has gone in search of new values for living. In offering an explanation for the author's deviance from cultural norms, the confession makes a plea for readmission to "the moral fold" (Spender, 1980: 121).

The interpretive approach to the study of autobiography among elderly people, taken by Tarman (1988), also recognised that influence of the social context on life stories. She drew upon Goffman's (1963, 1971) phenomenological analysis of social interaction to support her assertion that their accounts are understood better as positive responses to society's diminishment of the aged. The autobiography is more than a solitary search for consistency and meaning, as some developmentalists propose (Cohler, 1982). It is an interpretive step taken to negotiate a position of power in social interaction.

“As the aged's identity is undermined by stereotypes, they must constantly reassert their positive identity that threatens to slip away in their interactions. They must prove to themselves that the unfair stigma of old age is unqualified, or is at best unimportant. Goffman notes that the stigmatized have several strategies with which to accomplish this: they can conceal the signs of their stigma; they can present the signs to be evidence of another less stigmatized attribute; or they can accept the stigma but declare it as unimportant (1963: 92)” (Tarman, 1988: 178).

The life stories of remarkable change are accounts of deviance from ecclesiastical values and norms. The outcome for these priests in social interaction with the Catholic church is the attribution of stigma or spoiled identity (Goffman, 1963). Because the authors tell the story of the self as known from inside, the autobiographies in this thesis contain some elements of confession in them. They tell of events which reveal both the authors' failure to persist with commitments undertaken for life, as well as their struggle for a new integrity. The authors do not show regret over the choices exercised and decisions made. They do strive to offer creditable accounts to warrant their acknowledgment as people worthy of acceptance within their social context. Their life stories interpret their remarkable change in a positive light; the alternative ecclesiastical construction of reality portrays it negatively.

Chapter Three presents accounts of the life storytelling undertaken in this inquiry. It will become clear in reading these narratives that they show a quality of self-evaluating truthfulness (Barbour, 1986), and a concern to portray genuinely the dimensions of both *autos* and *bios* (Mandel, 1980; Olney, 1980).

1.15 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Feminist writers appear to be in consensus that the predominant form which autobiography takes in Western literature reflects the interests of its male-centred culture.

"Autobiography is a distinctively Western, and throughout much of its history, a predominantly masculine genre" (Stange, 1987: 15).

"Feminist literary criticism of women's autobiographical narratives has been neglected because women's autobiographies assume diverse, non-traditional patterns that are not easily assimilable to generic norms or to masculine notions of the authoritative self" (Helle, 1991: 55).

From her research into women's autobiographies, Helle (1991) concluded that the differences in the contrasting forms of autobiography found among female authors lie in their portrayals of both the autobiographer's self (*autos*) and life (*bios*). Stange (1987) identified the quest for a unified and cohesive self, exemplified by the classical fourth century Confessions of Augustine, as the aim of male autobiography. **8** Women, on the other hand, "as much by creative choice as by sociological or psychological necessity" (1987: 18), do not see their life stories as quest narratives (Bateson, 1990).

"What primarily distinguishes women from men in patriarchal culture is that while men must strive, within carefully laid down limits, to achieve their identities, women have had their identities thrust upon them. The task of men is to become what they must be, while it is given to women to be what they are" (Stange, 1987: 17).

In their life stories, many women disclose their individuality somewhat paradoxically through the patterns of the relationships in which they live. This style of self-presentation within relationships, is found to be a strategy for narration which is more characteristic of women's autobiography (Helle, 1991; Chang, 1992). The phenomenon of the "connected self" as the

author of the life story may reflect the distinction between the *separate* and *connected* styles of women's knowing and discourse which Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986), and Goldberger *et al* (1987) observed. These researchers proposed a developmental pattern of various "voices" of women's knowing; from silence to received knowledge, to subjective knowledge, to procedural knowledge and finally to an integration of these voices in constructed knowledge. Constructed knowledge, in particular, expresses the connectedness between the knower and the one seeking to know. It is not a domestic voice, although it engages in public discourse in ways which emphasise communication and takes into account the contexts of the persons and interests of the situation. The aspiration of constructed or "connected" knowing is reciprocity. Belenky *et al* (1986) recognised that separate and connected knowing and discourse do not inevitably belong to either gender. However, they argued that the "public" language of separate knowing, which appears to perceive the hearer as a potential enemy rather than as an ally, is more prevalent in men's narratives. The voice of connected knowing, which expresses a "continuity between the so-called private language of self-reflection and the formal designs of public speech" (Helle, 1991: 54), is more likely to be found in women's narratives. It will become evident, from an examination of the life stories told by the authors in this inquiry, that connected knowing and discourse are to be found in these men's narratives too.

Rather than being accounts of the escalating unity of the self, women's autobiography may indicate that "the way to find the self is to lose it" (Stange, 1987: 18). For women to go off on the quest of what are, in fact, impossible choices for them may lead literally to madness. A preferred form of "madness" chooses to avoid the normality of "one story" in favour of a story in which is found "a multiplicity of images and possibility, all of them somehow reflectors of the self, yet all of them partial and necessarily provisional" (Stange, 1987: 27-28).

"Refusing to be reduced to a single category, be it wife, or mother, or slave, they tell stories which begin and end in multiplicity, fragmentation, uncertainty as to ultimate meanings... but not in the madness, the insanity, of the too-straight-American-normal 'I'" (Stange, 1987: 25).

The six stories of transformation in this inquiry are stories of fragmentation, and failure to "keep on track". Instead of holding firm in their life story to the Catholic church's sanctioned connection between celibacy and ministry, these autobiographers relinquished the quest for a self "idealised" by ecclesiastical law and a flawed theology of celibacy. They listened to the questions and distractions which came from events within their experience (Bateson, 1990), and their imaginative and critical reflection brought a new construction from the fragments of their lives. 9

In terms of Stange's (1987) criteria, the autobiographical accounts told in this study start out as men's stories. They originate within the tradition of vocation as a quest narrative, and proceed in pursuit of the unified self which is prescribed by the tradition of celibate priesthood. Yet, in some ways, the origins of these men's stories also resemble women's stories, in so far as the tradition established priests in a prescribed sexualised identity (Haug, 1987; Helle, 1991). The identity of celibacy and the accompanying obligation of obedience to ecclesiastical authority is founded in a social narrative in which the priest is expected to encounter nothing other than what is prescribed, or communicated by church authority. For these authors, autobiographical learning had its origin when they finally welcomed the strangeness, and endured the fragmentation of their new experience (Ogletree, 1985). They discovered, thereby, that the tradition in which they had been formed had presented them with the social impossibility of choosing the multiplicity which they knew now to be themselves.

In considering the self of autobiography, Stanley (1992) argued against what she saw as the realist assumptions in current biography and autobiography. The lives in current auto/biography which are esteemed to be exemplary are "linear, chronological, progressive, cumulative and individualist" (Stanley, 1992: 12). These lives reflect the common view that there is a unified true self, to be discovered and revealed in both biography and autobiography. She questioned the validity of this assumption, noting the competing selves of a given person which various biographers present. Though each may interpret that same person's life differently, each account may each be true. Although all forms of life story

have some concern for facticity, she proposed that they are also artistic and constructive undertakings.

In contrast to the classical depiction of the unified linear character in autobiography, other forms of life story sometimes portray the self as alterable, fractured and changing. Stanley (1992) compared lesbian "coming out" stories with the spiritual autobiographies of 19th century North American Methodist black women preachers. She asserted that there was a "sisters under the skin" relation between the two groups of women. Both of these kinds of autobiography have a common structure of doubt and confusion, the discovery of a name for the struggle, and difficulties which precede a decisive act of coming out, or conversion. In both kinds of autobiographies, what is at stake is "a greater degree of self-authenticity in the face of what are presented as a diversity of unjust oppositions" (1992: 117). Whereas many coming out stories conclude with the commencement of a new way of life in a community of acceptance, there is an "explicit continuance within the black spiritual autobiographies of self-fragmentation, doubt and displacement" (1992: 117). These accounts, which the preachers gave of their lives, depicted them needing continually to be restored to calm and stillness by God. Their testimony to God's constant attentiveness to them served an important political purpose for them. Likewise, in some lesbian accounts, there is a political purpose in the happy ending which signals the author's arrival at a new identity, now free from doubts and distortions.

A quality, which Stanley (1992) observed in the writing of life stories in groups of working class people, as well as in female autobiography, is the awareness that lives make more sense when they are placed within the web of the person's relationships and commitments. As far as authorship is concerned, she remarked that "a single hand writes, but the self who inscribes, who is, is herself enmeshed with other lives which give hers the meaning it has" (1992: 14). This observation contrasts starkly with the style of some current autobiography which tends to bring the subject to centre stage, relegating others kindly or unkindly, to the obscurity of the wings.

The implicit autobiographical pact in classical autobiography is for the writer to tell the reader the truth, and to recreate the life as a factual rather than fictional account. Stanley (1992) asserted that the autobiographer's fictions, and the performance of the self, may permit more truth-telling about a life to take place, especially when the authors are socially deviant or not easily accessible for the purposes of research.

The literary form of oral history has been recognised also as a form of autobiography. Preoccupied at first with the experience of structural oppression in the stories of working class women, and her desire to give them a voice, Hamilton (1990) changed her research perspective as she began to identify an autobiographical quality within the stories she was hearing. At the same time, she was aware that other feminists had expressed misgivings about the literary form of autobiography, particularly from the standpoint of the way in which the self was usually represented.

“...since it (autobiography) is conventionally regarded as the coherent shaping of the past from the perspective of the unified self in the present and is, therefore, the classic expression of bourgeois individualism” (1990: 129).

She preferred to name the self of autobiography as a fiction which is formed through the process of telling the life story within the context of the particular historical ideologies of selfhood available to the autobiographer. As well, Hamilton (1990) observed that the genre of “oral history” tends to give the accounts of research the quality of evidence. This obscures the autobiography's characteristic of being a fictional performance of self. She relinquished her interviewer-centred view of oral history which purported to give victims of oppression a “voice” which is otherwise unheard. Even though oral history might appear to be biographical, the accounts are not solely the fruit of the researcher's work. Hamilton preferred to call her research autobiographical, recognising that this style of autobiographical activity is collaborative.

“But I would argue, on the contrary, that the interview is an act of collaboration between two people. The concept of it as autobiography retains or even underlines the sense in which the subject makes her own decision to tell the story of her life for her own purposes...a self-conscious act of expression” (1990: 130).

“More specifically, I began to see a relationship between their present circumstances and a desire to communicate an experience of their past: some women were in the process of coming to terms with their lives before death, some were threatened with expulsion from old and familiar surroundings so their identities were threatened...” (1990: 131).

The stories that she heard often expressed clearly an autobiographical intent. Some had a fixed quality which seemed to reflect the narrator’s need to control the life story. Other stories seemed to be concerned with establishing their narrators as belonging to the past, attributing to them, thereby, an exotic quality. Hamilton (1990) concluded that the self of her autobiographical research is neither a victim to be liberated, nor a self free from the influence of the range of life story forms available within the socio-cultural context. The life story is shaped by the narrator’s often implicit intent, desire or need to make story telling serve her purposes.

From the brief consideration given to some questions which concern autobiography as a literary form, it may be seen that in terms of transformative learning, autobiography holds promise as a valid and fruitful metaphor.

1.16 SUMMARY

- Autobiography is an account of transitions and transformation in the life of a person who is its narrator, character and author.
- It is broadly recognised that the life story, as an account of transformation, is a fictive interpretation grounded in the author's self-knowledge. The degree to which it contains a factual recollection of historical events matters less than the degree to which it shows a self-evaluative and critical consciousness. Thus, autobiographical learning is not concerned with the discovery and disclosure of a hidden true self, but with the construction of a valid and creditable life story which accounts for adult transformation.
- The act of autobiography transforms the narrator into an author. Authorship implies autonomy. However, this autonomy is relative in terms of the social possibilities available in the author’s social context. While some approaches to autobiography emphasise the ego as the conscious rational interpreter of the life story and director of the life, others prefer to describe the authorship and autonomy of autobiography as “co-authoring”.

- The widespread incidence of self-telling suggests that there is a human tendency to construct a life story. At times, the imperative focuses attention on a particular slice of life. The narrative responds to a personal need for self-understanding, as well as to the requirements of the social milieu for an explanation for remarkable changes in behaviour.
- The principal form of autobiography is that in which the author's *autos* appears to reach an idealised coherence, and their *bios* appears to proceed in a linear manner. Other forms of life story portray an author who constitutes the self within the context of relationships, and as a changeable person, whose life is not a quest but the art of living with interruption and multiplicity.
- The social context of the life story is more than a location. It provides narrators with ideological models of self and the life course with which to construct the life story. An alternative autobiography, which contradicts the myth or master story of the social context, brings its author the risk of some form of exclusion from social participation.

In the light of the foregoing consideration of autobiography as a literary form, it appears that, as a metaphor for transformative learning, it holds considerable value. The expression and elaboration of transformative learning as autobiography occur in an artistic way, in terms of an interaction between conscious and unconscious dimensions of self-knowing. Myth and metaphor are the language in which unconscious knowing presents itself to its conscious partner. Just as the composition of the life story is *poesis*, so also is the work and play of autobiographical learning.

ENDNOTES

1 In this thesis, the terms account, autobiography, biography, life story, narrative, personal narrative, personal myth, life history, and self story are considered to be equivalent. Denzin (1989: 13) applied the interpretive biographical method to “narratives which describe turning-point moments in individuals’ lives”.

2 In response to behaviour which contravenes social norms seriously, the formal rite of passage may be execution, exclusion by detention, a termination of civil rights, or ostracism. The formal rite of laicisation is available to priests on conditions which many do not accept as just.

3 In the field of human rights, there is an aspiration in groups such as Amnesty International that through the hearing of stories which people tell of their human condition, new legislation, education and practice will replace discrimination.

4 The International Federation of Married Catholic Priests, formed in 1985, has claimed that many resigned priests desire to be accredited for priestly service once again. They aspire to present an persuasive account of their lives to reshape social practice and the social identity of priesthood within the Catholic church. Thus, they hope that their choice for marriage, currently discredited, might be regarded as acceptable and normal. The new account, reasonable as it may seem, may fail to persuade, nevertheless. In Shotter's (1986) view, such a new "common place" in the Roman Catholic church's social practice would depend on the emergence of new shared feeling about the currently proscribed behaviour.

5 Another comprehensive model for learning from experience is that of Heron (1992). He proposed a pyramid whose base is that of emotional learning. Immediately above this base, and founded on it, is the imaginal dimension of learning. Imaginal learning gives rise to conceptual understanding, out of which emerges action. Postle (1993) has drawn on Heron's multi-modal model, emphasising emotional competence as foundational for experiential learning. Brookfield (1993) has named also the visceral dimension of learning from experience.

6 Autobiography as a metaphor for adult learning was the subject of an article written by the principal researcher to report his work in progress (Nelson, 1994). It presented in summary form themes developed more fully in this thesis.

7 The sense of authority and authorship which emerges in emancipatory learning is not principally a personal resource. It is a power held collectively by persons who constitute some group, community, or class. It is to be used in the interests of their collective liberation from social structures which prevent communicative action.

8 Lloyd's (1986) analysis of the self in autobiography showed that, in the autobiographies of Rousseau and Sartre, there are alternatives to Augustine's transcending self.

9 The Catholic church's institutional response to the stories of priests resigning from ministry is to explain that each story reveals a personal defect in the author, which ought to have been discovered prior to ordination. Those whose life stories show clear evidence of their unsuitability as celibates, although they may have been exemplary priests otherwise, may be dispensed from their obligations. Some are refused dispensation from the obligations undertaken at ordination because their stories do not show their unsuitability for celibate priesthood, even though they have married after exiting from ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

This chapter commences with an autobiographical account of how this research project began as an inquiry about remarkable change, and how it took shape later as a co-operative inquiry into autobiographical learning. It describes the steps taken in the inquiry, and discusses dimensions of the research process. Characteristics of autobiographical research, and dimensions of this particular inquiry into transformative learning are considered.

Important concepts used in this thesis to explain adult transformation in terms of autobiographical learning include narrative and conversation, imagination and interpretation. Various approaches to the understanding of narrative and autobiography have been presented in Chapter One. Chapter Three presents the stories of transformative learning. The significance of the social context of transformative learning is explored in Chapter Four. An elaboration of the pivotal concept of imagination, and its relationship to autobiographical learning is to be found in Chapter Five. The processes of interpretation which are central to autobiographical learning are considered in Chapter Six. Conversation is portrayed as a research method in this chapter, and as a metaphor for transformational learning in Chapter Six.

2.0 A PRELIMINARY NARRATIVE OF THIS RESEARCH

When I set out on this research journey, I named the phenomenon of remarkable change as the principal focus of my research. From my experience of transformation, as a form of self-directed adult learning, and from various other accounts of personal transformation and social emancipation presented in news media, contemporary literature, film, drama and everyday conversation, I had noted the following characteristics of remarkable change. 1

- Remarkable change in the life course is expressed in behaviour that is readily discernible as new and alternative. The process of role exit that it entails is often described as “becoming an ex” (Ebaugh, 1988), or in some circumstances “coming out”. Because this change contradicts the person's prior well established stance in life, it evokes a strong element of surprise in those who observe it. Moreover, the new stance attracts a significant degree of wariness and official social disapproval, in so far as it is perceived as being deviant, a challenge to authority, or a threat to social order. **2** Leaving the priesthood is such a remarkable change. **3** In many cases, where a remarkable change is gravely unacceptable, it goes unreported, is denied, or is misrepresented by the institutions it offends. Sometimes, people present their change as a defensive “press release” (Wiersma, 1988). **4** Within the last decade, literature, film, drama and the socially responsible “current affairs” media of information, have undertaken more frequently to give voice to the accounts of those who are unheard otherwise.
- Persons who make a remarkable change often explain their course of action as a conscientious decision. Sensitive to social disapproval, they may promptly indicate that their change is an objection to some *particular* binding social arrangement, rather than a rejection of all the values and norms of the social order in which they participate. Persons enacting remarkable change describe it, as a rule, as necessary for their authenticity, and though it may have brought a loss of status, it is prized often as a source of new vitality and joy (McMahon, 1987; Loughlin, 1994).
- Remarkable changes are not adequately explained as a predictable part of “inside-out” directed adult development, even though the dynamics of cognitive, moral and faith development may contribute to the change. Likewise, remarkable changes do not occur expectably and regularly among adults despite their similar contexts and circumstances.
- Clearly this phenomenon is widely dispersed throughout society. Several of the characteristics of remarkable change are found in the picture of “radical” change described by Edwards (1987), and the changes of life course in “invisible citizens” (Hardcastle, 1985).

I considered that, even though Catholic priests who marry constitute a minority within the general population of adult learners, the phenomenon of their transformative learning was a significant one to research. My interest in undertaking this research into their remarkable change was to discover what this particular remarkable change meant, how it occurred, and to explore the imaginative factor in adult transformation. I expected to learn what might be unique in each participant’s account of transformative learning, and what might be common to other learners’ accounts. As well, I expected that my learning would lead me beyond this study of remarkable change in priests to a deeper understanding of what pertains to lifelong

learning for adults in a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural contexts and circumstances. The style of the project required an intensive idiographic study which would not in itself warrant a general theory of transformative learning. However, I considered that the subsequent use of this style of research by myself and other inquirers would contribute to theory-building in the field of adult learning and education.

My decision to undertake this research within a group, rather than as a sole researcher of individual accounts, was influenced by various experiences, convictions and values. In the 1970's, I had participated in groups whose ethos was a "critical friendliness". Several of these groups practised the *Review of Life*, a disciplined action-reflection-action approach to work, relationships, and membership of institutions such as the Catholic church and the university. I was impressed by the way in which the group structure fostered its members as they engaged in critical reflection on their life situation, their personal beliefs, and social analysis. I wanted to include such a group practice of critical reflection in my research into the phenomena of priests' departing from active ministry. As well, I estimated that the quality of the research tasks of articulating, gathering and interpreting accounts of life experience would be enhanced within a group such as this.

As I explained in the Introduction, I envisaged that the study of the phenomenon of remarkable change would lead me to discover how imagination participates as a process in adult learning. Until early 1989, I retained imagination, remarkable change, and transformative learning as the principal elements in the conceptual framework for the research project. By that time, I had completed a semi-structured interview with each participant. As I reflected on the transcripts of the interviews, I discovered that, while I was looking for accounts of remarkable change, each person had told a story. The participants were not simply describing events, or presenting "lumps of data". The stories about the narrators' lives that I had gathered, had been told in a way that placed the specific event in a context larger than that of their resignation and marriage. I had a sense that there was something more to this research than what might be described as an "oral history interview"

(Hamilton, 1990). By that time, my reading had introduced me to the fields of life history (Bertaux, 1981), life story (Kotre, 1984), narrative (Bruner, 1987), and psychobiography (Runyan, 1982). Though I found biographical method (Finger, 1989) an inviting research stance, it did not correspond completely with my understanding of what I was experiencing as a co-participant and researcher. It occurred to me quite suddenly that autobiography is a metaphor which portrays well the learning of the participants in this study.

Yet I felt some wariness about this form of account for two reasons. Firstly, my background in behavioural sciences made me wary of anecdote, and alert to questions about the validity and reliability of personal reminiscence. Secondly, the concept of autobiographical learning that I had encountered (Powell, 1985) had impressed me as having more to do with autobiography as a record of changes in learning style. It had little to do with transformative learning as an act of autobiography that constitutes the self. My methodological misgivings about autobiography as a rigorous explanation faded as I explored the field of narrative psychology (Sarbin, 1986; McAdams, 1985, 1988). As my research proceeded, I observed that the life stories I was gathering were, by their very nature, quite clearly constructions and interpretations which required a hermeneutic framework rather than a clinical or forensic one. I became confident, too, that the literary metaphor of autobiography would sustain not only the utterance of accounts of personal transformation, but would disclose also a “map” of the narrator’s learning journey (Daloz, 1986). My reading continued to affirm the narrative quality of experience. I became more convinced that, as a metaphor drawn from literature, autobiography would be very appropriate for the study of imagination in adult learning. By this time, I had named my research area as that of autobiographical learning, understood as a form of transformative and emancipatory learning. As the research proceeded, to explore this process of “autobiographing”, the group employed several forms of life storytelling. In addition to the interview, we included artwork, metaphor analysis, and parable.

I aspired to use the paradigm of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1981a) in this research project, because it promised to cater for some particular characteristics of autobiographical learning. According to Heron (1985), this form of research, which proceeds systematically through the learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), also dissolves the distinction between the researcher and the subject.

“There are many arguments for doing research about people this way (Heron, 1981a): the primary one in my view is that it is the only way of researching people as fully self-determining, as beings whose thinking and choosing shapes their behaviour” (Heron, 1985: 128).

In particular, co-operative inquiry appeared to be a form of research, appropriate to accommodate narrative and reflection. Moreover, as Reason and Hawkins (1988) have argued, storytelling itself is an effective means to facilitate co-operative inquiry.

“In establishing a co-operative inquiry group it becomes important that right from the outset a culture is set which honours expression as well as explanation. As well as inviting the group to define its area of explanation we must also invite them to find images that envision it and stories that give it expression” (1988: 100).

Heron described the process of co-operative inquiry in the following way.

“(E)veryone involved moves between the roles of co-researcher - generating the thinking that conceives, designs, manages and draws conclusions from the research, and co-subject - engaging in the action and experiences which are the focus of the inquiry” (1989b: 73).

Heron added that,

“In a co-operative inquiry, you start out as the initiating researcher and facilitator; but once the group has internalised the method, you become peer, and all facilitative roles in the inquiry process are rotated among group members” (1989b: 74).

The pursuit of co-operative inquiry outside a university setting, over an extended period of time, sets limits to its implementation in a complete form. From the outset, the degree to which co-operative inquiry, as a process of contemporaneous research and learning, might be realised in this group was influenced by several factors. Because I commenced the inquiry

with the assumption that the remarkable change to be researched had already occurred, I expected to discover the processes of autobiographical learning retrospectively rather than contemporaneously. As a consequence, much of the research group's focus was directed initially to the "reflective observation" phase of an experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). I discovered, however, as Heron (1981b: 164) had observed, that the "concrete experience" of the group's collaboration actually recommenced and extended the autobiographical learning of the co-researchers. Though I enlisted the ethos and terminology of cooperative inquiry, it became clear that the processes of this research modified what Heron (1981b) called "the full experiential research model".

The co-operative style of research, and the dimension of shared responsibility were well suited to the maturity and education of the participants. Ideally, in co-operative inquiry, the various roles in leadership rotate (Heron, 1989b). Although there was an ethos of collaboration and cooperation in this project, and I was willing to share the leadership in the project, I soon recognised that I held the role of principal researcher, and that I was responsible for bringing the project to completion.

As principal researcher, I recognised my desire to find out what each life story meant to its narrator, and to appreciate all the narrators' ways of understanding themselves. I intended to learn how my co-researchers had learned to reconstruct their lives. I wanted to discover how each participant had interpreted the change they had made in their life choice, and I wanted to interpret their stories myself. I aimed to proceed from the data to a grounded theory of how some people construct and reconstruct their lives (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). My interpretive framework would relate my findings to other theoretical propositions about adult learning. I expected to reach a deeper understanding of the processes by which people interpret their experience, and the phenomena of transformative and emancipatory learning. I sought to understand the place of imagination in knowing, and to discover how changes in value systems and worldviews take place. I also intended to evaluate the approaches and methods which we used in the co-operative inquiry. I resolved to consult the co-researchers throughout the course of the study. I reckoned that their

response to my interpretations of their life story would greatly assist me to estimate the worth and validity of the study. My stance as co-researcher committed me to being a willing and mutual participant.

Aware that daily circumstances of work and family in the life of group members would influence the outcomes of our planning for and implementation of the project, I decided to employ a mixture of hierarchical, co-operative, and autonomous styles for fostering the progress of the research. The conceptual framework proposed by Heron (1989b) to explain the dynamics of group facilitation was useful for my understanding the management of our group process. Heron proposed that six dimensions - planning, meaning, confronting, feeling, structuring, and valuing - are involved in the facilitation of co-operative research groups. Because of my preference for a co-operative inquiry, I found that I needed to be alert to use enough authority to provide some structure and direction, and to explain and model activities such as drawing and metaphor analysis, without creating a norm for the group's participation. Most of the activities were not foreign to the participants. Therefore, I was able to become a peer in the inquiry. Drawing on their education and training as well as their life experience as facilitators in ministry, the other members participated readily and skillfully, especially in attending to the feeling, confronting, meaning and valuing dimensions of the group's conversation.

I discovered that sometimes I engaged in a hierarchical style of planning. This involved my taking the initiative to summon the others to take the next step in the inquiry, inviting the group to review our progress, and to consider and evaluate my proposals for further steps to be taken. At other times, the planned structure gave way in response to what I perceived were the group's needs and limits. On some occasions, it became necessary to slow down the rate of the research conversation, in order to give time for catharsis or a more sustained reflection.

It is not clear to me whether the quality of the inquiry is affected because of the intermittent way in which the research proceeded over a period of more than two years, 1988-1990. The

slow rate of progress was partly due to the intensive nature of this style of research which required me, as the principal researcher, to process the audiotapes between meetings (Reinharz, 1989). As well, the maintenance of the network between participants became an energy consuming effort for me. Added to this, the birth of my son in September, 1988 - another transformative learning experience for me - brought a diversion of much of my energies during the following two years. On the other hand, my strong conviction that this project has great significance for all of the group motivated my persistence.

As the starting point and first step in our inquiry, I proposed to the participants that a semi-structured interview with me, as principal researcher, would afford them an opportunity to tell their story first in a one-to-one conversation. I intended this strategy as a preparation for the group conversations which would ensue, in which a high degree of self-disclosure was to be expected. This interview would also allow me to gain, by way of preview, an appreciation of the range of the co-researchers' understandings and accounts, as well as any vulnerable dimensions in the narrators' life stories. With this foreknowledge, I expected that in the group conversations to follow, I might be able to question the storytellers, to facilitate clarifications in their accounts, or elicit an amplified statement which might lead to a fuller understanding for both the narrator and the listeners.

The group agreed to commence with this semi-structured interview, between me (as principal researcher) and each other co-researcher. Together, we devised some suitable areas for exploration in the interview. This initiated our cooperation and allowed the group members to nominate those aspects of their experience which they perceived to be relevant and significant for our consideration of their transformation.

An unforeseen procedural issue arose for me as the principal researcher. It was necessary that I too participate in all the steps of the research, including my being interviewed. Therefore, I engaged in an interview with myself, accessing my two roles of interviewer and interviewee, so that my interview account would be included in the data. I followed the list of agreed questions, using a "two chairs" technique. As with the other interviews and group

conversations, an audiotape record was made on this occasion for subsequent transcription and review.

2.1 THE CO-RESEARCHERS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE INQUIRY

When the focus of research is behaviour that is regarded in its social context as failure or deviance, it is often difficult to enlist, or even identify, potential participants (Stanley, 1992). In Australia, with a few notable exceptions, Roman Catholic priests who resign to marry have generally "disappeared into the woodwork", and become invisible to all but a few friends and family (Turner, 1992).⁵ As a result, my approach to enlist the cooperation of some participants proceeded slowly and discreetly through the "snowball" of personal referrals. In February, 1988, I invited twelve men, who had been ordained Catholic priests and who had married subsequently, to join me in researching what this remarkable change in our lives meant and how it had occurred. Some responses to my invitation reflected considerable reluctance to engage in a public storytelling. One respondent feared that the research process might turn into an "old boys' group", which would be just like the clericalism he wished to leave behind him.

With considerable optimism, I had hoped to carry out this research in several groups. When this approach turned out to be an unlikely possibility, after some delay, I decided to commence with a group of five who had indicated their willingness to engage with me in the research. All six members of this group had had their seminary formation and theological education in the same locations, and had worked in metropolitan dioceses in New South Wales. I have given all the group members names other than their own, to provide some measure of anonymity (Turner, 1992). Table 1 (**Appendix 1**) contains some demographic information concerning the participants.

The participants' lives span two decades by year of birth (1936-1955), and by year of commencing seminary education (1958-1979). For some participants, Mark, Paul, Luke, and Matt, their first experience of unsettlement came early after ordination, while Stephen and

Dan did not experience this until at least ten years after ordination. When this study commenced in 1988, all the participants had been married for a comparatively short time.

2.2 INITIATING THE CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY

Having expressed the intention to join in a research project, at my invitation we six gathered to hear my proposal of how we might undertake a co-operative inquiry into our experience of transformation. At the time of our preliminary meeting, though I knew all the participants to some degree, not all knew each other. This informal gathering enabled each to give a summary account of the remarkable change in their life. On that occasion, I outlined to them the research proposal as I then envisaged it, explaining that it was not intended to be a major statistical study of priests exiting from ministry, but an intensive inquiry into the process by which this movement had taken place in our lives. In particular, I proposed that our working as a group would be an integral part of this research. Our study would be a co-operative inquiry, directed toward:

- (i) eliciting accounts of remarkable change in the lives of priests now married who have lived and worked in the social context of the Roman Catholic church in Australia;
- (ii) discovering from these accounts the meaning of this phenomenon for those who enacted the change;
- (iii) considering remarkable change from the viewpoints of experiential learning and reflection, self-directed learning and perspective transformation;
- (iv) inquiring into the role of imagination in the processes of this learning;
- (v) providing an account of the meaning of this phenomenon for consideration by the Catholic community in Australia.

I did not assume that the intentions of the others participants in this research would be identical to mine. What I discerned as explicit in their intentions was a willing commitment to tell their stories as part of a co-operative research process. As well, they expected the research to bring them some authentic self-understanding, and an explanation of their own

and our common experience of changed life choices. Finally, they expressed some hope that the fruits of the research might be communicated to others, especially within the Catholic church community, for their information and consideration. 6

I was aware of the strength of my motivation to undertake the research, and my convictions that imagination had contributed to my remarkable change. This called for my vigilance to avoid making my experience and understanding normative in the inquiry. Throughout the research process, my vigilance was matched by theirs, both in the group conversations and in their review of my interpretations of the data. The participants were quick to recognise in the storytelling processes any events and insights which emerged as common to us.

However, they were also particularly alert to claim what was true for them in particular, and not to allow their stories to be subsumed by mine, or any other participant's account.

Once I had outlined my proposal that we proceed with a co-operative mode of research, the participants agreed to the process which would elicit their narratives, require them to engage in self-evaluative reflection and provide them with critical feedback. I appreciated their willingness to undertake this research even though, prior to this, they had not participated together in such an enterprise. I interpreted their consent to the co-operative inquiry as an indication that they placed considerable trust in each other as listeners, confidence in themselves as narrators of their life story, and a desire to tell their story to good purpose. I asked them if they would be prepared to use imaginative ways of telling the story, although at this time I had not envisaged any other than the use of drawings. I received an agreement to do this from all the participants. As an initial step in this co-operative inquiry, I asked the group to develop with me a semi-structured interview which I, as principal researcher, would undertake with each participant in the near future.

After I, as principal researcher, had interviewed each participant, the first meetings were arranged for the telling and consideration of the life stories in a group conversation.

Typically, the research group met for three hours in the evening, at the end of a working day. A shared meal, prior to the group's research work, provided the opportunity for the members to gather, and re-establish rapport between meetings. I discovered that one of the

limitations of small group research with busy people is that, despite the arrangement of meeting dates in advance, sometimes unforeseen illness, family exigency or the unexpected change in a work roster meant the absence of one or other member of the research group. For the sake of the group's momentum and morale, it seemed preferable to us that we proceed, even with one or other member absent at times. In deciding to proceed with the arranged group conversation, we took care to ensure that in the subsequent meeting, we provided some "bridging" for the member who had been absent. The bridging allowed the member who had been absent to catch up with the movement of the group, to complete the activity he had missed, and to gain a response from the other participants. Although these occasional absences were regrettable, their effect was mediated by the non-linear quality of the extended group conversation. In the group's hermeneutic conversation (Van Manen, 1990) its earlier scenarios were able to be revisited for elaboration and clarification.

Between meetings, as the principal researcher, I processed the audiotaped records of the group conversations, and arranged a subsequent meeting with the participants to continue the research process. Group meetings took place, therefore, at an irregular pace over a two year period. The circumstance of this rather lengthy period of research activity made possible an extended interpretation of the narratives, in both each participant's interior reflection and in the group process. Group members readily responded to each invitation to continue the research, showing no signs of wanting to discontinue their participation through a loss of interest. Indeed, their interest in the project has persisted to the present, without pressure on me to proceed faster than I was able. 7

The sequence of the research process was as follows.

- 1 After the interview between each participant and the principal interviewer, the group addressed the telling of the life stories through a series of three drawings. Each participant had the opportunity to tell the story of the drawings to the group, and to engage in the group conversation which followed.
- 2 Co-researchers were invited to consider their life narrative in terms of its core or central metaphors. The exploration of a central metaphor was done also in group conversation.

3 Participants were invited to write their life story as a parable. Parables were read in a group meeting which celebrated the ending of the main part of its work.

In response to this initial proposal, and to the ongoing proposals I made as principal researcher as the project progressed, the group of co-researchers expressed their agreement, and discussed each step of the research process to evaluate its suitability and value before implementing it. The participants agreed also to read ongoing accounts of the research which I would send to them, and to judge together with me whether these accounts had told clearly their narratives of remarkable change and interpreted them validly. Finally, the group members agreed that when the thesis which the principal researcher would write had been prepared, each would read at least those parts which would allow them to ascertain whether this constituted an authentic account of the research process. They also agreed to consider whatever theoretical propositions concerning autobiographical learning and outcomes for practice that this thesis might propose.

2.3 DIMENSIONS OF THIS INQUIRY INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

The nature of this particular co-operative inquiry called for methods to correspond with the intention to investigate life stories as both imaginative and critically aware accounts of transformative learning. A risk of distortion lies in placing emphasis on either a critical accounting for one's transformation or one that lapses into fantasy. Since autobiography is a literary form in which an author authoritatively and constructively accounts for transformation, it is necessary to employ methods that recognise authorship, artistry and critical reflection.

2.4 THE USE OF ARTISTIC MEDIA

When I had indicated to my co-researchers my intention to employ imaginative forms with them to express their accounts of change, I was uncertain about precisely which artistic media we would use. In my journey of transformation, and later in my practice as an adult

educator, I had gained experience with the use of clay, drawing and human sculpture as expressive media. I am confident that these are useful means of self-expression. From her experience with a variety of therapy and learning groups, Liebmann (1986) discovered that when the participants accepted her invitation to draw, they gained an effective means of self-discovery and communication. Likewise, Lantz found that art in therapy may be employed to "help the client communicate with the meanings and spiritual potentials embedded in his or her existential unconscious" (1993: 186). The use of art and other "ways of harnessing the power of imagination to yield subtle and comprehensive views of past experience" may lead to further autobiographical learning by alerting "the discursive intellect to a more holistic analysis" (Heron, 1985: 137). The use of drawings by the narrators in this inquiry could reasonably be expected to involve them in presenting their story in such a way as to allow them to use "controlled imagining" in an atmosphere which also might foster also the spontaneous emergence of images (Casey, 1976; Lantz, 1993). 8

Having completed the round of interviews which allowed the participants to present an ample telling of their stories of transformation, I realised that although I now knew all the life stories at greater depth, the other co-researchers did not. For the inquiry to be co-operative, it was necessary to find a suitable and interesting way to facilitate access to each other's stories through appropriate and gradual disclosure. Since the retelling of the life story is an important part of autobiography, this group activity would provide an opportunity for us to retell our stories. I proposed that we tell our stories once again, this time through the medium of drawing. This medium seemed to be the one most familiar to the members of the group. Following my proposal, all agreed to make colour drawings of some significant moments in their journey of transformation. Most of us had some adult educational experience with crayons and newsprint, and with the usual protestations about "not being much of an artist" we set about drawing three scenes from our life. 9 I suggested that we make two drawings, to depict in our story the times of entry into and exit from the priesthood. It became clear in the "telling" of the drawings that a third picture was needed.

The drawings were titled as follows.

DRAWING 1 "THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I BECAME A PRIEST"

DRAWING 2 "THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I HAD REACHED THE DECISION TO LEAVE THE PRIESTHOOD"

DRAWING 3 "THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I WAS FACING DILEMMAS, QUESTIONS AND CONFLICTS ABOUT MAKING A DECISION TO REMAIN IN OR TO LEAVE THE PRIESTHOOD"

Each drawing occupied at least one group meeting. After sufficient time had been spent in drawing, members of the group took turns to present their story. The questions and comments in this hermeneutical conversation brought clarification to and amplification of the accounts, and offered some feedback to each presenter. An audiotape recording was made of the participant's narrative and the group's conversation. The quality of the materials (pastels, crayons, and newsprint) used in making the drawings made them unsuitable for reproduction and inclusion in the thesis. The principal researcher drew on Heron's (1989b) model of modes of learning to make an analysis of the drawings, in terms of the narrator's affective states, images, ideas and understandings, and motivations and decisions which the pictures portrayed. The co-researchers verified that this analysis provided a valid and useful account of the stories they had told. Summaries of dimensions of the three drawings made by each co-researcher are presented as Tables 2-4, in **Appendix 1**.

2.5 METAPHOR ANALYSIS AND ELABORATION

The telling of the life stories through the medium of these drawings alerted me to the prominence of metaphor in our varied accounts. The stories told were full of images and metaphors. Metaphor's influence in the formation of identity in the personal, popular cultural and institutional domains of the adult learner's life has been described by Deshler (1990). He argued that because metaphor influences socialisation so thoroughly, some form of critical analysis is necessary if transformative and emancipatory learning are to take place.

That people may be unaware of the influence of metaphor only adds to its power as an agent of socialisation and even distortion. Deshler (1990) described his method of metaphor analysis as "exorcising social ghosts". He argued that the analysis of metaphor would show up distortions in meaning perspectives and lead to the creation of new metaphors. New meaning perspectives, derived from the new metaphors, would lead to personal transformative learning and emancipatory social practice.

"Creating our own metaphors contributes to our emancipation, not only in our personal meaning pilgrimage, but also collectively in the interpretation of popular culture and the creation of counter hegemonies against social forces that oppress, maintain social injustice or prevent global sustainability of life" (1990: 312).

Envisaging a continuum of learning, Deshler described *personal* metaphors as those which refer to one's family, lifestyle, career, experience of parenting and being parented, gender and sexuality, friends or reference groups, financial resources, leisure and play. *Popular cultural* metaphors are active in the construction of the person's life story through the literature, mass media, art, films, music and consumer goods which influence the person's life. *Organisational* metaphors convey the influence of those dimensions which are significant for a person's public life, such as educational and religious institutions, voluntary associations, places of employment, government, social movements, and public events.

Though Deshler (1990) seemed to offer metaphor analysis only as a tool for critical reflection, I perceived that it brought together controlled imagining (Casey, 1976) and critical awareness. Since it was my intention to understand how imagination acts in autobiographical learning, I estimated that an adaptation of Deshler's (1990) method of analysis would be an appropriate means to consider how metaphors influenced the life stories of the co-researchers. Analysis of metaphors could be expected to uncover those assumptions and frames of reference which have influenced and still may influence how we perceive, think and decide, feel and act upon our experience. Elaboration of the metaphors may stimulate the creation of new metaphors. I proposed to the research group that by carefully attending to the stories we had been telling we may be able to identify how our central personal, popular cultural, and organisational metaphors had changed.

The quality of metaphor in the life story is such that it warrants serious consideration through analysis. At the same time, metaphor also invites and soon enough compels a playful tone in the group's conversation (McClure, 1989). Our playing with the literary structure of metaphors in our life stories could be expected to amplify them and enable us to deepen our transformative learning. By both critically reflecting on and playing with these central metaphors in the retelling of our stories, we expected that metaphor analysis would disclose their meaning further.

The co-researchers were invited to discern the organising themes of their life story by choosing a central or core metaphor from it. As principal researcher, using the personal and institutional categories described by Deshler (1990), and having reviewed the audiotapes and transcripts of both the interview and of the three drawings, I drew up a chart for each person which indicated those metaphors in each life story whose significance was most evident to me. This chart served as a trigger for the co-researchers' own discernment of central metaphors. A summary of the central metaphors identified in the life stories by the participants and the principal researcher is contained in Table 5 (**Appendix 1**).

Each participant was asked to consider their metaphors firstly on their own, prior to our meeting. At our meeting, the group set aside time for each participant to do some metaphor analysis in the group conversation. Having selected what they perceived to be a central metaphor from one or more of the three domains of their life (Deshler, 1990), the participants proceeded to unpack its meaning, and to discover the influence of the metaphor. The other group members assisted in this process by active listening and questioning. The storytellers clarified and explored the values, assumptions and feelings latent in the metaphors. The analysis and elaboration sometimes led to the participants identifying and acknowledging other metaphors in their life story. Participants were able to recognise in their autobiographical learning both the unconscious and the spontaneous use of metaphor. As well, this playful mode of considering our stories enabled us to recognise ourselves as authors who had already shaped and reshaped our autobiographies. A full account of Stephen's central life metaphor of "the track" is found in Chapter Three.

By doing this reflective work in a group, we assisted each other both in detecting metaphors and in teasing out the unexamined influences on our lives. In the group conversation, as we engaged in metaphor analysis we drew on each other's wisdom and discernment. Mutual support and critique were especially helpful in the work of recognising the implications which some "frozen" metaphors had had for our stories and our lives. By working together, we found that we could foster also the creation of new metaphors. Deshler (1990) suggested that as a result of shared critical reflection in group metaphor analysis some collective emancipatory action might be an outcome for the participants. It certainly was part of the group's research agenda that we would communicate our understanding and our learning in some way to the Australian Roman Catholic community. A few months after the metaphor analysis, we agreed to submit for publication an article which described our co-operative inquiry. The article, *Hearing the Stories of a Journey*, was published in the Newsletter of the National Council of Priests, a newspaper distributed to priests engaged in ministry throughout Australia (Nelson, 1991).

2.6 PARABLE

The fourth and final form of the life story was that of parable. There are three ways in which this final piece of work is different from what we had already done. It is written, a third person account, and it is a stylised imaginative story. The parabolic form portrays the life story in terms of orientation, disorientation and re-orientation. The parable was clearly to be a reflective, playful and artistic interpretation of the life story. Though the task was somewhat novel to most, the co-researchers agreed to do it. Two members of the group declared later that, despite their best efforts, they were unable to complete that part of the storytelling, though they had been able and willing to cooperate in all the other parts of the process. They had no objection to this form of storytelling and gave no other explanation than to say that this artistic form of life storytelling was simply beyond them. Their reluctant and somewhat embarrassed non-compliance indicated that they felt simply unable to do the task. Once again I explained the task, thinking that it may not have been clear to them. They

promised to try it again. I allowed some time to pass before again requesting them to write a parable, offering them the parables which the others had written as triggers and exemplars. Despite a further attempt to complete the task, their response did not change. I determined not to press them further to write something simply for the sake of our having a complete set of stories. I preferred to interpret their statements as raising a question about the relationship between artistic or “creative” expression and imagination. As a consequence, only four parables were presented. These are to be found in **Appendix 2**. At one of the final meetings of the group, the parables were read as a way of celebrating the ending of this phase of the research process. The parables were well received and enjoyed for the humour they engendered, for their depth of feeling, aptness and capacity to tell the author's life story of transformation.

2.7 CONVERSATION AS METAPHOR AND METHOD FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Autobiographical learning is a remarkable phenomenon. To live and to learn in times of both stuckness and transformation requires considerable endurance and sometimes great courage. Yet, paradoxically, this learning is grounded in ordinary everyday experience. It seems fitting to this researcher that the methods used to investigate autobiographical learning should themselves be simple and familiar, reflecting somewhat the process of the learning itself. Although the interview method is clearly an interpersonal event (Cohler, 1988), I considered hermeneutic conversation a preferable way to gather accounts of transformational learning in this inquiry, because it reflects better the mutuality which is part of co-operative inquiry. The method of interpretive or hermeneutic conversation, as described by Gadamer (1975), Ruffing (1989) and Van Manen (1990), which I have used in this inquiry into autobiographical learning, is more fully described in Chapter Six (Section 6.4). Its flexibility of form, and its non-linear causality recommend the method of conversation as an umbrella approach to research which involves the gathering of accounts and life stories.

In the preceding pages of this chapter, I have described how hermeneutic conversation was elicited with each step taken in this co-operative study. In Chapter Six, (Section 6.12) I have used the *metaphor* of conversation as one way to describe how transformative learning proceeded in the six life stories told in Chapter Three.

Genuine conversation proved to be an appropriate method for fostering participatory inquiry in the diverse moments of this inquiry; the interview, the dialogues within the research group, and the authors' solitary composition of their lives through parable. In each of these situations, the author's interior dialogue engaged in a personal interaction or partnership with his exterior discourse. For as well as engaging the authors in the observable task of providing a followable public account of the events in their life course, conversation requires them to interpret the text of their life through reflection.

The most obvious and ordinary way in which life stories are told, reconsidered and elaborated is in conversation. McAdams (1993: 28) has aptly observed that, "much of what passes for everyday conversation among people is story telling in one form or another". This dialogue of storytelling may take place interiorly through one's solitary reflection on significant events, or in the keeping of a journal, or in letters to a friend. Sometimes, authors of life stories share their conversation with familiar hearers. At other times, they prefer strangers. Or again, sometimes authors choose to present some imaginative form of their life story for public consideration, or engage in a conversation which is broadcast. 10

In a dialogue about their lengthy experience in counselling and spiritual guidance, Lefebure and Schauder (1990: 27) reflected that conversation occurs, "where people raise fundamental questions, exchange basic impressions, and where they both grope for some kind of direction, for some kind of, if not ultimate solution, some provisionally valid approach to these questions". 11 In conversation, each partner's intention is to relate to the others some events from both their past and ongoing experience of life, to anticipate the future, and to rehearse it. Just as experience without reflection does not generate learning, neither does the mere telling of the story constitute autobiographical learning. It appears

also that to tell one's life story once is not enough, since autobiographical learning involves the shaping and reshaping of the account, until it has meaning and coherence for both the teller and the listener. 12

Besides being a metaphor for a hermeneutic inquiry such as this, conversation is also an everyday interpretive process through which authors gain an understanding of themselves and of each other. Ordinarily, the revision of one's identity and practice occurs through one's internal dialogue, as well as through the process of offering explanations to others for their acknowledgment. 13

The term, "critical friends", seems apposite for the conversation partners in this co-operative inquiry. The active listening and questioning of a critical friend in conversation is likely to invite the expression of meaning not yet disclosed, or not yet known to the narrator. Thus, in the interpretive conversation, the critical reflection of the listeners partnered the critical reflection of the story teller (Knights, 1985). The listeners who questioned (Gadamer, 1975) aided each other to dismantle distorted meaning perspectives, "press releases" (Wiersma, 1988), and "vital lies" (Becker, 1973). Because conversation is a form of *poiesis*, the activity of critical friends draws on imagination to facilitate interpretation and making meaning. In the presence of critical friends, whose imaginative knowing both receives and questions the narrative, the threads of experience, imagination and reflection may be woven into autobiography, shuttled between interior and exterior forms of conversation. 14

2.8 A GROUP PROCESS FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

The model of co-operative inquiry proposed by Heron (1981b, 1985, 1989b; Reason and Rowan, 1981) encouraged me to see my undertaking as different from other paradigms of small group research. I was excited to find affinity with Heron's (1981a) assertions concerning group participants as co-researchers, about mutuality in power relationships within groups, and about the possibilities for learning through valuing critically each person's experience. Though the instances which I encountered in my search of the literature

of co-operative inquiry did not correspond readily with the circumstances of my research, I was still hopeful to instil an ethos and practice of co-operative inquiry in the research I was commencing.

I was inspired also by the work of Haug (1987). She researched in small groups the effect of sexualisation on how women learn to name their emotions. She noted that women participants in a group may present a highly individual account of her life experience without realising the collective influences in it. The participants in her research brought to the small group their written accounts of remembered events of emotional significance in their life. From a collaborative consideration of the accounts, the women gained a heightened awareness of how they had learned to name their emotions. As a result of their discoveries through the group's "memory work", the women's new accounts recognised contradictions and compromises they had made in the naming process throughout their lives. Haug argued that groupwork is a necessary research instrument to enable women to recognise the extent to which the dominant culture, through sexualisation, distorts the meanings which individual women ascribe to their experience. It seemed to me that the participants in this study had undergone a process of sexualisation in their formation for the priesthood. In their case, sexualisation was directed to form their identity as celibate heterosexual male. Their theological construction of reality provided no means or language to critique this sexualisation. 15

Critical awareness, which is both a necessary condition for biographical research and an outcome of it, is enhanced within small groups. Finger (1989) reported that critical awareness occurs, "where each member of the group tries to understand the transformative processes of the other ones; this understanding in turn offers every participant the chance to critically question his/her own interpretations from the perspectives of others" (1989: 36).

But it is not only the quality of critical awareness which is necessary for small research group. Other qualities of mutuality and critical friendship are crucial concomitants also. Ruffing (1989) described these qualities as integral to the conversational relationship of

spiritual direction. In somewhat similar vein, Hart has drawn attention to the value of the quality of solidary relations in learning groups. In her estimation, this element of caring is "as vital a component of an overall liberatory educational practice as the fostering of critical reflectivity" (1990b: 135).

Those elements of small group interaction, noted by Haug (1988), Finger (1989), Ruffing (1989), and Hart (1990b), turned out to be no less significant in the experience of this group's research into autobiographical learning. Participation in the group had an enhancing effect on the life stories of the participants. The authors became more aware of how contradictions and distortions had been part of their self-understanding and self-presentation. As well, the way in which they told their life stories became less defensive in tone.

A different approach to small groups and personal transformation is found in the work of Boyd and Myers (1988), Boyd (1991), and Saul (1991). Their preference is for a Jungian perspective on personhood, individuation and group process. The distinctive qualities of their approach will be elaborated in Chapter Five through a comparison between transformative education (Boyd and Myers, 1988) and perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981).

Collaborative methods suit well the study of autobiographical learning which discovers "how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their social worlds" (Merriam, 1988: 19). In this autobiographical research, the authors collaboratively interpreted their life stories in a variety of forms, attending to the processes of knowing, choice, value and feeling which were present in their accounts of personal and social transformation. Their interpretive activity engaged the learners in critical reflection on their life experience, and in cognitive empathy for how it might proceed.

Autobiography is formed in situations which the author judges to be changeworthy and changeable, or where circumstances bring with them a need for change. Through

imagination, as a way of knowing one's life anew, an alternative frame of reference and self-understanding may emerge, which both envisages and authorises the transformation. The imagined meaning supports the rehearsal and enactment of a new life choice, which the learner values as more authentic. In a small group, the learners have opportunities to see through the critical and friendly eyes of other participants, the alternatives they envisage, and the new practice which accompanies the changed life choice.

As a metaphor, autobiography depicts the constructive narrative expression of an author's lifelong transformative learning. It signifies the author's interpreted account of their movement toward autonomy and self-understanding. The transformation that eventuates presumes in the learner an openness to explore disconfirming experience, the capacity to imagine alternative meaning perspectives, the ability to be critically self-reflective, and the courage to enact new behaviour. The small group research conversation which inquires about autobiographical learning may be expected not only to reveal the life story but also to have a part in the composition of a new scene or chapter in the autobiography.

2.9 SKILLS FOR PARTICIPATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

As with all research, appropriate skills as well as good intentions are required in both participants and researchers into self-inquiry (Babad, Birnbaum, and Benne, 1983: 58). Research into autobiographical learning obviously requires some technical skills. However, an authentic outcome for autobiographical research depends also on the participants' attitudes, their readiness to persevere, and their capacity to deal with the emergence of feelings in the process. Narrative skills are learned probably as part of everyday socialisation (Shotter, 1986; Bruner; 1987). Other skills, such as the cognitive and interpersonal skills needed for self-inquiry are likely to be acquired by adults through formal education. The level of educational achievement, and the reflective lifestyle of the priesthood have equipped well the participants for this inquiry.

Particular requirements for this study are the capacity to engage in critical thinking and reflection about one's own life, and the readiness to attend to the processes of imagining in the act of autobiography. In concluding the report of his research of life stories, Kotre (1984) pointed to a broad set of skills needed by researchers for eliciting and interpreting narratives.

"To use the narrative method well requires a special set of skills: clinical sensitivity, a strong theoretical bent, the ability to read critically in several disciplines, and literary power that will bring findings not only to scholars but beyond them to the general public" (1984: 265).

On the other hand, he added.

"A great deal of life storytelling takes place in natural settings, and what is known of the narrative method from therapy ought to be complemented with knowledge gathered from these settings" (1984: 266).

As well as using the narrative method, research into autobiographical learning stands within the domain "learning from experience". The fact of their remarkable change is an indication that the participants had already gained skills needed for learning from experience - being open to the events of experience, having the capacity to reflect, skill in naming one's learning, and the ability to position oneself to act on it (Kolb, 1984; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985). Those who advocate "new paradigm" research, such as co-operative inquiry, (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1988) require that its practitioners exercise skills which differ from those required in "traditional" research in the social sciences.

"Generally, traditional paradigm researchers rely on instruments to collect data, whereas in an alternative paradigm, researchers rely much more heavily on human skills such as listening, looking, relating, thinking, feeling, acting, collaborating. In essence, the researcher's awareness is the major instrument and thus must be finely tuned" (Reinharz, 1981: 428).

Rigour in new paradigm research depends on the participants exercising such skills as, "discriminating critical awareness and committed active participation, conceptual grasp and experiential immersion" (Heron, 1981). To these research skills, Heron added the discipline

of, "mindfulness, of inner alertness to what is and what is not going on while it is and is not going on, of keeping in mind a second-order objective while fulfilling a first-order objective" (1981: 164).

Participants in an autobiographical co-operative inquiry collaborate in the work and play of making sense of the events related in each other's narratives. The concept of "critical friend", described earlier in this chapter, conveys much about the qualities of mutuality and critical thinking needed by co-researchers. The dimension of narrative brings a poetic and hermeneutic aspect to the researcher's task. Therefore, co-researchers must be able to recognise how narrative forms and re-forms the author's life. They also require an interpretive skill to discover what the story discloses, to know both what is said in the story, and what is yet to be said in it.

As Babad *et al* have wisely noted, a participant's ideology, which refers "not only to a belief system but also to a socio-identity and a group of believers in which the person is a member", constitutes an obstacle to self-inquiry (1983: 55).

"Even if a particular ideological group encourages self-inquiry, that inquiry is often conducted in ways that are expected to foster more commitment to the group (for example, as in a feminist consciousness-raising group)" (1983: 58).

The processes of self-examination which were encouraged during the education of the co-researchers did not enable them initially to see through the construction of reality that constrained them. Participants in autobiographical research need to exercise vigilance individually, and as a group, to avoid an interpretation of narrative which imposes some master story rather than receives the meaning which the narrative contains. The emphasis on questioning, which the method of hermeneutic conversation brought with it to the co-operative inquiry, provided a means for the participants to assist each other in the dismantling of distortions from whichever source (Mezirow, 1990). Finger (1989) observed that participants in his biographical method improved their critical awareness through reflection in small groups. In addition to developing this *critical* ability in the participants as

a research group, I propose that there is a need to foster *imagining* as an active way of knowing the life stories and interpreting them. Finally, in co-operative inquiry, self-reflective skills need to be partnered by the ability to analyse social and cultural contexts of the life story. Chapter Four considers the social and religious context of the transformative learning of the participants in this inquiry.

The skills of self-awareness, communication and interpersonal relationship are crucial also for participants in this co-operative style of inquiry. As priests, the six participants had been engaged professionally in attending to the stories of persons, groups, and institutions for a considerable period of time. Some had undertaken formal study in the social sciences; all are currently employed in positions in which they exercise some form of pastoral care.

Although the ethos of the research conversation was not therapeutic by design, both narrators and listeners reported some experiences of the healing of accumulated “distress feelings” (Heron, 1989).

2.10 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH INTO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

Research into autobiographical learning has some qualities in common with research into other forms of transformative learning, such as its transformative orientation and the use of qualitative methods for gathering and interpreting information. What particularly distinguishes this research are its imaginative and autobiographical characteristics.

2.11 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL QUALITY OF THIS RESEARCH

The data for this research are the accounts which the participants gave in response to the request to tell and retell the story of their transformative learning. These accounts are quite literally autobiographical. The transformative learning process also may be described as autobiographical, but in a metaphorical sense. That is, in this kind of transformative learning, in which learners critically and imaginatively reflect on their experience, their poetic activity

may be seen to be that of composing their self and its life story. In this process of learning from experience, learners gain authority as they become authors of their own life stories, rather than merely being actors in a drama scripted principally by other personal, institutional and cultural interests. Other accounts of learning which transforms selves and lives usefully employ other metaphors; for example, Mezirow's (1975) "perspective transformation", Keane's (1987) "doubting journey", Frick's (1987) "symbolic growth experiences", Hart's (1990) "emancipatory learning", Kennedy's (1990) "emerging from the cocoon", Deshler's (1990) "exorcising the ghosts of our socialization". Whereas some metaphors highlight the aspect of critical reflection, the metaphor of autobiography portrays the narrative quality of transformative learning. The composition of the life story, as a construction of self and meaning, is achieved through *critical* and *imaginative* reflection on experience. Autobiographical research leads to stories which are both literary works and accounts of how transformative learning took place in the authors' lives.

The eliciting of life stories whether in an interview (Kotre, 1984; McAdams, 1985; Cohler, 1988; Bateson, 1990; Viney, 1993) or in a group setting (Haug, 1985; Finger, 1989; Reason and Hawkins, 1988; Saul, 1991) is facilitated by the fact that the invitation to tell one's story works as a trigger for nearly everyone. It provides for the author an opportunity to narrate what they perceive to be the key to understanding their life experience - "that's my story" (Kotre, 1984: 26). In his study of generativity, Kotre (1984) observed that some narrators relish telling their life story, presenting it in a concrete and episodic form. These narrators are unlikely to analyse their story, preferring to interpret it by telling the life story again, or by making allusions to other stories. Other narrators are analysts, who enjoy the freedom of ordering and reordering their life story.

The invitation issued to the authors in this study to tell the story of their transformation through interview, art, metaphor and parable actually drew from them a review of their whole life rather than the particular episode of their exit from the priesthood. The narrators seemed to wish to portray the context of their life, so that the others in the group might understand better the significance of the transformation which had taken place. Kotre

explained that the invitation of the researcher triggers this phenomenon of life review, "in which past experiences and conflicts return to consciousness to be surveyed and reintegrated" (1984: 29). According to Butler (1963), life review is a naturally occurring process, and a universal response to a person's anticipation of death. However, he recognised that it may occur also at significant turning points or endings in life. The authors in this study are understood to have faced such a turning point in their lives. From the perspective of autobiographical learning, their storying reviewed and re-invented their lives through self-evaluation. These narratives, which draw together the whole of life, reveal as much of the character of the story teller now and the present conditions of their life as they do of what took place in the past. Indeed, a life story is almost identical with the author's present self-understanding (Harre, 1979).

Kotre (1984) found that as life storytelling proceeds, its value may change for the narrator. Initial reluctance may give way to great enthusiasm. Shame may be replaced with contentment that "this is my life". He observed that, at times, life storytelling seemed to satisfy the narrator's need for generativity, by providing an account to inform and even entertain. The well-told story seems to fulfil a need for ego integrity (Erikson, 1963). The invitation to narrate their life stories in several ways provided the co-researchers in this study with an opportunity to tell their stories of transformative learning to their satisfaction.

2.12 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IS IMAGINATIVE INQUIRY

Embedded within the texts of the life story are imaginative forms, such as image, metaphor and symbol. Because imagining is both spontaneous and autonomous in the process of knowing (Casey, 1976), it is as if these imaginative forms have a life of their own (Ferrucci, 1982; Glouberman, 1989; Neville, 1989). They are observed to emerge, change or give way to successive forms on centre stage in the narrative. These imaginative forms influence the author's composition of personal and social reality in such a way as to maintain the present situation or to stimulate change (Deshler, 1990). Their dynamic presence in narrative is best approached as a partner in the search for meaning, rather than as an object to bear whatever

meaning the researcher devises (Buber, 1970; Reason and Hawkins, 1988). Although these forms may be elaborated through active or controlled imagination (Casey, 1976), they are nevertheless beyond complete manipulation. By using low threat imaginative media to trigger both individual and group reflection and interpretation, the life stories were effectively elicited through interview and extended group conversation. Their elaboration through conversation was an appropriate research method for autobiography.

Alert to the dynamic quality of story, Reason and Hawkins (1988) posed the following question.

“When we tell stories, are we *creating* meaning or *discovering* it?... But was the meaning already there lying dormant and unseen, ready to be woken to the light of day by the storytelling; or did the act of storymaking and storytelling create the meaning that we now recognise?” (1988: 96-97).

Does the author re-invent their self and create an account of their life, or does the author discover and simply make explicit what is implicit in their experience? The archetypal psychology approach of Hillman (1975a) and Avens (1980) would suggest that psyche whose "language is that of images metaphors and symbols" creates reality (Avens, 1980: 33). In so far as the author "psychologises" or sees through the image, reality is created and becomes manifest. In response to the question presented by Reason and Hawkins (1988), Mezirow (1990) would argue probably that when distortions have been unmasked through critical reflection, a new meaning perspective is discovered, articulated and owned by the learner. Recognising that their question draws the enquirer into considerable conceptual complexity, Reason and Hawkins (1988) ventured this tentative resolution.

“Maybe we can say that at a strictly material level we discover meaning - certainly we discover form. Existentially, we create our own meanings from events, in Sartre’s terms ‘we are our choices’. Adding to this a perspective from soul we have to hold the paradoxical notion that our meaning is simultaneously created by us and manifested through us” (1988:98).

My interpretation of the life stories told in this inquiry has led me to conclude that both the author’s agency in composing the story, and the influence of the imaginative forms

themselves need to be accounted for in an adequate explanation of autobiographical learning.

My excitement at discovering the work and play of imagination in my own transformative learning had led me to approach this research project with enthusiasm and conviction. The deeper understanding of imagination which I sought therein has brought for me some shifts in awareness. I have discovered from the storytelling in this research that the ways in which imagination or imagining (Casey, 1976) plays its part is more varied than I had suspected. Admittedly, some narrators in the co-operative inquiry also warmed to my suggestion that imagination weaves its way throughout their narrative. They found it relatively easy to actively engage in exploring the imaginative form of metaphor and constructing a parable. Others, whose stories indicate the presence of spontaneous imagining, nevertheless seemed to regard themselves as unlikely candidates for the exercise of controlled imagining. They found some difficulty in constructing the parable, and in elaborating the imaginative forms which were present in their narratives. Though their lives and life stories appeared to be artistic constructions, they disclaimed being artistic.

My enthusiasm for the use of artistic media in autobiographical research has been tempered. I have concluded that, although it is legitimate and useful to evoke narrative and stimulate learning in this way, it is also important to attend closely to, and engage playfully with the latent and manifest imaginative forms of language which inhabit of the learner's narrative. Ricoeur's (1978a, 1978b, 1980) understanding of metaphor and narrative provides a rich theoretical framework for exploring the place of imagination in transformative learning.

2.13 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH USES QUALITATIVE METHODS

Much of the research of the social sciences into human motivation and behaviour has shown a preference for empirical observation of phenomena, and explanations which lead to confident predictions about how other people might act in other contexts. Besides utilising these positivist approaches, educational research has explored also the assumptions and

methods of post-positivist research. Of course, what has been termed "qualitative research" is not one coherent set of presuppositions and methodology. In fact, as Jacob (1988) demonstrated, researchers employing qualitative approaches draw selectively from different traditions within the social sciences. In a review adult education literature, Merriam (1989) noted among recent research a shift away from an earlier defensive stance of justifying the use of qualitative methods. Researchers are now engaged in a more confident exploration of a comprehensive range of qualitative approaches to adult learning in order to discover what kinds of information they yield. The search for ways to achieve valid research has not become any less vigorous as a result of the growing confidence in employing qualitative methods.

Research into adult learning which elicits personal narratives of changed circumstances and choices, and engages people in making sense of their life stories appropriately employs qualitative methods. This style of research may combine both idiographic and nomothetic elements in exploring life stories. Although the researcher regards narratives as expressions of the uniqueness of each person's transformative learning, they also ask whether there are common themes within the diverse accounts (Kotre, 1984). Reason and Hawkins (1988) have named as misleading the common estimate that quantitative and qualitative research belong to two opposing cultures. They have proposed, instead, that research which has its origin in storytelling may discover possibilities for movement along the distinct but related paths of explanation and understanding.

"Thus we have two paths of inquiry: from experience through explanation to general theory; and from experience through expression to myth and archetype. Thus we create a space between them for dialogue and for dialectical development, so that a theme may be illuminated by a story, or a theory may clarify a myth" (1988: 85).

From her perspective as a feminist researcher, Reinharz (1989) has proposed the method of "experiential analysis". Her aspirations for research and her method have a significant resonance with the approach adopted in this project. Reviewing her research experience, she concluded that complete partnership, even among people engaged in co-operative research is never achieved. Nevertheless, she advocated collaboration in gathering the data and a

joint interpretation of its meaning. Reinharz argued that the joint analysis of data needs to be undertaken reflectively, issuing in interpretation which is artistic, sensitive and integrated. A test of successful interpretation is whether it draws a felt response from those who read it, and whether it stimulates a desire in them to engage in dialogue with the researcher. The method of experiential analysis takes a considerable period of time. However, Reinharz considered that it is more likely to produce "an informed understanding of the nature of the phenomenon than a quick overview or remedy for a given problem" (1989: 184).

A question about validity which all research faces is whether the observations, interpretations and conclusions drawn are to be trusted. Maxwell (1992) argued that this question addresses the validity of qualitative research also, and is not to be avoided.

"Validity, in a broad sense, pertains to this relationship between an account and something outside of that account, whether this something is construed as *objective* reality, the construction of actors, or a variety of other possible interpretations" (Maxwell, 1992: 283).

Some researchers have pointed out aptly that validity in qualitative research is not guaranteed by the prior development and ongoing refinement of instruments or techniques, in the manner of positivist research. In general, qualitative research depends principally on the integrity of the researchers and participants. Their intention to safeguard the worth of their inquiry, by providing authentic accounts of the phenomenon they investigate, is supported by the employment of appropriate interpretive frames (Denzin, 1989).

Maxwell (1992) identified several kinds of validity which pertain to the qualitative methods used in this inquiry into the phenomenon of autobiographical learning. *Descriptive validity* warrants that what is presented as an author's life story has been accurately and precisely recorded and transcribed; *interpretive validity* is present when the authors indicate that the account conveys what they understand to be their experience of transformation. "Face validity involves researchers going back to respondents with tentative results and refining conclusions in the light of the respondents' reactions" (Foley, 1994: 109). Part of the design proposed to the co-researchers at the commencement of the research , and maintained

through the inquiry was the principal researcher's undertaking to incorporate a process for their ongoing verification of their narratives and interpretations. During the course of the research, as principal researcher, I asked the co-researchers for feedback concerning the research process. The validity of this inquiry is strengthened by the co-researchers' positive evaluation of the assumptions, procedures and conclusions of the study.

The *theoretical validity* of autobiographical research depends on the worth of the concepts, interpretations and arguments which are proposed to explain how imagining contributes to transformative learning. The research orientation of the participants in this co-operative inquiry was discovery of meaning rather than verification. To reach propositional knowledge about autobiographical learning, they attended together to their experiential knowledge, through critical awareness and imaginative construction. I have already noted the involvement of group process in research which seeks to enable transformative learning (Burnard, 1988; Finger, 1989; Haug, 1988; Deshler, 1990; Saul, 1991). Collaboration in an autobiographical group is likely to facilitate both the expression and interpretation of learning.

Researching autobiographical learning through life storytelling is clearly an interpersonal event. It differs from a biographical study which explores "solitary narratives such as journals, diaries, memoirs and formal autobiographies" (Kotre, 1984: 29). Thus, the accounts of autobiographical learning presented in this study as the life stories of Stephen, Mark, Matt, Dan, Luke, and Paul are co-constructed by the participants. The co-operative task of producing the texts of the life stories argues for their descriptive validity (Maxwell, 1992). Kotre (1984) supported the validity of his accounts arguing that they were based concretely on audiotapes and transcripts that might be verified by inspection of the primary record.

"The finished stories are accurate in a secondary sense, not as facsimiles of the transcripts, but as literary depictions of the ebbs and flows in the lives that created the transcripts" (Kotre, 1984: 32).

The truthfulness of the life stories presented in this thesis may also be verified in a number of ways. By resort to the primary records, the drawings, written parables, tape recordings and transcripts, it is possible to check the accuracy of the reporting of each author's story. In order to safeguard that each account validly represents its author's character and his understanding of his own transformative learning, the authors as co-researchers have read and approved what has been presented as their narratives. Kotre (1984: 32) suggested that the story is validated and verified when the narrators indicate that the finished story "understands" them. Validity of the accounts may be recognised when the narrators are seen to be drawn into revealing further and deeper material. Even when the narrators reactions to reading their own story are unfavourable, this may also show a consistency with the themes of their story. The participants in this co-operative inquiry have reported their satisfaction with the interpretations of their life stories reached through consultation with the principal researcher. Several co-researchers have shown the accounts to their wives, thereby consulting another voice to attest to the validity of the accounts.

Another form of validity concerns the extent to which any conclusions about adult learning may be generalised from this research to the learning from experience of other priests who have married, or to even broader categories of adult learners. Post-positivist interpretive researchers consider that generalisability of the outcomes of their inquiry does not issue so much from the conclusions of the researchers, as it does from the willingness of its readers to appropriate its meaning in their own contexts.

Whereas Maxwell (1992) estimated that it is important to address the validity of interpretive inquiry, others prefer to consider their research in terms of its authenticity and truthfulness. Denzin (1989) strongly asserted that the study of lived experiences is primarily an interpretive task. Experiences, such as those which are the subject of this inquiry, are best understood through the interpretation of those who lived them. He argued that a "preoccupation with method, with the validity, reliability, generalizability, and theoretical relevance of the biographical method" should give way to a "concern for meaning and interpretation" (1989: 25). Denzin's expectations for interpreters present no easy path to

follow. To interpret well the life stories they gather, students of the biographical method “must learn how to use the strategies and techniques of literary interpretation and criticism” (1989: 25). They also ought to be concerned with how developments in critical theory affect the reading of social texts, and understand the viewpoints of hermeneutics, semiotics, feminist theory, cultural studies and Marxism, postmodern social theory, and deconstructionism (1989: 25-26).

Caulley (1994) claimed that concern for validity in “postpositivist interpretive research” reflects a preoccupation with measuring up to the natural sciences. He described seventeen basic characteristics of postpositivist interpretive inquiry which sustain its authenticity. One of these is that it uses qualitative methods. Other characteristics include an inductive approach to analysis of data, purposeful rather than random sampling, an emergent research design, theory which is grounded in the data which is gathered, a preference for thick description and idiographic interpretation, and tentativeness in the communication of the research findings. The measures of credibility for this style of research lie in its being transformative, educative for the participants, just in its implementation, and a genuine experience of raised consciousness. The majority of these qualities and dimensions have a resonance with the inquiry into autobiographical learning which I have presented in this chapter.

According to Harre (1979), the primary validity of life stories lies in their authenticity and coherence, rather than in facticity or historicity. Because autobiography signifies the interpretive and critical construction of a narrative, it is important to discern criteria for the authenticity of research into autobiographical learning.

"There is no solution to the ultimate problem of historical accuracy. In the Brussels method (for constructing autobiography) historicity is abandoned in favour of authenticity: that is, do the recollected features of the events of the life course form a coherent thematic order? This is not to be confused with a criterion of consistency, since it is not suggested that the various themes of an individual's life should be expected to fit together into a consistent whole" (Harre, 1979: 324-325).

In telling and retelling the narrative, the author of the life story imaginatively and critically sustains an ongoing interpretation, to arrive at an account that has the qualities of continuity, coherence and followability. Ricoeur (1971) argued that a followable story is intelligible to others and self-explanatory. With specific reference to psychoanalysis, Spence (1982) argued that "narrative truth" in the life story emerges as the understanding that is shared by the narrator and the listener. Cooperation between storyteller and listener requires alertness in telling and retelling, coupled with *constructive* listening. Collaboration leads to "interpretations which are creative rather than veridical" because "the analyst functions more as a pattern maker than a pattern finder" (1982: 292-293). Spence held little hope that psychoanalysis might yield one day a general theory of human behaviour, suitable for reference with a variety of patients. His observation sounds a caution for this inquiry that, likewise, this study of autobiographical learning may have as its outcome more value for educational practice and research than for the construction of a general theory of transformative learning.

My experience of adult learning led me to prefer it as an explanatory understanding of my remarkable change in life course, and as an approach to personal transformation. As an interpretive approach, does this narrative method of research differ from that of psychoanalysis? Kotre's reflection on his own study of generativity throws some light on autobiographical research too.

"In psychoanalysis, the analyst comes to stand in the patients' mind for a significant person in the past; Freud called the phenomenon transference. In life storytelling, the listener and the recorder signify not the past but the future; in a kind of generative transference they become a target for whatever fertility exists in the teller. In psychoanalysis, the goal of enlightenment is to extract a poison, to cure the self. In life storytelling, the goal is to extract that part of a person's experience which others can incorporate. The ground rules of psychoanalysis are that all should be spoken and nothing remain buried; those of life storytelling state that, although depth is pursued, some secrets should die with the teller"(1984: 30-31).

The purpose of telling and retelling the stories of Stephen, Paul, Matt, Mark, Luke and Dan is akin to the generative quality of Kotre's research. The inquiry does not set out to disclose

everything about the narrators' lives, because it is one of *poiesis* rather than either therapy, or the verification of historical fact. It is expectable also that stories which report failure or deviance from institutional norms may well have layers or versions.

"Which layer of a story is transmitted, that is, how 'deep' the story is, depends on the teller, the listener, and the climate the two of them create. At whatever level a story is told, it is an interpersonal construction of these two individuals, a compromise between the needs of each" (Kotre, 1984: 29).

The narrators' perception that those listening to their life stories are critical friends supports the argument that the inquiry generated accounts which have qualities of both intimacy and critical distance. It may be assumed that the narrators in this research group would have some sense of solidarity because of their common circumstance of having made the transition from active ministry to marriage. Their professed willingness to participate in the research project might also strengthen an expectation that their accounts would reach "depth" on the first occasions of meeting as a group. I did not make this assumption. It seemed important to me to make provision for gradual expression and interpretation of the life narratives. One strategy employed to facilitate the emergence of deeper levels in the telling of the life stories was to provide the semi-structured interview which commenced the inquiry, as well as a variety of ways to retell the story.

I anticipated that a version of the narrative, "for public consumption", which related the outer dimensions of their transformative learning, would be more evident in our first encounters as a group. With the development of trust and care in the group, deeper versions of the inner story of transformation could be expected to emerge. Also, as the authors used the imaginative forms of parable and metaphor, they engaged in a more reflective and exploratory wondering about the meaning of their transformative learning. I estimated that in consultation with the other researchers, we would decide to stop the process when the accounts had reached a state of both fullness and stability - the best accounts we could provide at present.

Variation in the life story occurs in an author's interaction with one listener or another. At first sight, this quality of apparent instability in the account may appear to question the validity of autobiographical research. However, what influences an author's construction of their account of learning is not always each various immediate social context in which the life story is uttered (Wiersma, 1988). In everyday life, the version of their life story which people tell appears to change as the author's insight develops and leads to new interpretations. The changeability of the life narrative may indicate that the author is attending more carefully to the story through imaginative and critical composition. Indeed, Harre (1979) noted that as his (auto)biographical research proceeded, the participants gained an enlarged awareness of their life's course. The story which is formed through retelling is an authentic life story which is both a work of art and an account of emerging autonomy.

Brady (1990) depicted well this constructive dimension of autobiography.

"As autobiographer I am the hero of my own tale, and I want to elucidate the past in order to draw out the structure of my own being in time (Keen and Valley-Fox, 1989). Thus, I exercise imagination, creating images and metaphors in the development of the narrative, and in so doing add myself to myself. Through imagination, the autobiographer creates the past by infusing facts and events with interpretation, direction, suggestiveness, and ultimately human meaning" (1990: 49).

Where the storytelling takes place within a group conversation, some researchers have reported their confidence that the accounts do exhibit criteria for authenticity and validity (Haug, 1987; Finger, 1989). Similarly, as principal researcher, I have confidence in the critical and imaginative attending which this research group brought to the telling and hearing of all the life stories. Their skills in expression and interpretation, and their attitudes to the inquiry warranted my confidence that a valid understanding and explanation would emerge to illustrate how imagination contributes to adult transformation.

There seems to be good reason for confidence in the qualitative approach used in this inquiry into autobiographical learning. Critical awareness in all participants, which is vitally

necessary for valid research, authentically and effectively partners imaginative knowing, especially within a small group process. Imaginative-critical knowing becomes the means of understanding the life narratives and of contributing to their continuation.

2.14 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IS TRANSFORMATIVE

Deshler and Selener (1991) have advocated that adult education research be transformative in its implementation, and in the use of its results.

"Transformative research should be ethical through serving specific universal ethical standards in the conduct of research in the public interest with attention to human rights, social justice, reconciliation, and the preservation of environmental sustainability. It should be emancipatory through reducing or eliminating economic, social, political, and technical oppressive operations, structures, and situations. It should be empowering through serving the emergence of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. It should promote the conservation and proliferation of different forms of life. It should be holistic through emphasizing, identifying, and revealing the relationships between parts and wholes, subjectivity and objectivity, micro and macro contexts, and local and global decisions and forces" (Deshler and Selener, 1991: 16-17).

Though this inquiry into autobiographical learning may seem to be domestic in comparison with the research envisaged above by Deshler and Selener, nevertheless, its ethical, emancipatory, empowering and holistic dimensions require careful consideration and appreciation (Heron, 1981a; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, 1990).

I have already noted in this thesis that people who make life choices which contradict their prior public commitments may experience some degree of institutional or social disparagement and disrespect. In so far as they reject the constraints of an institution or culture, they often experience a reciprocal rejection. Their narratives of adult transformation are countered often by official accounts attributing to them failure and disloyalty. In some social settings, personal and collective accounts of transformation are suppressed or discredited in such a way as to render them publicly inaccessible. Indeed, their authors may

be officially abhorred or treated as invisible. An important outcome of research into autobiographical learning is that, in so far as it gives voice to the person's own account of their change in life choice, it has an empowering quality. Participation as a co-researcher in autobiographical research may stimulate the narrator to undertake further learning which is emancipatory, to network with a community of learners, and to challenge publicly oppressive institutions within their own and other socio-political environments (Hart, 1990a, 1990b).

The public exclusion of the stories of transformative learning which married priests have to tell, and the Catholic church's official requirements for accounts suited to warrant the applicant's laicisation, communicate to their authors an evaluation of shameful and moral failure. By promoting critical reflection and imaginative knowing, research into autobiographical learning affords narrators an opportunity to construct for themselves explanations of the life choices they have made. In this way, participants may achieve deeper self-understanding and an expanded social awareness of how their stories of transformation and emancipation connect with those of other people in different contexts and circumstances.

Heron (1981a) emphasised the political and moral aspects of research which generates knowledge about the persons who engage in it.

"Put in other words, doing research on persons involves an important educational commitment: to provide conditions under which subjects can enhance their capacity for self-determination in acquiring knowledge about the human condition" (1981a: 35).

As principal researcher, I chose to engage the participants in this inquiry as co-researchers, rather than as subjects. It remains my conviction that a participatory process, in which authors of life stories of adult transformation cooperate in imaginative telling and interpretation, will lead to authentic research, with an emancipatory outcome for the participants.

Life storytelling has as its purpose not only to discover the content of accounts of transformative learning. As an interpersonal event, it draws the participants into an imaginative and critically reflective work of authoring, and evokes in them further dimensions of their transformation. The author breaks a silence, finds a voice and tells the story of transformative learning in a critically friendly public context. To discover the stories of other authors, to enjoy solidarity with them, and to communicate one's autobiographical learning to others is to savour some of the "powers of the weak" (Janeway, 1981). At an appropriate time, some expression of their transformative learning may evoke public recognition that these stories of change are stories of dignity and courage, narratives of imaginative possibility to order anew the forms of priesthood in the Catholic church. Such an understanding, widespread within the Catholic church, may bring changes in the policies which govern the lives of priests.

In the following chapter, I present the life stories told in this co-operative inquiry by Stephen, Paul, Dan, Matt, Mark, and Luke.

ENDNOTES

1 The transformation of personal meaning perspectives is regularly interpreted as an individual's learning, even when the learning is dialogical. Personal transformation often takes place within a community of "parallel" learners. On the other hand, emancipation refers to learning which takes place among "collective" learners, among whom a common critical evaluation of their social ideologies and contexts has occurred. Emancipation brings freedom from distortions in knowing, and the possibility of communicative action within the social context. Deshler (1990) used critical reflection in groups on the literary form of metaphor for constructing and reconstructing both personal and social reality.

Autobiographical learning may refer to a continuum of transformation and emancipation. In learning contexts, where the autobiographical self is perceived as "connected", it is likely that the outcomes of learning are both personally transforming and socially emancipating. Where the autobiographer is seen as a "unique and coherent" self, it may be more appropriate to name autobiographical learning as personal transformation. In this thesis, emphasis is placed on the life stories as personal accounts. However, when these accounts are considered in their social context (Chapter Four), it becomes clear that the solitary learning of the autobiographers is well understood as part of a social movement. In a manner somewhat akin to the Women's Movement, this social movement, in formal and

informal ways, has raised the consciousness of priests about the Catholic church's ideologies of authority and sexuality. It is estimated reliably that, during the last twenty five, more than 100, 000 priests throughout the world have decided to leave the ministry in order to marry.

2 It has become common for people from all areas of life, public and private, to publish their autobiography or memoirs, and to offer interviews to illustrate and explain the ways in which their lives have changed. Especially when they appear to be acting against personal, economic, political or social self-interest, the stories told by prominent members of social movements and groups have attracted public interest. In the current ethos of economic rationalism, their decisions to advocate for peace, the environment, or rights for minorities evoke surprise. However, autobiography is often debased by the glut of "I'll tell it all my way" life stories offered by celebrities. Often, they show little evidence of critical reflection or transformation. It must be said also that the degree of interest in accounts of lives, transformed or not, may reflect public voyeurism.

3 Though not every Roman Catholic priest who resigns from active ministry chooses to marry, every priest who chooses to marry is required to resign and is thereby suspended from active ministry. Whilst the priest's choice to marry does not, of itself, imply his rejection of the exercise of ordained ministry, it is, in fact, the public withdrawal of a solemn commitment to a celibate lifestyle. At the time of their ordination, as a general rule, priests in the Roman Catholic church are presumed to understand this permanent commitment to celibacy as a necessary condition for acceptance into the practice of ordained ministry. The subsequent decision of a priest to marry so deviates from his former publicly attested stance in life as to imply a major shift in perspective towards his own life and his relationship to his social and religious context.

4 Wiersma (1988) alerted researchers of life histories to the self-contradictory "press release" which some women, in the process of making career changes, offered as an account of their change in life course. The statement is aimed to satisfy the conventions of their social context. In the face of anticipated criticism for taking responsibility for their lives, the women communicated that they had not initiated or planned their transformation. Wiersma's interpretation of these accounts with their authors brought the discovery that because the women had come "to believe that their own experience was not legitimate or believable" they had adopted these "purposively distorted accounts to express themselves" (1988: 234). In her joint interviews, Wiersma "offered them an opportunity for a collaborative reconstruction of meaning which helped them to reclaim their experience" (1988: 235).

5 In North America, there have been associations of resigned and married priests since the late 1960's. It is only since 1992 that there has been a significant interest in the formation of such groups in Australia. As far as I am aware, no such group exists in Sydney where this research was undertaken.

6 The intention to inform the Catholic church community was not aggressive. The co-researchers were content that an article, *Hearing the stories of a journey*, representing the views of the co-researchers, was published in the National Council Of Priests Newsletter, December, 1991, pp 6-7. The article, which described this research process and some of the insights gained as a result, was presented alongside a “testimony given at a diocesan gathering” by “A Brother Priest”. This testimony also a story of personal change, which concluded with the yearning “that within this brotherhood of priests I might find a home”(1991: 6).

7 The implementation of the research project, which included enlisting the group of participants and the preliminary negotiations about how the process would take place, had started in February, 1988. The interviews and group meetings commenced in February, 1989; the meeting which concluded the group conversations occurred in November, 1990.

8 In his phenomenological investigation of imagination, Casey (1976) made a distinction between the *spontaneous* activity of imagining and *controlled* imagining. Spontaneous imagining provided images, which the person might then elaborate through controlled imagining. Lantz (1993) described four ways in which he used art in Logotherapy and Existenzanalyse to enable clients to gain access to their unconscious. He invited his clients to look at selected pieces of art. He engaged them in their own painting and drawing. Clients were invited at times to consider the therapist's drawing of the therapeutic situation, and to clarify issues of counter-transference through the therapist drawing the situation.

9 Erin White suggested the metaphor of landscape to me (personal conversation). She had employed it in some adult education settings to elicit the learners' awareness of their spirituality. The metaphor permits the artist to proceed either concretely or abstractly, to set their own horizons, to portray foreground and background, and to depict the interaction of the various elements in the scenario.

10 Conversation is often employed by skilled interviewers to elicit autobiography. Stephens (1994) noted that there are three kinds of interview current in journalism and broadcasting: contest, conversation and confession. He pointed to Caroline Jones as an exemplar of the art of the confessional style. Her interviews, which she has described as *the search for meaning*, were intended to be “revelations of the soul and psyche. They are produced by deep listening and facilitation, not with a scalpel” (1994: 40). The quality of conversation found in this research appears to move between what Stephens described as the conversational and the confessional mode. Jones' published collections of radio interviews, *The Search for Meaning* (1989, 1990), continue to be popular with Australian readers. Interviews which have been part of social science research also find a public readership; for example, accounts of managing crisis researched by Kelly and Reddy (1989), *Outrageous Fortune: Men and women tell how they made it through a major crisis*.

11 Reflecting on their experience of counselling, Lefebure and Schauder (1990: 25), having proposed initially that there are seven stages in a *therapeutic* dialogue, concluded

that this progression applied to *any* genuine reciprocal conversation. The flow of dialogue in the partners proceeds from their lifetime of personal and spiritual preparation, to attentive listening and exploration of a life story, then a diagnostic interlude, a time of assimilation, the selection of a target area for remaking, and a focus on the future in this target area. Lastly, there is support for each person in following their chosen course in the ongoing composition of their life. Various other approaches to counselling present a model designed to elicit the story, consider it critically for the purpose of diagnosis, and propose the planning of alternative practice.

12 Kepnes (1982) noted the important distinction between the telling and retelling which leads to reinterpretation, and the neurotic repetition of a traumatic story.

13 In terms of Myers-Briggs typology, introverts may prefer internal conversation as their principal means to compose the life story, while, on the other hand, extraverts may have a preference for interpersonal exchange.

14 Obviously, in conversation critical friends are present physically, or through written correspondence and various forms of telecommunication. However, autobiographers may choose also a classical wisdom figure with whom to be in conversation (Proff, 1975). Nikos Kazantzakis' (1965) *Report to Greco* is a good example of a critical friendship between the writer and a classical wisdom figure.

15 Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), there has been a continued critique of the significance of celibacy as a precondition for ministry in the Catholic church. As well, there has been an the extensive rejection of their sexualisation by priests who have married, by others who remain in active ministry, and by many of the laity. Nevertheless, the policy of mandatory celibacy for those who are ordained is still a publicly unquestionable part of priestly formation.

CHAPTER THREE

SIX STORIES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

3.0 INVITATION TO A STORYTELLING

This chapter provides a comprehensive report of the six accounts of transformation collected in this inquiry. My intention is to show here that each life story portrays the emergence of its narrator's authority and authorship in a unique way, and to illustrate common threads in their diverse patterns of meaning making. In order to portray, as economically as possible, the range and variety of the accounts told by each and all the narrators, I have chosen to focus on one life story in particular, and to present the other stories in a more summary form.

I have selected Stephen's story to occupy this position of *foreground* because of its clarity as a story of transformation, and its suitability as a *background* story against which the other stories might be seen in relationship, and by contrast. I have chosen Stephen's story to be central in preference to my own, which I have told here under the pseudonym of Dan. By placing the story of Stephen in the foreground, I have intended to avoid making my story normative. Although I considered that through my own story I would be able to illustrate more convincingly what I had come to understand as the role played by imagination in autobiographical learning, I decided that to do so would risk my being blinded to what else might be said about imagination in the variety and richness of all the stories told in this chapter. My intention, therefore, was to create a greater possibility for learning about imagining and self-telling, by locating my own narrative within the setting of the other stories.

As Kotre (1984: 35) has pointed out, in the study of individual lives the researcher's task is first to try "to set down in an artistic way the uniqueness of a particular individual". My

approach to portraying the transformations in these life stories combines the stances of an artist, interpreter, author, and critical friend, rather than merely that of a records clerk. It seems appropriate to me that my presentation of the stories should itself take the form of storytelling. My stance, as I portray the life stories of the participants in this inquiry, resonates well with Bateson's (1990) comment in presenting the lives of her five women narrators.

“The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives. They are autobiographical, not biographical, shaped by each person's choice and selective memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they are shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience”
(1990: 33)

The story of Stephen's transformation that I relate in this chapter is drawn from four sources. These are; the story he told in his interview with the principal researcher; the story he told in the group conversation at the time of the drawing sessions; his playful reflection, in the group conversation, on the metaphor which he perceived to be at the core of his story of transformation; and the parable which he wrote. The accounts are like four self-portraits photographed by the subject from diverse angles, or in different lights or settings. Together they form a comprehensive autobiographical portrayal of a life in transformation.

Having presented Stephen's story, using these several forms of the text of his life, I will present the five other life stories. My interpretive presentation renders these stories in a different way in each case, since I have drawn on the particular forms of life storytelling in each case which convey most adequately the event of adult transformation. Finally, I note some characteristics common to the six life stories of transformation.

3.1 STEPHEN'S STORY

In the accounts of Stephen's transformation which follow, his emerging identity as author and artist of his life is revealed. His composite narrative shows a critically reflective manner,

and skilful play in teasing out the core metaphor in his story. Stephen's parable, which illustrates how the new life story subverts the master story, is located in Appendix 2. In a cumulative fashion, Stephen's understanding of his transformation is expressed, drawing upon the accounts he presented as narrative and drawings during the co-operative inquiry. I have included his reflection on the central metaphor of the *track*. To preserve the autobiographical character of this rich description of his transformative learning, I have allowed Stephen's own words to be heard as much as possible in quotations from the transcripts of his accounts.

3.2 THE TRAIN JOURNEY

Stephen recalled the early years of his life in the 1930's, in a country town, as a "normal Australian Catholic boy", the fifth and youngest son in a family of eight children. He spoke of how he felt drawn to all the happenings in the life of the church across the street from where he lived. Following in the footsteps of his brothers, Stephen became an altar server. This brought him into close contact with the priests of the country town. He saw in them warm-hearted men who had offered their lives in worthwhile service to the people of the parish. At Mass, they were also the celebrants of the sacred. Stephen was attracted to both these aspects of the priests' lives.

When his family moved to the city, Stephen's education at a Catholic school further enhanced his attraction to the church. By the time he had left school, he had decided that he wanted to be a priest. "I believed that was what God was leading me to do". His brothers urged him to go to work first for a few years. "But I was a pretty strong willed young fellow". So he set out on his journey to the seminary.

In those days, Stephen's Catholicism was "a very black and white faith". He described himself as an intellectually convinced Catholic who argued strongly in defence of his faith.

Stephen aspired to be a good Catholic, and felt obliged to do whatever the Church required, believing that "if you did all those things, then you were a good Catholic".

"So I was on my journey of faith, with a deep conviction about being a Catholic, being very intellectual about it, and living it in a very willed way, by doing all these right things, and believing that God was calling me to be a priest".

Seminary life reinforced his trust in the church, his convictions about its rightness, and fostered his determination to live accordingly. "As a person, I was pretty much a conformist to the rules. I wanted to be a priest". During his seminary years, Stephen was addressed by inner questions about what part human relationships would play in his life. From the beginning, seminary authorities had told him to sever links with his former friends. Aware that he would also be required to renounce marriage, a restriction which did not appeal to him, he reached the following resolution.

"When I got to the point that I believed that this is what God wanted me to be, I said, 'Well, if that's what I've got to do, that's what I'll do'".

Only toward the end of his training did he experience anxieties about his capacity to live his entire life without marriage. Two years prior to ordination, Stephen consulted his spiritual director, who simply asked him if he wanted to be a good priest. Stephen replied, "Of course I do. I wouldn't want to be a bad one. I want to be a good priest". Encouraged to go away and think about the spiritual director's question, Stephen did so. Returning a few weeks later, he was asked, "What is your answer?". His response was, "Yes, I do want to be a good priest". The reply came, "Well, you go, and be a good priest".

Having thus settled his mind about celibacy, Stephen gave little further thought to his sexuality or affective life during his seminary days. "I can't recall any real opportunity or invitation to explore my own sexuality, self-awareness or feelings". He fully expected that the friendships he was making in the seminary, and his love for sports would be adequate compensation for his needs for companionship. His doubts behind him, Stephen proceeded to ordination.

Commenting on his first drawing, titled *The landscape of my life at the time when I became a priest*, he pointed out to the other co-researchers that he had depicted himself with his arms folded. This, Stephen explained, meant that he had locked off "that part of his life", closing off sexuality and any risks that it might involve. "I'd pushed down all of my sexuality".

An extract from Stephen's parable related this time in his life as follows.

"After some years in the mountains, he journeyed down to the sea where other learned men lived. There he spent some years listening and learning. During that time he realised that if he wished to share his newly acquired knowledge with others he must be prepared to live without wife and children. Sometimes Tiger thought, 'I cannot do this! This is too hard to endure!' Eventually, after many years of listening and learning, he decided that life without wife and children would be difficult but he could, with the Wise One's support, be able to live such a life".

In his first drawing, Stephen also depicted himself beside a railway track. He was eager to follow it, to begin his ministry through the church to families, institutions and parishes throughout Australian society. Happily ordained, full of idealism and confidence, he was all set to go and serve the people of the parishes, and "proclaim Catholicism".

"When I left the seminary, I believed I'd been given the information and the know-how to be a good priest".

Stephen was confident that the Catholic church would provide the organisation, structure and discipline to support his work and life.

3.3 A TIME OF UNSETTLEMENT

Stephen described the years from the middle 1960's till 1983, when he first took leave from active ministry, as "a time of unsettlement, a time of questioning, a time of being disturbed. But it was also a time of growth, a time of change, a time of decision making". In a clear and

ordered way, he enumerated the events which "stopped me in my tracks and said to me, 'Hey, what is going on? '". He regarded these unsettling events as significant, and decided to trace their implications for him. In his third drawing, titled *The landscape of my life at the time when I was facing dilemmas, questions and conflicts about making a decision to remain in or to leave the priesthood*, these events appear as "thunderbolts which challenged where I stood in relationship with people, church and priesthood".

In particular, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) challenged Stephen to a different understanding of the Catholic church. The vision of the "new" church excited him, as it still does.

"It was a church in which we shared our struggles, our continuing search for the meaning of God and life. It was a church in which people would make personal decisions that wouldn't always equate with the institutional church".

His new vision of the Catholic church describes a church radically different from the one into which Stephen was ordained, and for whose ministry he had been educated and formed. Excited and challenged by the changes authorised by the Second Vatican Council, Stephen described their initial impact on him.

"For the first time I began to realise that the church wasn't this hierarchical structure....that it was a body of people...and I wanted to be part of it. And I wasn't quite sure how I could, because I still felt up here (*touches his head*), I was still entrenched in the old church. And down here, in my heart and my whole gut feeling, that's the church I wanted to be very much part of".

During those years, the Vietnam war was being waged. Stephen was convinced that Australia's participation was warranted and necessary to halt worldwide communism. His firm anti-communism was founded on a loyal acceptance of the Catholic church's energetic denunciation, especially in the 1940's and 1950's. It was supported by the media reports of journalists whom he respected. He found himself reluctantly in continual conflict with many younger members of the parish, some of whom were liable for military service. "When I

gave answers, they would challenge me". Although he readily acknowledged their right to ask questions and to dispute with him, the experience unsettled him greatly.

Throughout the 1960's, there had been worldwide controversy in the Catholic church about its teaching on birth control. Since his ordination, Stephen's pastoral focus had been on family life, and he had an acute awareness of the problems being faced by Catholics in marriage. An extract from his parable portrayed this situation.

"Time passed, as time does. Tiger listened more carefully to his people and he began to hear more clearly their uncertainties, their anxieties, their pain. As he listened, he found his answers no longer satisfied their needs, his answers did not quell their uncertainties, their pain. Tiger became disturbed, he became confused because he thought the learned men had given him all the knowledge and teachings of the Wise One that he would ever need to help his people...Tiger continued to explore more deeply what the people were saying. He spoke with them, he listened to them. They challenged his knowledge and his words about the Wise One".

He held a hope that there would be a change in church teaching. The decision of Pope Paul VI in 1968 to forbid contraception caused Stephen a lot of soul searching. He was unwilling to oppose the decision publicly, yet unable to agree with it.

"I didn't want to buck the system, to confuse people. I found it very hard to agree with it. Priests that I respected came out very strongly and proclaimed their opposition to it. I admired them for it, but I don't know whether I could. I might not have had the courage, or in my own heart I didn't think that was the best thing to do. But I took the stance gradually of sticking with people and saying what I believed in my heart to be true. I told them, 'You've got to work this out for yourself. I can't tell or give that answer. I will support you in what you choose'".

Concomitant with this unsettling controversy, was the departure from active ministry of some priests whom he admired. Again, though Stephen was disturbed and saddened by these events, he assured those who resigned of his support.

About this time also, in the context of his discovering that some women warmed toward him in friendship, Stephen experienced what he called "the awakening of my own sexuality". He

backed off in alarm. Close affection was not for him as a priest, he thought, although he valued it from family members and relatives. Yet, his retreat from the offered friendship also made him uneasy. In these unsettling times, Stephen kept his footing with the help of some close friends he had made in the seminary.

"I think their friendship was a very vital part of enabling me to work through that period without becoming fragmented or panicking too much".

Among his peers in the clergy, Stephen perceived signs of frustration, resistance to change, and developing cynicism. Eager to avoid these attitudes in himself, in the 1970's Stephen set out to respond constructively to the unsettling that had been occurring in him.

He began a three year part-time course in counselling, primarily to develop his pastoral skills, but also to attend to his own personal development. He felt that there was a conflict in himself between his head and his heart, "between what I wanted to be as a person and as a priest, and what I wanted the church to be". Refusing to be overcome by the conflicts he was experiencing, he resolved to engage in whatever opportunities he might have to influence decisions in the church, and to participate in any learning programmes which related to church renewal. From some formal learning situations he gained a theological framework for understanding institutional and social change; from others there came the stimulus to grow emotionally.

"I started the counselling course. And that was good, because it began to zoom in on feelings, and began to zoom in on relationships. And it helped me to really discover more fully my own feelings and to gradually own them."

Stephen welcomed this new experience of affective life and relationships.

"It gave me like a platform, or an inner conviction - I'm going to stand in these friendships. If they are a bit trying, or a bit difficult sexuality wise, I'm not going to run away. I'll stand my ground and work through them. And I had some really good friends, and it became a growing experience for me".

His personal development continued. Participation in Marriage Encounter had begun to open up for him an awareness of "what could have been for me. I was very open to worthwhile friendships".

In terms of his metaphor of the train journey, Stephen observed, "While I was on the track at Seaview, I was dropping some of my luggage. I was becoming more open". At the same time, he recognised that this new openness to his experience was improving the quality of his awareness of others, and his capacity to respond in pastoral work.

A holiday overseas in 1976, away from his role as priest and pastoral responsibility for six months, confirmed for him that the changes taking place in him were genuine. Stephen had become more secure about himself both as a sexual person, and as a priest who wanted to build a parish community.

On his return, he came to the decision that it was time to take a parish, and move on from the area in which he had lived and worked for the previous fifteen years. "I got Woodside and went there with great enthusiasm". There he found people in the parish whose enthusiasm matched his own.

Stephen's parable tells his story of continued listening and learning from his pastoral work.

"Gradually, while with his people he listened more deeply to what they were saying, he listened to his own thoughts, but also to his heart. He began to realise an emptiness in his heart. The thoughts of his head and the feelings of his heart seemed at odds - his thoughts were clear, his knowledge and training insured this but his heart was disturbed! Gradually, as he continued to live and share life with his people, Tiger came to realise there was an emptiness in his heart, an emptiness that would not be filled by his people or by the knowledge and teachings of the Wise One".

A turning point that same year was Stephen's meeting with Justine at a group encounter programme conducted as part of the course in counselling. The friendship began easily.

They agreed to keep in touch by letter writing, since they lived at a considerable distance from each other. Stephen welcomed her friendship.

"Here is a friendship that looks good and healthy. I will write. I will continue. I won't back away from it".

Since both friends were committed to a religious lifestyle, they hoped and expected to find a suitable form of relationship. However, after a few years, both realised that in their love there was a desire to marry. Stephen felt conflict within himself. He wanted to own this desire, and their deep mutual love, but could not reconcile it with being a priest.

"But that's not for me. I'm a priest and I've made my commitment for life. That's not for me".

An extract from Stephen's parable described this movement in his life.

"Tiger began to realise that this lovely lady's friendship was becoming very important to him. Steadily, she was filling that emptiness in his heart. The warning bells of the learned men began to ring, for they had instructed him that his life was for all - to love all but to belong to no one - to be a father to all and yet a father to none. Now conflict arose in Tiger's heart. While his heart said, 'It would be good to marry and have a family', but his head said, 'That's not for you - remain faithful to your calling'. Tiger was not at peace; this dilemma threatened the very pattern and order of his life".

In the early 1980's, Stephen and Justine resolved to find a way forward which would not be destructive for one or the other. They sought guidance through a retreat made with the same spiritual director. For Stephen, the outcome of the retreat was his decision to continue with both the priesthood and their relationship, at a restricted level.

3.4 A MOMENT OF VISION

A year later, Stephen's vacation took him on an overland safari with his closest friend from seminary days. On a two hour bus trip, Stephen settled down to read a book he had brought with him. In his interview with the principal researcher, he explained what took place.

"The book was all about relationship, it was all about honesty with oneself, and with God, and the significance of relationships in our own life. At the end of it, I could quite honestly say, 'Look, I'd like to marry Justine. I want to marry Justine. What am I going to do about it?' And I went, 'Oh, God'. I was really thrown because all the implications of that came up. And I thought, 'How can I face this?'. It was absolutely staggering, you know. The thought of leaving priesthood; I'd nothing, no credentials. I was in my fifties and starting life all over again. Could I leave? I mean, I was happy in the priesthood in one sense. Everywhere I'd been, the people respected me and worked with me; and would I be a scandal to the church if I left? Aaah! You know, my family, my brothers and sisters and their kids whom I loved deeply, who had been tremendous to me. How would it affect them? All these sorts of things."

"I thought of Paul of Tarsus, and how he got thrown off his horse. Well, I'd been thrown off my horse well and truly".

An extract from Stephen's parable recounted the momentous event.

"His struggle continued until one day Tiger went on a journey to another mountain to search out his answer to the conflict in his heart. As he journeyed, he talked to the Wise One, he listened to the Wise One. And as he spoke and listened, he realised that to marry or not to marry was *his* decision, *his* choice - that was the Wise One's special gift to all his people. This realisation was like a bolt of lightning illuminating his understanding. The experience shook Tiger and he began to understand the possibility that marriage could be for him. Tiger was excited."

Alluding to his third drawing, *The landscape of my life at the time when I was facing dilemmas, questions and conflicts about making a decision to remain in or to leave the priesthood*, Stephen noted, "I felt I had been turned upside down, and my head and my heart were together". He felt lighter, as if a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Simultaneously, "I got in touch with the deepest parts of myself, my deepest fears and

anxieties". Despite his exhilaration, Stephen now faced the paralysing fears of losing his significance and personal identity. He feared also the impact that he expected his exit to have on his friends, other priests, people in his parish and especially his family. His travelling companion listened intently to him for the remainder of the trip. In a day or so, he asked Stephen some perceptive questions which served to help him find some clarity. After sharing his experience with Justine, Stephen decided to return to his parish and to settle there for a while without making any decisions.

3.5 A TIME FOR DECISION

Six months after his return from his vacation, he applied for a twelve months leave of absence during which he proposed to make a decision. At the Bishop's request, the leave was postponed for four months, during which time he agreed to work in a different parish.

Once again, in his third drawing, *The landscape of my life at the time when I was facing dilemmas, questions and conflicts about making a decision to remain in or to leave the priesthood*, Stephen portrayed the conflict of head and heart. Perceiving that he had now discovered two ways of valuing his life, one as a partner in marriage and the other as a priest, he found that he was immobilised. His head alerted him to the concrete difficulties he would face in trying to take a new track. His heart felt alarm at having to "make a jump" from his present position to where he wanted to be. The process of questioning himself whether or not he would make the jump persisted as an inner conversation. To help himself reach a decision, Stephen made a second retreat with a spiritual director whom he trusted and respected.

"I had done two directed retreats in that time with him, and they were the means of helping me to work through that clearly, the head and the heart, work through the whole business of, you know, the will of God, work through the whole business of turning your back on God, putting aside God's gift of the priesthood, letting the people down. All those things. I came through that very peacefully to make my decision that I could move forward in faith, peacefully and in trust."

Finally, after a year's leave of absence from the ministry, he sounded out his affirmative response from what he called his "deep gut feeling".

"I knew in my heart that's where I wanted to go, and that's the most life-giving decision I could make, I wanted to make. In my heart, I knew I had to jump across the chasm".

Stephen's decision to leave the priesthood and to marry Justine was not an impetuous act. He acknowledged that it was a gradual process.

"It was the gradual process of integrating the head and the heart, right, a faith that was once all intellectual and became both, a balance of both, and the process of identifying and accepting my own feelings. That was a process that took, I suppose, ten to twelve years. I mean, it's still going on (*laughs*)".

In the group conversation, reviewing his decision for remarkable change, Stephen identified some fears which emerged as he was making the decision to leave the priesthood.

"I had the security that those people had struggled a lifetime for, many of them, and if I was to step out of priesthood I was to lose all that. I was starting life all over again and could I cope with it? Could I overcome it? So that was a fear, it was like a blockage. I had the fear of rejection by my own family who have always been very precious to me, and my close friends that I had shared my life with. It was a fear of the loss of significance, not the loss of status. Through the priesthood, I realised that I was in a significant position where I was able to exercise a lot of influence for the good. I was able to assist people because of my position and I realised that I would lose that, in one way. But I came to realise that wasn't the important thing. It was me, the person. And if I was the person I'd come to believe I was in my own self-esteem, then that wasn't important, but my presence was still of significance as a person".

"My concerns at the time of decision making. Could I live without the priesthood? I had the concern of feeling badly about letting the side down. I'd worked closely with my fellow priests and some of the bishops. I had a good experience of working closely within the church and seeing the church with all the warts (*laughs*) and at the same time being part of that knowing that there was a lot of gaps happening, guys leaving, and I would add to that. Was I letting the side down? And I had to work

through that to feel comfortable about making my decision, and not to let it hold me back".

"And then, there was, of course, that fear of failure. You know, hell, can I start my life all over again? I mean I'd love to marry Justine, but what have I got to offer her. I've got myself, and that is what she loves, but, I mean, I've got no credentials, no degrees, I've got no qualifications. In my early 50's, to step out, and start life over again. I mean, can I make it? (*laughs*)".

Strength to decide to leave the priesthood came from his mutual love for Justine, and the encouragement he found among friends when he informed them of his self-questioning.

"I mean, her love was a tremendous inspiration, and I remembered a lecturer saying one night at the Counselling (Course) that most people in life only get the courage to do great things through the encouragement of other people, and I believe that I had that encouragement, that support. So I stepped out".

The final paragraphs of Stephen's parable usher in the beginning of a new chapter in his autobiography.

"Finally, Tiger's journey led him to the point where in the stillness of the lakeside, he peacefully, happily knew that his life and Justine's were meant to be one. As he came to this decision, the many difficulties and problems which had seemed insurmountable disappeared. Peace flowed into his heart. He felt the warmth of the Wise One's smile, and Tiger felt very comfortable before the Wise One, with the world and with himself. He felt a new harmony develop between his head and his heart, he felt the emptiness within his heart being filled with new happiness and peace.

Tiger, with head held high, began another phase of his life's journey, walking confidently ahead with the knowledge that he and Justine would walk together, sharing their lives fully and strengthened in each other's love. He looked to the future with contentment, knowing the Wise One asks only this of us: that we love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with our God".

3.6 THE CENTRAL METAPHOR OF STEPHEN'S STORY

The research process required the co-researchers to tell their stories of transformation in another way through reflective elaboration and analysis of metaphors in their narratives. Stephen named "the train journey" as the core metaphor that shaped his story and his life.

"As I was thinking last night about this task of talking about a metaphor, I remembered being in New York in 1976, and deciding to go to Washington. We went to the railway station and were told to go to track 39, if we wanted to go to Washington. I really thought about the track, being a Gundagai boy. There's a song; 'There's a track winding back'. That's where my roots began".

"By the time I came to leave school, I'd decided to go down this track, the track of the priesthood. I got on a train and began a journey, and that's my metaphor. A journey on a particular track that would take me to the priesthood, and continue on that track through the years of priesthood".

3.7 STARTING OUT ON THE TRACK

"When I got on the train (for the seminary), there were other people on it, and I had certain luggage with me. The first stop was the seminary. There, it was a time of waiting for the next part of the journey. I was thinking of that terrific train trip you sometimes see on television, that goes right up the Andes, and it stops every now and then, and you see them all hop off, and they all go and have a cold drink or something to eat. And they all get back on again recharged, and they go on to the next station. For me, the seminary was a stopping point where I was further energised. I did feel somewhat restricted. I'd had a girlfriend, and I wrote to her. I was told not to write to her if I wanted to be a priest. I was also told not to have particular friends in the seminary".

"Some of those who had got on the train with me, got off. Nobody who was significant for me got off on that first part of the journey. Eventually the train chuffed off to the major seminary where I got off again. The major seminary was a bit more refreshing because I thought we were beginning to be treated more like adults, I thought. And, at times, I experienced that".

"I struck a big hurdle. I became very anxious and fearful that if I became a priest I might not be a good one, and that really frightened me, the thought of turning out a bad priest. In my first year at the major seminary, we heard that the Head Prefect from a few years ago had left and married. Shock waves went through the seminary.

It was unbelievable. It was like as if somebody had died. His brother was in our class. We weren't allowed to talk about him, we weren't allowed to talk to our classmate about him. It was like he had died or had been assassinated. A couple of years later that thing got to me, that I might finish up like that, a disgrace to the church and my family and to myself. So I went through three or four months of real...I told the spiritual director, who said, 'Do you want to be good priest?'. 'Sure', I said. 'Well, be a good priest'. And I swallowed the line; hook, line and sinker."

"That time, at the major seminary, was a time of growth in some ways, as was the minor seminary. But, on reflection, I can see how I didn't grow, didn't develop. And I pushed down all of my sexuality and natural feelings. I had great ideals".

3.8 STOPS ALONG THE TRACK

"I got on the train from the major seminary and went west to Brownsville, and I began a new life. I discovered that the parish priest didn't tell me what to do. The presbytery was a home, and not churchy. In the middle of my stay there, suddenly, my co-worker disappeared and married. This was a big shock. People didn't know what to do about it and I didn't know what to do about it. In the next three and a half years, there were lots of times I would feel uncomfortable. There I felt affirmed, appreciated, very inadequate at times, and I think that was good for me. When I left the major seminary I believed that I had been given the information and the know-how to be a good priest. I was giving the answers to people, but I was feeling uncomfortable".

"I got on the train again and went to Seaview and was there for fifteen years. That's where things really began to happen. The people were very well educated. I began to be unsettled. When I gave answers, they would challenge me. I began to think more deeply about what I believed".

"The thunderbolts of Vatican Council II, *Humanae Vitae*, the Vietnam War challenged me a lot in where I stood in relationship with people, church and priesthood. In that time of being unsettled, I met a few women I felt very attracted towards, and they towards me. That also scared me because I didn't know how to handle it; so what I did was to back off. That left me very uncomfortable. It left them very angry. They told me so. Through that I felt very hurt."

"Next, I got into renewal movements - Movement for a Better World, Cursillo. Marriage Encounter came after. For the first time I began to realise that the church wasn't this hierarchical structure; that it was a body of people. The church was becoming, it was a pilgrim people of God. That's the church I wanted to be part of".

"Then there was the counselling course to improve skills of listening and responding. It was a time for real personal discovery, a time to accept the importance of relationships in one's life whether celibate, single or married, to just open up, to recognise and express deep feelings which I'd really put away in the seminary. As I was on that track at Seaview, I was dropping some of my luggage. Different people were getting off, and different people were getting on. I was becoming more and more open, sharing more openly, more deeply my own feelings. One of the biggest discoveries was the anger I'd pushed down. It was like opening a boil, with all the stuff that had been pushed down".

"Those fifteen years on the track at Seaview were very rich years for me, and very fruitful years for ministry".

"Along the way I began to talk with the driver (of the train). I began to make some decisions for myself, hopping off and looking around. I made the decision to get on the train again and I began to be the driver, going to Woodside, where I drove the train till 1983".

"All this time I was growing. I was feeling inadequate about what I was seeing in marriages around me, was very desirous to help people in their marriages and I heard about Marriage Encounter. I was really delighted. In getting involved, I got to know some really wonderful couples, and there began to open up in me what could have been for me. That same year, I went to do the CDP (Community Development Program), and in my group was my future wife. That's where we met. By this time, I was open to really worthwhile friendships. We clicked over that eight days we were in that group. At the end of the week, we agreed to keep in touch by writing. Our friendship gradually developed from that mutual decision. We had seven points for judging a friendship where the people had respective commitments. And one point was that the friendship had to be an open one. We agreed that was important".

"As our friendship grew, it became more emotional, more tender. And I got scared, and backed off. Justine said that wasn't good enough for our friendship. I went and did a three day retreat, and came away convinced that I wanted to stand in that friendship; I wanted to be authentic. I couldn't stop growing, as I felt I would. So I stood in our friendship and it grew, and it came to the point of my integrity. Because I realised that I loved her so deeply that I wanted to marry, I'd like to marry her, and when I'd realised that, I felt like I was turned upside down. Like I'd been hit with a thunderbolt, because all the implications of that for me were quite horrific. You know, I was in my fifties, turning round and starting life over again, I had no money, no job. How would I cope? Ah, you know. It was crazy. I decided the best way to tackle it was to face it. And I had a good mate. I shared all that with my mate. He listened well and eventually, he began to put some questions".

" I did a retreat. Then I went to see the Bishop saying I needed some space. So, I went to another parish for four months, and I still didn't know whether I could leave the priesthood and marry. I really didn't know, so I took leave for twelve months, and then subsequently came to a final decision".

3.9 LOOKING BACK ON THE JOURNEY

"Looking back on that journey, I got on the train of the priesthood, on the track, it was quite straight and clear, so I thought. But as I went along, and got off at different stations, different people got on and I shared the journey with them. Different people touched me quite deeply and differently. And some women touched me quite emotionally, and it began to open up for me the realisation that what I was really searching for was the fullness of life in the shared intimacy of marriage. I didn't want to leave priesthood, and I didn't want to be celibate. And, yet, to be honest with myself, with God, with people, to be really honest, my response to life was to choose to marry. And that was frightening, really frightening. For me, it was. It was really frightening and scary. What gave me the courage to do it was Justine's love, and the tremendous support, non-judgmental support from my close priest friends, the mate I'd had from 1946 and his wife. When I told them, their reaction was, 'Terrific. When is it going to be?'. It was positive, it was encouraging. Their encouragement gave me the courage, with Justine's love to do that stepping over".

"That's the track I've been on. It's a journey in which the luggage I took with me as a young Aussie bloke, was a lot of idealism and enthusiasm. It meant giving up marriage. I said that if it means that, I was prepared to do it. As the journey went on, the realisation of that gift certainly became more real, but I was still prepared to do it. But as the journey went on, I began to shed some of the luggage that I think bound me up, tied me up. As I began to shed that, I began to see life differently, see the church differently. But when I met someone who really, really touched me, I said that I'd like to marry that person. You don't just give up that easily. I chose to make the decision to marry. I felt before God when I did that, I felt very peaceful, after a lot of trauma".

3.10 STEPHEN ELABORATES THE METAPHOR

"I wasn't driving the train. I got on it, I got on the church which was being driven by the hierarchy, and I hopped on that train. I began to talk to the driver while I was at

Seaview in the late 60's. I began to make some decisions about my own life. I chose to do the Counselling course. I chose to get involved in the Movement for a Better World. I chose to get involved in Cursillo. So, even though the driver was still there I was pressing the button occasionally and hopping off and having a look around".

"I really got off the train in 1977 by telling the driver that I don't want to go on that track, I want to go on this track. I want to go to Woodside. He was all for me to stay, we weren't going anywhere. And I said, 'No'. So I got off that train, and I began to drive the train. I was keen to drive that train; that was the exciting part of being the leader. Where am I going to lead? I was keen to build the community, the pilgrim people of God, and these people at Woodside were really keen to get on that train with me and go. So, we went. But unfortunately, no, not unfortunately, the train driver got a bit distracted (*laughs*). Because he chose to unhook the carriage for a week and he shunted off his engine for a week to Wagga where there was a nice little community of people doing a CDP. And he got off the engine and sat down by the track there for a week and he didn't know whether he wanted to get back on the train again, or his engine and chuff-chuff back to Woodside. But then he said 'I do, it's been a good experience, but I'm O.K.' And he went back. I went back, and drove the train from 1977 till 1983".

"I was driving the train, and we were going forward, and the people on the train were arriving and were happy. And every now and again, we'd stop, and I'd get off and go walkabouts and meet my friend, and it was great. But it was becoming for me more difficult. And for Justine it was becoming more difficult, because she was having difficulty handling the "stop-start" effect of the relationship. There was a tension and a conflict. In the early days, it wasn't a conflict. It was a great joy. But gradually, it became a conflict I was experiencing, realising what the relationship was".

"That particular train on that particular track, I left. I decided I was finished driving that train. And I made the decision to get on to another train with another group of people, and I drove that for four months. While driving that train, I became more and more aware that I wanted to get off that train. But I didn't know which track I wanted to get on to; whether I wanted to get back on the old track, the priesthood track, or whether I was going to get on to a new track, which would be a marriage track. And so, I got off the train, and left that train, and said 'That train has to stay over there' and I'm going to just go on this little track. But at the moment I don't know where I will go. And I drove a little train as a good faithful public servant for twelve months around and around on a little circle. And when I had chuffed round the circle, at the end of coming back to the City Circle, I very delightfully, happily, peacefully jumped off the train at Central and said that I'm now ready to go now on a new track, the marriage track".

"On that journey, on those different trains, there were different people who certainly had a great impact on the ultimate outcome. In the beginning, I was really very legalistic, black and white. But I found it very stifling. I didn't know how to get out of it. But that's when the Vatican Council came and gave me a new look at understanding. And then *Humanae Vitae*. People were feeling bitter and hurt and left out, and I didn't know how to respond to them. I felt very uncomfortable, a bit disillusioned. And then the Vietnam War, I had felt very strongly that we had to be there to stop the communists coming any further. Young people in the parish, university students poured shit all over me for that. And then, another priest, whom I admired, was leading an anti-Vietnam demonstration at Bondi Junction. 'Have I got this all wrong?'"

"When I got on, I was being driven; gradually, as I made the journey I began to talk to the driver and then I started to drive. And finally, I opted to get off the train and journey on another track, the journey together. As a passenger, there can be a lot of security. It was scary to leave the security the priesthood offered".

"My journey is a bit like that train trip in the Andes, with stops and starts, gradually climbing the mountain".

3.11 STEPHEN'S STORY AS PARABLE

A parable is a story of orientation, disorientation and reorientation (Crossan, 1988). In Chapter Five, which deals with imagination in autobiography and transformative learning, the relationship between myth, master story and parable is stated more fully. Within Stephen's life, there existed a myth or master story of the good priest, as one who is submissive to authority. However, questions emerged for him in his early training, about his being able to be celibate even though he had no doubt about his desire to share the knowledge of the Wise One with others. His contrary desires were sorted out on that occasion by an explanation given to him by the learned men. Trustingly, he accepted this ordering of his confusing reality, and acted accordingly. In time, he became a custodian of the master story of submission to authority, enacted it in his own life, and offered it to those whom he wanted to serve.

A parabolic event made an unexpected entry into his life. It was through his ready obedience and willingness to act upon new awareness that Stephen set out to follow enthusiastically the Catholic church's changed self-consciousness. Obedience - the virtue of listening deeply - brought him by surprise to the edges of the master story. It was in the lives of others, that he first discovered contradictions between the master story and people's experience. Despite his attempt to employ the master story to bring order to this social disruption, he soon discovered gaps in the master story in relation to his own life. Heart-awareness emerged to elude the control of head-consciousness. This time the contradictions could not be managed by the master story or myth of the good priest.

The parable in his life was turning upside down the established order in his life. He found himself in need of a new story, a new ordering of reality. An alternative ordering of reality, based solely on heart-awareness, would be inadequate also and false. Neither head-consciousness nor heart-awareness alone could form a story for his life which would include all that he had learned from experience about himself. His feelings of joy, mixed with fear and anxiety, indicated to him that his world was still tumbling. Finally, he imagined the unimaginable. He could envisage both his love of the priesthood and his love for Justine. In the master story, these were irreconcilable. In the parable, he discovered that they were compatible.

His joy increased, but his anxiety and fears remained. To go beyond the edges of the story proposed by the learned men was to become an outlaw. The master story called him to order, but presented a threat to his life. The parable offered him a way to continue his journey in freedom, at the cost of shrugging off the master story's hold on his life. He had a choice, according to the parable, to be priest or married, knowing that the desire he had for both was authentic. The parable did not abolish the master story for the whole community, but enabled Stephen to transcend it. Along with a penalty of exclusion, his courageous choice for freedom brought him peace and a new order in his life.

This full presentation of Stephen's story shows the variety of the forms of narrative. There is a convergence among the accounts which tell of his transformation. I will now present the autobiographical accounts of the other co-researchers in a more condensed version.

3.12 DAN'S STORY - THE SEARCH FOR A PLACE OF INTEGRITY AND INTIMACY

The story which follows is drawn principally from Dan's analysis and play with important metaphors in his life story. Dan recognised several metaphors which have shaped his life story. Some of these are *life and death*, *the two-sidedness of life*, and the dimension of *finding what was lost or hidden*. The major metaphor is that of *place*. It refers not only to the various places in which he has lived, but more importantly to his "having a place to stand", "being in place, in order to act effectively and live truthfully".

Born in 1940 in Belfast, Dan was the second eldest of seven children. His father's conversion to Catholicism prior to being married meant that Dan's parents faced the stresses of conditional acceptance, even among their own families and relatives. In the context of Northern Ireland's sectarianism after World War II, his parents' response to the cultural and political environment of Dan's early childhood generated some values for the family's survival.

His father's stance was, "Be truthful, even if it means you have to stand apart". His mother's response to exclusion or isolation was, "Be caring and responsible, and you'll always find you have a place".

Although these values expressed his parents' hope for a better future based on integrity and compassion, they also carried a note of caution and the need for self-protection in them. At times, the realities of his early social context evoked a defensive stance in Dan. Indeed, in his estimation, his childhood years in Belfast promoted in him a sense of wariness in

unfamiliar social situations. Dan recalls himself in his early years as a wise, caring, playful, well-loved and trusted child. In his parable (**Appendix 2**), Dan described himself as being a child "not quite the same as the others". He experienced this sense of difference again in adolescence, after his family emigrated to Australia. In retrospect, he acknowledged that throughout his life he has sensed in himself the question, "Now that I am here, what do I need to do, who do I need to be, in order to enjoy life and have a place here?". In his responses to new situations, his parents' values of care, responsibility and integrity are to be found as recurring themes in Dan's life story.

For Dan's parents, in the cultural atmosphere of contest over religious truth, and social and political power, the Catholic church occupied the ground of orthodoxy, even though in Belfast it was in the position of having less influence in public affairs. Because his father faced unemployment regularly after the Second World War, Dan's parents chose to emigrate to Australia in 1950, seeking a place of security and future opportunity for the children.

Wanting to know the truth and to care for others became important ingredients of Dan's adolescent idealism. He believed that he had a vocation to the priesthood, a role in which both these values held great significance. He was greatly impressed by the life and practice of one particular priest, whom he named the "Black Prince" in his parable. In Dan's eyes, this priest epitomised being genuinely effective on behalf of both people and God.

Dan entered the seminary in 1957, expecting to learn how to be an effective carer, and to have access to knowing the truth. Integrity meant adhering to the orthodoxy of the Catholic church's wisdom, in which he expected to find all the understanding he would need for life. He was unaware of any need for friendship other than that which he enjoyed in the seminary. He believed, as he had been told, that the company of priests would be sufficient for him and safe. Indeed, in terms of celibacy, he was not aware of any desire for marriage. Dan trusted that the church knew best and would know how to guide him throughout life. With high

ideals for caring, and for passing on the orthodox message of faith, Dan was ordained in 1963.

Just as Stephen had done, Dan also continued to trust the church even when, in the early 1960's, changes came to its understanding of care and community. Indeed, he understood the renewal of the Second Vatican Council to be evidence that the church's true message was becoming even more truthful.

Three years in his first parish brought Dan many opportunities for caring, as well as the sometimes confusing experience of what seemed like the adolescence he had not had in his seminary years. By his willingness to be of service to people, he found a place in their affection and a sense of doing the church's work. Although people responded to his ability to listen and to care with appreciation, Dan was reluctant to let them get close to him. He did not see his avoidance of closeness as a fear of sexuality. It was part of his understanding of celibacy that "by belonging to nobody he would be available for everybody". However, he felt out of his depth in trying to respond wisely to the pressing questions which people were facing about sexuality and contraception. From his attempts to relate the church's new vision and teaching to the parishioners, Dan concluded that he needed to know more about people and the society in which he lived. He commenced studying psychology at university in 1968. Dan expected that there he would learn ways of being a more effective carer as a priest.

Being at university meant a new challenge for him in construing the meaning of his place in the church because in those days, a priest's going to university was regarded as almost a prelude to his exit from ministry. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, a number of priests who undertook university studies had left the priesthood. Dan believed that the criticisms made by these exiting priests had some point, but he did not doubt that the church's teaching and practice would change in time. As far as his own place at university

was concerned, he was very sure that he was there for the sake of the church and that he would not be leaving the priesthood.

At the same time, his learning in the social sciences was challenging him with new perspectives. In his interview, he recalled a turning point in his life.

"In 1968, I read in Carl Rogers that a person becomes fully functioning in so far as he or she is open to experience, and is free of conditions of worth. I latched on to the first part, and didn't realise at the time the significance for me of the second part".

Dan's resolve to be open to experience at the university brought him the discovery that till now he had been largely unaware of his sexuality, affectivity, and his need and capacity for intimacy. Many of those writing then about spiritual formation in the Catholic Church began to reinterpret the meaning of celibacy. Some proposed that priests need to have deep friendship with women as a condition for their personal and spiritual maturity. Whereas personal growth once seemed irrelevant to Dan's life because of his commitment to celibacy, now it seemed that in order to be capable of genuine care and to be true to one's self, he ought to be maturing in loving, interpersonal relationships.

"A friend told me that she loved me, which shocked, and delighted me, because it finally dawned on me that I was marriageable. Can I still be a priest after admitting this? I don't have to be a priest, do I? Will I get married? No".

The excitement and tension of his sexuality burst in on him. Attracted to several women, he enjoyed the friendship of each, but did not feel free to marry. Like many others, he sought to find ways in which he might combine responsibly his commitment to celibacy and his conviction that he needed to have close women friends. At times, he heard rumours that the obligation of celibacy would be removed from priests, and he welcomed the prospect of such a change.

"I became a friendly, affectionate, caring priest who now knew more than his prayers, and made more sense to people".

The Vietnam war, personal authority, the sexual revolution, pornography, population control were all contentious issues among university students in those years. Dan's hope was that the church would dialogue wisely with the society in which it lived. He was dismayed by the Pope's decision on birth control in 1968. It seemed to imply that the experience of those people, for whom family limitation was of immense importance, was not to be taken into account. His moderate resistance to the Catholic church's ruling was sanctioned for him by the views of various theologians and psychologists who still argued for change. In these unforeseen circumstances, Dan was coming to understand integrity as acting in accordance with one's conscientious perspectives, rather than adhering to orthodoxy at any price.

The more he became aware of his own experience and that of others, he realised that to live with integrity he had to find a place for himself some distance from the centre of church power and orthodoxy. This would give him room to enjoy the intimacy of friendships and to adopt a broader approach to offering pastoral care. After graduation, his preference was to remain at university as a chaplain, rather than to return to parish life.

"University is a place where I can stay close to the questions, yet it is a hazardous place for me as a representative of the institutional church. At the same time here is a place where I can care for the young, the questioning and the fringe people. Here my own life will develop as priest, and a friend to others through intimacy".

"There, I felt like a priest at the entry/exit point of the church. I was out of touch with most clergy, who felt ill at ease with university people anyway. For me, it (university) felt like the best of both worlds, the right place for me".

Church authorities valued his work as a priest. Dan, however, found himself in a place where he often oscillated between tension and relief. The "little church" of the university was rather isolated from the rest of the diocese. This isolation afforded him some freedoms. However, in the later 1970's, the Catholic church did not continue to change with the same

passion which it had shown in the mid 1960's. Dan felt discontent and wondered about the value of his work.

In 1975, a meeting, which he attended in Peru with university students and chaplains, exposed Dan to liberation theology and the challenge to live truthfully in terms of a radical faith in a world of injustice. In anger and compassion, he wanted to make a personal response to what he had experienced. On his return to Australia, he wrote in his journal,

"A radical lifestyle as priest would make sense of my not getting married. Yet, in my present circumstances I live with the tension of wanting deep, private but not exclusive friendship, and at the same time wanting to widen my sense of public responsibility".

He now questioned celibacy more actively, readily admitting the wisdom and courage of some friends who left the priesthood and married. But he did not claim any right to act in this way on his own behalf. Sometimes Dan hoped that the Catholic church would change its requirement for mandatory celibacy, so that he could remain a priest and marry. At other times, he had a sad inner sense that his place in life was to be a lonely person. This was allied to an impression which he had that he would live only till he was forty years old.

Many people regarded Dan as an accessible priest who had moved away from the "centre" of the church. He worked hard to meet the needs of people who felt estranged from the Catholic church. Added to the demands of work, Dan also experienced tension in trying to be authentic in his own faith and practice. As his faith stance changed, he found himself able to identify with fewer clergy, and in conflict with some policies and directives of the Catholic church. Within a couple of years, he felt exhausted and dispirited.

"A brief study leave in 1978 brought me rest, and time to explore and wrestle with good questions. I desired to foster my inner life. I concluded that I still wanted to be both a priest and to have intimate friends".

On his return to the university, Dan's focus shifted away from activity and education for social justice. Now, at 39 years of age, he became interested in offering retreats to people. This was enjoyable work for him, and it met with some success. However, the inner tensions in his life once again brought a tiredness, which he recognised with shame as "burnout". Dan perceived himself as an aging, dying man who needed a break from his exhaustion, or a breakthrough. The only way forward he could imagine was some new work as a priest. He expected that this would restore him. So, in 1982, feeling that he was in a place of stalemate, he sought to quit the university. Facing a dilemma over combining his work as a priest and his hopes for friendship, he asked himself;

"Where can I go now and still hold on to my desire to explore the inner life with others, without losing my friendships?"

Dan now realised that there were contradictions in his relationship with the Catholic church. His value of being open to experience clashed at times with the church's orthodoxy, both in terms of what it meant to care in particular circumstances and in terms of his own needs for intimacy. What did it mean to belong to the church, when he felt the need to be cautious and to keep some distance from it in order to be true to himself, and to meet his need for friendship? The close friendships which he had with several nuns at this time were a kind of anchor for him in all his restlessness. He felt well-loved and appreciated by them. At this time, Dan sensed no freedom in himself to realise his hopes for intimacy in marriage. He felt stuck.

Tired from his inner tensions, yet continuing to expose himself to overwork, Dan believed that he needed to get away from all his responsibilities. He decided that he needed to go overseas to search for "the pearl of great price". Unaware of what exactly this might be, he knew that it would have something to do with settling his questions about integrity and care. Whatever the cost of this quest, he believed that it would be worth giving everything he had to gain the "pearl".

On this occasion, he believed that he would be unable to find what he needed alone, so Dan undertook therapy to help him in his search for the truth of his life. As well, he was free from responsibility to care for others. The experience of therapy opened his eyes to the ways in which he had given his life away, preferring to please others, "for the sake of having a place".

"Searching for the truth meant breaking the spell, and being exposed to the 'lie' of all the expectations I had accepted for my life. It was a shattering experience to realise that to be authentic I had to 'lose what had been my livelihood'. This brought a great sense of depression".

The discovery also brought Dan a sense of making a new start in his life. As his learning and unlearning continued, he faced questions about how he could be faithful to both what he believed to be true of himself now, and what he had known of himself to be authentic in the past. As this inner inquiry proceeded, he became friends with K, the woman whom he later married. Their friendship was a source of joy and accompaniment for him, and his affection for her grew quickly. Soon, questions about his future assailed him. Dan found that his journal had also become a place for his questioning and reflection.

"Am I free to love and be loved, to be partner and parent, or do I have to go back to being a priest, managing somehow to survive on a private life of intimacy? Would this be authentic for me?"

It seemed to him like he was faced with a choice between two distinct and exclusive futures. One option meant returning to his former work, or discovering an alternative authentic form of priesthood. He did not have not much energy for this prospect, although he still felt attracted to the search for authenticity.

"Thoughts of return evoked a fear of being swallowed up by the church, and of losing an authentic part of me - my desire to be married".

His other option appeared to be to marry K, which would mean leaving behind his earlier way of being a person involved in caring, who searches for truth with people in their inner life. He felt uneasy at the prospect of letting people down, fear at the thought of rejection, and grief at the thought of losing his place as a public carer, as well as losing his established identity and reputation as a priest.

"I can see how both things are true of me. Do I have to sacrifice one part of me? I did in the past, and it seemed reasonable then, but it is no longer reasonable or authentic. Is it feasible to marry and to discover a new authentic 'searching for truth' style of life? I can see how it might be feasible, but is it right for me?"

Dan's thinking and pondering seemed to find no way out of the impasse. Then, one day, as he walked along the street, turning over in his pocket an Israeli coin which a friend had given him, it occurred to him that "every coin has two sides!". As he contemplated an image of the lost "coin" of his life, he could see that the side of the coin marked "responsibility", had always had the primary call on his energy. The other, neglected side of the coin, "freedom", was just as necessary to him for his life to be authentic. Could it be that integrity and care meant being both free and responsible? Could he take the freedom and the authority for his life which was his?

At that moment, Dan believed that his searching had come to an end. Now he must make a decision about the future. Returning to Australia, he took leave from the priesthood with the understanding that he would decide within a year whether he would marry K, or return to ministry. He wanted time to meet with those to whom he felt obliged to offer some explanation for his new stance, and he needed to have time to discern what his discoveries meant to him, and to test the genuineness of his options. An extract from Dan's conversation with the research group serves to conclude his story.

"In my life I had been looking for a way of being truthful as well as a way of being caring. I thought that I was called to be a celibate priest as *the* way to realise that. Being open to experience led me to discover some distortions in my life, and the conditions of worth under which I lived".

"I had hoped that I would not have to make a choice between being true to what I had discovered about myself and what was required of me in order to be a priest. More and more, I found that my hope that the institutional church would keep apace with my own quest was not to be realised. I found that orthodoxy could mean being right rather than being truthful, and I chose the latter".

"I was also looking for a way to be loving. I was persuaded once that I could love wholesomely through service. I did not discover there how I too could be included, but found that service brought me control, power and reputation rather than love. I did not realise their addictive power for me, and sacrificed my own need to be loved in order to be "in place". I chose to survive by splitting my life and making a compromise that was based on a self-protective lie. To persist in the split was to die, while retaining approval and appreciation. To choose to live was to enter into a place of emptiness, in order to gain a fullness in due time".

For Dan, the transformation he experienced is the perspective that he had the freedom and the responsibility to choose his own life. This did not mean an easy choice because he had grown so used to pleasing people. He anticipated that his choice would offend some and grieve others. What changed was his perception of where the authority for his life lay.

3.13 PAUL'S STORY - A HEROIC STRUGGLE

Paul's childhood was spent in rural New South Wales. His early years coincided with World War II, and his father's absence at the war seems to have influenced his interests and his sense of what it meant to be a man. Perhaps this is shown in his keen appetite in childhood for reading about the war, as well as stories of heroic exploits, and history. At the age of thirteen, Paul's family came to the city for the sake of his father's employment. He felt as if he had been uprooted, and the experience of city life for Paul was marked by loneliness.

In 1959 Paul, aged seventeen, went to the seminary. Though he enjoyed school and the team sports in which he excelled, he experienced some isolation as a teenager. Something of this

heroic orientation to life appears in his understanding of the priesthood. The image of "being a man among men", rather than that of being a "man of God set apart" was firmly imprinted in his attitudes to becoming a priest. He wanted to be of service, and he abhorred the status and privilege which some clergy claimed and most people conceded to them. Paul felt isolated in the seminary also, and unsure of himself, "keeping people at a distance as a means of survival". However, he was greatly stimulated by the intellectual fare being offered to him there during the Second Vatican Council in the years prior to his ordination. His theological journey was full of excitement and he was also developing a taste for the social sciences. But there were few students in his seminary class with whom he could share this passionate interest. He had great hopes for the church of the future as the servant of the people. Idealism steered his enthusiasm. Paul desired to be a good priest who would build community, be a change agent, care for the poor and live a simple lifestyle.

Though he had questions about his sexuality, he was not able to find people with whom he could discuss them. He could see value in marriage for priests as being good for other people, but felt uncertain about himself. With high ideals, he believed that he was under obligation to use his talents of intellect and energy for the sake of the church. So, he reached the conclusion that he could and would commit himself to celibacy as a means to the end of serving the people. "I decided I had to block out this part of my life".

Ordained in 1965, he entered parish life the following year. He was immensely successful there in his work with families, and young people in particular. Paul was innovative and capable of generating opportunities for growth and learning among adolescents. All the while he was aware that he had not yet grown through his own adolescence. However, he was willing to allow the questions to surface and to consider them. At times, he felt awkward and dependent, in need of personal intimacy.

"I began to grow up, and to ask questions about myself. I began to realise how isolated the priesthood was going to be".

In his preaching, Paul spoke about what mattered most to him about the Catholic church's mission in Australian society. While the people in his parish appreciated his great energy and enthusiasm on their behalf, he often felt that he was unheard, especially when he tried to give voice to his own needs, and to the questions which he faced in his own faith.

"After preaching, I felt vulnerable when I got no feedback".

Looking back on his work with young people, he concluded, "I spent ten years of my life meeting my own needs through the needs of others".

His busyness was a resource for his self-esteem. When the time came to leave that parish, Paul received a great deal of public acclaim and appreciation, and felt a great sense of achievement. Yet he still experienced difficulty in establishing and maintaining peer relationships. He felt awkward and out of touch with his affective life.

In the next parish in which he served, he began to appreciate how structural analysis was an important partner for his theological understanding of ministry. He was disappointed to find that few priests shared his vision and understanding of what the church might be, and he felt isolated. As he looked around him, he was appalled by what he saw as the empty lives of many priests, and he became fearful for his own future.

A turning point came for Paul in 1974. One evening, at a parish dance, when a woman parishioner invited him to join in, he was shocked to realise how much he needed intimacy. Paul recalled this moment of awareness. "I knew then that I was finished with celibacy".

Though he had begun to grow emotionally and in self-awareness, Paul did not feel free to leave the priesthood and marry. He was diffident about his ability to engage in relationships. His sense of vocation to be a priest, and a sense of obligation to use his undoubted gifts within the priesthood also restrained him. It was a time of great ambivalence and

vulnerability for him. Paul felt like a wreck. He experienced a breakdown in health and took leave from his parish duties in 1975.

With the help of a counsellor, Paul continued to explore his self-awareness and especially his emotional life. He learned to listen to his own voice so that he could discover his feelings. Slowly, too, he began to develop relationships with women. After a while, conscious of an persisting sense of obligation to exercise his talents for the church, Paul made a return to active ministry. For the next three years, he felt ambivalent about his situation. In 1979, he took a final leave, and the following year he began a university course in social sciences. Having left the priesthood behind, Paul set out to construct a new identity and to find the intimacy he yearned for. He felt very much like the youthful undergraduates at the university he was attending.

"Having seen that celibacy is not for me, it took nine or ten years to achieve what I needed".

In these ten years of "going back to basics", Paul struggled heroically to reinvent his life in the face of inner constraints. A yearning for deep companionship stayed with him along with the feelings of shame, grief and vulnerability which came with his departure from the priesthood. For Paul, to leave the priesthood was to face the failure to carry out his high ideals for service. He believed that his considerable skills of leadership were being lost to the church. Paul's hopes for a changed church seemed to be lost, and he had a sense of deserting those priests and laity whom he respected. It was with deep regret that he was leaving the future of the church to "the bastards" who, from his perspective, shared neither his passion nor his vision. His heroic struggle seemed to have come to nothing because he could not cope with the demands of celibacy.

The next few years at university were a time of learning and unlearning for Paul. He gained another perspective on the use of his talents, seeing that the point of that parable was about taking risks, rather than living with a sense of obligation. Among the younger students at

the university, he found a social context in which he could examine possibilities for a new identity and take the risks of trying them out in friendship as a peer. Counter to the conclusion about sexuality which he had reached in the seminary, Paul now learned that "being a Christian doesn't mean having to abandon sexuality". Gradually, he was forming a self which he discovered was welcomed by others.

For Paul, at the time of his ordination, the value of service had held greater significance for him than did his needs for communal or personal intimacy. The cultural context of the Catholic church's requirement of celibacy for priesthood, his driving idealism, and his own uncertainty about sexuality and relationships, all together fostered his strategy of consciously blocking awareness of his sexuality. He believed that he could certainly expect respect and some communal affection from those whom he served. For a while he had managed the tensions inherent to his stance. However, his characteristic honesty in facing questions which emerged from his experience of ministry brought Paul the awareness that he yearned for intimacy and sexuality,

How he might attend to this yearning in the context of Paul's commitment to the priesthood was affected by his degree of personal autonomy. With some shame, he admitted to himself his dependency on recognition by those who mattered in the church. As Paul took initiatives in his parish work, his own sense of authority increased. However, often his worth was either not acknowledged or resisted by his clergy peers. In 1975, the collapse of Paul's ability to work in the priesthood led to a new composition of his life which included his desire for marriage. Over the next ten years he constructed an identity in which intimacy and autonomy found a place. The authority for his life now lay within his own choices and the risks he would take. Paul married M in 1984.

With all its struggle, Paul esteems himself to have "a fortunate life", especially in finding a wife who accepted him with all his awkwardness and giftedness. He has a sense of

contentment that through this co-operative inquiry he has considered once again his life story as his unique journey.

3.14 MARK'S STORY - A SEARCH FOR A HOME

The energy which brought Mark to the seminary in 1958 at the age of 21 was the passion to express his ideals in a lifelong vocation. Only his father's serious illness had stalled his entry immediately after leaving school. Like his father, Mark held in disdain all forms of privilege and status. He looked forward to his life and vocation as a priest with high aspirations for serving people. Mark's strong sense of social and political ethics placed him squarely on the side of the underdog. He believed that this was the emphasis of the Gospel and he expected that as a priest he would be able to care for the marginalised. Another family influence on his aspirations for the priesthood was his hope for a happy home, similar to what he was leaving behind. He hoped that priesthood in the Catholic church would be a happy home for him, in which he would find support for his life as an effective minister of social justice and compassion.

In the seminary, he was shocked to find that the identity and personal style which he had already begun to form prior to his entry was unacceptable. Mark came to the conclusion that in order to complete his training successfully, he would have to "stop growing as a person".

"I had a potential to be a leader. It was blocked in me, anyhow, in the way that I tried, the way I saw, and not only that, it had to be in line with the...and not say what I was thinking, not allowed to challenge, to buck the system".

Because of his strong motivation to achieve his goal, Mark accepted the obligation of celibacy; "this is part of the deal and I must do it". For the sake of becoming a priest among the people, he chose not to keep growing as a person, and was ordained in 1965.

"I always thought, many times, that you should see something through to the end. If you are right and young enough, no matter how painful it was, then you keep on doing it".

Unfortunately, within three years of his ordination Mark's commitment to self-sacrifice was turning out to be self-destructive for him. In the parishes to which he was assigned he found neither companionship, nor a happy home to sustain him. He disliked clerical culture and the priestly "club".

The years following the Second Vatican Council were exciting and difficult ones for many priests, as has been explained in Stephen's story. Mark was disillusioned by the church's punishment of those who spoke out, and he felt that his own sense of honesty was compromised. There followed for Mark years of dissatisfaction and tension in a series of parish appointments. Even though some of his peers were resigning from the ministry during these years, Mark felt held in place as a priest by his sense of responsibility to his family, the church and his friends. His own determination not to fail at his vocation and life's work also kept him in a place of ongoing struggle.

In the mid 1970's, his election as a clergy consultant to the Bishop gave Mark some scope for leadership through his support for more just procedures in the assignment of younger priests to parishes. About this time, he stood up for himself for the first time in refusing to accept a particular parish appointment. In his alternative appointment, he met his future wife, and this was a turning point for him.

"The first day I met her I knew she was someone I could love and marry, someone who, the first day I met her, changed my life in a real, fundamental way. I think I started then a seven year journey".

This long term friendship, by offering him a sense of personal worth and acceptance also contributed to his holding fast. His friendship was reminiscent of his dream for a happy home.

Mark's health failed in 1982. His doctor warned him, "You will die soon at this rate". His subsequent time of recuperation brought him back to health, but did nothing to convince him that the mainstream of parish work would allow him to live out his ideals. Mark returned to parish ministry.

In his third drawing, titled *The landscape of my life at the time when I was facing dilemmas, questions and conflicts about making a decision to remain in or to leave the priesthood*, Mark described himself as "facing a jump". "Guilty, hopeless", "feeling trapped and shattered" and "not game to jump" are some of the feelings he described in his drawing of this period of his life. The images in his drawing included a rope, handcuffs, a bottleneck, "boxed in, hung, drawn and quartered". Mark came to the conclusion that to remain in the priesthood would mean a threat to his honesty. He risked dishonesty, both in terms of his difficulty in accepting the developing tenor of the church's policies, and in terms of celibate living. At this time, Mark would pray for the courage to make the move out of the priesthood to marry. His dream of a home with his wife held out some hope for a normal life. But he felt unable to make the decision to leave.

The turning point for Mark came during a retreat. It was not a time which he had set aside to solve his dilemma, but rather one which was part of his spiritual formation.

"And I went on a weekend of meditation. There I had a terrible time coming to terms with these things, not being able to live without her, but also there was the priesthood which I thought I couldn't live without, and how would I go about not being married Catholic - that terrible, terrible conscience thing. And also thinking I'd end up being a bad husband too, and that I wouldn't enjoy any job I took. I'd be really lonely, perhaps."

"But for some reason on that meditation thing, I came to the realisation that I wouldn't die a priest! It clicked! It was obvious for a long time. It clicked. And, so, that was it, out! In a couple of weeks, I was out".

"I don't know why it happened on that retreat. Maybe it was the fact that there was so much time; that it was just learning to meditate, and we sat down with a mantra. It was such a freeing moment, it was raining and I walked out in the rain and I just didn't care. It was just so simple, a simple decision".

"I don't think anything sensational happened. It was always the overriding thing in my prayers at the time, for God to guide me to do the right thing".

Mark married S in 1986, within a year of his leaving the priesthood.

Right at the beginning of his training, Mark became aware of the constraints on his sexuality and authority which the Catholic church would exercise in his life. These he accepted reluctantly, for the sake of achieving his goal. Mark's understanding of his vocation as being an effective agent was primary for him. It temporarily displaced his hope for a happy home and intimacy. However, the desire for intimacy was not to be suppressed. Especially in those circumstances where Mark's ideals for agency were compromised or thwarted, he became aware of his need for companionship. There developed a long period of tension in which his responsibility to complete his undertaking as a priest struggled with his need for intimacy. This contest became a stalemate, in which he balanced his loss in health and vitality with the energising influence of his friendship.

For a long time he had not found the courage to "jump the gap". The inner authority to claim what he needed for himself, appeared to be absent. In his dramatic moment of realisation, Mark gained the freedom to choose for himself what he most deeply desired. Authority and integrity had come to reside in him with all the risks and implications which followed.

3.15 LUKE'S STORY - YEARNING FOR A PLACE TO BELONG

In considering and analysing the core metaphors in his life story, Luke portrayed himself as having been born into the Garden of Eden, and then separated from it in early childhood. Before he was two years old, the birth of his twin siblings had made it necessary for his parents to place Luke in the care of his grandmother for a while. Even after his return home, the experience of aloneness and of not belonging in his family stayed with him. Luke recognised in this separation the roots of his lifelong search for belonging, for inclusion and a home.

Unlike Stephen's family, Luke's family had not had strong connections with the Catholic church, or its practice. Indeed, it was only after Luke had left school that he began seriously to inquire about God. It was during this time, in what he described as a conversion experience, that he made a discovery that God's love would meet the sense of emptiness he had felt since early childhood. An extract from his interview describes the impact of this discovery.

"I had an insight into a God who loved me. Out of that experience, a sense emerged that this was the central reality of life. Somehow, I wanted to make my life centred round that".

In this moment of religious conversion, Luke sensed a call to become a priest. Indeed, the priesthood became an imperative for him, because it appeared to be the way in which he could live in a religious context and share his awareness of God with others. Luke entered the seminary three years after leaving school. Life in the seminary was a constant struggle for him. Although he wanted closeness, he found there only loneliness and depression. Tension, heavy heartedness and self-questioning about his suitability characterised his seminary years.

Part of his childhood sense of aloneness had been an expectation that he would never marry. In considering celibacy during his years in the seminary, Luke concluded at that time that he did not seem to have any yearnings to be married.

"In accepting celibacy, deep down I had a sense that I would never marry. There was no way I could break out of this world and make contact in the way I wanted to".

In order to deal with a deep sense of disquiet he felt about his becoming a priest, Luke deferred his ordination for nine months. He chose finally to be ordained in 1974. However, he felt that he had not addressed his disquiet adequately.

"When I made the commitment, there was a part of me which said that this was what I wanted. Yet I felt very doubtful about ordination. No joy in it at all. On Ordination day, I felt that somehow I didn't belong here. There was a real sense of disquiet about the decision, which I couldn't quite understand".

"If anything shaped my journey out of the priesthood, it had to do with trying to understand this sense of disquiet over a long period of time".

In the years which followed, Luke enjoyed some aspects of his life as a priest. Preaching allowed him to link the questions of his own life with the stories of the Gospel, and to find some reflection of his searchings there. Mass and sacraments were also significant for him. He enjoyed especially work with young people. This work brought him a sense of belonging, and the occasion to struggle with them in their questions about authority and sexuality. In this context, he felt that he could be a human, rather than a religious person. In most other situations, he felt that he was expected to have a religious language and clerical lifestyle.

Luke's attitude was one of a constant search for an understanding which would address his inner disquiet. He found that his interest in ministry was oriented to the human condition, and he enjoyed reading authors whose focus was that of the alienated and dispossessed in society. He believed that it was in being close to human life that he would find God. His

routine work of "topping people up" with religion was unsatisfying, and bore no relation to the immersion in life which he sought.

He began to look more closely at his own life. In 1977, Luke undertook a part-time course in counselling, just as Stephen had. Within the new self-awareness which his learning brought, came the discomfiting acknowledgment that in the past he had had occasional times of depression.

Whereas Stephen's group encounter experience had led to a friendship with Justine, Luke found there only further evidence of his inner constraints. His loneliness in ministry, and his feeling of isolation from life were heavy burdens also, and he longed to be part of the close atmosphere of some of the families he knew. Luke sought the help of a counsellor in facing his sense of isolation.

Soon after this, in the late 1970's Luke became friends with A, whom he married in 1986. She was one of a group of friends whose company he enjoyed. After some time, he became aware that their friendship brought him both happiness and an inner conflict.

"I couldn't stand putting my life in a little compartment. What would I do? Is the restlessness about celibacy? I felt drawn to marriage, yet I had a strong sense of wanting to be a priest, despite its dissatisfactions".

In 1978 Luke fell ill. Shortly after his recovery, in an attempt to come to terms with his disquiet and conflict, he enrolled in a spirituality course for three months. Although he had made a thirty days retreat at the conclusion of the course in the hope that he might leave the priesthood, he found instead that it confirmed his sense of call to be a priest. Luke decided sadly to end his friendship with A. However, their separation did not last long because, as well as his sense of call to be a priest, he still knew that he needed friendship and belonging.

The loneliness he felt in his next parish, and a conviction that his work there was superficial led him to seek a year's leave to search out other more significant settings of ministry. In 1980, he devoted some time to working among homeless alcoholic people in another Australian city. This work turned out to be something which he felt unable to do. During a study exposure tour he took that same year, he discovered in the Philippines, the kind of Catholic church which sided with marginalised people.

"This confirmed my sense that the priesthood I wanted to live meant working with people at a very human level. Out of that, a spiritual dimension could and would be offered".

Luke returned after the year's leave, clearly aware that the experience of priesthood in such a marginal setting held some attraction for him. At the same time, he knew that his desire for relationship with A was just as persistent. He searched for a resolution to his inner conflict. Referring to his third drawing, titled *The landscape of my life at the time when I was facing dilemmas, questions and conflicts about making a decision to remain in or to leave the priesthood*, Luke described his struggle with a heavy sense of obligation to go back to celibate priesthood as being like a "bird trying to let go of a rope to which was attached a huge rock, or steel ball".

At times, he seemed to catch a glimpse of a resolution of his conflict.

"I remember going to the beach one day. I couldn't see any other way than having to go back. After the swim, I had a real sense of feeling that I don't have to go back to this church, that I can leave, and be with A. That remained with me for a day or so, then disappeared. I would wax and wane, and be sucked back into this strangling and shackling church".

Later, referring to his other drawings, Luke reflected on the significance of the sea for him.

"It has just hit me now, I had a beach scene in my first drawing too. In this second drawing, the break came for me when I went to the beach and had a swim".

Shortly afterwards, Luke sought out the religious sister who had directed his thirty days retreat some years before. He asked her to aid him in discerning a genuine choice for his future.

"I had discovered that my relationship with A had triggered off a sense of belonging with her, and that marriage was what I wanted with her. The retreat confirmed that. Prior to that I had felt tension between the two. Now I felt quite at peace with marriage and priesthood, though they were incompatible within the system".

"In making the decision, I was looking quite starkly at two roads. As soon as I was posed the question of the two roads, it was almost automatic. I knew I could leave".

Luke decided that he would marry A, and left the priesthood in 1980. What followed, however, was a long period of exposure to grief and depression.

"I felt very depressed, mourning the loss of priesthood, and triggering off the grief from early separation from my parents, and the depression related to losing my identity... struggling to find something new in it all... part of my identity is still forming".

"So much of my life was geared towards priesthood, and in one sense I didn't want to give that up, it was a precious part of my life. I started analytical therapy in 1982, and this has been a very significant growing point in my life; it enabled me to put aside a lot of., and helped me to acknowledge my own needs, and find more appropriate ways of meeting them. Before, everything was in the priesthood, and one's whole life was supposed to be met in that narrow structure".

"I became more accepting of my needs, and realised too that priesthood still is an important part of my life. But somehow the institution can't come to grips with that, and I feel a sense of loss and sadness. At the same time, the new career in social work meets a fundamental need for service and ministry for people".

"It is difficult to realise that the time and the history are influential. Had I lived in a different time and different church, it's quite possible that what did evolve over a long period of time for me, wouldn't have. I came into priesthood in a latter period, when the church had opened itself more to social sciences - a questioning environment. A period of flux. It paralleled how I was. It triggered, encouraged, challenged me. Had I not been in that historical time, it's possible I might have

stayed in as a very sad sort of man within the priesthood. I'm very conscious of being where those influences have been a part of my life".

"What stands out in the journey I've gone through is that at a very deep level, whether it had been in priesthood or in lay life, what has been part and always will be is trying to make more sense of my inner experience. That has been a very significant motivating force pushing me into experiences, wanting to come to a deeper sense of the truth that's inside me. I think part of the truth is understanding the truth of my early life, how it lives in me now. And once I entered the priesthood and experienced disquiet and confusion, part of my journey in the priesthood was trying to make sense of the doubt and confusion about priesthood, yet wanting to serve people and be priest. So, part of my journey has been a sense of search for truth, inner truth, continual search, uncovering new elements in that".

"At a significant point I met A, yearning for life. Meeting her released so much of my own yearning for life. I touched and found it in the person of A, and that continued to develop over a long period of time".

"Also, about trying to understand the conversion experience. It was very real. Its influence in entering and remaining in priesthood. And it is significant even now. The meaning has changed over time, in new contexts. On entering priesthood, it was a primitive, fundamentalist understanding of how God touched people, and worked in people. Over time it has become more human, balanced with a wider understanding of God".

"There's a recognition that I've come home. I was a wanderer through different sorts of lands. At times, feeling it's better here than elsewhere, but never feeling at home. The experience with A prior to that retreat was - this is home, this is where I belong, this is what I've been yearning for, this is what I've been looking for, but haven't been able to recognise up until now".

"I looked at priesthood, and marriage with A as two roads. When I looked at them, I knew immediately that the road with A was the one I belonged on. There was peace and a great sense of joy. The other road had heaviness of heart and frustration. Such a contrast. This confirmed what I'd been feeling all along. I reached a greater acceptance that my needs are important. To turn back is to do violence to myself. I tried to finish, but my whole being cried out for recognition. These are central needs, and I'm not going to compromise them'.

"In one sense, the tension settled once and for all in the retreat. Yet, I was still exposed to being drawn back to priesthood or at least some aspects of it. At one level, there is a contrast between what I came from and what I found. This is partly related to discovering that what I was in wasn't 'me'. I didn't belong, I had no roots".

The transformation which took place in Luke's life is clearly one which embraced his lifelong search for belonging. The priesthood, which once appeared to be his best hope for identity, belonging and agency had become a heavy burden now, in so far as it excluded him from the companionship, which he now identified as being central to his life.

3.16 MATT'S STORY - QUITTING THE STAGE, AND COMING HOME TO HIMSELF

Even though he too had grown up in the culture of an Australian Roman Catholic family, school and church, the social context of Matt's childhood and seminary formation was significantly different from all of the other narrators. Born in 1955, most of Matt's experience of the Church has been in the time after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Matt described himself as a shy, overweight child who learned to gain love and acceptance through compliance, and by "being good at school". Using the metaphor of the theatre to portray his life, Matt described how in his adolescent years he developed various roles, some of which gave him significance and admiration among his peers, and others which won him the approval of his family and relatives. Whether he was clown among his peers, achieving student, or helpful tutor in his family and school settings, these ways of presenting himself were roles acted out to give him some sense of power and predictability in his life.

"I learned to act and to fulfil the expectations of others. The roles I adopted became entrenched in me".

In the final years of his schooling, he wondered at times about who was directing his roles. While he wanted to think that he was in control of his life, sometimes, he felt the constraint of school and family authority.

An extract from Matt's parable sets the scene for his vocation.

"The Knights of the Table proclaimed an awesome message among their people. One did not have to live in fear, as many did. One did not have to be as cold and dead as stone, as many were. Life was for living - Be Happy! Be Free! Do Not Be Afraid!".

"He yearned to become a Knight of the Table, a Steward of the Signs, so that he could shower happiness and freedom on those whom he met".

In terms of the metaphor of the stage, entering the seminary in 1973 was like going to drama school. It was tedious for him to have to learn the scripts he would act out as a priest. At the same time, Matt found great excitement in the "workshopping", where he could "push the scripts and Scriptures" to discover a variety of interpretations and their implications.

"I looked forward to the time when, as a priest, I could make the script my own, and push its interpretation further myself".

The seminary provided a safe place of rehearsal for him, and he enjoyed provoking a reaction to the performance of his roles. On one occasion, when he had sought election as the students' representative during a dispute with seminary authorities, he was rather dismayed at being thrust into the spotlight of disapproval, misrepresentation and criticism from clergy outside the seminary. Most of the time, however, Matt was content to be lost in the crowd, having a sense of running his own show.

In 1978, the year prior to ordination, he had opportunities for field education which excited him because they exposed him to a wide range of possibilities for ministry in situations of human need. Matt had an idealistic confidence in his own abilities to make a difference in the church. In his first drawing, titled *The landscape of my life at the time when I became a priest*, he foresaw his ministry as follows.

"I'm being called to be a man among people, leading people to happiness, spreading a Gospel message and getting a message back, giving strength and getting strength back".

"At Ordination time, heading toward this, I was quite excited. I'd worked for seven years to get to this, I'd enjoyed the parish experience I'd tasted. The church as monolith had lost its value for me. That was never part of my education. Church for me was a community of people, to be found in hospitals, jails, etc".

"I didn't have any real sense of self-sacrifice. I had some healthy doubts about whether I was good enough. I was leaving behind trivial pursuits, pedestalism. I was going to be free to be my own person, to live according to my own values, free from the trivia, rules and regulations".

In his parable, Matt portrayed a sense of having achieved his ambition despite the costs.

"The Knight had forsaken wife, family and even friends, but was now the possessor of the wondrous signs that would bring happiness to so many".

Contrary to this idealism and his expectations, Matt discovered that, upon his arrival in his first parish in 1979, he soon lost the impetus he had built up in the year prior to his ordination. Now he discovered that his life was governed by "another director", the parish priest. However, because he fulfilled the expectations which most people had for him, he achieved a wide popularity.

"I fell back. I lived everyone else's script. I defended the church, and church teachings. I was liked, but I was fairly cold".

For a couple of years he continued in this vein, unaware that there was anything else to the life of a priest than the exercise of his powers in serving the people.

"I was the priest. It never crossed my mind that I could have time of my own. I was proud that I was always being the priest".

Some married friends in the parish showed him for the first time that he could be loved for who he was rather than for what he was. That was a pleasant discovery. A shock came when, in 1981, a young woman challenged him to acknowledge that "in fact, I was someone else than this actor who was on stage, who was really on a pedestal, even though I pretended that I wasn't because I refused to wear a collar". Matt was threatened by her frankness and by her offer of friendship, which he refused. Looking back, he admitted;

"A play had been set, and I nearly didn't follow the actions and words; but I did. And I felt smug about it. Because I stuck to my guns, I lost an opportunity for some sort of intimacy or another, and I felt that loss for a couple of years".

When it came time, in 1982, to move to a second parish, Matt still played in his role as priest. He felt that there he should present an androgynous presence to people, partly for his own protection, and partly because he believed that it served people well. Drawing on images from the solo theatre performances of actor Reg Livermore, Matt believed that he ought "paint his face" as well.

"At the new parish, for the first two or three years, every time I walked out of my room, I had face paint on. I might have been funny, I might have been being serious, I might have been happy, or I might have been dealing with sadness. Whatever I did, like Reg did, it had a point. Whether it was hilarious comedy, or soul destroying depression, it had a point, some comment on society".

To his surprise, his move to this parish brought Matt the experience of a very different environment.

"The priests there seemed to be living their own lives, and weren't ashamed to talk about what mattered to them".

Slowly, Matt realised that he could be himself, not only in his "dressing room", but among the other priests as well.

"This was a big step. It was because these other people could do it, be themselves. That allowed me to do it. Gradually, my face paint began to come off in public too. I began to say what I really felt, and wanted to say. After a while, it felt better to have the face paint off".

Though he felt better, Matt also experienced great disturbance as he contemplated the implications of showing his own face to the world. He experienced a sense of guilt, because he felt that now he was not doing what he was supposed to be doing. Matt felt apprehensive, too, that he would lose his significance and acceptance if he stepped down from his role as priest. He was disturbed, also, because as he began to say what he felt and meant, Matt saw that he was at odds with what many people in the church stood for. He could see also that his earlier vision of serving people on the margins of society had not taken shape as he had once hoped.

"I had a sense of being able and wanting to form a path, to journey on in one part of my life, whereas in the church there was a big 'Stop' sign. I thought I hadn't been going anywhere for a long time. I was wanting to see a 'Go' sign, to have permission to move and to experience love, and to see myself as a person, as I saw me, and not as a functionary".

"I also saw the church as a trap. I felt bound by the institution. I was binding myself, not able to love".

As long as he was an actor, in the role of priest, it had been enough for him to have the applause of appreciation for a good performance. He had also been encouraged by the obvious fruits of his labours. However, as the face paint came off, Matt began to ask himself whether appreciation for his work could really sustain his life. Whereas once Matt had declared his expectations of never sharing a deep love in marriage, it became clear to him that he now desired this.

"I always saw celibacy as rejecting a restricted form of love which goes deep, for a love where you can share yourself about. I'd been bound in that. I'd been spread so far round with this love that it wasn't deep enough for me, although I'd accepted in the first place that it wasn't deep anyway. From my earlier imagined wide social

network of many people, interacting with me and me with them, it had come down to a couple of families and a few friends. I had a fantasy or an image of a family".

"One priest kept saying to me, "If you want to leave, get out and get married".

"It was not just a matter of personal love, but dreaming of the two of us, going back to the fringe dwellers, to a life, which at that stage it was not possible for me to do".

"Though I felt revolted with myself, and my body image, there was T offering friendship. T's friends became mine, and my friends became T's".

An extract from his parable tells the story of his undoing and his revival.

"The Knight worked hard. As time passed, he became tired and sick. Some of his fellow Knights gathered around to lend him their strength, but he seemed to become sicker and more tired. He liked being a Knight, but he seemed to be losing the ability to draw strength from the signs of the Society. While everyone still saw him as a Knight, he felt as though he was slipping away from the Society - being drawn into a chasm of fear and pain".

A brief holiday in 1985 did little to revive the Knight.

"He was still a Knight and could not run away, and so he returned to his people after a short while. A cloud came over him. Others - Knights of the Table, his people, his family - tried to return gifts to him, but he needed something different. He felt his heart slowly turn to stone".

"One day over a meal, he looked up to see a peasant girl he had known for some time, but she was no longer a peasant. Rather, she shone as a Princess. This was new in many ways. The Society of the Table had many Princes but no Princesses. Why had he mistaken this Princess for a peasant? What was the nature of her Royalty?".

"The Princess showed the Knight her heart. Her Royalty was of the Heart, not of Proclamation. She could show him this Royalty of the Heart. She could lead him to discover his own heart. The Knight discovered what he had suspected - a heart of stone. The Princess brought her own gifts to the Knight, and he started a journey of discovery. His heart was thawed; he learned to love; he learned to live; he learned to receive as well as to give. He had become a Prince of the Heart".

"The peasant's son had become a Prince - his castle is smaller than before, and his people are fewer than before, but he still gives of his gifts. And yes, his Princess keeps his heart from turning to stone".

Some friends had encouraged him.

"If you really want to take the face paint off, then you are allowed to take it off. If you want to retire from the stage, well, you can do that too".

The prospect of leaving behind the role of the priesthood was daunting for him. Having constructed his identity in terms of his performing a role to gain acceptance, he feared what a future without that role might mean.

"I had a fear of rejection, of being shut out of the church. If I walked out, the door is going to be slammed, and I would not be able to get back in. I'd be cut off from sacraments by getting married. It would be humiliating if I were refused the sacraments. It had been my whole life for fourteen years, not just a job. I'd become comfortable in it. What will my family and friends say? This made me stay stuck. I'm not willing to risk their anger, to hurt them, to risk disappointing them".

Matt also underwent turmoil in contemplating what was happening to his sense of achievement, which was such an important part of his identity. Unable to act with integrity, he felt trapped.

"It felt like the image of the candle in the barbed wire. My interpretation of the Gospel was O.K., but I didn't know what to do with it any more. There was a period of stuckness, when I was just pushing, not allowing myself to do anything, and you even lose sight of why you wouldn't do anything in the first place. I was angry and frustrated with myself, more so if you believe you have something to say or live or do, and that adds to one's anger".

"I felt a failure already even before I leave. I was becoming more hard-hearted and less loving. Self-questioning and tied up in knots. What's right?, what's wrong? To stay, or to move on - a question to be resolved. Keeping one's integrity is a prerequisite. Once you decide, you have to decide whether it's really right, whether that's really procrastination or stalling tactics, I don't know. All the way through I'm asking, to what extent am I kidding myself?".

"I had a fear of public failure, publicly known as being wrong. What draws me forward is the support of a few, who encourage me to resolve the questions, to take time away if I need it. And the need to have integrity. Am I going through the motions? It was getting to the stage where I had to do something about this or I wouldn't be being fair dinkum with myself. What is this doing to the people in the church if I'm not getting this question resolved? They, too, are having an influence on me to get it resolved".

On the occasion of imminent transfer to another parish, Matt's questions about the role as priest which he had adopted came to a head. Alluding to his second drawing, he described his sudden decision to take leave.

"A party to farewell me tips the balance, *in vino veritas*, among a few friends who encourage me to resolve the questions. Under the influence of some cheap stuff, I decided to do something about it. I went back to each of them and talked it over again, to make sure it was the same decision when I was sober".

After a year of "provisional retirement from the stage", he decided not to put on the face paint again.

"My script wasn't mine till I retired. Taking the mask off is a one way street; to put it back on is to lose some sanity. Maybe I was sick of playing the extrovert, and wanted to get back to being an introvert. That's not what I thought then, but I've thought about it a lot since".

"In ministry, a lot of the action had been image creating and image sustaining, finding myself in doing. T was offering me a place to be able to act as oneself as well as be oneself, a place of rest with no barriers".

Matt had left the stage, and had come home to himself, and to intimacy with T, whom he married.

3.17 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SIX LIFE STORIES

I now embark on interpreting the accounts of remarkable change presented in the preceding section. Especially through reference to Stephen's autobiography, I intend to discuss the accounts as life stories of transformative learning.

A comprehensive understanding of the life stories requires consideration of the various forms of story telling used in this inquiry. I have approached the drawings, narratives, metaphors and parables, not as a disengaged social scientist in search of "brute facts" (Cohler, 1988), but as a research companion who is vitally interested in understanding them. As a co-researcher, I expect the interpretation of these stories to illuminate my own self-understanding.

I have noted already in Chapter Two that research, which has its origins in storytelling, is not limited to a choice between either explanation or understanding. Kotre (1984) interpreted life stories of generativity from both idiographic and nomothetic perspectives. Reason and Hawkins (1988) argued that co-operative inquiry which uses narrative may yield both forms of interpretation.

In co-operative inquiry and hermeneutical conversation (Heron, 1989b; Van Manen, 1990), interpretation signifies an understanding of the stories which is gained jointly with the other co-researchers (Hamilton, 1990; Spence, 1982; Hillman, 1975a; Kepnes, 1982). Having participated in these conversations as a co-researcher, and having reflected further on the transcripts I propose to interpret Stephen's story in particular, to see beyond even what he may have intended in telling it, to discover the "what remains to be said" in his narrative.

In Chapters Five and Six, I will propose an explanatory account of how Stephen and the other narrators learn as they construct and reconstruct their life story; and how they compose their life story in and through their learning. This second step of interpretation

proceeds to a "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), from a thorough consideration of the autobiographical data, recognising in the events of the life stories a variety of instances and forms of transformative learning. This level of interpretation also offers some opportunity to appraise approaches and methods employed in this co-operative inquiry, such as the use of literary and artistic modes of expression in the collection of data, and conversation as a style of small group research. In Chapter Two, I have made evaluative remarks about the methods and approaches, in the light of the research experience.

A central question in this thesis refers to the informal work and play of imagination in autobiography. I proposed, at the outset of this inquiry, to explore the role which imagination plays in knowing, in interpreting experience, and in transformative and emancipatory learning. In Chapter Five, I will propose an understanding of imagination, and discuss its role in the formation of these autobiographical accounts through metaphor and parable. In Chapter Six, I will discuss the relationship of critical thinking to imagination in the processes which constitute autobiographical learning. This discussion includes an interpretation of these accounts of transformative learning, employing the metaphors of journey and conversation.

Although the characteristics of remarkable change, described in Chapter Two, are common to each of the narratives, each account is patently unique. The very nature of autobiography means that each account of transformation is specific. The social context of Australian Roman Catholic priesthood, shared by the authors, explains to some degree how individual life stories may also have some dimensions in common. A description of the social context in which these authors composed their narratives is presented in Chapter Four.

Even though the publicly attested event of marriage has signalled the ending of their practice as priests, the life stories of Stephen, Luke, Mark, Matt, Dan and Paul are unfinished. Likewise, the authors' transformative learning has not ceased either, because their transformed meaning perspectives now include an appreciation of the value of their

experience as a source of learning. Therefore, their rich stories are open to elaboration. The closing of one chapter in their personal narrative heralds a new chapter, and new learning in the context of marriage.

In the following section, I propose to discuss several common qualities of these life narratives. The primary focus on Stephen's autobiography is maintained, with occasional reference to the other life stories by way of comparison and contrast.

3.18 STORIES OF FAITH

The perspective of faith, as an interpretive frame, emerges as a central dimension in the autobiographies. This phenomenon may be surprising, or not. It may surprise those who regard the remarkable change of these authors as defection from faith (O'Farrell, 1985). Others, such as Fowler (1981; 1984 ; 1987) and Griffin (1980) expect that adult transformation will incorporate faith development and even religious conversion. It was not my intention as principal researcher to undertake a study of either of these phenomena. However, Fowler's (1981) proposal that the ongoing construal of meaning in faith development is both developmental and constructive throws some light on transformative learning.

Fowler (1987: 56) described the activity of faith as a construal of the self in terms of knowing, valuing and meaning which "attempts to make sense of our mundane everyday experience *in light of some accounting for the ultimate conditions of our existence*". Thus, faith development is not restricted only to persons with specific religious affiliation and belief in a personal God. Resting on the foundations of Piaget and Erikson in particular, Fowler (1981, 1987) proposed that the interpretive stance of faith comprises cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. He identified a primal state of undifferentiation, followed by six stages of faith. Fowler's explanation for the first four stages was anchored in Piaget's

(1958) theory of cognitive development; the two remaining stages are inferred from his empirical research among adults. Given favourable initiating and sustaining circumstances, he argued that there are predictable patterns of change in a person's stance of faith. Fowler (1987) married his theory to that of Kegan's (1982) theory of five stages in the "evolving self" in order to provide a constructivist-developmental description of the stages of selfhood and faith.

The six stories of transformation may be understood as having elements of religious conversion and faith development. A changing understanding of God as their ultimate point of reference is found in each of the accounts. Each path of faith development in the stories serves to show its author's changing stances of faith.

Faith development is central to Stephen's journey. Indeed, he described his autobiography as an "account of his journey of life and faith". Even though this journey led to revoking his public undertaking of celibacy and his resignation from the priesthood, it is clearly not a story of apostasy, and in Fowler's (1987) terms, it shows a development of faith. Stephen's story indicated his arrival at a new stance of faith.

The highly cognitive quality of Stephen's faith was derived initially from his comprehension of Catholic church teaching. Likewise, his ordering of his affective life, sexuality and affiliations first followed the strict directives of conventional Catholic church discipline. He perceived his vocation as one of following a track already laid out for him by God through the mediation of the church. His sense of identity as a priest, the meaning of communion and agency in his public and private life, his understanding of God and spirituality were all communicated to him through a theological framework which had an aura of eternity. Stephen had no expectation of change in his faith except to hope for deeper understanding of its content and more effective practice as he matured. However, over a period of thirty years, his stance changed in ways which bear some relationship to Fowler's (1987) schema.

Stephen acknowledged that at the time of his ordination he was rather "black and white", conforming to church authority in his approach to his vocation. This way of participating in his tradition correlates well with aspects of Fowler's (1987) description of the stance of Synthetic-Conventional faith and Interpersonal selfhood.

"The task of this stage is to synthesize into a workable unity a sense of identity based on the range of images of self provided by those who matter. This forming unity must also integrate the sense of self derived from internal feelings and reflections on the self's present, past, and future" (1987: 65).

In the long years of his unsettlement, Stephen faced first the external and then internal disturbing circumstances which challenged his Synthetic-Conventional faith. Disconcerting questions, which showed that his current construction of faith was no longer adequate, generated a movement in him towards the stance of Individuative-Reflective faith and Institutional selfhood. The conflict between two authorities, namely, the Catholic church's teaching to which he adhered in loyalty, and the undeniable evidence of his own experience, gained from "reading the signs of the times", meant that Stephen had to construct a perspective from which he could consider his relationship to both. To do this, he had to move from his embeddedness in interpersonal dependence on the church. Kegan's (1982) description of the Institutional self indicates that at this stage the self begins to have a sense of being in charge of its life, of being its author. The shift towards authorship in autobiographical learning correlates well with the evolving of the Institutional self.

The emancipatory stance of post-conventional individuating faith is characterised by an emphasis on critical reasoning and the demythologising of one's belief systems. It also involves a careful reconsideration of the relationships and commitments of one's vocation. Stephen's life story shows that in his gradual movement towards self-authorship, his understanding of God, himself, church and the priesthood was also undergoing change. However, it did not proceed at a pace faster than his sense of vocation could accommodate. Consequently, he retained a strong quality of ethical connectedness to God and to the Catholic church.

During the individuating stage of faith development, Stephen found initially a successful balance between ministry and friendship. When a new situation developed to disturb the balance, he once again was exposed to unsettlement. The desirability of marriage with Justine constantly attracted him, but he felt neither desire nor freedom to relinquish the priesthood. Even though his questions were posed in terms of an either-or choice, the ending of Stephen's story reveals his awareness that his desire for both the priesthood and for marriage was authentic. In reaching a new understanding of his faith, he made a decision which peacefully accepted both the limit and the giftedness of the outcome which he chose. His decision brought him a resolution to his struggles and a sense of growth. This new stance appears to approximate to what Fowler (1987) considered to be the stage of Conjunctive faith and Inter-Individual self, in which the person's construal of their meanings, commitments and relationships is able to esteem together what once may have appeared to be opposites.

Stephen's arrival at this new stance of faith was dependent on a critical evaluation of the pros and cons of his situation. At the same time, however, his account of the decision making indicated a time of "waiting".¹ The phenomenon of "waiting" in Conjunctive faith indicates that there are aspects of knowing outside the person's conscious control. Stephen actively sought to reach a resolution for his dilemmas by engaging in some directed retreats with the spiritual director who knew of his friendship with Justine. These retreats appear to have been times of critical reflection and waiting.

In Stephen's journey of faith, his understanding of God as what is ultimate in his existence had changed from being the director of a prescribed way his life to being a God of intimate partnership. Stephen's parable described his discovery that the Wise One's special gift is to offer Tiger the choice for his life. Although he had clearly apprehended God in this new perspective of freedom, Stephen also knew that in the social context of the Catholic priesthood there remained for him some painful constraints. The journey of faith did not

take Stephen or the other authors out of their tradition. However, they gained a freedom to understand their situation and experience in a new way. The interpretation of tradition may lead to genuinely new understanding and practice. Stephen's expressed his transformative learning in the following way.

"Two (big difficulties) which emerged in my directed retreat. One was, could I happily live without the priesthood? And the other one was, if I did decide to leave, knowing that I wouldn't get a dispensation, could I marry in conscience outside the church, happily? Because, you know, the church has been so much part of my life. And I had to explore these at great depth. The retreat director helped me just to sit with the Lord for days on that, for days. And it was something I didn't think I could do. But I did it, and he used to give me passages of Scripture to read; and I'd read, and eventually I was able to, and that was a tremendous growth of faith for me. It really was."

It has been noted already in this thesis that the initiating influence on Stephen's changing perspective on himself, the priesthood, the church and God was the Catholic church's own major reframing and re-evaluation of its identity and purpose. His obedient response to the church, his "keeping on track", served to disturb, surprise and finally delight him by its outcome. His story is one of a long and constant search for a way to be faithful.

3.19 STORIES OF PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

In summary form, it is possible to describe the perspective change in each of the stories in the following paraphrases.

Stephen: "I am free to choose my life; this is God's gift".

Luke: "I may follow the road to life and health, rather than the tortuous paths of duty".

Paul: "The obligation to use my gifts has been replaced by the freedom to take risks, which requires even greater courage".

Mark: "This new inner awareness has taken the brakes off my growth".

Matt: "Now that I've left the stage, I am free to become myself".

Dan: "My life now has two sides; freedom as well as responsibility".

Although each life story is a specific account of personal transformation, some common shifts in the co-researchers' lives are observable. For example, a common movement toward autonomy is indicated in the narratives. Whereas the priest's identity, vocation, lifestyle, and place within the structures of the Catholic church were strictly prescribed and reinforced in practice in the 1950's-1960's (Turner, 1992), the life stories reveal their authors arriving at a new sense of authority, and understanding of vocation and identity. ² In particular, vocation now appeared to be less of an order to be obeyed and more of an invitation to listen. For example, Luke discovered a new sense of vocation in social work, which expresses for him a way of being priest. Buechner's (1973) description of a transformed understanding of vocation corresponds well to the new understanding gained by the six autobiographers.

"There are all kinds of voices calling you to do all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God, rather than that of society, say, or the superego, or self-interest.... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (1973: 95).

A fundamentally new understanding of God as the ultimate dimension in their lives emerged in the stories. The authors describe God as compassionate, and they claim a more mutual relationship with God in which the quality of their autonomy is relative and relational.

The movement towards autonomy is shown also in most of the accounts by the gradual change from obedience to a critical stance toward church authority. For example, it is noticeable in Matt's story that his relationship with the church at the time of ordination in the 1970's was not charged with a heavy sense of duty. According to him, "the church as monolith was dead". For Matt, God had always been immanent to his experience. Just as he was beginning to discover that his life had become distorted, Matt found to his dismay that a conservative and prescriptive stance was being reasserted in the church. He found

himself in a struggle for autonomy. In each author's life story, a pronounced realignment of personal authority appears to have occurred at the time of their conscientious decision to leave the priesthood and marry.

It is noticeable that in all cases the movement toward assertive independence took several years. The authors indicate that, initially, they had trusted the power of the Catholic church's authority in their lives. Their intention in questioning the necessity of celibacy was not to eschew entirely the authority and tradition of the church. It was an attempt to find a new way for their lives within a changed practice in the Catholic church. For a long time, several waited in the hope that the church would grant permission for a married priesthood. At the time of their exit, they still were enthusiastic about the Second Vatican Council's vision for the church, and still hoped that they could contribute to its realisation.

The absence of defiance and counter-dependence in these accounts does not diminish the socially subversive quality of the transformation which took place. The authors imagined that the church, which had espoused a vision of renewal, would adopt an alternative social construction of priesthood that combined ministry and marriage. When they perceived that there was little likelihood that such an arrangement would be accepted, the authors acted on their convictions, adopting something of a revolutionary quality in their "Protestant Catholicism" (Hastings, 1986).

Their autonomy as authors is reflected in the diversity of the stories. During the co-operative inquiry, similarities in some accounts came to light as a surprise. Although a sense of solidarity developed through participation in the group conversations, each author resisted having any of the specificity of his story subsumed by any other author's story. It became clear that each story of remarkable change is different.

3.20 STORIES OF FAILURE , SHAME AND GUILT

Although the authors tell of their transformation, they also admit a sense of failure, guilt and shame. Considered to be defectors from the priesthood, their choices are interpreted by the Catholic church as a refusal to comply with promises they once made in good faith. In the face of what it perceives as rejection of its authority, the Catholic church's attitude to their exit is to regard itself as an aggrieved and rejected partner. The authors' entry into priesthood had been a cause for communal celebration and the occasion of elaborate ritual. Their exit from ministry was without ritual, and generally unacknowledged publicly. They faced the shame of being unable to be heard publicly. They were talked about publicly as failures and defectors. Pope Paul VI had identified priests who resigned to marry as "Judas", and criticised them as "crucifying the church". His powerful condemnation, and a general public attitude of disapproval, contributed to the hesitation which most felt during the time of stuckness.

The accounts told in this chapter reflect the authors' strong sense of shame and guilt at "letting down the side", "leaving the church to the bastards", of "disappointing family, friends, and other priests". The life stories of Stephen, Dan, Paul, Luke, Mark, and Matt show that for a lengthy period each experienced reluctance to leave the practice of priesthood. As well, they felt shame at the prospect of future economic failure, and the possibility, thereby, of failing their wives.

Schuchardt (1990: 73) proposed that coping with crises is a learning process. She named a spiral sequence of eight internal phases which interact with circumstances. These phases; uncertainty ("What's happening?"), certainty ("But surely that can't be true."), aggression ("Why me?"), negotiation ("But if I do that"), depression ("Why? It's all meaningless"), acceptance ("Now at last I know."), activity ("I'll do that."), and solidarity ("We're acting.") echo some of the dimensions of the six narratives.

The learning process she described has transformative and emancipatory qualities. Its final phase of learning to cope with failure brings people to solidarity and collective action.

“The only possible solution consists in no longer being opposed to, but living with, the apparently unacceptable, as the acceptance of a new task which has different effects and which has to be shaped both individually and in solidarity. In anticipation of all biographies it can be said that this kind of shaping can be experienced as meaning and indeed as happiness. The capacity to shape one’s life through active participation in shared life is now ‘self-discovery’ through ‘being different’ in the midst of the inappropriate norms of achievement characteristic of our society” (Schuchardt, 1990: 71).

Although the stories of transformative learning signify failure in the eyes of the Catholic church, they serve as rituals (Elsbree, 1982) which bring both self-discovery and the acceptance of being unacceptable.

3.21 STORIES OF GRIEF

The transformation of their meaning perspective, which each story portrays, brought a mixture of joy and grief. By the time the first of the authors decided to leave the priesthood, there had already been in the Catholic church a history of some fifteen years of resignations. Some priests had gone quietly. The departure of others had generated considerable public interest. The official attitudes of the Catholic church to its priests leaving the ministry had firmed since 1978, and the process for gaining a dispensation had become more difficult since then. A priest, contemplating his exit from ministry, needed to anticipate the loss of esteem and valued friendship, as well as the loss of the identity, practice and security of the priesthood. The stories of Luke, Stephen, Matt, Dan, Mark and Paul indicate that before they took the concrete step of resignation, symptoms of grieving had surfaced already. Marris (1986) outlined the process of grief in the following way.

"Grief, then, is the expression of a profound conflict between contradictory impulses - to consolidate all that is still valuable and important in the past, and preserve it

from loss; and at the same time, to re-establish a meaningful pattern of relationships, in which the loss is accepted. Each impulse checks the other, reasserting itself by stabs of actuality or remorse, and recalling the bereaved to face the conflict itself" (1986: 31-32).

Their life stories show that grieving continued after the priests had resigned. It became a part of their ongoing narratives. Luke, Dan and Stephen were especially conscious of prolonged grief that became acute at times. For all, there has remained some vulnerability. Because there is no rite of passage in the church's life, by which the personal and institutional loss could be publicly acknowledged and mourned, the transition from the priesthood was like a death which had no funeral. Dispensation permits priests who resign to be part of the church's life, only in a greatly diminished way. In terms of ritual process, there is no public rite of re-incorporation into the community of faith. Some awareness of this is reflected in the article which the co-researchers addressed to priests currently engaged in ministry.

"Though this loss may be acknowledged in private, generally it has been without public recognition. It is as though this most obvious loss cannot be spoken about. There is no permission or process available in the Church for the community of faith to express publicly their mourning for the loss of priests when they leave. The grieving is blocked in us all. And it remains so, as long as the community cannot publicly express its anger toward priests whom they may feel have abandoned them for the comforts of domestic bliss; or its lament for the often abrupt severing of collaborative pastoral relationships built up over several years; or its gratitude for generous service given; or its questions to our Church leaders about the future of the Eucharist" (Nelson, 1991: 6)

An important dimension of the life storytelling of this co-operative inquiry has been the authors' revisiting of their grief. The authors acknowledged that the retelling of their accounts was an opportunity to give voice to the contradictory impulses of grief. In the grieving, there was a sense of self-recovery and recognition of their transformation.

3.22 STORIES OF STUCKNESS

Having exhausted all their resources in trying to find a way through their disorientation, the authors described their diverse experiences of being stuck. It was a time of silence and tears, because at first they could not imagine anything new to change the status quo. The prolonged period of repetitive living and immobility was depicted sometimes as being "unable to cross the bridge", or as years spent searching for identity and intimacy, or "living with a painted face". Despite their conviction that Church's requirement of celibacy was an arbitrary one, their desire to be priests held them in place. There seemed to be no way forward for them.

3.23 STORIES OF SURPRISE AND JOY

For priests who considered at the time of their ordination that "for ourselves, to leave the priesthood was probably the greatest evil we could imagine" (Nelson, 1991: 6), the outcome of resignation and marriage in their life story was a great surprise. There was surprise for them, too, in being chosen and found admirable by the women they married. The element of surprise is also found in the imaginative movement of epiphany, which showed them a way out of the stuckness which each had experienced.

3.24 STORIES TOLD BY MEN

For a long time, the choice for celibacy by Roman Catholic priests and their adherence to that undertaking has been regarded by the general population, and even by Catholics, as something to wonder at. To counteract any suggestion that a priest's singleness might be indicative of homosexual orientation and preference, the clerical culture in Australia has portrayed priests as strong men. This was certainly the case during the years in which these

authors were being educated. The strength of a priest's manliness was seen to lie not in sexual drive or muscular maleness, but in self-control and independence. In their seminary formation, priests learned to be wary of sentiment, and to be cautious in the expression of their feelings. They were to restrict their companionship to other priests, and to avoid friendships, especially with women. At the same time, priests were expected to be men who were sensitive to the pains, joys and religious development of their parishioners. The *persona* of the "lone ranger", who could work anywhere with any group of people without forming attachments, was presented as an ideal for celibate clergy. The distrust of emotions fostered alienation from their experience of their lives. In clerical culture, men were expected to tell stories of the struggle to maintain their footing on the narrow path of the clerical lifestyle, and of successful endurance. Stories of failure in celibacy were suppressed, and those who failed were avoided. The heroic stories could be supplemented by others about the priest's interest in approved distractions such as sport. Stories which dealt with intimacy or sexuality were usually humorous. There was generally a great silence about the priest's inner life of mysticism and spiritual growth.

During the 1960's, however, personal intimacy and sexual expression had become paramount values in Western culture, and predominant themes in films, literature and television. The behavioural sciences also indicated the desirability of human relationship for mature personality development. Priests were caught in a conflict between the attraction of intimacy and the need to remain faithful to their undertakings. A common resolution of this conflict was to seek refuge and sustenance by being immersed in the clerical culture. Some priests devised a public story of compliance, and a private one of disobedience.

The stories told by Stephen, Paul, Luke, Matt, Mark and Dan are stories which contradicted the prevailing clerical culture of the time. They admit their slow discovery and recovery of affectivity, and the vulnerability which ensued. In Jungian terms, their stories tell of individuation, and the gradual incorporation of *anima* within their self. The authors reveal their sense of incompleteness, their need for friendship and sexual expression, their fear of

failure, and their anticipation of the loss of their career in the priesthood. They are not mainly stories of grim survival, but narratives of transformation.

3.25 STORIES OF IMAGINATION

Though the principal reinvention of their lives is embodied in marriage, there are also other moments in the stories in which the authors reimagined themselves. Exploring new ways of combining celibacy and ministry, searching for settings in the Catholic church where a significant ministry might be exercised, taking new risks with one's identity, testing the implications of ongoing insights - all these are ways in which the authors shaped and reshaped their lives, responding to those circumstances which threatened, and those which favoured them. The process of reinvention required both critical thinking and imaginative construction. Bateson (1990) described as follows the process of reinventing "interrupted lives" which she observed in her study of five women.

"Composing a life is a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present, remembering best those events that prefigured what followed, forgetting those that proved to have no meaning within the narrative" (1990: 29-30).

"The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives" (1990: 33).

In Chapter Six, I will present a fuller discussion of the life stories as ways to transformation.

3.26 STORIES OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

A major purpose in undertaking this research was to consider the role of imagination in transformative learning. The life stories indicate that an adequate explanation for the way in

which autobiography is composed needs to encompass a multiplicity of internal and circumstantial influences. The authors themselves point to many dimensions in their learning - the emotional, relational, spiritual, intellectual and contextual factors - all of which had important ramifications for them and for their life story. The diverse learning processes, which include imagination, enabled the transformative learning to take place, affecting each author's self and practice in profound ways.

For Luke, in a lifelong search to integrate his affective world, there was insight and strength gained from therapy and spiritual direction. Paul, who had his intellectual framework for social change already in place, also undertook therapy and began to hear his own voice in his story. A few priest companions significantly influenced Matt's decision to take off his "painted face", and his friendship with T effected the changing of his heart "from one of stone to one of flesh". Relationships had an important influence in Mark's story also, but it was the epiphany he experienced that energised him into taking a step he had contemplated for years. Dan's sabbatical experience had included therapy, education, spiritual direction and the encouragement which came from friendship.

On his path to change, Stephen gathered resources from education, retreats and spiritual direction. In a transformed worldview, Stephen had learned to listen to his own life experience as a source of learning. His experience became a partner to consult, rather than a client for whom he was able to find answers. Stephen's account of autobiographical learning reveals also how his openness to people gradually underwent change. Instead of listening to people as their expert, he began to listen with them as a learning companion.

Stephen's autobiographical learning was influenced externally by changes in Catholic church culture in the 1960's, and by events taking place in society. His internal movement from obedience to external authority to an obedience of listening to his own interpretation of his life is the central shift in his transformation. Stephen's reflection in the group conversation portrays well his autobiographical learning.

"The journey has been a search for intimacy, which I didn't really know about. But when I looked back, I believed that I'm not a person cut out for celibacy. But I am a person who needs, and is nourished by intimacy, and also has much to offer in a intimate relationship. To my mind, the decision to move out of priesthood and to leave aside celibacy - I'll always cherish priesthood - was one of opting for quality of life, a better relationship with God and a better relationship with human beings"

"I think of the people who have touched me along the way, and in a very positive way enriched my life. I think that's what has made the journey so wonderful up to this point. I would still like to be a person who can assist people along the way, in a positive way. In other words, what I've learned is that the best way to help people is to stand with them, to offer them ways and means, but to allow them the freedom to make their decisions, and to allow them the space and time to do it."

Through autobiographical learning, the six authors reached a new way of knowing their lives. The questions which emerged from reflection on disorienting experience stimulated their learning. The learners reached increased self-awareness through the use of their critical and reflective abilities. Attending to the intense and prolonged experience of both satisfying and distressing emotions partnered their rational attempts to find a way out of their disquiet and their dilemmas. There were painfully long periods when they could see no way forward. There were times of questions without answers, and answers to questions they dared not voice. As they reconstructed their stance toward church tradition, they experienced times of unlearning. Epiphanies, which for a moment illumined a way forward, inspired them to risk to follow this gift of the imagination. With transformed self-awareness, the authors made conscientious decisions for the sake of their integrity as knowers and persons, and thus reinvented their life stories. 3

3.27 SUMMARY

The stories told in this chapter relate remarkable changes in the lives of their authors. They are also accounts of autobiographical learning in which the narrators became authors as they gained personal autonomy. The disruptive circumstances in the priests' experience exposed

them to feelings which they ignored or excluded from the account they usually gave of their identity. In each life story, there followed a prolonged time of being immobilised between their present state of celibacy and ministry, and a desired state which seemed to be entirely out of reach and beyond legitimate choice. Despite their critical awareness of the arbitrary nature of compulsory celibacy, the authors experienced stuckness.

It was through the narrators' discovery of imagining as a spontaneous illumination, and as a capacity to construct their lives anew, that they re-invented their life stories. Although the manner of the imaginative transformation differed in each life story, imagining and critical reflection are both found as dimensions of the autobiographical learning that led to a transformed perspective and practice.

The varied forms and styles of composition in the life stories reflect the authors' personal characteristics. They also show the variety and specificity in autobiographical learning. The undeniable common threads in the life stories show the influence of historical circumstance, and the social and cultural context of these lives and their accounts. In Chapter Four the significance of the social context for these life stories of transformative learning will be explored. The interpretation of Stephen's story, as an account of transformative learning, will be left to Chapter Five. There, an explanation will be presented to show how imagination may be seen to partner critical reflection, as well as other processes of knowing, to reinvent his life and the lives of the six co-researchers.

ENDNOTES

1 Fowler (1987) described knowing at this stage as having the quality of "epistemological humility". Rather different from the analytical and critical reflection of the prior stage, Conjunctive faith proceeds with receptivity, learning to "balance initiative and control with waiting and seeking" (1987: 73). This implies a willingness to welcome and engage in dialogue with what appears to be strange to one's perspective rather than to dismiss it. There is a freedom to appreciate multiple perspectives while valuing one's own with a clear awareness of the limits in its construction. In the previous stage of faith

development, the person moved towards independence and the acquisition of personal authority. Conjunctive faith builds upon this in recognising personal and social interdependence. Finally, there is the discovery that people are both conscious and unconscious selves. The person faces the challenge to welcome and integrate the "hidden aspects and movements of the self".

2 Stephen's identification of the train track metaphor as the mode for both journeys, "the journeys of faith and life", shows a critical awareness of how in his early years of life he had pledged himself to an established way of living. Bateson (1990) described the quest as the model of an ordinary successful life. She argued that in this understanding, which is similar to Stephen's metaphor of the track, interruptions are to be avoided.

"The pursuit of a quest is a pilgrim's progress in which it is essential to resist the transitory contentment of attractive way stations and side roads, in which obstacles are overcome because the goal is visible on the horizon, onward and upward. The end is already apparent in the beginning" (1990: 6).

3 Dunne (1981) has described the process of gaining insight as follows. In a situation where a person cannot see their way forward between opposing fears except in terms of great loss, they are likely to engage first in *calculative* thinking. This usefully offers a means of weighing up one's prospects in the light of the outcomes of each particular choice. In waiting through *meditative* thinking, however, the person asks the question, "What does my life require of me?". There is a need to discern one's own voice among the several inner voices which may respond. The insight, which comes in the waiting, is a way of knowing the situation. Through insight, the knower perceives that their life's integrity depends on their making a particular choice. This criterion of personal integrity had become paramount for Stephen. In making his decision to marry, Stephen realised that he no longer had the certainty he had once regarded as fundamental.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

4.0 SETTING THE SCENE

This chapter describes and discusses the social and historical context in which the autobiographical learning of the group of six participants in this inquiry took place. After making some introductory statements about the relationship between social context, adult learning and autobiography, I will discuss the significance of celibacy for the Roman Catholic priesthood. This ecclesiastical tradition is part of the cultural context of the life stories. Careful inspection of the life stories shows that the public undertaking to be celibate occupies an important place in the composition and reinvention of these life stories. It figures both as a requirement for the authors' admission to the priesthood, and thereafter as a legal impediment to their choice for marriage. A historical survey is presented to show how celibacy has come to have such great significance for the Roman Catholic priesthood. In particular, the period in which the six authors entered and exited the active ministry is portrayed as a time when the discipline of mandatory celibacy was questioned widely throughout the church. This questioning, and the church's response of refusal to change this policy, combined to generate an important and dynamic struggle within the lives and social context of these autobiographers. From the narratives told in the preceding chapter, it is apparent already that the lively theological and cultural ferment in the church after the Second Vatican Council made a significant contextual contribution to their autobiographical learning.

The life transitions of the co-researchers who engaged in this inquiry are part of a contemporary worldwide social movement among priests, sometimes described as an

“exodus” (Powers, 1992; Rice, 1990). Since the late 1960’s, the widespread cultural phenomenon of Catholic priests considering the meaning of authority and sexuality in their lives has been part of the social context in which the authors of the six life stories have lived. The origins and outcomes of this phenomenon, and its impact within the Catholic church in Australia, are discussed in this chapter. The alternating and sometimes conflictful culture of the Roman Catholic church, from the 1950’s to the present, is shown to be an influential social setting for the autobiographical learning portrayed in these six lives. In particular, Stephen’s account of autobiographical learning is considered within its historical and proximate social context. His narrative illustrates well how personal authorship and socially constructed accounts interact in adult transformative learning.

4.1 ADULT LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The life stories told in Chapter Three indicated that the six autobiographers have all participated in the social and cultural context of Australian society and Roman Catholicism. Their narratives span the major part of the last fifty years. Due to the cultural changes taking place within Catholicism, there are variations in the authors’ appropriation of Catholic church tradition, and their theological approaches to ministry, priesthood and celibacy. The specific influence of the social context on each author’s learning may be discovered within his account of his entry into and exit from the priesthood, and the various times, events and particular circumstances of his life. The diverse locations in which each exercised ministry also contributed to the specific quality of each person’s transformative learning.

Far from being a single mould, in which human lives and their stories are shaped without resistance or assistance, the Australian social context is a plurality of subcultures, in which adults live and learn. Obviously, the degree of cultural pluralism varies from one setting to another, and also within the institutions of a particular subculture. As Jarvis (1987) pointed out, the complex web of subcultures in which people live also changes over time. A

potential for autobiographical learning lies in the participation of adults in these changing cultural milieux. In principle, the opportunity for learning occurs when people perceive a gap between their current experience of the social milieu, and their “biography”. This disjuncture, as Jarvis (1987) terms it, may pose questions which disorient the person's life narrative in its present circumstances. Or, the disruption may have some implications for what the learner anticipates or plans as their future life narrative. As long as the perceived disparity is not so intimidating as to inhibit learning, nor so bland as to stimulate no questioning of the life story, it may be expected to set in train a process of reflection. Given that the person has the skills, and the inclination to overcome whatever barriers to reflection on this experience may exist (Boud and Walker, 1993), the outcome of reflection on this disruption may be transformative learning. The adult learner, whose “biography” is reshaped thereby, becomes a “more experienced person” in their social context (Jarvis, 1987).

It is generally agreed that, although one’s immediate cultural context provides a common set of understandings, attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings about the world, each person perceives and experiences this context uniquely. What seems to be most often left out of accounting for this personal diversity within a social context is the fact that people not only perceive, but *imaginatively* construct the story of their participation in interpersonal, familial and social settings. ¹ To recognise the prevalence of the literary form of metaphor in everyday language is to discover one of the ways in which imagination may be seen to construct a personal reality in relation to the cultural and social context (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Deshler (1990) proposed that metaphor operates as an interpretive frame for personal and social experience. Personal metaphors constitute the narrator’s world of family, lifestyle, career, gender, leisure, and friends. Cultural metaphors are concerned with the domains of ideas, arts, fashion, music, philosophy; institutional metaphors refer to social movements, educational and religious institutions, business, and politics. Deshler showed that metaphor may bring distortion to the learners’ life story. That is, it may restrict a person’s capacity to learn from experience, and hobble their social practice. By engaging in

analysis of core metaphors of their life and life story, learners may “exorcise” these distortions and gain personal transformation and social emancipation. In Chapter One, I noted that some forms of therapy set out to enable the narrator to reimagine and reconstruct life stories which diminish personal life within its social and cultural contexts (Kepnes, 1982; White, 1989; Viney, 1993).

How each individual perceives, defines and imaginatively constructs the social situation affects its potential for their learning. Not everyone perceives a particular event as disjuncture, even though other learners may. This is evident from the life stories told in Chapter Three. When the experience of disjuncture within their social context does lead to learning from that experience, it shapes a specific autobiography for each person. It is important to note, as well, that there may also be “collective” learning in a cohort of learners who critically reflect in a common social and cultural context (Hart, 1990a).

Jarvis (1987) has usefully distinguished among the various ways in which learners interact with their social context. Disjuncture which spurs reflection involves the adult's reactive response to some pain, pleasant surprise, social disharmony, new awareness, or loss of meaning in a particular set of circumstances. By contrast, where the adult learner takes an initiative, either to enter a situation, or to create one with a potential for learning, there is proactivity. The actual outcome of the potential for learning within a particular social context may be adult learning which is culturally valued, or even required. This may amount to socialisation. However, the outcome for the learner may be a remarkable change, like those described in Chapter Two. Learning outcomes which are emancipatory or transformative, are likely to be perceived within some part of the social context as having a disruptive effect for both the person and for the society.

Where adults in a minority, or an oppressed social group perceive that dominant interests have defined the social context to their own advantage, they may struggle both reactively and proactively to arrive at a new ordering of the social milieu. The new social order, which

is shaped by their emancipatory learning, is likely to represent more authentically the learners' identity and their interests. Emancipatory education processes, such as those employed by Freire (1970), the Young Christian Workers' "Review of Life", the Women's Movement and other liberation movements, have shown their potential in groups which undertake to redefine the social context through critical reflection and visioning. Accompanying this social redefinition is a corresponding reinvention of the personal and social identity of the group members. Members of consciousness raising groups also claim the learning outcome of being empowered to engage in new social practice which sustains, or even extends their emancipation. During the last thirty years or so, the social and cultural contexts of education, health, politics, sexuality, leisure and the environment have been reshaped both dramatically and subtly in response to social movements. Some movements have aimed at emancipatory social practice, some at taking control.

When adults participate in their social context with no experience of disjuncture, their social practice is stable. In this case, their practice may become repetitive or stereotypical. Without some "trouble" in the social context (Bruner, 1987), there is no development in the life narrative. In the absence of a disorienting event (Boyd and Fales, 1983), and the ability to reflect critically on it, the potential for learning is virtually unrealised. There is stagnation in the autobiographical project also, when the potential for learning can not be actualised, even though the disjuncture may be felt keenly. Episodes in the life stories of Stephen, Paul, Matt, Dan, Mark and Luke exemplify these times of "stuckness" and immobility, when authoring one's life is impeded. The six narratives show that, in these circumstances, the authors experienced both psychological constraints on their capacity to rewrite their life story, and systemic impediments to enacting what they envisaged.

4.2 SOCIAL CONTEXT AND THE FORMATION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The story of a life is also a story of the social and cultural setting in which it occurs. However, the social context is more than the geography of autobiographical learning, which the life story describes. The life narrative does recount how a particular person experienced opportunities for autobiographical learning, by interacting with and within the forces of this particular social context. However, as Shotter (1986) has pointed out, each particular social context influences autobiography, by prescribing for authors the way to render their accounts of changed perceptions and behaviour. To be an acceptable and creditable account of learning, autobiography must be framed and expressed according to the discourse which the social context authorises. Fowler (1984: 136) noted the “presence of core stories of our tradition that precede our coming to consciousness and provide symbol, image, and story by which we awaken to the task of making meaning”. The autobiography is a work co-authored in the subject’s social context, influenced by the culture and tradition. The stories of authors as moral agents are not as autonomous as they may be made to appear (MacIntyre, 1981).

“I spoke earlier of the agent as not only an actor, but an author. Now I must emphasise that what the agent is able to do and say intelligibly as an actor is deeply affected by the fact that we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. Only in fantasy do we live what story we please. In life, as both Aristotle and Engels noted, we are always under certain constraints. We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making. Each of us being a main character in his own drama plays subordinate parts in the dramas of others, and each drama constrains the others” (1981: 198-199).

Where there is a high degree of stability, constancy and homogeneity in the social context it is likely that life stories will reflect similar qualities. Alert to the influence of social and cultural construction in autobiography, Freeman (1993) raised questions about how any new story might ever be told.

"If in fact both lives and the stories people tell about them are 'socially constructed' and if more generally one cannot ever step beyond the discursive order in one's

culture, how does one ever manage to go on to do something new and different?...How, in short, does one undergo the transformation from a kind of object, prey to the constrictive forces of society and culture, to a wilful subject, able to put into question those narratives assumed to be given and to transform in turn the sociocultural surround itself?" (1993: 23).

In his psychological study of autobiography, couched in terms of "rewriting the self", Freeman (1993) noted that cultural constraints spur some authors to rewrite both their self and their life history. Referring to Conway's (1989), *The Road from Coorain*, he pointed to the pervasive influence of her rural Australian social context. It was a major factor in constituting the life she would lead and the life story she would tell.

"(T)here simply were no available story lines, she told us, that could adequately contain the unique contours of her own life. So it was that she would have to write a new story, one that was faithful to the vertiginous ambiguity of the developmental path she had traversed" (1993: 226).

Freeman chose to explain the change in Conway's life and narrative in the language of development.

"She would be attuned to difference and plurality rather than hierarchy and deviation from socially constructed norms. A developmental project was in the making, and it would have at its foundation not the ironclad *telos* of some absolute idea, pulling her toward the future evermore with its inexorable force, but the open-endedness of life itself, which would be perpetually rewritten in line with the revelations to come" (Freeman, 1993: 214).

Development in the autobiographical project means experiencing the twists and turns which come from the author's struggle with the constraints of constructed social reality. The path to rewriting the self, and all of the relationships of the self, is one which brings disorientation and a sense of losing one's way. To choose a self and a life narrative which are prescribed may appeal as a way to avoid the disorientation and discomfort. However, the way of transformation is not the author's pursuit of an autonomous self. The autonomy and authority that the autobiographer employs in reinventing the narrative and the self are a

matter of moral choice. Increasingly, the choice for development and autobiographical learning is being understood to require a morality which cares for others as one cares for the self. A central element in life stories is the authors' taking into consideration their "connectedness" to the social context (Gilligan, 1982), and to their tradition (Gadamer, 1975). A prominent aspect in the life stories told in Chapter Three, is the changing quality of the authors' moral responsibility and personal freedom.

Freeman (1993) concluded his study, just as he had opened it, with the assertion that what makes the rewriting of the self possible is the serious attempt at self-understanding which is autobiography. By becoming conscious of the discursive order of one's social context, the narrator of the life history becomes capable of criticising and even transgressing restrictive cultural forms.

"(T)he narrative imagination engaged in the project of rewriting the self, seeks to disclose, articulate and reveal that very world which, literally, *would not have existed* had the act of writing not taken place" (1993: 223).

As an "upsurge of the narrative imagination", the authoring of the life story is also the *poesis* of the new self. Yet the rewriting does not mean imagining oneself as entirely beyond the social context and its world of discourse.

"To be made/known, to be constructed/discovered, to be created/revealed, this is the dilemma we face. Although it cannot be resolved, it is important that we endure it. For even as we must be vigilant enough to avow our own interpretive participation in rewriting the self, we also must be humble enough to see that the very past which has culminated in this rewriting is excluded from a total grasp, working its mysterious ways like a distant call in the night" (Freeman, 1993: 184).

The six stories told in the course of this inquiry and reported in Chapter Three reveal themselves as projects of *poesis* (Randall, 1992), in which the author's self was rewritten in a decisive way. By enacting their remarkable change, each author engaged with and resisted

the “master story”, that is, the social construction which their social context prescribed for them. Thus, a new self and a new story were constituted.

As he examined episodes of transformation in life stories of generativity, Kotre (1984) found himself questioning whether a narrator's social and cultural context is necessarily a constraint and adversary to transformative moments. Contrary to what psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology appear to require for the freedom of the ego, namely its liberation from the domination of culture, Kotre (1984) argued that no life story works itself entirely free from cultural influence, even when the author is critically aware of it. He pointed out, for example, that struggles for personal individuation and social emancipation are themselves connected to the cultural myth of self-discovery and freedom. The transformations recounted in the narratives of Stephen, Paul, Luke, Matt, Mark, and Dan, which contradict their cultural context, appear paradoxically to have depended on the influence of altered circumstances within this context. Where the social context of autobiographical learning has cultural plurality and proves to be changeable, it may constrain at one time and enable emancipation at another. Roman Catholicism during the last thirty years is an example of changing social and cultural contexts for autobiographical learning.

4.3 CELIBACY IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

From the preceding chapter, it is possible to see that the church's requirement of celibacy for the exercise of priesthood became an important social constraint in the lives of the six autobiographers. Obviously, mandatory celibacy was not the only problematical element they encountered in the practice of priesthood within the Catholic church. However, for the co-researchers in this inquiry, it was the focus for the disjuncture they felt between what they had learned about sexuality and autonomy by trusting their experience, and what stood as an ecclesiastical prescription for their lives. In making their choice to marry, the six

authors contradicted their public undertaking of a lifestyle of celibacy. Their choice for marriage brought them suspension from further public ministry in their social context.

It is important to describe at sufficient length the historical context of the law of celibacy and its significance for the Catholic church. This historical review, and the six accounts of autobiographical learning will indicate how the canon law and theology of celibacy have influenced the experience of authority and sexuality in the lives of these priests.

Besides participating in the immediate setting of Australian Roman Catholicism during the past forty or fifty years, the authors have been part of a common tradition of Catholic priesthood which has developed during the previous two thousand years. During those years, the tradition of priesthood and celibacy emerged and grew through conflict and consensus, education and edict. It is important to recognise that the theological and cultural tradition of celibacy for priests is deeply entrenched as a part of the socialisation of all Catholics, and not only priests. The historical survey which follows is intended to show that there is a genuine practice of celibacy in the Catholic church. It also shows that its enforcement as law serves the interests of ecclesiastical power.

In the first three centuries of the Christian church, in the context of persecution and social disapproval, various forms of the practice of priesthood took shape in diverse local community settings (Schillebeeckx, 1985). In those years, there appears to have been no preference or requirement that priests be married or celibate. It was among those Christian men and women of the fourth century, who fled to the desert in order to escape the corruption of society, that celibacy became a customary ascetical observance. These people lived as hermits, or in loosely structured monastic communities. When, after Constantine's conversion, freedom from persecution finally came for the Western Christian church, it found new energy to regulate its life. Among other decisions to standardise church life was a demand that priests practise sexual abstinence in preparation for their participation in the ritual of the Eucharist. The custom which developed, which institutionalised the occasional

cultic purity of its priests as celibacy, was already found in some of the religious practices which the Roman Empire had adopted. Schillebeeckx (1985) argued that the Western Christian church's fourth century law of sexual abstinence for priests on the day before the celebration of Mass expanded later into a virtual law of celibacy, when the Eucharist became a daily practice.

In Spain, the Synod of Elvira (305) decreed to exclude married men from holy orders, and directed those who were already married to practise sexual abstinence. At the Council of Nicaea (325), the application of this regional ruling to the rest of the church was opposed. However, the Council of Nicaea did declare that priests may not marry once they had been ordained. From the time they originated, these regulations for celibacy were received with both compliance and disregard. In some places, there appeared to be official tolerance of offenders, in so far as they were fined for their lack of compliance but not removed from office. In other places, severe measures were enacted to deal with those who disobeyed. The decrees of the seventh century Council of Toledo threatened stern reprisals which included the enslavement of a priest's wife and children. Again in the eleventh century, there was zeal abroad to break up the marriages of priests (Rice, 1990).

The First Lateran Council in 1123 decreed that clergy marriage was illegal. This law was strengthened further by a decree of the Second Lateran Council in 1139 which deemed such marriages to be both illegal and invalid. The practice of celibacy was to be enforced through loss of office for offending priests. The "women" of priests, as they were now called, were to be punished through whipping and exclusion from shelter. They were refused burial with ecclesiastical rites. Despite these penalties, in England, as elsewhere, the phenomenon of priests who broke the law of celibacy persisted (Campion, 1993).

Towards the end of the first millennium, there were several important influences which guided the Roman Catholic church's steps to enact a general law of celibacy. Theology, which had come to emphasise the transcendence of the Mass and to surround its celebration

with grandeur, constructed the social identity of the priest as a man set apart from the experience of ordinary life (Campion, 1993). From this viewpoint, celibacy was required as a form of appropriate asceticism and ritual purity in the priest. In this influential theological perspective, marriage and priesthood were considered to be utterly incompatible.

Despite the resistance to celibacy in principle and practice, the popes' determination to require it persisted. Sipe (1990) explained that questions about church property and religious power, which remained part of the papal agenda for several centuries, influenced the popes' continued legislation for compulsory celibacy. Schillebeeckx (1985) concluded also that the reason for the enforcement of the widespread legislation for celibacy through church Councils during those centuries was the determination to safeguard church property from alienation by inheritance. Legitimate sons of lawfully married priests who held offices or benefices would have had the right to claim them. 2

“There is a natural awareness that unmarried men are less encumbered socially, freer, and economically more flexible than those who are married....The vow of celibacy institutionalized nonmarriage, and gave the practitioner (or the avowed) superior control over his political and economic destiny” (Sipe, 1990: 50).

A concomitant of the enforcement of the law of celibacy was an intense antifeminism in the formation of the clergy and monks (Sipe, 1990). The suspicion of witchcraft attached to women made the clergy wary of them. Priests were to regard women as lustful, and sources of sin. They were to avoid women and treat them as inferior. Their exclusion from power in the church is a cost of the legislation for the ritual purity of priests, which is still borne by women.

“It is hard to overestimate the importance of antifeminism in the formation of celibate consciousness and priestly development for over two centuries when the discipline of celibacy was being solidified (1486 and following)” (Sipe, 1990: 51).

As monasticism spread throughout the Western church and grew stronger, a monastic model of priesthood, with its vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy, gained the support of many

ecclesiastical authorities. They regarded this model as the one to be preferred for all priests. The codification of ritual purity brought celibate men, in holy orders and monastic life, who were no longer affiliated or obligated to family ties and property, under the control of the church leaders. Through the vow or promise of obedience, which had also become compulsory, celibate clergy and monks surrendered their personal authority. In Sipe's (1990) estimation, a cost borne subsequently by the whole Catholic church has been a distorted theology of sexuality, and the persistence of clericalism as the dominant and dominating exercise of ecclesiastical power.

With the Protestant Reformation, came a theological perspective which argued that celibacy is not to be required of the clergy, and that it is a spiritual gift of only a few. In response to the urgent need to "counter-reform" the Catholic church, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) gave particular emphasis to the education and religious formation of priests, and confirmed the requirement of celibacy for priests in the Latin Rite. Despite the strength of the legislation, and the new educational structures of the seminaries, there continued to be notable breaches in the observance of this law (Sipe, 1990; Rice, 1990). The teaching of Trent continued to form Canon law, and the Catholic church's practice of educating priests up till the time of the Second Vatican Council. The seminary formation of Stephen and Dan, in particular, was one in which the discipline and practice of celibacy were unquestionable. Breaches of the practice of celibacy by priests were to be kept secret from those aspiring to be priests, and from the Catholic faithful. Stephen's story recounts the sense of shame and shock which overtook seminarians upon hearing of the marriage of a recent head prefect of the seminary. Stories, which came to public notice, of any priest's failure to observe the discipline of celibacy brought great shame to the Catholic church. Priests who had chosen to marry were regarded generally with a mixture of hostility and avoidance. Sometimes priests voiced some compassion for these "shepherds in the mist".

In 1959, Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Heralded as a time for *aggiornamento*, for the church to make an entry into the modern world, the

Council generated an atmosphere of questioning and reappraisal of Catholic church practice. It is not surprising that one of the matters which received widespread public questioning was the requirement of celibacy for ordination to the priesthood (Tierney, 1974). The discussion reflected the modern world's questions about institutional authority and personal responsibility, the meaning of commitment in marriage, birth control, the new aspirations for intimacy, self-actualisation and community, and the redefinition of women in society. In 1965, alarmed by the lively public controversy about celibacy, and some popular estimates that there would be a change in the law soon, Pope Paul VI excluded further discussion of celibacy from the Council meetings. Two years later, he issued an encyclical letter reaffirming the practice of priestly celibacy. Again in 1969, he affirmed the discipline of celibacy for priests in the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic church. In the Oriental rites of the Roman Catholic church married men may be admitted to the priesthood, although this practice is forbidden in Western countries such as Australia, United States and Canada. None of these authoritative statements quelled the worldwide discussion, or stemmed the flow of priests exiting from ministry. Pope Paul VI continued to receive questions from bishops about new forms of the priesthood to remedy the situation of depleted ranks of clergy. To a question about the ordination of mature aged married men, which was raised by the Dutch bishops at that time, Pope Paul VI replied in the negative. These events were taking place within their social context while Stephen, Paul, Dan, and Mark were engaged in ministry, and Luke and Matt were in their seminary formation.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops considered the question of celibacy as part of its agenda. With some dissenting voices and with some voices qualifying their support, the Synod of Bishops voted to require priests in the Latin rite to observe the law of celibacy in its entirety. A proposal to ordain married men was turned down despite considerable support. Once again, official statements and exhortations failed to silence the questions or to meet the pastoral needs experienced by the church worldwide (Tierney, 1974). The flow of dispensations continued. According to Shanahan (1980), "3,690 priests were laicised in 1973, 2506 in 1977 and 2307 in 1978". In 1978, Pope John Paul II, dismayed at the rate of applications

from priests requesting dispensation from their obligation to celibacy, proclaimed an embargo on dispensations until he held an inquiry and made new regulations.

The inquiry produced a Letter to the Bishops, on October 14, 1980, outlining new procedures to deal with dispensation from priestly obligations. The Letter noted that in the years immediately preceding 1978, during the time of Pope Paul VI, the process of granting dispensations had been regarded by many in the Catholic church as an administrative one. Tierney (1974: 282) a canon lawyer, had argued for a “generally known, dignified and honorable procedure of resignation” to replace laicisation. In the new procedures, however, priests were not to regard dispensation from celibacy as a choice open to them, or a right which the church would have to grant. The reasons to justify the granting of a dispensation became more stringent, and strong emphasis was placed on dispensation as the reduction of the priest to the lay state. The revised regulation asserted that the applicant’s request to be relieved of the obligation of celibacy is tantamount to the request for a return to the status of laity in the church's government and public work. Such an interpretation is not true to the intention of many who apply for dispensations from celibacy, because they do not choose to relinquish active ministry. This ecclesiastical interpretation of the situation, which allows no challenge to the requirement of celibacy, still stands as the official account, or master story, of this remarkable change of life choice in Catholic priests.

The Catholic church's official estimate of priests who have left active ministry voluntarily, for whatever reason, is that their choice is a betrayal of trust, and an injustice to the church. The process of dispensation from celibacy questions whether the exiting priest had been validly ordained, even though in the public estimation he may have exercised an effective and exemplary ministry. If some defect in awareness, consent or suitability can be shown to have been present at the time of ordination, then the church may decide to dispense the priest as though he had never been ordained. Dispensation is an act of graciousness on the church's part.

Those eligible to apply for dispensation are those who should not have been ordained, and by way of exception “those who have left the priestly life for a long period of time and who hope to remedy a state of affairs which they are not able to quit” (Letter to the Bishops, 1980, n 5: 1191). The principal evidence considered in the church's legal process is the self-disclosing statement of the departing priest, made in response to a series of questions. The onus lies with the applicants to demonstrate with strong and numerous arguments that at the time of their ordination they lacked the necessary freedom to choose, or the capacity to bear the responsibility of celibate priesthood. It should also be shown that these personal defects were not able to be assessed prior to ordination by those responsible for their formation. The new rules require from the applicant a thorough account, to be made in a spirit of humility. The request for freedom from the obligation of celibacy is construed as virtually the applicant's denial of his ordination. The dispensation is equivalent to a declaration that this person is unsuitable for the priesthood because of defects in his moral, spiritual, or psychological capacities. Some applications are refused; others are granted only after what appears to many as a punitive delay. Regarded as a lay person, his subsequent place in the functioning of the church is restricted. There are several recent notable exceptions to this rule, because individual bishops have employed former priests in areas of the church's work where their expertise is recognised.

The church claims an exclusive right to the priests' obedient fulfilment of their undertaking to live a celibate lifestyle in ministry. This legitimates the punitive approach to those who have conscientiously chosen to marry. Church authorities claim that the new regulations have stemmed the flow of dispensations, or at least have reduced the number which are granted. This masks the fact that, in the face of this more prohibitive stance, some priests who marry may prefer not to initiate the process, because the constraint of the ecclesiastical context distorts their life stories of transformation.

It is now a common conviction, among those who began by advocating for change only in the church's attitude to priesthood and marriage, that the current crisis in the Catholic

priesthood has to do not only with the questions of optional celibacy and the ordination of married men (Rice, 1990; Powers; 1992). The Catholic church is being faced also with the need to address the presence of women in church leadership, and the ordination of women. For some (Rice, 1990), the greatest challenge to the church is for it to move away from its alliances with the rich and influential people in society, in order to make an option for the poor.

"Questions of why priests leave, and whether celibacy should be optional, seem to grow pale and even self-indulgent when placed beside such massive challenges. Yet that is an illusion. Such questions are tightly interwoven in all three of these challenges. They are, in fact, a part of them. They are part of the struggle within the church for human rights - the right to honourable dispensation, the right to marry, the right to found a family, the right to liberty under God. They are part of the feminist struggle, to which the institution is saying you cannot be a priest if you are a woman or if you are married to one. And those questions are deeply a part of the option for the poor, because in the Third World the only way those poor will have leadership or the Eucharist is if respected married family men can be drawn from within the community, and ordained to provide them with these two necessities" (Rice, 1990: 247).

Thus, mandatory celibacy of priests has continued to occupy a place in the public spotlight. It appears that the Catholic church's persistent policy of refusing open discussion about the values of priesthood with optional celibacy has been strengthened by recent public disclosures about clergy sexual abuse. Sipe, a psychiatrist and respected researcher into the celibacy of Catholic priests, who was invited to the Vatican conference on celibacy (1993) remarked about the meeting that "preference for fixed symbols over lived narrative, seriously distorts discourse" (1993: 742)

"Celibacy will never survive as a legal and static idea. It has meaning only if it is lived, talked about and debated. A 'dialogue' about celibacy which cannot confront the stories of its practice and its changeable history in the church is a sleight of hand similar to the one we detect when dictators speak of having 'opened a dialogue' with the weak whom they keep on the margins of society by armed force. Dialogue whose real purpose is control rather than discovery in the end defeats itself and brings only external conciliation, internal reform" (Sipe, 1993: 742).

The Letter to Bishops by Pope John Paul II, on May 30, 1994, excluding the ordination of women, and forbidding any further discussion on this subject shows once again that social control occupies a central position in the policies which govern the practice of priesthood. The current administration of the Catholic church is unlikely to change these preferred positions. The responses to this recent statement from the laity, theologians and clergy of the Catholic church range from a welcome embrace of the teaching by some, to a spirited assurance from others that the struggle for women's ordination is not over, nor will discussion be suppressed. The church's refusal to change the law of compulsory celibacy has met with similar responses since the question was raised in the 1960's. Despite the power of the social context to construct reality by imposing a master story to order sexuality and authority, people still prefer the authenticity of their own life narratives.

In Roman Catholicism, celibacy is part of the myth of priesthood. Appropriate for the priesthood as a charism, celibacy has been institutionalised and incorporated into the master story which confines priesthood to celibate males. McGarry (1991) observed that fallacies or arbitrary interpretations may become attached to the myths or traditions which indicate what is fundamentally true about the world. When the tradition or myth no longer brings life to its social and cultural context, it is time "to go back to its source and reexamine the primary myth to discern the terms of current interpretation" (1991: 19).

4.4 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE PHENOMENON OF PRIESTS RESIGNING FROM MINISTRY

The choice for change, made by the authors of the six life stories told in Chapter Three, has questioned the Catholic church's arrangements for the exercise of priesthood. Clearly, church law has not been changed as a result of these remarkable changes. Indeed, official statements continue to affirm the policy of mandatory celibacy. In this section, I wish to show how the ongoing and various reactions of church and society to this phenomenon

qualified the social context in which the autobiographical learning of the six authors took place.

Since the 1960's, the phenomenon of priests leaving the ministry within the Catholic church, has met with various responses. Some interpretations of the departure of priests have named it as a tragedy for the church, which evokes a communal grief at the loss of so many gifted people. There has also been anger directed towards the priests who exit. In some countries, laity and clergy have sounded a persistent alarm because there is now a shortage of priests to carry out what is perceived as the necessary work of the Catholic church. Recruitment programs, launched energetically to replace the resigning clergy, have brought varying results. Some outcomes are insufficient to reassure them.

Other interpretations of the significance of diminished clergy numbers have named it as a timely step in the process of restoring the dignity of the laity. After a long period of clericalisation, some argue that the time is ripe at last to make the laity co-responsible for the Catholic church's life. As well, various new options to meet the church's current need for government and ministry have been proposed. These include opening the priesthood to women, and to men who are married, as well as restoring the ministry of priests now married who may wish to exercise some aspects of their former life and work (Schillbeeckx, 1985). Movements for the Ordination of Women are to be found in English speaking countries especially. Organisations, such as CORPUS, in which resigned priest members indicate their willingness to return to some form of service as priests in the Catholic church in the United States, have been formed worldwide.

Apart from occasional authoritative condemnatory statements, the institutional church has greeted the ongoing exodus from the priesthood mostly with silence. Avoiding public discussion, the church has interpreted the phenomenon in its renewed affirmation of the requirement of mandatory celibacy for priesthood, and by its revised regulations for dispensations. By eliciting self-discrediting stories from those who apply for dispensation

from the obligations of celibacy, and by excluding genuine dialogue (Sipe, 1993), the church sustains its official interpretation. Pope John Paul II claims to serve the genuine interests of the clergy and the laity in this way (Letter to the Bishops, 1980).

An important source of interpretation of the exit of priests from ministry has been the stream of research by social scientists, principally in North America. Schallert and Kelley (1970), whose sociological research immediately followed the first wave of marrying and resigning priests, indicated that the phenomenon of voluntary withdrawal from the Catholic priesthood could not be explained simply as priests rejecting celibacy. They discovered, from their interviews with priests in active ministry and a comparable large sample of those who had withdrawn, that significant changes in the social and cultural context of the Catholic church had brought corresponding changes in the role and status of priests and laity. The “complete and revolutionary posture of the Church” in Second Vatican Council had come “as a social and cultural shock” (1970: 432). Many people felt the impact of this shock. Among them were the priests who had withdrawn from ministry. Important values and orientations, which these priests had held, underwent change. These concerned the domains of authority and obedience, the person and the role, and the priests’ orientation to society. They adopted a more flexible view of ecclesiastical structures, and an expectation that doctrine is also something vital, rather than fixed and dogmatic. A characteristic common to the priests who withdrew was a “newly discovered subjecthood or personhood” (1970: 446) which until then they had esteemed as selfishness or egoism. Another crucial discovery for them was the value of their feelings and an appreciation of their embodiment. These changes are readily observable in the life stories of Stephen, Dan, Paul, Mark, Matt and Luke.

Schallert and Kelley (1970: 447) noted that the priests who had withdrawn had experienced a sense of being a stranger within the church. Their alienation grew into a crisis, in which there was a sense of self-estrangement, and a loss of meaning in their activity within the church. In this circumstance, the quality of the priests’ relationship to a *crucial other* within the church, such as an authority figure or guide, seemed to be of paramount importance.

“More importantly, however, when the *significant* or *crucial* other to whom the priest turns to for help incarnates within himself all of the structural problems which have contributed to the original crisis, then a latent decision to leave the priesthood is made. If he is greeted by an explanation or a scolding, or an exhortation or anything else short of sympathetic human understanding, his despair will seem justified to him and irresolvable” (Schallert and Kelley, 1970: 458)

In concluding the report of their study, Schallert and Kelley (1970) advised that “the single most important step to be taken” to remedy the situation was the renewal of the Catholic church.

“But one thing is certain...to refer to these men as evil or faithless to the Church or the Holy See, or cowardly or *psycho* or whatever else is only to demonstrate a bias which is easily removed by three or four years of serious study and research” (1970: 460).

The clinical research into the psychological maturity of Catholic clergy in U.S.A., carried out by Kennedy, Heckler, Kobler, and Walker (1977), gave no support to the prejudice that priests who resigned were less psychologically mature than priests who persisted in ministry. Erickson (1983) reported, from his psychotherapeutic practice, a case in which a priest’s adolescent choice for celibacy, influenced by the social context of the Catholic church, had been reconsidered in mid-life.

Other sociological research, undertaken in the U.S., proposed “paths to departure”, and reported that changing dimensions and patterns of authority in the social context of the Catholic church had influenced priests’ social behaviour (Jehenson, 1969; Greeley, 1972; Dellacava, 1975; Schoenerr and Greeley, 1974; Schnabel and Koval, 1979).

Powers (1992) has estimated that there are over twenty thousand resigned and married priests in the United States of America. He noted that the departure of priests has usually been labelled officially as entirely the breakdown of individual virtue or resolve, a loss of spiritual life or the action of defectors from the faith. Disagreeing with this focus on

individual behaviour, Powers argued that the resignation of priests, especially since 1965, constitutes a social movement which has become worldwide.

Despite the pronouncements about mandatory celibacy, and exhortations to priests which followed the Vatican Council, a steady stream of priests has continued to choose to marry. It is clear from accounts reported in Rice (1990), Sipe (1990), and Powers (1992) that some priests wished to resign from ministry as well as marry, whereas others simply wished to be enabled to marry and to continue as priests. The church's response has been to treat the persons in both situations equivalently. In both cases, their choice to author their lives by choosing to marry led to their suspension from ministry.

Having considered the historical development of the policy of celibacy, and the ways in which the Catholic church has responded to the challenge presented to it by the social movement of priests choosing to marry, it is important to return to the narratives to discern how the changing social context of Catholicism affected the autobiographical learning of the six storytellers. Although Stephen's story is considered more thoroughly, the specific ways in which each author has learned in the social context will be illustrated.

4.5 SIX ACCOUNTS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Each of the stories, of Stephen, Paul, Mark, Matt, Luke and Dan, provides a specific account of autobiographical learning within a changing social context. Each story portrays its author, composing a life story amid constraints to conserve tradition, and challenges to change it. This tension characterised the culture of the Catholic church during the years which followed the Second Vatican Council.

It has been noted earlier that, even within what may appear to be a homogeneous social context, people perceive and interpret in various ways the personal and social outcomes of autobiographical learning. Obviously, each interpretation offered as an explanation of the social phenomenon of the departure of priests corresponds with the perspective and interests of interpreters within the Catholic church. Similarly, since this phenomenon of priests leaving the priesthood first came into public view, it has been variously interpreted in Australian society at large. This is not to say that this phenomenon has attracted universal comment. After all, many citizens may sense no need to account for particular social phenomena. As far as many casual observers are concerned, the phenomenon of priests choosing to marry, despite their earlier undertaking to remain celibate, may not be so surprising now. That the priest's conscientious decision to marry is an instance of a remarkable change, which contravenes church norms and argues for an alternative tradition of ministry, may not be apparent to those outside the cultural context of the Catholic church. In fact, it is the choice for celibacy in the first place that may appear to be all the more unusual, in these years after the sexual revolution. Therefore, in some settings in Australian society, what appears as a crucial and contentious issue for the Catholic church, may go unnoticed or require little or no explanation, unless some dramatic circumstance attract the attention of the media of information and entertainment. Thus, in the context of Australian society and the Roman Catholic church, the meaning and social significance of the phenomenon of Catholic priests marrying varies according to the interest and interests of persons and institutions. The effect of public opinion on the making of life choices is best discovered from the narratives of change.

The life stories told in Chapter Three account for the transformative learning of the six authors in the context of Australian Catholicism, with special reference to the period since the 1960's. The accounts, are the fruit of a process of redefining what comes to be "symbolised and resymbolised over and over again" (Ricoeur, in Kearney, 1984: 28). By

telling and retelling their story, the co-researchers have been able to question and challenge both their own and the church's "established" interpretation of what their actions mean. Up till the present, these stories and the accounts of other resigned priests, have generally not been heard. For the most part, the authors have been voiceless in public discourse within the church, because the church generally excludes from its media of information any discussion about dissent from church policy. It is ironic that although the Second Vatican Council taught eloquently about the rights and dignity of conscience, church public practice has chosen to disregard many priests' accounts of their conscientious choice to marry. 3

It is the priest's *action* in choosing to marry, which becomes the text which is interpreted publicly, and not the *account* which the author has to offer. Obviously, the priest's choice to marry evoked interpretation in the local social context in which it occurred. When the life stories are told, they too are open to the interpretation of whoever might hear or read them. Those who interpret the accounts may confirm or dissent from the narratives. The social context in which the account is interpreted affects whether the author's account will be esteemed as having value or not. For example, the account required by the church in a petition for a dispensation from the obligation of celibacy is adjudged to be creditable if it conforms to certain criteria, or is rejected as unfounded. On the other hand, the article, *Hearing the stories of a journey* (Nelson, 1991), published in the National Council Of Priests Newsletter, drew only positive written responses to the author and co-researchers.

The author's narrative does not purport to reveal *the* meaning of the event. Indeed, like any account, these six narratives are the authors' interpretations of what their transformative learning means. The life stories told in Chapter Three, which the authors constructed in the co-operative inquiry, have served the dual purpose of making their changed life choice more intelligible to themselves, as well as to others. As followable public accounts, they also contain an invitation to whoever reads them to consider what significance they have for the authors, and their implications for the social context of the Catholic church.

Moreover, although the life stories are open to the interpretation of those who read or hear them, they, in turn, interpret the reader's own accounts of this social phenomenon. If readers interpret the autobiographical accounts in such a way that their "world disclosing" capacity becomes manifest, then an opportunity presents itself for readers to consider and interpret again what import this social phenomenon carries for themselves. If the stories were to generate a widespread public consideration of priests resigning from ministry, there may emerge yet other interpretations of the phenomenon. The public conversation might generate a step towards social emancipation. It would initiate the possibility of reaching a new "common place", to reconstruct in common the social identity of those who have experienced this remarkable change, as well as all who constitute the Catholic community (Shotter, 1986). Through mutual interpretation, context and narrative may be seen to be capable of mutual formation.

Such an interpretive event, in favourable circumstances, might well stimulate a new history for the practice of priesthood in the social context of the Catholic church. Ricoeur discussed the political and social dimensions of public discourse. Using Popper's description of an "open society" as one which assumes that political debate is always open, Ricoeur argued that participation in the discourse would mean being "prepared to take the critical step back in order to continually interrogate and reconstitute the conditions of an authentic language" (Ricoeur, in Kearney, 1984: 29). The autobiographical accounts of this thesis, as alternative constructions of reality, have a potential to evoke such new interpretations of the social phenomenon. A new interpretation may reveal alternative worlds in which a revised theology of sexuality and authority would constitute a new understanding and practice of priesthood for the Catholic church. Thus, the narrative evidence in these life stories emerges as a new and possible perspective, which brings both *rupture* and *affirmation* to the Catholic church's current explanations of what this phenomenon of change entails. The narratives affirm the church's fundamental values concerning service, and the dignity of conscientious decisions. What is ruptured is the church's present practice of invalidating the personal and social experience of these authors, and excluding it from being a source for the church's

learning in the formation of its tradition. New theological understanding, an alternative tradition and a new social context for the Catholic church's practice of the priesthood might emerge from the imaginative possibilities which are disclosed in these narratives of remarkable change.

4.6 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF STEPHEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

For Stephen, and the other participants in this inquiry, Australian society and Roman Catholicism in the 1950-1960's constituted the principal social and cultural context for their personal and religious formation in young adulthood. At that time, Catholicism offered to its faithful in general, and to those who entered religious life in particular, a construction of social reality which was very influential in forming their sense of identity and vocation in life. The primary and secondary socialisation of Catholics inducted them into a hierarchical and patriarchal culture, in which the behaviour required of them was clearly indicated (Schallert and Kelley, 1970). For the most part, Catholics learned to view other influences and dimensions of the social context in the light of whether they were significantly and positively related to their vocation or whether they were antagonistic.

Turner's (1992) social history of Australian Roman Catholicism has painted a picture of the religious formation of religious women, men and priests in those days. It was a culture of formation towards unquestioning obedience, where fidelity was equated with passive acceptance of tradition and the decisions of those in authority. Individuality and personal creativity were considered to be at enmity with the best interests of the community of faith. A call to the priesthood brought with it a sense of urgency and a necessity to comply. To ignore or to "lose one's vocation" was to risk one's salvation. On the positive side, the status of priest was highly prized within the community, and, by association, the priest's parents and family were held in high esteem also.

Not surprisingly, the life stories which emerged in this inquiry reveal something of the learning processes which influenced the seminary formation of their authors. The social context of the seminary provided an institutional setting for induction into the clerical culture. Through their formation, the seminarians were educated to make a choice for celibacy as a necessary condition for the priesthood. Although celibacy and obedience to church regulation were constraints formally imposed and accepted by candidates at the time of ordination, they had already been part of the lifestyle of the seminarian for some seven years. The enablement which the acceptance of celibacy and obedience brought was the authorisation to exercise a public ministry. Seminarians knew that to change subsequently the option for celibacy, by choosing to marry, would mean the withdrawal by the church of the priest's right to exercise a public ministry on its behalf. It also carried the meanings of a betrayal of God and the church.

The starting point for Stephen's journey of autobiographical learning is located in his immersion in the culture of rural Australian Catholicism, found in both his family and at school. Here he acquired his Catholic tradition of faith and practice. Stephen's early attachment to the vocation of priesthood within this tradition became the reference point for his life choices.

"So I was on my journey of faith with a deep conviction about being Catholic, being very intellectual about it, and living it in a very willed way, by doing all the right things, and believing that God was calling me to be a priest."

Stephen's sense of urgency to proceed to the seminary immediately upon leaving school is consonant with the picture of the Roman Catholic culture of the period.

"So, thirty or forty years ago, young men and women who became convinced that God had called them to religious life or to the seminary believed that to ignore this call was to place their souls' salvation in jeopardy" (Turner, 1992: 261).

From his Catholic tradition, Stephen inherited a sharp sense that there needed to be congruence among the various aspects of his faith and its practice. An important constituent, therefore, of Stephen's faith was obedience to the authority or will of God. Although he believed that his vocation came from God, he knew that the Catholic church claimed the responsibility and right to discern its validity. Integrity as a Catholic and fidelity to God required him to listen respectfully to the church's directives and comply with them in his behaviour.

Though at times these directives were personally restrictive for him, his commitment to the tradition was, nevertheless, resolute and wholehearted. Stephen's loyalty was based in a confidence that the church's teaching was reliable and true. It did not deter him to know that the tenets of his faith and understanding conflicted with other contemporary religious and scientific interpretations and explanations of life. Without bigotry, he had a sanguine confidence that the Roman Catholic tradition, when clearly and attractively presented, would appeal to people of good will and open mind. He portrayed himself as "all set to proclaim Catholicism" at the time he was ordained.

The authority of God and the church invested his worldview with a self-evident quality. Through his socialisation in family, school and even in the seminary, Stephen's learning was confined to elaborating and making secure the perspectives of the tradition. He approached his formal learning intelligently, appreciating whatever elements of practice there were within a predominantly theoretical education. It was beyond the intention of the seminary to educate Stephen and his peers as reflective practitioners and creative theologians. Nevertheless, he enjoyed a sense of satisfaction, believing that his theological knowledge and understanding would extend to any new experiences he could expect to encounter as a priest in Australian society.

In his analysis of the religious and professional formation offered to Australian priests in those years, Collins (1986) asserted that the primary models employed were cultic and jurisdictional.

"They were trained to see their task as providing clear, authoritative and binding leadership for the faithful. Priests were sacred persons, the intermediaries between God and the worshipping community" (Collins, 1986: 192).

Though it appears now to be contradictory that education for ministry in society should take place in the closed world of the seminary, Stephen did not question his seminary formation.

"They did not, for example, read newspapers or listen to radios. Any deviation from the structured norm was followed by a form of penance. Any hint of disobedience or criticism of authority was anathema. Individuality and creativity were not encouraged. The emphasis was on obedience and the value of perseverance" (Turner, 1992: 262).

At the time of his ordination, Stephen's worldview held that, for Roman Catholics at least, all life was authorised by God through the church. Standing solidly on his platform of an intellectual apprehension of church teaching, he acted with a degree of conviction in practice that was the logical outcome of his beliefs and values. In his deep concern for people, Stephen drew from his tradition the comfort and confidence of knowing that all their questions and dilemmas could be resolved deductively by reference to the church's authoritative teaching and guidance. The church's authority was the source of order, and its decisions were unquestionable for Catholics. He perceived this directive role of the church as benign, and oriented towards serving people. As well as holding these intellectual convictions, Stephen was full of loyalty and enthusiasm for the church and its mission.

Throughout his life narrative, Stephen showed an acute awareness of the social environs of his life and ministry. From the beginning, he expected to fulfil his vocation by being available to people in their everyday crises and struggles. The parish in which he first lived

was a place where his good will and enthusiasm found immediate expression. There was scope for him to be self-directed, even within the rather highly structured role of an assistant parish priest. Stephen took the opportunity to visit and to engage parishioners in conversation about their faith and their lives. He enjoyed his work. Yet, within a short time, his confidence was being rattled somewhat by the mismatch between what he had learned, and the situations that he was encountering in these early years of ministry. When one of his priest co-workers in the parish exited unexpectedly from the priesthood, he found himself without an explanation satisfactory to himself or one communicable to the people of the parish. Within the tradition he had inherited, a priest's leaving the priesthood would generally be interpreted as desertion and disloyalty. Though he was disinclined to apply that labelling to the situation, he was at a loss to make sense of the event.

Stephen's openness to people and to events in the context of Australian society in the 1960's brought stress fractures to the edifice of his orthodox certainty. From within the household of his own faith, there came two new phenomena, which together exposed him further to vulnerability. One was the unexpected message and impact of the Second Vatican Council; the other was the change in lay attitudes to church authority.

4.7 THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The exciting but imprecise direction, which Pope John XXIII gave to the Catholic church in 1959, when he convoked the Second Vatican Council (Abbott, 1966), called the clergy and laity to listen to the "signs of the times" (Mt 16: 4). The new direction awakened in many Australian Catholics a sense of freedom to explore the meaning of their faith and practice. During the years 1962-1965, Vatican Council II issued a number of decrees, announced radical changes in the Roman Catholic church's contemporary self-understanding, and revised its statements for its mission in modern society. O'Farrell (1985), a historian of

Australian Catholicism, described the effects of the Council's vision. He regarded it as a retrieval of traditional values which had been obscured and distorted.

"These changes clarified basic teachings and practices, and modernised their expression, ridding them of irrelevant accretions of tradition, of forms and styles inherited from bygone days and antiquated attitudes.... From its old image as a stern and closed citadel of certainties, it changed its posture to that of openness, encounter and involvement in the world" (1985: 406).

A more concrete description of what changed in the cultural context of Australian Catholics is given by Noone (1993).

"Changes included the end of Friday abstinence, liturgical reform, new roles for nuns, debates on birth control, greater emphasis on lay Christian responsibility and religious liberty, as well as improved relations with Orthodox, Protestants, Jews and atheists" (1993: 112).

Much of the spirit of this "church in the modern world" obviously contradicted the self-evident worldview which Stephen had shared until now with most Catholics. The challenge to change his perspective and practice to what was manifest in the church's new vision and mission statements stopped Stephen in his tracks. At the same time, the excitement of this new intention to address contemporary dilemmas and encounter people with modern perspectives drew him on to explore its implications for himself and for his ministry. That the changes were authorised by the institution that had formed his present self-evident worldview was an important consideration in Stephen's acceptance of them. His trust in the church's wisdom gave him confidence that gradually he would gain a sense of continuity between his tradition and the new teaching. It also encouraged him to expose himself to the risks of exploration, of not knowing, of "reading the signs of the times".

In the 1960's, in Australian society as elsewhere in the Western world, there was a ferment of optimism about human intentions, and some expectation that humanity would make extraordinary progress in all fields of human endeavour. For some, there was a hope that

there would be major advances in unity among the Christian churches. Others rejoiced that the age of Aquarius was being ushered in. Simultaneously, there were people holding conservative views in politics, business and the church, who offered strong resistance to what they perceived as movements of disorder and revolution. Abroad, controversy and conflict abounded within that decade, for these were the years of escalation of Vietnam war and protest against it, the sexual revolution, the publication of feminist ideas, and the dawning and undeniable awareness of the gap between the rich and poor of the world. The slogan "Question authority" gave voice to the mood of many younger people, especially. Australian society watched the overseas dramas of social unrest and found that its own stability was shaken also.

In Stephen's second parish, it was younger people, in particular, who challenged his well-intentioned orthodox responses to their questions and views about the Catholic church, and its political and moral stances in Australian society. The Second Vatican Council's decrees called for a genuine and wide consultation of the laity in the church's search for genuine responses to the dilemmas of modern life. However, in fact, the Australian Catholic church was slow to relinquish its claim to be the prime interpreter and guide for Roman Catholics in their personal and social morality. By criticising some of the church's directives, and by challenging its silence on important political and moral issues, young lay people in particular were directly confronting Stephen's tradition.

He was uncertain about how he could reconcile what he had received as his tradition with this new vision of church which appealed to him. In the context of the contradictory and confusing social reality he was observing every day in the world about him, he found himself at a loss. The cross currents of old tradition and new vision were confusing, unsettling and at times paralysing for a priest like Stephen who wanted to be faithful to the church's directions, and at the same time responsive to its new ethos of openness to the modern world. The church's new proclamation was urging him to read the "signs of the times" and to learn with others by being attentive to the lived experience of people around him. Eager

to follow the church's lead, Stephen nevertheless encountered great difficulty in discerning what was valid and true among the many voices competing for a hearing about important matters in those days. His diligent obedience in being alert to the social, cultural and political milieu brought Stephen unsettlement rather than order.

"I wanted to be part of it. And I wasn't quite sure how I could, because I still felt up here (*touches head*). I was still entrenched in the old church, and down here in my heart and my whole gut feeling, that's the church I wanted to be part of".

The greatest consternation which Stephen faced as a priest in the late 1960's and early 1970's stemmed from the lively interaction and conflict between church authority and changing social values and attitudes. The principal contexts of disturbance for him were the Vietnam conflict, and the church's teachings on sexuality and birth control. However, other questions facing the church in those years included the effectiveness of Catholic schools, the ordination of women, social justice and ecumenism. In Australian society, important debates about land rights for Aboriginal people, care of the environment, and the health, education and welfare policies of the political parties (Noone, 1993) were beginning. The Catholic church, with its new stance, expected itself to have something to contribute to the debates.

For a long time, a stereotype of political and cultural solidarity of Australian Catholicism had existed. The Australian Labor Party, which had been identified generally as supporting the interests and causes of Catholics, experienced turbulence in the 1950's over approaches to be taken to communism in trade unions. The ruptures which occurred revealed new diversity and conflict within the Catholic culture, which could not be contained by Church authority. In Stephen's life, the currents of Australian politics flowed into those of a church in the process of reform.

4.8 THE VIETNAM WAR

The Catholic church's official response to the Australian government's involvement in the Vietnam War and the decision to reintroduce conscription in 1964, was generally one of approval. The church's position endorsed an anti-communist analysis of events in Vietnam. For the most part, lay Catholics and clergy were willing to accept the decisions of the Australian Government to be involved in the war. Stephen, too, was sympathetic to this stance. However, he felt contradicted by the resistance of small groups of Catholics to military involvement and conscription, and by their participation in the street demonstrations for the Vietnam Moratorium. Catholic war resisters whom he respected were challenging the interpretations of the war made by the U.S. military and conservative Catholic groups in Australia. The resisters appealed to the tradition of the New Testament, Pope John XXIII's encyclical on world peace *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and the theme of the address of Pope Paul VI, "No more war, never again", at the United Nations in October, 1965. Some young Catholic men, who had been drafted, claimed a conscientious objection to the war, and found moral support from a few priests (Noone, 1993).

4.9 BIRTH CONTROL

Responding to the pastoral questions which presented themselves in these various contexts, Stephen relied initially on his worldview that the church was the authority and guide for all human circumstances. Two things disconcerted him, however. Firstly, it was evident to him that this directive pastoral strategy no longer was effective in the face of ambiguous "signs of the times". There was always more to be said than what the church acknowledged. Secondly, the church's new vision of openness had already weakened its own hierarchical authority to some extent.

The Second Vatican Council had taught that an informed conscience, as their "most secret core and sanctuary", commits Christians to join in the common human search for truth, "and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships" (Abbott, 1966: 213-214). For the most part, this statement of the fundamental dignity of persons had been received gladly by Catholics. Indeed, many grew confident thereby that in the late 1960's there would be a reinterpretation of church teaching on contraception in line with the current findings of medical research, behavioural sciences and demographic studies. Stephen, too, was hoping that the church, would attend to the "signs of the times", and proceed inductively to make a new decision, authorising Catholics to use contraception responsibly. The decision to exclude the use of contraception for Catholics, published in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, came as a great shock to Stephen.

The ruling ran counter to the majority advice given to the Pope by a study commission he had appointed. The ensuing dissent, which many Catholics expressed, protested that the church was ignoring their honest learning from lived experience, as a source of authority and information for formulating church teaching about sexuality. Many felt that, in an apparent about-face, this "voice of the people" within the church had not been heard, and that the openness of the church was suspect. Noone (1993) argued that the birth control decision served to undermine respect for church authority more widely than the church's approach to Vietnam. The coincidence of these events shattered all the more the trust of many laity and clergy.

Stephen was bewildered in his attempt to reconcile this exercise of the church's teaching authority with the evidence of lay learning from experience. By this time, he was welcoming the emergence of a new church which would be a place, "in which we shared our struggles, our continuing search for the meaning of God in our life. It was a church in which people would make personal decisions that wouldn't equate always with the institutional church".

Instead of church authority safeguarding order, there was now widespread disorder and dissent in the Roman Catholic church, especially in Europe and the United States. Stephen considered that for him to make his opinions known publicly would be to confuse his parishioners and make the situation worse.

The widespread dissent from the church's teaching signalled a shift in the cultural context of Australian Catholicism, especially within the laity. It was a movement towards autonomy, in which people were making conscientious decisions to resist church teaching and to take responsibility for their behaviour. Many Catholics immediately gave up their practice of church attendance at this time, and regarded themselves as both excluded from the church and no longer bound by the tradition. Within a short time, many others had decided to remain within the church, in order to dissent responsibly from this teaching "from within" (Collins, 1986).

Ambiguity surrounded the manner in which the Catholic church in Australia dealt pastorally with the ban on contraception. Among many laity, there was an uncomfortable ambivalence towards authority within the church. In 1975, seven years after *Humanae Vitae*, the Catholic hierarchy was still seeking to address this situation of dissent among Catholics against the authoritative papal teaching by proposing a "pastoral solution". Priests were to insist firmly on the acceptance of this teaching. Nevertheless, they were advised not to harass people who had reached a state of conscientious objection to this particular teaching of the church. In the meantime, Stephen had gradually arrived at his own stance of "sticking with people, and saying what I believed in my heart was true". He was supportive of those who faced decisions about contraception, telling them,

"You've got to work this out for yourself. I can't tell you or give you that answer. But I will support you".

4.10 PRIESTS LEAVING ACTIVE MINISTRY

A third voice of conscience and dissent began to be heard. Throughout the world, numbers of priests were withdrawing from active ministry, many of them choosing to marry. It is difficult to estimate exactly the numbers of those who departed. Rice (1990) described the reasons for the inexact reckoning.

"The total number of resigned priests throughout the world could be as high as 100,000, which is the figure generally accepted by the media, and it is certainly above 80,000. The Vatican's own *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* lists the granting of 46,302 dispensations to priests to marry, between 1963 and 1983. That was six years ago. And for every priest who gets a dispensation, there is another who was refused or never bothered to ask. So a figure of 100,000 is likely" (1990: 24).

Powers (1992) interpreted the phenomenon of priests leaving active ministry as a social movement.

"The movement embraces a broad spectrum of people from those wanting nothing more than the freedom to marry to those calling for a revolutionary restructuring of the church, including a radical reconceptualization of Christian ministry" (1992: xiii).

Placing his focus on varied efforts for ministerial reform since 1966 in the North American Catholic church, Powers asserted that a social movement has the following characteristics. In a social context where people experience "powerlessness and futility", a dramatic event occurs which transforms the situation, convincing people that something may be done to change the status quo. The emergence of eloquent and charismatic leaders brings organisation. They identify a congruence between the core values and meanings of society and the aspirations of their protest. The movement educates itself and others to raise consciousness and mobilise support. Despite the development of factions within the movement, negotiations to change social structures take place with those who hold legitimate power in the institution or society. Some beginnings of such a social movement

of priests for reform within the Australian context faltered with the departure from ministry of the charismatic leaders.

Most priests who resigned in North America have expressed no public interest in exercising ministry subsequently. However, from the early days of the exodus of priests from ministry, some married priests have sought that right. Since 1968, the Society of Priests for a Free Ministry, named the Federation of Christian Ministries in 1980 to indicate the evolution of a broader sense of identity, has been the most persistent and active organisation in this social movement. Another organisation of married priests, CORPUS, formed in 1974, became more active in 1984 in its advocacy for a general reconsideration of the meaning of priesthood in the Roman Catholic church.

On the church's international scene, the movement for the reform of ministry had gained some impetus when several prominent priests resigned in the years immediately following Vatican Council II. One influential figure was Charles Davis, a well known English theologian who left the priesthood amid great publicity in 1966. Davis gave an account of his action in his book, *A Question of Conscience*, the following year. His desire for personal integrity through emotional and intellectual autonomy, for a more inclusive approach to inquiry and truth, and the freedom to express his sexuality in marriage, guided Davis' choice to resign. He claimed that his sense of unrest within the church disappeared once he had left the institution. A summary of the process of his transformation of consciousness struck responsive chords in many priests at the time.

"I have taken possession of myself by a radical decision; I have accepted the risk of a wider and receding horizon; and I have joined myself in intimate love to an individual person" (Davis, 1967: 14).

Other significant figures in North America and Europe left the priesthood with more or less media publicity than Davis, evoking in Catholics a mixture of strong feelings; support, sadness at their loss to the active priesthood, and bitter condemnation. Prominent priest

theologians, such as Hans Kung and Edward Schillebeeckx, who did not resign, nevertheless lent their support to the impetus for changes in the ministry of priests, including the introduction of optional celibacy.

In Australia, the stream of departing priests began later and proceeded more slowly. The National Statistical Survey of Australian Religious Personnel (1976) indicated that whereas the crest of the wave of exiting clergy in U.S. had been reached in the first half of the 1965-1975 decade, in Australia the peak was not reached till the latter years of that period. Parer and Peterson (1971) made an early attempt to name what was happening in the lives of Australian priests.

"Perhaps the greatest single factor in the present priestly crisis situation is that priests are starting to demand that they be seen as persons, as human beings with rights" (1971: 5).

This diagnosis of the condition of clergy is similar to what Powers (1992: 4) noted. He compared the unhappiness and unrest many priests felt at that time to what Betty Friedan had described in the experience of women, as a "disease which has no name".

In Australia, not all priests had greeted the changed ethos of Vatican Council II with joy.

"For everyone the years after the Council were destabilising, as old ways made a place for new. About one in ten priests left the ministry. For some there was a crisis of faith. For others, compulsory celibacy became unsupportable" (Campion, 1987: 228)

Parer and Peterson (1971) considered the exit from ministry in the late 1960's, expressing concern that some priests may have left without sufficient forethought.

"This pattern emerged in the United States, in Northern Europe and in Latin America. Beginning in 1964 and speaking generally the first to leave were men of a high degree of pastoral commitment, often the forward thinking theologians and the men with a sensitive awareness of social injustices. These were followed several

years later by an avalanche of priests whose background was one of indecision and discontent. If this were to happen in Australia and New Zealand we would endorse wholeheartedly the warning to young priests (and older ones too) to move slowly and cautiously" (1971: 19).

Noone (1993) described the situation as one in which the implementation of change brought conflict and controversies. Debate ensued about what it meant to be faithful to church tradition. Efforts to modernise liturgy and catechetics, in particular, met with protests and resistance from those who believed that the church's tradition was being sacrificed. Innovators sometimes appealed to the resisters to recognise that the "new" approach was a retrieval of ancient tradition. At other times, they appealed to the decrees of the Vatican Council to authorise their interpretation of reading the "signs of the times" as a warrant for experimentation and modernisation. There was widespread ambiguity and uncertainty, and some priests and laity sought clarity in defining for themselves the limits of tradition (Parer and Peterson, 1971: 16).

Those who retreated from the considerable challenges posed by the Second Vatican Council, while remaining within the structures of ministry, were described by their critics as having left the church "to the right" (Parer and Peterson, 1971). On the other hand, shocked by the message of *Humanae Vitae*, and dismayed by the punitive actions taken by some church authorities toward dissenting priests, some priests felt that the whole spirit of the "new church" was at risk. Attempts by priests to interpret together this confusing state of the priesthood in Australia had commenced with regional meetings, and the subsequent circulation of newsletters. In 1969, independently of church authority, though not in defiance of it, eighty five priests gathered at a hotel in Coogee for two days for a national meeting. Discussion topics included new forms of ministry and the development of due process to resolve conflict in the church. They regarded their meeting as a first step, to be taken tentatively because of the suspicion of a large number of other priests. The hesitation among the gathered priests was evident from the fact that there were no public statements about birth control, celibacy or Vietnam. But they did decide to set up a national association of priests, which has persisted till the present, now with church approval. The following

year, a larger gathering of priests at Hunters Hill again considered questions about the ministry of priests. The gathering showed itself well disposed to a letter received from fifteen priests who had resigned.

The confusing interaction of impulses to modernisation and to preserve tradition was reflected in the restlessness of priests who set their minds and energies to develop forms of significant and challenging ministry. Some hoped, thereby, to make their life commitment to celibacy and obedience worthwhile. The movement for "free ministry" in North America had included optional celibacy in its aims from the beginning. The most active reformers among Australian priests initially were aiming to gain the church's authorisation to surrender the security of their clericalism by engaging as priests in forms of everyday work. Some radical priests at that time believed that the Australian Catholic church, with its chequered history of conformity and resistance to the state, had settled now into compliance, to protect its interests through Government funding for schools. They considered that the church seemed to perceive less need to be a critic of Australian society. In contrast, they named what they perceived as the challenge facing the church at that time.

"The task confronting the Catholic church in Australia seems clear. It must free itself from the ties which it has cemented with the establishment in order to become once more a charismatic voice" (Hill, Cusack and Kelly, 1970: 149).

They proposed that the way forward for the church would require a faithful following of the spirit and decrees of the Second Vatican Council.

Restless priests were esteemed often by their disapproving colleagues as undergoing some form of personal identity crisis. They were often regarded as being intellectually proud, devoid of piety, and suspect in their moral behaviour. Those who agreed with them, many from a distance, regarded them as prophetic and innovative dreamers of what would surely emerge as the future forms of priesthood.

Turner (1992) has researched through oral history the phenomenon of Australian men and women who departed from their religious vocation. She noted that, to a culture which expected to exercise control and to require obedience, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had announced an *aggiornamento*. This appraisal of the values and meanings of the church's theology and life, in the light of the condition of the twentieth century world, had plunged the whole culture of Catholicism into a time of review and renewal of its practice. Initially, the impetus for the reappraisal came from the directives of the church's hierarchy. However, very soon there was an enthusiastic and energetic movement, particularly within religious communities of women, to engage in revisioning their personal and communal vocation.

"With a sense of freedom, religious men and women were able to discover their individuality after years of conformity to role expectations and the burden of carrying a high status within the church. Consequently, a considerable minority of religious men and women and priests then felt free to assess their religious vocation in a way they had never previously been able to do and decide, without excessive guilt, that their lives now lay in a different direction" (Turner, 1992: 262).

In her study of what she calls "second decisions", Turner (1992) selected pseudonyms for her storytellers, as I have done in this thesis. Her narrators preferred this disguise because of a fear that they may be misjudged or misunderstood by their family or friends. They felt some risk that the explanations they gave for their decisions might threaten their employment, and social relationships. Their fear of disapproval shows that Turner's generous interpretation of their second decisions is not widespread among contemporary Australian Catholics.

Turner (1992) examined and reported the stories of four men, who, having been ordained priests prior to the Second Vatican Council, have chosen not to engage in public ministry any more. She drew attention to the exceptionally high ideals which led them into the priesthood.

"Their high ideals also moved them to alter their first choice; it was not so much an abandonment of that choice but of its suddenly being given a wider context in which to operate. A basic honesty and dislike of hypocrisy largely determined their decision to continue their lives outside the perimeters of religious life and the seminary" (Turner, 1992: 262).

She noted that many religious women and men who made a second start in their lives have been incorporated into the workforce of the Catholic school system. However, resigned priests have largely become "invisible".

"To the hierarchical church it is as if the gifts and experience of these men and others like them are non-existent - and this at a time when elderly and ill priests struggle to maintain the customary number of Masses to be celebrated in parishes. But the experience of some has convinced them that the traditional view of the priesthood is too narrow." (Turner, 1992: 271).

In a succinct sketch of current official attitudes of the Catholic church in Australia to priests who resign from the ministry and marry, Collins (1986) outlined their experience of exclusion.

"These men, many of whom are still willing to serve in the ministry, are excluded in a most unchristian manner from any activity in the church. They have been highly trained at considerable cost to themselves and to the Catholic community, but they have been excluded from any ministry because they decided to exercise their *natural* right to marry. Many have been treated with pettiness, even with viciousness. They were called Judases by Pope Paul VI. Pope John Paul II has decided that the only way in which they can become laicised (and thus marry in the Catholic church) is for them to admit that they were so sexually and humanly immature that they were incapable of making any form of commitment at the time of their ordination. The implication is that this immaturity has continued throughout their priesthood. Yet the vast majority of these men have carried on successful and fruitful ministries for many years in the church and they have been highly regarded by the people and communities they served" (Collins, 1986: 241-242).

From a Catholic lay perspective, O'Farrell (1985) identified some of the conditions in the social context of the Catholic priesthood before and after the flow of exiting priests began. "Statistics are not available for defections, but they certainly ran into hundreds" (O'Farrell,

1985: 417-418). He observed that the 1960's had been a time of questioning among priests worldwide. The new popularity and socially credited effectiveness of counselling, psychology and social work had threatened the status, role and relevance of clergy. The Vatican Council's emphasis on the roles of lay people in the church also presented a challenge, requiring a major adjustment in the pastoral practice of priests. There was a marked decline in recruits for seminaries, and a high rate of "drop outs" from seminary training. All these elements contributed to a slump in clergy morale. Conservative attitudes firmed among clergy partly because of the exit of many radical and critical priests, but also "because of a natural tendency for those left behind to repudiate all that the defectors stood for" (O'Farrell, 1985: 418).

Stephen's needs for intimacy and autonomy did not assume prominence for him while he faced the events of the 1960's. It was his vocation, and the fulfilment of his social role which were thrown into chaos. To find some stability, and to keep abreast of the changing practice of the church, he sought to be a good priest with the help of informal theological learning. In the later 1970's, within the social context of a counselling course, his personal needs and desires drew him into further learning. Stephen's journey of autobiographical learning has been responsive to the starts, stops, turns and movement in the progress of Catholicism over the preceding thirty or forty years. His narrative of learning showed that he had gained autonomy, without repudiating his vocation and work as a priest.

From the middle of the 1970's till the present, the theological climate of Roman Catholicism has cooled, and the winds of conservatism have swept through the worldwide church. Latin American liberation theologian Boff (1990) argued that, in the interests of achieving a consensus between progressive (pastoral) and conservative theological points of view, the Second Vatican Council had arrived at its decrees through a process which included both these perspectives in the same document. In the mid 1970's, some influential people in the Catholic church's government began to reread "the pastoral texts of the Council in a dogmatic way" (1990: 1566), seeking to standardise the church through canon law. He

interpreted this as a panic reaction "to the Roman Catholic church's natural crisis of readjustment to the new practice of dialogue and apprenticeship within modern society and the world of the poor" (1990: 1566). The need to restore the hegemony of clergy over laity has been seen also in the subsequent moves to prevent women's ordination, and in the treatment of those who have left the priestly ministry, "in a way reminiscent of old sexist, patriarchal and clerical prejudice" (Boff, 1990: 1567). The advent of Pope John Paul II in 1978 signalled a move further to reduce diversity within Catholicism, and to restore a state of order comparable to what had prevailed prior to the Second Vatican Council.

The directive church, in which Stephen acquired his tradition of faith and priesthood, had preferred his faithful compliance to creative practice. In something of a dialectical swing, this tradition underwent reshaping after the Second Vatican Council. Once again, he responded. However, when the tradition swung back to a directive stance, it no longer commanded Stephen's obedience. His experience of transformative learning allowed him to consider his tradition critically and imaginatively. He valued the freedom which self-directed learning had brought him (Brookfield, 1985).

This chapter has noted that the changing and complex web of the social context bears an influence on the lives people live, the stories they tell, and on their autobiographical learning. Through the processes of learning which emancipated the learners in this inquiry from particular social constraints and transformed their perspective, the new narratives of the self were composed. These new accounts of the self are patently narratives which are alternative to, and even contradictory to those which the social context authorises as creditable accounts. To present them in this thesis as credible and creditable accounts, is to value them as examples of remarkable change and autobiographical learning.

Without hostility, these life stories present a critique of their social context. In this way, the new life story serves not only to rewrite the author's personal self (Freeman, 1993). It stands also as an account of the author's life, to confront other accounts which distort and

falsify the meaning of these experiences of change. In so far as it purports to be an account of a still reputable life, the new life story serves to challenge its social context by appealing for its inclusion within the canon of socially acceptable narratives of personal and social identity (Shotter, 1984; Spender, 1980). 4 The extent to which such new stories might succeed in gaining a creditable place probably depends on the degree to which they challenge the values and meanings of Roman Catholicism, and the degree of stability and homogeneity within the social context of the Catholic church.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has illustrated that the cultural and social context of Catholicism, in its changing contemporary expressions and through the historical tradition of celibate priesthood, had significant and varying influence on the lives of Stephen, Luke, Mark, Paul, Matt and Dan. In particular, the dramatic event of the Second Vatican Council provided a new lens through which they might interpret their lives and their modern context. The words of Luke, when interviewed by the principal researcher, show his awareness of the influence of the historical moment and the social context on his life and its account.

"It is difficult to realise that the time and the history are influential. Had I lived in a different time and different church, it's quite possible that what did evolve over a long period of time for me, wouldn't have. I came into priesthood in a latter period, when the church had opened itself more to social sciences - a questioning environment. A period of flux. It paralleled how I was. It triggered, encouraged, challenged me. Had I not been in that historical time, it's possible I might have stayed in as a very sad sort of man within the priesthood. I'm very conscious of being where those influences have been a part of my life".

The Second Vatican Council, aiming to recover and discover an authentic faith and practice for the times, inspired in many Australian Catholics a new spirit of questioning traditional values and stances (Turner, 1992). With a new openness to the modern world, the Catholic church began to use the social sciences and critical thought to interpret the personal and

communal experience of its members. By emphasising conscience as the core of genuine response to God and to humanity, the tradition of Catholicism recovered something of its authentic ethos. Although many priests appear to have ignored these significant changes when they were introduced (Schallert and Kelley, 1970; Parer and Peterson, 1971), and others have subsequently retreated into dogmatic interpretations of Second Vatican Council decrees (Boff, 1990), their embrace of a revisioned Catholic tradition made its mark on the lives of Stephen, Luke, Mark, Paul, Matt and Dan. They reinvented their lives, and recomposed their life stories.

The life stories of the co-researchers were reinvented through a lengthy process of autobiographical learning. It is clear from a reading of the narratives in Chapter Three, that imagination and critical reflection both played a part in the transformation of the learners' perspectives. In Chapter Five, an explanatory understanding of the role of imagination in transformative learning is proposed, and in Chapter Six, a description of autobiographical learning as an interpretive activity is offered.

ENDNOTES

1 An important distinction between fantasy and imagination was proposed by Knowles (1985). He described fantasy as “acts of daydreaming, dreaming, wishful thinking and also what now is popularly called ‘fantasizing’” (1985:53). For Knowles, an essential characteristic of fantasy is that it implies a withdrawal from the social context. Fantasy and engagement with one’s context are mutually exclusive. He contrasted fantasy with imagination, describing the latter as “a certain form of perceiving but it is more than that; it also includes willing and, more centrally, a movement toward action”(1985: 60). In perceiving one’s situation, imagination moves the learner into an engagement within their life context.

2 Sipe (1990), Rice (1990) and others who have critically evaluated the historical development of celibacy in the Catholic church do not disparage the practice of celibacy in the priesthood as a charism or spiritual gift. The life stories show that Stephen, Dan, Luke, Mark, Matt and Paul rejected the practice of celibacy for themselves, because they discovered it to be unauthentic for them. The lengthy period of time taken by the narrators to enact the insight that their vocation did not include celibacy probably indicates the

strength of the social sanctions attached to compulsory celibacy, as well as their attachment to the practice of ministry. The narrators' fears about an alternative economic future, of being excluded by friends and family (Turner, 1992), and of being refused sacraments indicate that their exit was not simply about "wanting to get married". Their choice to relinquish celibacy revealed to them the Catholic church's reluctance to modify its control of power, resources and the social construction of authority and sexuality.

3 It must be said that in private conversations, many priests have received a sympathetic hearing from particular bishops, clergy and laity. However, the sympathy and even tacit approval of the hearers rarely finds public expression. Some journals, and newspapers which are outside church jurisdiction, such as *The Tablet* from England, and the *National Catholic Reporter* from U.S.A., provide a critical commentary on the Catholic church's life. These have opened their columns to correspondents whose accounts are excluded from media controlled by the Catholic church.

4 Narratives of personal commitment and life together have been offered by gay and lesbian couples to gain inclusion in the social "dictionary" for their experience as alternative meanings of marriage and family. Social inclusion and validation has consequences also in terms of people having access to various social services benefits.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMAGINATION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

5.0 THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

In the Introduction to this thesis, I stated my conviction that imagination had played an important role in my personal transformation. Through this co-operative inquiry, I aimed to discover whether imagination plays a distinctive role in the processes of autobiographical learning. I proposed to discover whether this transformative learning might be explained in terms of the imagining which everyone does. My intention is not to elaborate an esoteric epistemology. On the contrary, this research question is directed to the experience of autobiographical learning in the circumstances of everyday living. The central assertion of this thesis is that imagination does play a distinctive role in autobiographical learning.

Given the ambiguity and ambivalence which surrounds imagination, in both popular and academic usage, it is clearly necessary to describe and explain what is intended by imagination in the context of this thesis. Therefore, in this chapter, I intend, firstly, to illustrate the significance of imagination for autobiographical learning by exploring, from several theoretical standpoints, its relationship to knowing.

Parable and metaphor are two forms of life storytelling which the co-researchers employed in this inquiry. I propose to discuss them, secondly, as acts of imagining that contribute to transformation in the authors' lives, and to the composition of their life narratives. Then, I will examine some assumptions underlying perspective transformation, which is the major

paradigm for the theory and practice of transformative learning. I will argue that critical reflection places an emphasis on the conscious ego that limits the place of imagination in knowing. In autobiographical fashion, I wish to recall briefly the circumstances of my own learning experience which prompted me to seek in imagination an explanation of how transformation may take place.

In consulting my own account of adult transformation, I recognised that by the late 1960's I had become critically aware that the tradition of compulsory celibacy for priests in the Roman Catholic Church was a matter of ecclesiastical discipline. As I explained in Chapter Four, the policy was founded on a mixture of theological meanings and political motivations, rather than only on an inherent connection between priesthood and sexuality. In the early 1970's, I began to admit to myself that, much to my surprise and contrary to my earlier intentions for my life as a priest, I now felt drawn toward marriage and parenthood also. I was unable to see a way out of my dilemma of having contrary desires. On one hand, I could not honestly dismiss my new self-understanding as unworthy or shameful. On the other, because I felt convinced that my calling as a priest was also genuine, I was unable to act autonomously to make a choice to marry. I felt stuck. Along with many others at the time, I sought for some way to attend to both desires. As Stephen's story related in Chapter Three, at that time some spiritual guides proposed the "third way" as a respectable solution of this dilemma. This involved the choice for a non-exclusive friendship which "by definition allows no room for physical intimacy beyond what occurs between sister and brother in a healthy Christian family" (Fichter, 1992: 136). My friendships helped make this prolonged period of ambiguity tolerable for me. Moreover, I embraced busyness, keeping myself too well occupied to confront my apparently insoluble dilemma. However, friendship and pastoral preoccupation did not take away the quality of stuckness which characterised my life at that time. In the end, as I described in the Introduction, the choice of a sabbatical, away from both comfort and distraction, seemed to me to be the only way I would gain freedom from my experience of immobility. To settle my restlessness, I wanted to find the "pearl of great value" (Matthew: 13. 45), for which I expected to be glad to give everything.

At the beginning of my sabbatical, I had imaged my malaise as the “loss of the coin of my livelihood”. I was not surprised to find that the use of imaginative approaches to promote self-understanding through therapy and education brought me new insight. Although I had no rational explanation for it, images which emerged in my consciousness became a guide for my remarkable choices. A turning point for me in gaining freedom from stagnation had been the “epiphany” of the lost coin which I was seeking. In “seeing” its two inscriptions, “Freedom” and “Responsibility”, I realised that most of my life had been one-sided. At that moment, I perceived that the freedom to choose my life had always belonged to me.

During my time of sabbatical, and in the year that followed it, slowly I had become the author of my life story, as I have explained in the Introduction. This experience led me to question whether the imaginative capacity to compose the life story, which I assume adult learners possess, regularly influences transformative learning. This co-operative inquiry has permitted me to examine these six life stories for evidence of imaginative construction and reinvention of the author’s life, and to discern whether imagination has a distinctive role of transformative learning.

5.1 IMAGINATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

Through careful reflection on the six accounts, I reached an understanding of the six life stories. In Chapter Three, I presented a comprehensive account of Stephen’s life story in particular, drawn from the four forms in which he had told his story - the interview, telling the story through drawings, play with the central metaphors, and the parable. I portrayed shorter composite accounts of the other stories, so that their narratives might be seen in relation to his. In Chapter Six, I will present an interpretation of the life stories, through the metaphors of *journey* and *conversation*. These metaphors illustrate how the authors followed a common direction of transformation. They also point to an understanding of the

specific significance of each author's change in life choice. From my consideration of the narratives as accounts of autobiographical learning, I have identified some questions about transformation which call for an understanding or explanation.

- What enabled the narrators to recognise that, within their life stories which they had hitherto considered to be unchangeable, there was now something new to be said which might lead to their giving a new account of themselves?
- What enabled the autobiographers to attend to feelings of distress which accompanied their sense of stagnation; and to draw energy from the feelings of anticipated satisfaction which emerged in the turning point of the narratives?
- What made it possible for the narrators to estimate the prospect of their change in life choice to be worth serious commitment; to give assent to the course of action which it entailed; and to translate their new perspective into practice?
- Why did transformation take such a long time according to these accounts? What is the source of the impulse, and the sustained energy, which enabled an outcome of remarkable change to emerge in each life story?
- How did the process of autobiographical learning enable these narrators to acquire a new identity and meaning perspective, on which to base new life stories that depart markedly from their prior accounts?
- In summary, what is it that enabled the autobiographers to travel, at times very gradually, from a position of stagnation or major inner discomfort to the new stance of major satisfaction that they report? How did they complete a journey that appeared to lead them into exacting processes of self-reflection, some costly choices, and the difficulty of enacting a new life, in a social context which generally did not welcome their substantial change of life choice?

From these questions, it appears that an adequate explanation of autobiographical learning will account for a *leap in awareness* that takes the learner beyond their current self-evident construction of reality. It needs to explain the *affective movement* by which the person passes beyond the obstructing influence of those feelings of distress that are associated with

the threatened loss of their current identity and social significance. Because the *steps* taken to enact a change in life choice may be expected to attract opposition from the person's social environment, the learner's capacity for sustained rehearsal and courageous action despite difficulty also needs explanation.

5.2 UNDERSTANDING IMAGINATION IN KNOWING AND ACTING

It is important to acknowledge here that imagination has been the subject of philosophical, literary, mystical and psychological inquiry from ancient times (Avens, 1980). Contemporary attitudes to the reliability of imagination as a way of knowing range from scepticism to some uncritical use of imagery and images in therapeutic and educational settings. It is probable that the attitude of familiarity and acceptance, which theorists of narrative and life story show towards imagination in their explanations of personal transformation, is matched by the wariness shown by some researchers in the human and social sciences. Imagination is often confused with fantasy, or fancy. Knowles (1985) argued that both fantasy and imagination are necessary for human development. Fantasy enables the child to bring order, in a world which appears to be chaotic and fearsome, by constructing an identity which obtains their social acceptance. This life story in childhood is a "fantastic" response to fear. In adolescence and adulthood, to maintain this strategic or fantastic self is to enter into a foreclosure. Because the fantasy is not one's authentic identity, it is likely to be challenged from time to time by events which precipitate a personal crisis. Knowles (1985) argued that imagination creates a way out of the crisis, moving the person into an open and willing commitment to alternative understanding and practice. This engagement with reality becomes the foundation for constructing an identity based on trust and hope (Erikson, 1963), rather than fear. This distinction between fantasy and imagination contributes to a clearer understanding of what this thesis proposes as the role of imagining in autobiographical learning.

Because imagination is not adequately accommodated in the discourse of adult education theory and practice, it is necessary to present here a brief account of various approaches to its role in knowing and action which some contemporary writers have taken. The theoretical points of view represented are those of phenomenology, education, philosophy, theology, hermeneutical phenomenology, biblical hermeneutics, archetypal psychology, learning theory and psychology.

The caveats of Casey (1976: xv) concerning the use of the term imagination have prompted me to adopt his usage. In this thesis, therefore, imagination is to be understood as the *act of imagining* rather than as one reified mental faculty among others. I also follow his usage by not ascribing honorific connotations to the term “imaginative”.

5.3 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO IMAGINATION

A prejudice to describe imagination in mental activity as either subordinate, superordinate or mediatory has characterised the meanings assigned to it by Western philosophical and psychological theory (Casey, 1976). Consequently, imagination's place in Western thought lies between the Romantics' overestimation of its significance and efficacy, and Sartre's dismissal of it with suspicion and disdain. Casey attributed this ambiguous state of affairs to the prejudices of those writing about imagination, rather than to their direct observation of it. He stated that a thorough phenomenological investigation of imagining was needed.

“Imagining itself is *neither* superproductively world-generating *nor* utterly devoid of intrinsic resources. If we should not claim too much for imaginative activity, we also should not claim too little” (1976: 3).

Despite differences among the conceptual frameworks of Western thinkers, their portrayal of imagination in knowing suggests a hierarchical model of the mind, in which separate

faculties compete for supremacy. Casey (1976) argued that his phenomenological study of imagining revealed that there is multiplicity in mental life rather than hierarchy.

It is useful to summarise some of the conclusions from Casey's (1976) phenomenological study of imagining.

1 In the act of imagining, Casey distinguished between *imagining-that* and *imagining-how*. The former dimension imagined a future scenario; for example, a state of affairs in which priests could legitimately marry and exercise ministry. The latter dimension involved personal activity undertaken by the imaginer. That is, it meant imagining the implications for oneself, and what it would require of the imaginer for such a state of affairs to occur.

2 *Spontaneity* and *controlledness* are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive qualities of the act of imagining. Although controlled imagining may be an occasion of spontaneous imagining, the latter is self-generative. It emerges, as if from "a psychic vacuum", instantaneously, effortlessly, taking the imaginer by surprise. Once it occurs, spontaneous imagining may then be directed. The everyday form of imagining is that in which the imaginer assumes conscious control over the act, either by initiating it or responding to its spontaneous happening. In either case, the knower guides and brings the subsequent imaginative activity to an end. Casey (1976) observed three sources of limitation to what this controlled imagining can accomplish. Firstly, contradictory or incompatible concepts cannot be imagined in a directed way. Secondly, controlled imagining cannot effect a real existence for what is imagined. Thirdly, the extent to which individuals show imaginative capacity varies according to their aptitude, desire or degree of experience. Despite the limits which affect controlled imagining, "whatever the imaginer does succeed in imagining by virtue of his (sic) capacity for imaginative control is typically *just* what he intends and no more" (1976: 86).

3 Imagining is independent of all other mental acts, and there is a discontinuity between them and imagining. In the act of imagining, all that is imagined is present at once, and is not susceptible to exploration as a perception may be. Categories of true or false do not apply to the act of imagining, since it is not correctible by reference to something else. Despite uncertainty for the imaginer about where it may lead, the act of imagining evokes a certainty, similar to that which follows the apprehension of logical truths.

4 Unlike perception, the act of imagining has the quality of vagueness which indicates its indeterminacy. An accompanying characteristic is that of pure possibility, which shows the act of imagining as a musing state of mind.

5 Imaginative autonomy implies neither supremacy over, nor subservience to other forms of mental activity. Neither does imagining's autonomy impose on the knower an obligation to proceed with what has been imagined. Casey (1976) disagreed with psychoanalytic theorists who would concede to imagining a secondary autonomy, under the control of the ego. He argued that a theory which proposes a central directing role for ego fails to account for the autonomy of imagination.

“More strongly put: in becoming autonomous, imagining also becomes egoless - ceases to need an ego” (Casey, 1976: 182).

6 The autonomy of imagining consists in its independence from all other mental acts, from its milieu, and from involvement in human concerns. The act is disengaged from and indifferent to real outcomes. Its autonomy also consists in the freedom of mind, of which imagination is uniquely capable. This freedom allows easy access to effortless imagining, and the successful accomplishment of imaginative projects in controlled imagining. The freedom of mind in spontaneous imagining adds yet another dimension, “for such freedom is not just a freedom to realize what we intend but presents to us what we have not expressly intended at all. What is brought forth in controlled imagining represents the satisfaction of certain explicit intentions, yet *just this and no more*. With spontaneous imagining, by contrast, what appears or occurs in imaginative form differs from what we had expected ... We are surprised because so much of imagining is *uneventful* and *unsurprising*, being circumscribed within the confines of controlledness. But whenever an imaginative presentation flashes before us in an absence of express intention or expectation, we become aware of an unusual sense of mental freedom, one which occurs in disregard of explicit wishes and motives” (1976: 198).

It is this quality of spontaneous imagining which presents pure possibility as the “unsolicited gift” which sometimes arrives in the act of knowing. It is not a strategic means to an end, no matter how creative, nor does it carry a constraint to actualise any possibility at all.

Despite differences in technique, and in their understanding of what the basic phenomenon of imagining is, the analytical psychologies of Freud and Jung, and the practices of guided imagery all gave a place of central importance to autonomous imagining. They portrayed it

as freely interacting with the multiplicity of images present in personal and archetypal unconscious life (Casey, 1976).

“It (imagining) shows itself to be crucial to the redirection and eventual ‘cure’ of the psyche in distress - and to its liberation from the locked-in domain of the reality-bound ego. As Eros animated Psyche with his arrows of love and ascended with her to Olympus, so the imagination reanimates an exhausted ego by teaching it how to rise into the ethereal realm of the purely possible” (1976: 220).

Casey’s (1976) comprehensive account of imagining provides a conceptual framework which is illuminating for the processes of autobiographical learning. The construction of the life story is not entirely under the control of the rational ego. Spontaneous imagination offers the author access to pure possibilities for action which may be further elaborated. In the life narratives of Stephen, Luke, Paul, Matt, Mark and Dan, the interplay of autonomous imagination with other dimensions of knowing appears to constitute both the life, and the account of autobiographical learning.

5.4 IMAGINATION IN EDUCATION

Warnock’s (1976) thorough examination of literary and philosophical approaches to imagination appears to have been the trigger for much of the ensuing literature. Her understanding of imagination’s role in knowing affirmed its character as a power of mind, from the heart as much as the head, which enables learners “to go beyond what is immediately in front of their noses” (1976: 201). Drawing on the writings of Coleridge (1772-1834) in particular, Warnock asserted her “sense that there is always more to experience, and more in what we experience than we can predict” (1976: 202). Against Sartre (1972), who argued that only perception is concerned with properties of the real world while imagination is confined exclusively to what is unreal, Warnock asserted that imagination is involved in everyday perceiving as well as in interpreting. Thus, by imagination, people “see into the life of things” (Warnock, 1976: 202). Imagination

participates also in our communication to others the fruits of our perception and interpretation. Warnock (1976) concluded that imagination penetrates the totality of human knowing.

“Moreover, we all of us, all the time, attach some significance to the form which our experience takes, even if it is only to hail it as familiar, or sink back in it as, roughly, predictable. We are therefore in my view, inevitably exercising imagination in our daily conversation and in our practical uses of things in the world. If the continuity of function for which I have argued exists, then one must recognize the universality of the imaginative function both in that it belongs to everyone and in that it is exercised by each over all of his (sic) experience” (1976: 202).

Almost as an afterthought, Warnock noted that imagination, beyond its interpretive role in making “the world familiar and therefore manageable”, also “renders our experience unfamiliar and mysterious” (1976: 208). She alluded to the prevalence in autobiographies of “epiphanies”. These are moments of awareness and intense emotion which give meaning to the person’s world in a highly significant way. Though the report of such transcendent and transforming moments are principally available to us in notable autobiographies, such as C.S.Lewis’ (1955) *Surprised by joy*, Warnock asserted that these experiences of imagination in its highest sense are also common in the lives of people generally deemed to be ordinary and uncreative. They are certainly to be found in the life stories told in Chapter Three.

Because of its pervasive presence in knowing, Warnock considered imagination to be an integral part of learning and education for adults and children. However, she decried its being reduced to the teaching of techniques, or the imposition of a burden on learners to be creative and original. Her hope was that people would learn to create their own interpretations of things in the world around them “as much by looking at them as by making them” (1976: 207).

5.5 IMAGINATION AS INTERPRETATION OF LIFE EXPERIENCE

Having also considered a range of Western philosophical understandings of imagination in knowing, Hampshire (1989) also observed that imagination has been held in both esteem and in disregard. Whereas Descartes and Spinoza, among other philosophers, had considered imagination to be a source of illusion and error in knowing, Vico (1688-1744) had elevated it above intellect. For Vico, it was fundamental that in the act of knowing “the intellectual, abstract, prosaic and analytical power” is subordinate to and derived from the “figurative, concrete, poetical, synthetic power of imagination” (quoted in Hampshire, 1989: 46). An irenic stance, taken by Hampshire, proposed that imagination has its prominence in the *interpretive* skills used in the study of literature, linguistics and history. Reason, however, is the power to be used in discourse where the skills of argumentation, logic, and *calculative* thinking are required. Rather than separate out these two diverse powers in the act of knowing, Hampshire (1989) preferred to assume that imagination relates to all thought that is not primarily argumentative or calculative. Autobiography is such a form of knowing. Although the metaphor of autobiography may give an impression that autobiographical learning relies entirely on imagination, an examination of the life stories presented in Chapter Three shows that their composition engages dimensions of imaginative and critical knowing.

The exercise of imagining is rooted in the particular history of each person’s experience (Hampshire, 1989). Therefore, imagination in each person is not a normal or balanced energy. Shaped by the peculiar circumstances of each life, from one person to another imagination shows characteristics of scarcity and abundance in its development.

Consequently, what stimulates one person’s imagination may be found by another to be boring or even threatening, because each person’s imagination interacts with their own particular conscious and unconscious memory. This seems to offer some explanation why people, in apparently similar contexts or circumstances, may compose diverse life stories.

Whereas one may experience stagnation, another may find the freedom to take a turning point in their life and learning.

In agreement with Warnock (1976), Hampshire pointed to the everyday exercise of imagination, in which people sometimes suddenly and unexpectedly experience an epiphany, “a privileged moment that takes them outside their ordinary and confined routines” (1989: 132). There are also leaps of imagination that may amount to the conscientious conviction of a moral conversion, in which a person’s system of values and beliefs may be changed in whole or in part. Imagination combines with argument and logic to integrate the knower’s perceptions into the context of the whole life story.

“Behind the conventional, public history of successive events, there is the true, primitive experience of one’s own imaginative thoughts, dependent upon the peculiar distortions of emotion which are one’s own, if only one will attend to these twisted visions, and if only one will do the work that is needed to convey them in some appropriate medium. This is the work of bearing witness, and of bringing testimony, to one’s own sharply biased experience of life, and of conveying to one’s descendants an authentic and abnormal perception of that which makes life seem worth living, beyond the transient enjoyments and predictable disappointments of everyday experience” (1989: 132).

Thus, Hampshire (1989) appears to support an understanding of integrated knowing through imaginative reflection on the inner significance of both everyday experience and epiphanies, paired with the energies of argument and logic. When adults engage in autobiographical learning, and give expression to the uniqueness of their life story, their integrated knowing and testimony conveys “to one’s descendants an authentic and abnormal perception of that which makes life seem worth living” (1989: 132). The life stories presented in Chapter Three are examples of the work and play of imagination and critical reflection, portraying lives which are not to be understood as typical or representative.

5.6 IMAGINATION-INSIGHT

Lamenting that a modern scientific worldview had distorted the very meaning of knowing, reducing it to the gathering of data by empirical observation and the making of logical inferences about them, Sloan (1983) set about considering how the wholeness of reason might be restored. 1

“The narrowing of reason, with which we have been concerned, does not result from the rigorous development and refinement of analytic, discursive, and technical reason but rather from the tendency not merely to refuse the name of reason to that primary and more fundamental awareness of the whole, but more drastically, to ignore it altogether” (1983: 19).

“And the name for this unity of thinking, feeling, willing in the whole person is imagination” (1983: 173).

To recover the way of knowing which involves the whole person - thinking, feeling, valuing and willing - the learner requires an adequate grasp of imagination. The principal sources for Sloan’s (1983) critique and revision of knowing are the views of Barfield, Polanyi, Cassirer and Bohm.

Warnock’s sense that “there is always *more to* experience, and *more in* what we experience than we can predict” (1976: 202) emphasised for Sloan the capacity of imagination to discover meaning. However, he asserted that besides having a role in *discovering* meaning, imagination is also the *creative* “source in our knowledge of new meaning and understanding, ...the means wherein that *more to* and *more in* can be revealed” (Sloan, 1983: 148-149).

Although it is helpful sometimes to focus on a particular aspects of knowing such as critical reflection, knowing is an integrated whole. Developing Bohm’s (1981) argument, Sloan (1983) proposed imagination as equivalent to insight. Insight-imagination is, therefore, best understood as knowing by the whole person through thinking, feeling, willing and valuing.

Isolated from these other dimensions of knowing, imagination may prove to be an impediment to insight. Sloan noted the distortion which imaginative fancy on its own may bring.

“The power of the imagination is revealed negatively in the hold that the lesser images and concepts thrown up by imaginative fancy can exert upon us, hypnotising us, as it were, so that it becomes impossible to step outside the grooves and compartments of habitual thought” (Sloan, 1983: 158).

Though imaginative fancy can usefully recombine images and concepts already known, it cannot generate new knowledge. Left to itself, fancy leads to distortions in thinking, feeling and willing (Knowles, 1985). Integrated within knowing, imagination can draw upon imaginative fancy for aid in giving metaphorical expression to the insight which emerges.

Aware that imagination is often taken to be nothing more than imaginative fancy, Bohm (1981) sought to free his concept of insight from connotations of what is irrational, unreliable and trivial. In the accounts of several scientific discoveries, Bohm (1981) had detected a pattern which illustrated his perception of the presence and action of imagination in knowing. The accounts regularly depicted a researcher who has been engaged in intense work for a long period without apparent result. In a moment of relaxation, an image or insight appeared within the researcher’s consciousness, unexpected and unbidden. Following the insight, came a time of further diligent work to fathom the meaning of the insight. The discovery which eventuated is the outcome of a whole process of knowing (Bohm, 1981). Sloan (1983) made this conviction his own.

“All genuinely new knowledge comes by means of passionate, energy-filled insight that penetrates and pierces through our ordinary ways of thinking. The function of insight is twofold: to remove blocks in our customary and fixed conceptions of things, and to gain new perceptions. When we fail to attend to the central role in knowing of this deep imagination, or insight, we become trapped in the already given” (Sloan, 1983: 141).

From Sloan's (1983) perspective, it may be said that imagination, as a *via negativa*, promotes learning by enabling the knower to break through presuppositions and habitual ways of thinking. Imagination functions initially in knowing by persistently questioning whatever mismatches between what a knower sees through critical reflection on experience, and what he or she usually considers to be reliable knowledge. Imagination also leads to the perception of a possible, new order of relationships within the learner's situation. It is through image and metaphor, Sloan proposed, that imagination finds a *via positiva* to learning. This path to knowing is not attainable either by logic alone, or by imaginative fancy.

His assertion that knowing involves the whole person drew Sloan's (1983) attention to the place of feeling and willing as aspects of knowing. Distinct from sentimentality, feeling is an integral dimension of knowing. It refers to the knower's qualities of interest in, and reverence for reality. Feeling signifies attentiveness and vulnerability to the whole of whatever is present in experience. Kolb (1984) stated that such a sensitivity to reality is essential for experiential learning. It indicates openness to the distress and pleasure of the learner's own experience, as well as that of others. The inclusion of feeling as a dimension in knowing is clearly important to reflection on experience (Heron, 1992; Boud and Walker, 1993; Mulligan, 1993; Postle, 1993), and hence to autobiographical learning.

Often confused with wilfulness, as either aggressive or passive forms of resistance to commitment, willing is "an activity of sustained attentive awareness (which) takes its proper place in thinking as striving toward participation in reality" (Sloan, 1983: 167). It is a sustained commitment to strive for meaning, and a conscientious resolve to perceive reality with openness. Moreover, willing is the quality of intentionality in consciousness which continually reshapes the learner's relationship to self, others and the environment. Willing actively orients knowing and learning toward practice. Coulson (1981) proposed that imagination constructs real assent to possible practice, even before the outcome may be

verified as more authentic. This aspect of Coulson's (1981) understanding of imagination resonates with the use of willing which Sloan described.

These two elements of insight-imagination, namely, questioning irregularity through reflection on experience, and seeing new possibilities for one's life, appear to be regular aspects of autobiographical accounts of adult transformation. Sloan's (1983) description of imagination as a passionate, constructive and integrating way of knowing, serves to illuminate how autobiographical learning occurs both in remarkable changes in life choices, and in the context of everyday life.

5.7 IMAGINATION AND ASSENT

Observing that some philosophers preferred to see imagination as merely preparatory to knowing, Coulson (1981) asserted that imagination is itself a particular way of knowing, neither over against reason nor a separate faculty of mind. Though it is often laid to the side in explanations of knowing, he stated that imagination may receive some attention as a last resort, when other attempts at explanation prove to be deficient.

Drawing also on Coleridge's analysis of literary imagination, Coulson (1981) stated that in the act of knowing imagination both dissolves and recreates. Imagination reaches full expression only when it has enlarged the knower's sense of reality spontaneously and creatively. By "providing a new unity to our perceptions" (Coulson, 1981: 10), imagination extends our consciousness.

Coulson (1981) argued that imagination is central to the understanding of assent to action. He addressed the question; "How can we assent to something as true, prior to its being proved to be so?" This has relevance to the question which confronts explanations of perspective change, namely, "How do learners, having critically reflected on their

assumptions and identified distortions in their meaning perspectives, commit themselves to a new perspective and alternative practice, prior to knowing that these are indeed more authentic and inclusive?”. Coulson’s (1981) approach is to enlist the well known distinction between notional and real assent. A languid, notional “armchair nod of agreement” is an insufficient conviction and warrant to change the tradition and practice of authors of autobiographical learning. When learners prudently reckon that a perspective change will alter substantially their relationships of social power and personal intimacy, a real assent is required to bridge the gap between insight and action. It is imagination which brings an energetic real assent, to form the learners’ convictions to act even before there is practical certainty that the practice proposed is more authentic than the current practice. Imagination unifies the learner’s knowing, intensifying the person’s consciousness in a way that dissipates doubt; it is “as if we saw” (Coulson, 1981, 53). Critical reason may follow imaginative assent to verify the conviction and augment the learners’ certainty that the action is authentic. Sometimes, the assent to act for change may not easily be authenticated. In this case, learners face stuckness, since “we can neither live with the metaphors and symbols which express convictions, nor live without them” (1981: 61). This dilemma resembles situations in the life stories in Chapter Three, which the authors described as “facing a gap”, being unable to “cross a bridge”, “being at a crossroads”.

In autobiographical learning, people enact a choice which imaginative insight has shown as a purely possible alternative to their present perspective and practice. For Coulson (1981), the work of imagination continues in forming the conviction and real assent which initiate the knower’s transition from the insight into lived experience, with the aid of critical reason.

5.8 IMAGINATION AND HERMENEUTICS

Philosophical approaches to the role of imagination in knowing may be described as lying along two axes (Ricoeur, 1976a). One axis represents the distinction between theories of

reproductive imagination (Hume), and theories that portray productive imagination as having no link with perception (Sartre). The second axis discriminates between theories that depict the imaginer as being either unable to distinguish reliably the imaginary from the real (Pascal), or as being able to use imagination to critically evaluate reality (Husserl). Avoiding a choice between univocal explanations of imagination that focus on showing whether and how perception stands in relation to image, Ricoeur (1976a) questioned whether being equivocal is characteristic of imagination.

Responding affirmatively to this question, Ricoeur (1976a) chose to illustrate how metaphor functions in language. In exploring the meaning of metaphor, he elaborated an understanding and explanation of how imagination functions in discourse and action, asserting that imagination is a method of knowing rather than a collection of images. In imagination, there is also “an aspect of *semantic innovation* characteristic of the metaphorical uses of language” (1976a: 6). Ricoeur claimed that his theory of metaphor could account adequately for imagination’s *mimetic* capacity which redescribes images, as well as its *poetic* or projective function which is part of the dynamics of human action.

In a discourse where there is only “the shambles of literal predication” (1978a: 7) no new meaning is likely to emerge. It is through the mediation of imagination, which perceives a similarity not yet grasped in the discourse, that metaphor utters an unusual predicate in which that new similarity is suddenly available in the discourse. “Imagination is the apperception, the sudden view, of a new predicative pertinence” (Ricoeur, 1976a: 7). Not to be confused with a mere association of ideas, imagination is a restructuring of meaning, a “method for giving an image to a concept.... Suddenly we are ““seeing as’...; we see old age as the close of the day, time as a beggar...” (1976a: 8).

Imagination’s mimetic dimension, which redescribes images, also engages in mediating new meaning through metaphor because it “radiates out in all directions, reanimating earlier

experiences, awakening memories, spreading to adjacent sensorial fields” (Ricoeur, 1976a: 8). Metaphor is, therefore, an orientation both to past experience and future action.

To gain an understanding of their own activity, people are accustomed to redescribe their past personal and social reality through the mimetic dimension of imagination, and to order it in narrative through the structures of fiction because “the meaning of human existence is itself narrative” (Ricoeur, 1984: 17). The fictional quality of narrative is needed also in the context of action. For Ricoeur, action is the life project in which one is engaged, the action which one may be about to take in living one’s life. In action, the projective or creative function of imagination faces the future through its anticipatory play with possible outcomes in practice. He considered that the capacity to act creatively in one’s life project requires a mutual enabling to take place between the qualities of narrative and those of the project. In this interaction, the narrative gains the project’s capacity to be future oriented, and the project benefits from the structured order of the narrative.

Imagination contributes further to the motivation to act by making a “luminous clearing” (Ricoeur, 1976a: 12) in which one’s desires and motives may be recognised, unfolded and discerned. Finally, imagination permits an assessment of one’s capacity to follow through one’s desires or intentions.

“There is thus a progression from the simple schematization of projects, through the figurability of my desires, to the imaginative variations of the ‘I can’. This progression points to the idea of the imagination as a general function of what is possible in practice” (Ricoeur, 1976a: 13).

Ricoeur’s assertion, “I can”, is echoed in the rhetorical question which surfaced in the moment of Stephen’s epiphany; “Why can’t I?”

Placing it in the plane of language, Ricoeur (1976a) proposed imagination as a method which makes possible the ordering of past experience, and the expression in action of desires and choices. Imagination thereby constitutes the life project as autobiography, as a life

narrative constructed through imagination. Imaginative reflection on experience announces new statements of pure possibility for the author's identity and action. In the manner of metaphor, imagination enables the autobiographical act.

Further aspects of Ricoeur's understanding of imagination find a place later in this chapter, in an explanation of how metaphor and parable act in the construction of autobiography. In Chapter Six, his approach of critical hermeneutics is examined in relation to interpretation and transformative learning, in comparison with the critical theory of Habermas, and the hermeneutical consciousness of Gadamer.

5.9 TRADITION AND IMAGINATION

Those who present imagination as essentially a constructivist way of knowing are challenged by Bryant (1989). He argued against a view in which imagination appears to enable us "to step outside of our social and historical context far enough and long enough to reconstruct it to our own liking" (1989: 206). Following Gadamer (1975), Bryant regarded an account of imagination as constructive to be too one-sided.

"Such a view does not adequately appreciate the degree to which the imagination is at play within the stream of tradition. It is not a power that enables us to jump out of our history" (Bryant, 1989: 206).

He proposed, therefore, that imagination is both constructive and receptive. Assuredly, by being receptive to the tradition in which it is embedded, the activity of imagination risks becoming repetitive and bound by the tradition. On the other hand, Bryant also proposed that tradition has the power to quicken imagination by providing it with ideas, images, and memories to generate insight. Imagination may creatively receive and adapt the past for the present context in an interplay and fusion of past and present horizons.

“And because this interplay takes place within a context that is not just our projection and is not amenable to whatever we might arbitrarily wish to make of it, this reciprocity between tradition and experience can lead to discoveries that either make the tradition appear inadequate or tend to confirm the disclosive power of the tradition. This disclosive power leads one to affirm that a tradition reveals the true nature of life and therefore bears authority” (Bryant, 1989: 207).

Bryant (1989) emphasised that the stream of tradition, in which imagination plays, is *living water* which exists in reciprocity with experience. He insists that imagination’s presence in knowing contributes to changes as well as continuity in perspective.

Adopting the metaphor of play as the mode of its presence and action, Bryant (1989) acknowledged Gadamer’s (1975) influence on his understanding of imagination. This playful presence of imagination is not superficial or immature. Imagination at play signifies that it has a capacity to be in relationship with tradition in such a way that does not constrain it entirely. Through its play with what tradition signifies, imagination finds the freedom even to initiate and accompany the reshaping of tradition. Imagination at play finds expression in questioning. Questioning, which promotes a new fusion of horizons, is at the core of Gadamer’s (1975) metaphor of conversation, as I will explain further in Chapter Six.

In Chapter Four, I related how ecclesiastical tradition, which formed the theology and practice of Roman Catholic priesthood, influenced the six life stories of the participants in this inquiry. In the Second Vatican Council, a disclosive power in the Church’s tradition became manifest. The tradition, which had required obedience as compliance, now authorised members of the Church to open their lives to experience as well. The tradition reshaped itself, creating disorientation in the lives of these authors. Transformation of the authors’ perspectives occurred because their imagination interpreted in a reciprocal way the disorienting experience and the changing tradition. The new interpretation brought the disclosure of new possibility for each autobiography. Simultaneously, the reshaped tradition authorised this possibility for autobiographical learning, through which the authors reshaped their life stories.

5.10 ARCHETYPAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IMAGINATION

Suspicious of the way in which many people in Western society have taken selective hold of Eastern methods to transform consciousness, Avens (1980) turned to Jung and Hillman on one hand, and to Barfield and Cassirer on the other, for inspiration in mapping out the place of imagination as the element common to the spiritualities of both East and West.

Perceiving it to be fundamental to all knowing, and prior to experience and personal consciousness, Avens asserted that imagination resides in psyche, the middle region, or the abyss between the physical world and the realm of spirit.

“For imagination lives in the gap, in the middle, suspended ‘as a rainbow spanning the two precipices and linking them harmoniously together’” (Avens, 1980: 24). 2

In archetypal psychology, the world of psyche and the world of myth are co-extensive (Avens, 1980). Mythical forms are to be found in all the elements of psychic reality; for example, in “the creative realm of emotions, fantasies, moods, visions and dreams” (Avens, 1980: 33). They structure knowing and action, prior to any attempt knowers may make to project the mythical forms meaning in consciousness. They communicate to knowers through the language of image and metaphor. Myths, therefore, do not have their origin in *personal* psychic states, but in the *collective* unconscious. Or, stated another way, the psychic condition of the knower derives from the presence of mythical principles or archetypes. Archetypes, these “deepest patterns of psychic functioning” (Hillman, 1975a: xiii), are common to people in diverse places and times. They organise psychic imagery into personal constellations, or paradigms of action. Archetypes become manifest in behaviour, in images and in a style of consciousness. At particular times in a person’s life, a specific archetype, or the interaction of several, may dominate their perspective, choices and actions. The thinking, feeling, judging and perceiving functions of consciousness are also influenced by archetypes. Well known examples of Jungian archetypes include *anima*, *persona*, *puer*, *senex*, and shadow. Some writers depict the influence of archetypes in theological terms, as “gods and goddesses” which reside in the person (Bolen, 1984, 1989).

Following Jung, Hillman (1975a, 1975b) also underlined the *polytheistic* nature of psychic reality. He contended that the “common sense” *monotheistic* view is mistaken; namely, that we are at the centre of the circle of all that we perceive, distinct from it, yet related to it as subject to object. What we may assume to be all that there is to us as persons, is only one archetype, namely, ego. This heroic ego archetype has dominated Western thought in its attitudes, especially in terms of what constitutes knowing and willing. The polytheistic and polycentric view of psychic reality sees ego as taking its place with other archetypes on the circle’s circumference (Avens, 1980: 39).

Hillman (1975a) proposed archetypal psychology as the way to understand and approach imaginal reality and soul making. Soul making requires knowers to reflect on their ideas in terms of the archetypal images present in them. Instead of approaching this reflective work through rational processes of analysis, or through allegorical interpretation, “psychologising” (Hillman, 1975a) or soul making seeks for the *metaphorical* quality in what appears to be personally, scientifically, or politically *literal*. In psychologising, knowers gain insight into psychic dimensions of reality, and thereby engage in soul making.

“It means looking at the frames of our consciousness, the cages in which we sit and the iron bars that form the grids and defenses of our perception. By re-viewing, re-presenting and re-visioning where we already are, we discover the psyche speaking imaginally in what we had been taking for granted as literal and actual descriptions. This psychological questioning, this *reflexio* which turns ideas back upon themselves in order to see through to their soul import, makes soul” (Hillman, 1975a: 127).

Describing soul is a matter of some difficulty (Hillman, 1975a). However, he offered some ways to consider it. Soul is a reflective perspective rather than a substance. It turns events into experiences, which are known metaphorically. Whereas Freudian psychoanalysis approached the images of psychic life in an allegorical manner, looking for the real meaning in its *latent* content, Jung attended to the image as metaphor, considering it to be meaningful as it is. Because it acts in an intermediary fashion, the “image is an expression of the

unconscious as well as the conscious situation of the moment” (Jung, quoted in Avens, 1980: 35). Hillman argued further that, through psychologising, the image itself may be seen to shatter the distortions of allegory, thereby “releasing startling new insights” by disclosing itself (1975a: 8).

“Thus the most distressing images in dreams and fantasies, those we shy away from for their disgusting distortion and perversion, are precisely the ones that break the allegorical frame of what we think we know about this person or that, this trait of ourselves or that. The ‘worst’ images are thus the best, for they are the ones that restore a figure to its pristine power as a numinous person at work in the soul” (Hillman, 1975a: 8).

Whereas phenomenology expects that by attending to events in experience they will reveal their essence, archetypal psychology addresses the event as imaginal, recognising it and the archetypal figures which inhabit it. What is perceived in consciousness, is known from the perspective of the unconscious.

Soul making has an obvious autobiographical quality. It is not concerned with self-improvement or moral reform. It is accomplished by living one’s life through a re-visioned psychology. In other words, by encountering again and again, through reflection and questioning, the archetypal forms in the images of our experience and engaging with them in collaboration and resistance, people compose the autobiography of the soul. Particular archetypes may generate discomfort within autobiographical learners and in their relationships. However, soul is made when learners enter into open relationship with archetypes, rather than avoid or try to control them. Hillman (1975a: 192) stated that we are always in one or other archetypal perspective, “governed by one or other psychic dominant”. He deplored the refusal to acknowledge “our fantastic nature, ourselves as metaphors and images made by soul” which forces us into literalism and prevents us from psychologising ourselves.

“We presume human needs to be the literalisms of biology, economics, and society, rather than the psyche’s perpetual insistence on imagining” (1975a: 209).

The making of soul is enabled when people see into the archetypal domain through images, and shatter these literalisms.

Though Hillman's (1975a) intention is not to provide paradigms for adult learning, his description of how imagination forms persons in consciousness through psychic images has considerable connection with the enterprise of autobiographical learning. Indeed, Hillman's (1975a, 1975b) descriptions of "soul-making" describe well various aspects of the life stories and autobiographical learning of the participants in this inquiry. The reflective questioning of the images of our experience is an imaginative critique which enables the author to see through the distortions of personal, cultural and political literalism. The work of psychologising persistently, and sometimes painfully, discerns the presence of archetypes in the metaphorical language of the images of experience. Soul making does not control or eliminate them. It accommodates them in relationship with each other, so that the entire story of the person's conscious and psychic life may be told. The intention in soul making is not to reach a unified monotheistic self. It is to know the psychic meaning which the life story holds polycentrally and polytheistically. Soul making recognises that not all the mythic forms and patterns of psychic energy are personal; yet, all have a part and a place in the story of any person's soul-making.

"If we could engage the many persons of the psyche, and especially the anima, then our words must allow for a variety of archetypal modes, a 'strange medley' of thought, piety, and absurdity" (Hillman, 1975a: 216).

Soul-making, as the recognition and utterance of one's meaning, may be undertaken both alone in inner psychologising, and in conversation with others. Conversation in which psychologising takes place transforms speech from chatter "to the telling of the tales of the soul" (1975a: 217).

“The overwhelming difficulty of communicating soul in talk becomes crushingly real when two persons sit in two chairs, face to face and knee to knee, as in an analysis with Jung. Then we realise what a miracle it is to find the right words, words that carry soul accurately, where thought, image and feeling interweave. Then we realise that soul can be made on the spot simply through speech. Such talk is the most complex psychic endeavor imaginable...” (Hillman, 1975a: 217).

Hillman proposed that the movement toward psychological discovery follows a number of steps. First, there is a moment of wonder or doubt that is triggered by imagination. This interrupts the learner’s current construal of reality, takes our attention, and initiates an entering into the self. The inquiry deepens either cumulatively by hunches and suspicions, or suddenly by insight. Thus, people reach an awareness of what is less apparent in their situation from a literal understanding. What at first seemed to be impersonal in the life story or soul making is revealed as archetypal and mythic in form. Yet, even though seeing through yields greater clarity, learners still notice obscurity. In time, the movement repeats itself when a new sense of wonder and questioning emerges. Hillman proposed that soul making is inexhaustible, and that there is “an infinite regress which does not stop at coherent or elegant answers” (1975a: 140). Even though the movement of soul making is endless, autobiographical learners compose and recompose a narrative, in which they explain the events they experience in metaphors of causality.

The archetypal understanding of imagination implies that the autobiographical act is not the work of an autonomous conscious ego. The life story is fashioned through complex internal processes of knowing, and the interaction of a plurality of voices within the author’s self.

5.11 IMAGINATION IN TRANSFORMATION

Inspired by a “transforming moment” in his life, Loder (1981) reflected on the meaning of such convictional experiences. He predicated a transformational logic, which he claimed would hold for scientific, aesthetic and therapeutic forms of knowing. Loder strongly

affirmed the centrality of constructive imagination in these forms of knowing, arguing that rational processes are unable to add to knowledge, unless there first has been an imaginative leap.

“The imaginative indwelling aspect of knowing, always inevitable to some degree and more widely essential than recognized, keeps knowledge alive and open to change and makes it evident that the ‘world’ is very much our composition of things” (Loder, 1981: 26).

Having asserted that all knowing occurs in a social context of assumptions, relationships and circumstances, Loder (1981) proposed that there are five steps in the transformative movement which proceeds to knowing.

“In summary, then, the key steps in transformational logic, or the knowing event, are (1) conflict, (2) interlude for scanning, (3) constructive act of imagination, (4) release and openness and (5) interpretation” (Loder, 1981:35).

The turning point in knowing is the third step, the constructive act of imagination. This brings both discontinuity and transformation to the situation of unresolvable disorder which the rupture or conflict of the first step initiated. Imaginative insight, which comes from the creative unconscious, is always a surprise. The release of energy in the fourth step is often experienced as a feeling of being unbound or freed to take up other matters of interest. In fact, the openness which accompanies the release often enables the learner to explore even their assumptions further. Interpretation takes the knower backward and forward through the five processes until a consensus is reached. The consensus establishes congruence with the world of the knower’s original social context, and correspondence with the implications of the new understanding.

The five steps of the knowing event may suggest a rigid sequence from start to finish. However, Loder (1981) observed that the knower may enter the movement at any step along the way. What motivates the knower to complete the movement is the tension which

is present when there is conflict needing to be resolved. The knower's tension towards resolution creates an intentionality to complete the process of knowing, no matter what the starting point may have been. The logic of transformation is not inexorable, because it may be prevented from beginning, or it may be sidetracked once it has commenced. The logic of transformation may be prevented or disrupted when the knower's capacity to imagine has been stifled or distorted in some way. For example, personal assumptions, fears of conflict, or conditions in the social context may generate the repetitiveness of imaginative fancy (Knowles, 1985) and displace the creativity of imagination. Despite this suspension of the logic of transformation, Loder (1981) argued that transformation could not be thwarted completely or permanently.

Though his focus is not explicitly one of autobiographical learning, Loder's (1981) logic of transformation may take its place beside descriptions of perspective change and reflective learning (Mezirow, 1991). What clearly distinguishes it from Mezirow's (1991) theory of perspective transformation is the cardinal role which Loder accorded to imagination, rather than to some form of critical thinking. In Loder's (1981) view, this logic forms the framework for narratives of transformation in the discourses of scientific discovery, aesthetic creativity, and therapy. The sequence of five steps offers a way of understanding the composition of a life story, in which the author receives an imaginative insight to illuminate the next scene or chapter. The concept of authorship implicit in Loder's (1981) description is one of cooperation, in which the narrator gives shape and life to the insight by interpreting it further into consciousness and practice.

5.12 SUMMARY OF VIEWS OF IMAGINATION IN KNOWING AND ACTION

Autobiographical learning is a form of ongoing self-formation and life construction. It finds expression in a narrative which relates the questions and answers, dilemmas and decisions, grief and elation which are part of human storying. Narrative links the autobiographer's

times of movement, stagnation and waiting, not only as a temporal record but also as this particular account of the author's imagining. The writers consulted in this chapter, have all given serious consideration to the place and action of imagination in the act of knowing and communicating to others. They considered imagination from diverse standpoints, so their views are not expected to be in concert. In common, they avoid ascribing to imagination either inferior or superior status, because they do not subscribe to a hierarchical model of mind. This summary indicates important points of convergence in their explanations.

- 1 Several writers have sketched a map or sequence of knowing which leads to personal transformation. They outlined the steps in which imagination participates (Sloan, 1983; Avens, 1980; Hillman, 1975a, 1975b; Loder, 1981).
- 2 Imagination is a power of mind (Warnock, 1976), which is distinct from fantasy (Knowles, 1985). It is a capacity to create awareness (Ricoeur, 1976a), which is fundamental to knowing (Hillman, 1975a), involves the whole of the person (Warnock, 1976), and integrates thinking, feeling, valuing and willing (Sloan, 1983).
- 3 As interpretive thinking, imagination complements rational cognitive processes (Hampshire, 1989; Coulson, 1981), unifying perceptions and enabling the imaginer to engage in practice (Coulson, 1981). However, it is not only a prelude to rational thinking (Coulson, 1981), nor is it part of hierarchical mental activity (Casey, 1976). Although imagination is independent of ego (Casey, 1976; Hillman, 1975a), it does not stand over against reason (Sloan, 1983; Loder, 1981).
- 4 Imagination has a heuristic quality. The spontaneous expression of imagining is beyond the intention of the knower. The image which appears opens up the pure possibility of new dimensions of reality. Although controlled imagining elaborates the image and explores the feasibility of new practice, it cannot effect or compel what the learner imagines in this controlled way (Casey, 1976). In the act of knowing, imagination

critically questions whatever disrupts the knower's understanding of reality (Sloan, 1983; Bohm, 1981). It questions images and metaphor to see beyond literalism (Hillman, 1975a), and interprets the text of human action to discover meaning, and to reveal the "to be said" through metaphor (Ricoeur, 1978b).

- 5 In preparation for new practice, imagination plays with pure possibilities (Ricoeur, 1978b). It engages in a reciprocal relationship the experience and the tradition in which the knower stands (Bryant, 1989). There is an imaginative leap of assent which enables the knower to undertake the implications of their insight prior to its verification (Coulson, 1981).
- 6 Among the forms of imagination, it is important to distinguish between its creative, constructive dimensions (Warnock, 1976; Casey, 1976; Hampshire, 1989; Sloan, 1983; Ricoeur, 1978b) and its redescriptive function which recombines images.
- 7 The uniqueness of each knower's imagination is described by Hampshire (1989) as being rooted in both personal life history and the social context. Bryant (1989) pointed to imagination as being receptive, but not bound to the meanings of tradition. Hillman (1975a) proposed that through imagination archetypal images and patterns of energy in the collective unconscious are brought into consciousness.
- 8 In the everyday experience of imagining which constructs autobiography, there are epiphanies (Warnock, 1976), transforming moments (Loder, 1981), a sudden view (Ricoeur, 1978b), privileged moments (Hampshire, 1989), moments of insight and images (Sloan, 1983). These are spontaneous acts of imagining.
- 9 Imagination leads to soul making and the narration of a new life story (Hillman, 1975a, 1975b). The activity of imagining suggests that there is multiplicity in mental activity, and in personhood (Casey, 1976).

These concepts, presented in summary form, contribute to an explanation and understanding of imagination's role in autobiographical learning. They subscribe to a process of knowing, in which imagining and critical reflection participate mutually.

The questions proposed earlier in this chapter, in section 5.1, which emerged from the co-researchers' hermeneutic consideration of the life narratives, sought an explanation of how this journey of remarkable change took place. Although the questions did not ask explicitly how imagination engages in transformative learning or in the composition of the life story, they inquired into the origin of new images, and the care of feelings of distress and satisfaction which ensue in the learning process. They sought to understand how the learner was able to resist constraint by tradition, and how the knower gave assent to a new social practice and its enactment despite social disapproval. The questions wondered about the length of time taken to enact what had been glimpsed in a spontaneous image.

The writers considered above, who represent a range of disciplines of knowing, assert that imagining is part of an integrated process of knowing. In autobiographical learning, the learner's imagination receives spontaneous epiphanies. It muses over and interprets images, metaphor, and parable. Imagination enters into the feelings of distress and joy, which the learner's experiential encounter with disorientation brings. The empathic quality of imagining attends to the feeling states, and achieves a synergy with them. The persistent questioning, which imagination addresses to the mismatch between experience and the learner's autobiography, leads to an elaboration of what was glimpsed in the spontaneous image. The time taken to elaborate the new self-understanding may be long, depending on the learner's particular history, the strength of the cultural tradition, and circumstances in the social context. Nevertheless, calculative thinking acts together with imagining, as its partner rather than as a censor, to construct the new perspective and its corresponding social practice. The life of the learner is reinvented, and the life story is composed once again.

5.13 IMAGINATION IN FORMS OF LIFE STORYTELLING

The work and play of imagination in the lives and narratives of the participants in this inquiry may be seen clearly in the literary forms of parable and metaphor. The ways in which myth, metaphor and parable have constituted the six life stories are described in Chapter Three. The parables of Stephen, Luke, Matt and Dan may be found in Appendix 2. Table 5, in **Appendix 1**, presents a summary of the central metaphors in the autobiographical accounts.

5.14 MYTH, PARABLE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The influence of myth in personal narrative has been described in Chapter One (Crites, 1971; Bruner, 1987; McAdams, 1988; Murray, 1985). Myth is a coherent, stable, measured account of the present social order, on which personal meaning is founded. It forms a ground for relationships of predictability, order and control within social institutions and among people. Though myth is taken to be what is knowable, it is also a fiction or construction which orders common experience.

"Myth does not mean a story that is not true, or a story that is about gods and goddesses; myths order the world in which we live by turning randomness into pattern, by replacing appearance with some ultimate reality, by reconciling the frustrations produced by contradictory experience in some higher unity" (Funk, 1988: xi).

He contrasted parable with myth.

"Myths establish and nourish a particular world in which contradictions and frustrations are reconciled; parables undermine that world by frustrating expectations and turning things upside down" (Funk, 1988: xiii).

Parable disturbs and overthrows the myth that has come to be generally accepted as an account of right order, especially by those whose interests it serves. As a story form, parable

reinterprets reality for its hearers, surprising them by representing their world anew. In an autobiographical account, the structure of parable is found in orientation (how the person understood and lived the situation initially), disorientation (how the person discovered contradictions and disorder), and reorientation (how the person gained a new understanding and practice). Parable is an imaginative process in autobiographical learning which instigates the dismantling of myth or master story in autobiography. As an imaginative form of the life story, parable does not purport to be a literal truth. It is patently a fiction that describes the interruption, re-visioning and re-formation of the situation. Parable claims to provide an understanding of self, experience and context which is more authentic than what it replaces.

Myth establishes a belief that, in both the personal and social world, the reconciliation of the opposites is always possible (Crossan, 1988). Parable is an event within the knower's life, and a counter story which reveals contradictions in the way in which the opposites are reconciled. Perhaps for the first time, parable illustrates to the knower that the current particular reconciliation of opposites is a social construction of reality which is based on myth. Parable breaks the boundaries of myth, and, in the manner of metaphor, plunges people into knowing what till now has been unknown, and into living what till now has not been lived.

"They are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and hereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of story itself" (Crossan, 1988:100).

In composing autobiography, authors are influenced to greater or less extent by the social mythmaking of their milieu. In putting together their first life narratives as stories of order, the authors in this inquiry, through their childhood socialisation and seminary formation, drew unwittingly on the mythmaking generated within the culture of Australian Catholicism. The communal myth or master story of the Catholic priesthood had created a plausible world order in which, for example, the acceptance of authority and celibacy were seen as reasonable requirements for anyone who wishes to be a priest - despite whatever contradictions might appear within the experience of priests' lives. Each author's narrative

shows that their practice of ministry served initially to maintain this master story, and even to reinforce it through changing times.

A turning point (disorientation) in the life stories occurred when the authors recognised that the specific context and circumstances of their own life questioned the myth they had appropriated. To question that communal myth is a serious challenge to church order. It also raises questions which confront the self about being willing to accept still the conditions of entry into the priesthood. The event of remarkable change in the lives of the participants of this inquiry, which indicates that their ordered world of meaning had been turned upside down, is a parabolic event. The transforming parabolic event did not find expression in the literary form of a parable in every participant's collection of stories. Nevertheless, the *process* of parable is found in the autobiographical learning which occurred in the lives of Stephen, Dan, Matt, Luke, Mark and Paul. In Chapter Three, the parable in Stephen's life has been briefly presented and interpreted.

5.15 METAPHOR, IMAGINATION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

In Chapter Two, I described a step taken in the research process to consider how central metaphors in the life stories influenced their composition and reinvention, and how they affected the participants' autobiographical learning. I propose to discuss now some aspects of how the imaginative process of metaphor operates in autobiographical learning.

It is generally agreed that a metaphor spans two disparate subjects, a primary and a secondary, in a deliberate association in such a way that the secondary subject provides information about the primary subject. The interaction approach to metaphor, proposed by Black (1955), described the primary element as the *focus* and the secondary element as the *frame* through which the focus is perceived. Interpreted through the frame, some aspects of what the focus is understood to mean are highlighted, and others are ignored. Through this

deliberate association, the metaphor's literal foundation is transformed. The meanings which the focus has for a given knower interact, therefore, with the associations and meanings which the frame has, so that both terms of the metaphor are stretched. **3**

Against the view that metaphor contributes only verbal decoration to projects such as life storytelling, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that metaphor influences how people compose and tell their narratives. Indeed, the autobiographer's culture or tradition is grounded in metaphor. In acquiring language, people develop the facility to communicate through metaphor and to express their life narrative. Therefore, the use of metaphor in language is neither random, nor restricted to people with poetic ability. There is a range of well known and culturally acceptable metaphors. However, a particular metaphor is not confined to a specific situation. Although it orders large domains of knowing in the arts, humanities and sciences, metaphor fails to set limits to its own meaning. On occasions, this may lead to confusion and frustration. However, it may lead also to discovery. Since the two parts of the metaphor are disparate, namely, the subject or topic and its referent or vehicle, clearly there is tension in their being connected (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Therefore, the interpretation of metaphor cannot be fixed, although it may acquire through popular usage a certain stability of meaning.

To interpret metaphor is not to make a literal translation. Nor is it to treat the metaphor as allegory in which every aspect of one subject finds a corresponding aspect in the other subject. To interpret metaphor there is required an imaginative leap which connects aspects of these two different realities, thereby achieving an understanding of the metaphor which befits this particular context. For example, in saying "Joe is a cold fish" someone employs a metaphor which invites us to understand Joe by taking some information from the concrete image of cold fish, but not to attend to all the possible information. We do not immediately think Joe has scales, or a tail or even a fishy smell. But we may infer that he is likely to be unfeeling, or unresponsive or aloof. It is imaginable that in a culture where cold fish is highly desirable that this metaphor would convey a very different meaning about Joe.

From his survey of the extensive literature on metaphor, Candy (1986) affirmed;

“the central place of metaphor in the symbolic domain through which we imagine, conceptualise and verbalise the world of objects, events and processes around us. Metaphors are not mere abstractions; they constitute an active attempt to impose order and meaning on the infinite complexity of our realities” (1986: 93).

Despite his own enthusiasm for metaphor, Candy noted that some people held disparaging views of metaphor, regarding it as an indication that the writer avoids methodical description and clear thinking. Others relegate its use to fanciful and poetic discourse. He also noted that, even among those who regard metaphor as a powerful instrument for making and sharing meaning, there is little agreement about the complex process by which metaphor serves as a bridge between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. Opinions differ about the way in which the secondary element of the metaphor generates an understanding of the other. Whereas some understand metaphor in language to be a rational process of cognition, others consider that metaphor is understood intuitively and holistically.

An important contribution to our understanding of how imagination participates in personal transformation and the construction of the life story is Ricoeur's (1978b) phenomenological description of metaphor. He argued that an adequate understanding of metaphor must include the role of feeling and imagination in metaphorical meaning. Their place in metaphorical meaning is not to be restricted only to being psychological dimensions of knowing. Feeling and imagination are to be regarded as intrinsically part of a semantic understanding of how metaphor "bears over" meaning. As well as participating in the dimensions of positive insight, and picturing in metaphor, both imagination and feeling contribute to the negative aspect of suspension in the "split reference". Thus, both feeling and imagination reveal in metaphor the quality of "it was and it was not".

"Imagination does not merely *schematise* the predicative assimilation between terms by its synthetic insight into similarities, nor does it merely picture the sense thanks to the display of images aroused and controlled by the cognitive process. Rather, it

contributes concretely to the *epoche* of ordinary reference and to the *projection* of new possibilities of redescribing the world" (1978b: 152).

Through its power to suspend what is literal and concrete in our language and knowing, the fictive quality of imagination promotes "the *positive insight* into the potentialities of our being in the world which our every day transactions with manipulatable objects tend to conceal" (1978b: 153).

For Ricoeur, feeling is our way of intentionally orientating ourselves to the world about us without objectifying it. Far from being restricted to inner states of emotion, feeling includes the interiorised thought of poetic feeling. Feeling accompanies the insightful grasp of both the incongruence and the new congruence in the metaphor, so that it is "felt" as well as "seen". Feelings serve to reveal to us that we are knowing subjects; they "accompany this process (of imagination) and are structured by it to give rise to hope and action" (McReynolds, 1993).

"Feeling is not contrary to thought. It is thought made ours" (1978b: 154).

Ricoeur's (1978b) perspective, that in metaphor, imagination and feeling collaborate with cognition in an intrinsic partnership, approaches the conclusion which emerges from this inquiry into autobiographical learning. The importance of the joining of the "head and the heart" is seen in Stephen's story, contributing together with the manifestation of a new image to the turning point in his life. There are echoes of this integration through the six accounts.

5.16 SPONTANEOUS AND ELABORATED METAPHORS

Metaphors serve to draw together large domains of the cultural experience in which they are grounded (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Shell 1986). In a life narrative, at the same time as it

unites diverse themes in the story, the central metaphor bears in itself something new. When the central metaphor is known and owned by the author, it is pregnant with possibility for change. When a central metaphor emerges in spontaneous imagining, encapsulating the themes of the life story immediately and without prior elaboration, it may yield a new understanding and a transformative outcome. Subsequent appropriation and elaboration of the metaphor brings a clearer understanding of its implications for the author's life and narrative (Angus and Rennie, 1988; Deshler, 1990).

Metaphor, therefore, has a potential for epistemic creativity. On the other hand, when the principal association between a particular focus and frame loses its tension and becomes standardised, the metaphor takes on the equivalence of a literal statement and the metaphor may be described as "frozen" or "dead". Some metaphors, which at one time have been stimulating or even threatening in their implications, may become clichés. Others may become reified and take on the mantle of incontrovertible scientific knowledge. Just as "a good catchword (in most cases a metaphor) can obscure analytical thinking for fifty years" (Bartel, 1983: 16), so frozen metaphors in life stories and cultural understanding can obstruct autobiographical learning. It is through imagining that the "frozen" metaphor may be thawed out, and the "dead" give way to a newly created one (Evans, 1988; Deshler, 1990).

Though frozen metaphors in clients' accounts in psychotherapy lack implicative power, they are nevertheless valuable for reflecting the element of stasis or stuckness in important dimensions of a person's life. In his critical examination of the significance of metaphor in psychoanalysis, Evans (1988) opposed an attitude common among therapists that the use of metaphor relates only to the fantasies and impulses of primary process. He proposed, instead, that metaphor functioned as an interpretive intermediary between primary process and "reality oriented" thinking. Further, metaphor belongs as much to the discourse of the therapist who is assumed to be well adjusted, as it does to the account of a disturbed client. In psychotherapy, "by facilitating the use of metaphor in describing one's experience the

therapist is encouraging a part of the psyche that is intimately involved in both stasis and growth" (Evans, 1988: 545).

The central life metaphors in a client's account appear to encapsulate their sense of what it means to be this person in their present circumstances. From a phenomenological perspective, persons construct and reconstruct their worlds in the light of both conscious reflection on and active interpretation of their experience, and by their living out life metaphors which had been frozen (Evans, 1988). Basing his conclusion on his practice of psychotherapy, Evans asserted that a regenerative effect could be observed as a result of the conscious use of metaphor by therapist and client.

"It is in this sense that the metaphor contains the seeds of its own transformation, not by being usurped by literal reality - which invokes the fantasy of the end of subjectivity through analysis - but rather by a genuine transformation in which the metaphor bends, contorts, assumes a new shape that bears some resemblance to the original" (1988: 547).

Although the metaphor represents an interpretation of experience which constructs meaning and coherence, it remains open itself to the possibility of being changed by the awareness of therapist and client. The characteristic ambiguity of metaphor may lead knowers to awareness of more marginal dimensions of their experience.

"Through awareness and insight both the focus and the frame may recover the creative possibilities contained within their respective systems of associations" (Evans, 1988: 549).

In collaborative styles of metaphor generation, Angus and Rennie (1988) found that both client and therapist discover new ways of appreciating the metaphor's significance for the client's account and the therapeutic conversation.

"In these collaborative relationships, both therapists and clients were simultaneously attuned to their own experiential responses. In this inquiry, they both described their experiences of metaphoric expression as being spontaneous wherein they discovered

what they were going to say as they spoke. It was noteworthy that this spontaneity was as characteristic of the therapists as it was of the clients. These therapists prized and highlighted the expression of imagination as a vehicle for discovery. Hence, both clients and therapists in the act of collaborative elaboration of a metaphor gave free play to their imaginal processes. It was during these moments of spontaneity that a discovery of something “really new” was most likely to occur (Angus and Rennie, 1988: 555).

Evans (1988) found that persons who are open to their primary processes tend to perceive deeper levels of meaning in metaphor. He discovered, too, that some metaphors appear to be more likely than others to stimulate mental activity. By gaining awareness of their life metaphors, both those which have been frozen and those which have arrived spontaneously, knowers reach a new psychological freedom, and the composition of a new narrative.

"If the client is able to bear it, a truly novel metaphor is less likely to be incorporated into the ongoing hum of the personality, but rather alters the tonal structure itself" (Evans, 1988: 550).

"The client develops a kind of freedom, often an initially quite terrifying freedom, to abandon his or her familiar perspective, assume different vantage points, and otherwise re-experience the world through the various phases of conscious metaphor. With regard to the present discussion, psychological freedom is gained not by achieving a metaphor of liberation but rather by the liberation of metaphorising" (Evans, 1988: 550).

The presence of metaphor in accounts of transformative learning is that of an active process of imagining, rather than that of merely being a structure within the story. As in the case of parable, metaphor acts within the life story in both spontaneous and elaborated ways. The conscious elaboration of metaphor does not reduce it to something literal. A metaphor which is vital promotes autobiographical learning because it permits and even contains within itself possibilities for change in perspective and practice. The *poiesis* of reinventing the knower's life and life story is continued through the interpretation of metaphor, which includes imagining and feeling in the interpreter's work and play.

5.17 METAPHOR AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Agreeing with Ricoeur 's phenomenological hermeneutics, Vanhoozer (1990) described human being as marked by the passion for the possible. The forward orientation of human being projects itself "in front of itself towards a possible way of being" (1990: 7). So, the importance of imagination in narrative or poetry lies not in describing creatively real events in the author's life history. It rests in an exploring and prospective role, in probing the possible, "for it is the imagination which projects possible courses of action, which are always narrative in nature" (Vanhoozer, 1990: 20). Metaphor in narrative expands personal reality by envisioning future life projects, and the means for realising them.

"Metaphors offer different ways of seeing the world; narratives present different ways of seeing human being in the world" (1990: 8).

In metaphor, imagination invents reality. A change in metaphor means a change in personal existence.

"Metaphors, therefore, not only yield new insights into reality, but also suggest new ways of orienting oneself to the world" (1990: 66).

In connecting large domains of experience, metaphor does not indicate any limits to its meaning. This polysemy of language proves to be a source of frustration for those who would prefer to have precise definition in language use. Ricoeur (Vanhoozer, 1990: 59), however, is inclined to regard it as a virtue, necessary if we are to make authentic choices to live as we might. It is in a poetic approach to language, which values feeling and imagination, that there lies the possibility to criticise life and reinvent it. Vanhoozer (1990: 66) noted that, despite Ricoeur's (1978a) confidence in metaphor, he may not avoid the question of how to know the difference between metaphors which project the possible into reality, and those which do not.

"The question is simply this: if metaphors are our only access to a redescription of the real, how can we know whether or not to believe the metaphor? If what the metaphor affirms cannot be checked by non-metaphorical means, how can we tell the difference between a helpful and a misleading metaphor?" (Vanhoozer, 1990: 66).

Vanhoozer realised that Ricoeur's (1978a) response to this question is to point to the criterion of illumination. Aware that the criterion of illumination does not bear empirical verification, Ricoeur (1978a) proposed that an existential verification is both appropriate and possible. An existential verification of the metaphor lies in discovering that a particular metaphor illuminates or makes the knower's experience of the world more meaningful or intelligible (Vanhoozer, 1990: 67). The illumination which metaphor brings does not show life as it is lived already, but points genuinely to the possibility of human being. Because metaphor is free from a responsibility to describe reality literally, it operates from a deeper than empirical level, redescribing life according to its deeper possibilities. The possible may be disclosed by metaphor because of a tension which exists in metaphor between what "is" and "is not". Metaphor refers to the real as dynamic becoming, rather than as static being. It receives further verification as the project becomes realised in human existence.

For Ricoeur (1978a), authentic existence depends on our seeing the world in terms of its possibilities through the illumination of metaphor, and choosing from among those possibilities what is most proper to one's being. Otherwise, we are confined to unauthentic existence, in which we perceive ourselves to be objects in a world which consists of givens and actualities. Whereas metaphor presents us with the possibility and responsibility to choose and make authentic existence, literal and scientific language so preoccupies us with actuality that we do not touch on our passion for the possible.

The passion for the possible is a characteristic of the autobiographical accounts of remarkable change. The life stories show how the emergence of feeling in the authors' ways of knowing opened them to their own experience of disorientation. Through their reflection on experience, imagining, as the persistent search for meaning and patient questioning of tradition and experience, enabled them to redescribe their lives. Their poetic enterprise

involved close attending to the life story they found themselves telling. The event of parable and the central metaphors within the stories opened up the possibility for the authors to change, by choosing what appeared to be forbidden literally by tradition.

Although metaphor offers possibilities for meaning and existence, the realisation of the human project requires an act of will to choose what is one's "ownmost" possibilities. The validity of a particular interpretation of the projective possibility of metaphor needs to be shown existentially through the person's living it in authentic existence. The life story is likely to include times when choices led to authentic existence, and times of stagnation when the passion for the possible did not find vital expression. The autobiography reveals the work and play of imagination, insight and choice in the author's composition and reinvention of their existence.

5.18 IMAGINATION IN ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND RESEARCH

Explanations of transformative and emancipatory learning are presented often as "maps" for the journey of reflective learning from experience (Daloz, 1986). Usually, these maps have located transformative learning principally in the territory of critical rational cognition. However, a move to include other internal processes of knowing in explanations of adult experiential learning is evident (Mulligan, 1993). The influence of affect as a factor in adult learning has been well recognised for its inhibiting and facilitating effects (More, 1974; Heron, 1983, 1992; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Postle, 1993; Boud and Walker, 1993). Nevertheless, prominent and influential paradigms of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981, 1985, 1990, 1991; Brookfield 1985, 1987b, 1990b) give their major attention to critical reflection and critical thinking.

The recognition that there is something more to transformative and emancipatory learning than rational and conscious processes is found in occasional critiques of adult education

theory. Expressing some dissatisfaction with the rational paradigm of perspective transformation, Hart (1990b) claimed that adult education theory has overemphasised the cognitive processes in adult transformation. Alert to the “power of non-cognitive and non-linguistic aspects as contributing to *critical* abilities by subtly freeing the courage and the curiosity to know and understand”, Hart argued that educational theory should include the “strong motivational and emotional underside of critique” (1990b: 136). It would appear that the incorporation of these underemphasised dimensions of knowing in explanations of adult learning would require a more inclusive epistemology, with corresponding methods of research.

The criticism that explanations which overemphasise rational abilities and processes are inadequate is evident also from alternative explanations of transformative learning, and from the practice of some researchers. Although Mezirow (1991) reported studies of perspective transformation which show awareness of non-rational and unconscious factors, he saw these ways of knowing as being governed by critical reflection. Thus, he described one of the steps in Keane’s (1987) phenomenological study of the “doubting journey” as a “waiting period of the non-rational - intuitive, spiritual, emotional - in order to become congruent with the rational once again” (1991: 179). In his report of Taylor’s (1989) study, Mezirow played down the “dramatic leap or shift that ‘just happens’ in a way not consciously planned” by emphasising the conscious shift of transcendence which follows it (Mezirow, 1991: 173).

It is noticeable that those who propose autobiography as a form and means of adult learning recognise that imagination is central to the composition of life and its narrative (Randall, 1992). Brady (1990) described autobiography as having three interacting ways of learning; re-membering, ordering, and imagining the self and its narrative. For the most part, however, imagination has received little direct attention in adult learning theory as a major contributor to the processes of transformative learning.

In their description of transformative education, Boyd and Myers (1988) posed a fundamental and substantial challenge to explanations of transformation which are based primarily on ego-conscious critical reflection. They presented their alternative, particularly in contrast to Mezirow's (1981) description of perspective transformation. Because Mezirow (1990, 1991) has developed further his theory of perspective transformation, partly in response to additional criticisms (Collard and Law, 1989; Hart, 1990b), I will refer to his later writings when appropriate. Despite the clarifications and changes to Mezirow's theory, Boyd and Myers' (1988) critical evaluation of perspective transformation, and their articulation of transformative education as an alternative, are still pertinent.

It is useful here to recall a description of Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, in a more recent form.

“Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. *More inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspectives are superior perspectives which adults choose if they are motivated to better understand their experience*” (Mezirow, 1990: 14).

By contrast, the significance which Boyd and Myers (1988) attach to the “expansion of consciousness” in transformation can be perceived from their description.

“Although all transformations do not lead to the expansion and integration of an individual's personality, it is only through transformations that significant changes occur in the individual's psychosocial development. A positive transformation is experienced as a clearly demarcated event which moves the person to psychic integration and active realization of their true being. In such transformations the individual reveals critical insights, develops fundamental understandings and acts with integrity. If such learnings are qualities of transformation then it would follow that educators should be interested in the educational aspects of transformation” (1988; 262).

Boyd and Myers (1988) claimed that, up till that time, in the literature of adult education, there was little evidence of an interest in transformative learning as “psychic integration”. They traced the ego-rational quality of perspective transformation to Freudian personality theory. Although both Freudian and Jungian theories and therapies “appreciate, and rely upon, the irrepressible *spontaneity* of imagination” Levin (1981: 260), the former approach places limitations on the meaning and use of imagination.

“Whereas Freudians, practising their method of suspicion, tend to reduce the dream’s symbols to neurotic distortions of libidinal (and primarily sexual) drives, the Jungian prefers to *amplify* them, allowing the symbols to expand in scope and deepen in their value. And, whereas the Freudian tends to affix a symbolic meaning for all eternity, the Jungian is quite prepared to participate with the patient in a process of unfolding, in which the symbols continue to undergo transformation as they are brought into ‘conversation’ with more and more aspects of the patient’s integrated living” (Levin, 1981: 261).

Preferring Jung’s (1969) theory of the individuation of the ego-Self relationship, Boyd and Myers (1988) argued that it is through a non-rational process of *discernment* that the psychic integration of ego and other structures in the collective unconscious takes place. Discernment embraces the activities of *receptivity, recognition and grieving*. Boyd and Myers (1988) stated that discernment has several characteristics which distinguish it from critical reflectivity.

“Discernment leads to insight, but not the reflective insight resulting from critical reflectivity, nor the understanding gained by taking things apart, by analysing and reducing them to their basic components. Rather, discernment leads to a contemplative insight, a personal illumination gained by putting things together and seeing them in their relational wholeness” (1988: 274).

The inadequacies which Boyd and Myers (1988) alleged to exist in Mezirow’s (1981) description of perspective transformation are indicated in the following propositions, in which transformative education is contrasted with perspective transformation, according to various important criteria.

- 1 The *purpose of perspective transformation* is to promote critical reflection on the epistemic, sociocultural and psychic distortions in meaning perspectives which prevent autonomy and self-realization. Thereby, the conscious ego is enabled to reshape a more inclusive perspective.

The *purpose of transformative education* is to aid the individual in the task of *differentiation* in the first half of life, and in the task of *integration* in the second half. The learner's ego is assisted, not to exercise greater control, but to be open to dialogue with other entities in the whole Self.

- 2 The *structure of perspective transformation* is that of a conscious ego as the initiator and central director of all knowing. Ego seeks freedom from the distorting influence of the personal unconscious through critical reflection.

The *structure of transformative education* is that of an ego which, through dialogue and in concert with all the other entities in the collective unconscious, engages in personal individuation.

- 3 The *content of perspective transformation* refers to the personal unconscious in which distortions are to be found.

The *content of transformative education* embraces both personal unconscious and collective unconscious. Archetypes within the collective unconscious, are expressed through components of the Self other than ego, such as the shadow, anima and animus, and persona.

- 4 The *executive dimension of perspective transformation* means that the primary way of knowing is critical reflectivity.

In contrast, the *executive dimension of transformative education* presents discernment as a way of knowing “which is more irrational, less under the apparent jurisdiction of the ego” (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 274).

- 5 The *process* of perspective transformation is delineated as ten elements in critical reflectivity which lead to new practice. These phases are not rigidly sequential. They include a disorienting dilemma; self-examination with feelings of guilt and shame; a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychological assumptions; the recognition that others share one’s discontent and the process of transformation, and that others have negotiated a similar change. The learner explores options for new roles, relationships, and actions; plans a course of action; acquires knowledge and skills to implement the plans; tries new roles provisionally; builds competence and self-confidence in the new roles and relationships; and reintegrates life on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective (Mezirow, 1991: 168-169).

The *process* of transformative education is described as discernment which has three activities; receptivity, recognition, and grieving.

As a lifelong process, discernment includes differentiation and integration. For the tasks of differentiation in the first half of life, instrumental learning, with its emphasis on establishing order and control, is especially useful (Boyd and Myers, 1988). Integration, which is characteristic of the second half of life, is a qualitatively different task. So that integration may take place, paradoxically, the ego must lose its autonomy and enter into relationship and conversation with the other elements of the Self. Transformative education proceeds through questioning and critique, to discernment. As they accompany learners through these phases of transformative education, adult educators are to offer an attitude and practice of compassionate criticism.

“As practitioners of transformative education, the adult educator assists learners by helping them first to question their present mode of operation and way of viewing reality, then to criticize the dominant consciousness which locks the present in place, and finally to enter into a process of discernment which unlocks the present and leads to a future based upon a new integration within the Self” (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 283).

Critical reflection has an early place in the process. The compassionate quality of criticism in transformative education recognises that the affective climate of learning is often one of bereavement (Daloz, 1988). Discernment, which follows the critique, addresses the “symbols, images and expressions of meaning which are involved in personal transformation” in order to facilitate grieving (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 283).

Though their challenge to Mezirow’s (1981) theory of perspective transformation does not focus explicitly on imagination, Boyd and Myers (1988) note that imagining, among other ways of knowing, has a place in the processes of discernment. They deny that the rational ego is the centre and director of human knowing and action. They claim that transformation can only be accomplished through the inclusion of irrational sources of knowing, especially feeling and imagining. Discernment begins with receptivity, and continues through the step of recognition, towards grieving. Receptivity prepares the way for grief work, and leads to the integration of the ego and other structures within the psyche. Unless the learner is able to “relax the hold their ego has on consciousness and allow voices other than just the ego’s”, then discernment cannot begin (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 281).

“Here the person assumes the posture of listener, open to receive the symbols, images, and alternative expressions of meaning which surface from the shadow, anima, animus, persona and other archetypal configurations” (1988: 277).

The learner undertakes an imaginative activity, similar to soul making (Hillman, 1975a), in order to recognise the presence of other components within the Self, to interpret them as images from the psyche, and to interact critically with them. Without the ego’s recognition and owning that these components also constitute the Self, psychic integration is impossible.

Changes, personal and social, which disturb the learner's ability to interpret and respond to his or her world of experience, are a form of bereavement (Marris, 1986). Grieving, the central dimension of discernment, responds to the loss which the learner experiences in personal and social contexts. Although grieving may commence in response to events in the learner's outer world of circumstance, it proceeds through ego's dialogues with intra-psychic structures that question one's deeply held assumptions. These archetypal energies carry the message that the continuity of one's life is being dismantled. As grieving continues, there is a gradual shift away from critical awareness of earlier ways of knowing oneself and acting. Within the processes of interior dialogue, the spontaneous image offers the learner a new way of interpreting both the inner and outer life. Boyd and Myers (1988) commented on a case study of transformative education, in which the learner, Mary, engaged with the archetypal images and intra-psychic structures she encountered in discernment.

“She acknowledged their message as directly addressing her and she openly entered into dialogue with these messages. The dialogue resulted in an illumination; a new transformative relationship emerged within herself and between herself and the world” (1988: 280).

Discernment, which understands transformative education as personal integration within the context of conscious and unconscious social formation, contributes well to an explanation of autobiographical learning. In Boyd and Myers' (1988) view, transformation in autobiographical learning would not be explained adequately as the outcome of “critical reflectivity”, carried out by the rational ego in response to disorienting dilemmas. The disturbance to the life narrative is brought by images from within the collective unconscious, as much as by the events of social and personal circumstance. Both sources of “trouble” (Bruner, 1987) create an occasion for transformation. Transformative education is “an evolving integration between two unique journeys, an inner journey into Self as well as an outer journey into the existential world” (1988: 280).

In response to this critical evaluation by Boyd and Myers (1988), Mezirow (1991) claimed that transformative education complements perspective transformation “by placing an important emphasis on the significance of presentational awareness and the centrality of the self in transformative learning” (1991: 167). This response to their substantial criticism of perspective transformation appears to ignore or miss the point of what Boyd and Myers had proposed as a contrary theory and practice. It must be said clearly that Mezirow (1990) is not oblivious to ways in which imaginative forms such as metaphor aid critical reflection. He suggested that in critical reflection, *intuition* suggests metaphor, and points out a direction in which abductive thought may proceed to construct an alternative whole conceptual framework from a step-by-step reinterpretation of the parts of the former perspective. He also noted the importance of learning to discern metaphors within the learner’s social context which will lead to new interpretations of meaning perspectives. He credited intuition with the capacity to recognise the meaning of strange experience, to suggest “metaphoric analogies and directions for abductive thought”, and to facilitate insight. *Imaginative insight* is a step in the process of reflective action which leads either to perspective transformation or at least to a changed meaning scheme, depending on the learner’s interpretation of the situation (Mezirow 1991: 109). Again, Mezirow proposed that *imagination* is “indispensable to understanding the unknown” (1991: 83). Although Mezirow recognised in principle that imagining is part of transformative learning, he failed to observe it closely, perhaps because of his major focus on critical reflection. Consequently, he has tended to lump together metaphor, intuition and imagination. His proposition that critical reflection may be aided “perhaps by finding a new metaphor that reorients problem-solving efforts in a more effective way” (1990: 12) subordinates imagination and imaginative processes to the conscious and rational processes in transformative learning. To admit imagination as a minor partner only, subjecting it to critical reflection, is to restrict both dimensions of knowing.

The main point of Boyd and Myers’ (1988) criticism of Mezirow’s (1981) theory of perspective transformation is rooted in his understanding of the self, which he derived from

Freud. In Chapter Six, the neglect of imagination in Mezirow's perspective transformation is seen to be influenced also by his adaptation of Habermas' critical theory of knowledge and communication.

Brookfield (1987b, 1990a, 1990b, 1993) has paid considerable attention to imagining in his theory and practice of critical thinking. Describing critical thinkers as people who have "the capacity to imagine and explore alternatives to existing ways of thinking and living", Brookfield (1987b: 8) affirmed the importance of imagining in transformative and emancipatory learning.

"Critical thinking is not seen as a wholly rational, mechanical activity. Emotive aspects - feelings, emotional responses, intuitions, sensing - are central to critical thinking in adult life. In particular, the ability to imagine alternatives to one's current ways of thinking and living is one that often entails a deliberate break with rational modes of thought in order to prompt forward leaps in creativity" (1987b: 12).

Brookfield's (1987b: 132) enthusiasm for the practice of imaginative speculation as a skill essential for achieving critical thinking is evident. He described at considerable length ways in which, as part of the practice of critical thinking, the creative powers of imaginative speculation may be released by aesthetic triggers. By distinguishing it from critical reflection, Brookfield (1987b) recognised rightly the autonomy of imagining (Casey, 1976). In practice, however, he appeared to consider imagination as something preliminary and ancillary to critical thinking in the creative act of knowing. Although Brookfield does not treat imaginative speculation as an unreliable or trivial activity, in practice, he appears to assign to it the status of a valuable instrument, under the control of rationality.

Imagining, as a way of knowing, is found both explicitly and implicitly in the explanations of transformative learning considered above. Despite their willingness to accommodate it, neither Mezirow nor Brookfield have yet afforded to imagination an appropriate place. Their explanations of perspective transformation, and critical thinking both concede a higher degree of importance, and a directive role to rational knowing. Despite their insistence that

imaginative speculation, or imaginative insight is essential, their preference is for the apparently more robust qualities of critical knowing. They consign imagination to a preliminary or transitional role.

As a metaphor for adult learning as *poiesis*, autobiography points to imagination's central but not dominant role in constructing and reshaping the life narrative. A phenomenological inquiry into imagining (Casey, 1976) shows an autonomous relationship between imagination and rational processes. Examination of the life stories told in Chapter Three shows that imagining was integral to the formation and reformation of the authors' meaning perspectives. The spontaneous epiphanies in the life stories illuminated the learners' present situations and pointed beyond them to an alternative. In a non-rational and unconscious way, imagining may be said to contribute hermeneutically to the critique of assumptions and meaning perspectives, and to generate alternative scenarios. Imagination collaborates as a partner with critical reflection to construct and reconstruct the life story.

In the practice of adult learning, there are several examples of researchers using imaginative processes to promote perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1990). Although he did not address explicitly the factor of imagination in transformative learning, Deshler (1990) employed metaphor analysis as a form of critical reflection. By connecting the literary form of metaphor with analysis he connected imaginative and critical knowing, showing the capacity of imagination to form, deform, and reform meaning perspectives. He showed particular enthusiasm for metaphor as an imaginative process in the subsequent reshaping of personal and social meaning.

“Creating our own metaphors contributes to our emancipation not only in our pilgrimage of meaning but also collectively in the interpretation of popular culture and counterhegemonies against social forces that oppress, maintain social injustice, or prevent global sustainability of life” (Deshler, 1990: 312).

Other researchers have reported their use of imaginative forms to initiate and foster transformative and emancipatory learning through journal writing (Lukinsky, 1990), and

educational biographies (Dominice, 1990). Using literature to alert learners to the interpretive power of imagination, Greene (1990: 254) sought “to release readers into the created ‘unreal’ worlds brought into being by the language of the text”.

“Experiences of bringing texts alive are experiences in interpretation; and, with each, comes the recognition that the meanings of things and their significance are contingent on a certain way of attending from the ground of intersubjectively lived life. Indeed, it is the stuff of life - stored images, memories, feelings, perceptions, understandings - that is shaped and ordered in the imaginative encounter” (Greene, 1990: 255).

Through imagination, learners are able to interpret and reinterpret the text of human action which is their own life story. Cohler (1988) portrayed various interview settings in social sciences’ research as occasions in which the participants share the interpretation of the texts of life narratives. His perspective underlines a growing awareness of the important hermeneutical quality of imagination in understanding the life course.

Although the researchers and practitioners noted above recognise an imaginative factor in their accounts of emancipatory and transformative learning, nevertheless, in an ego-rational frame of reference the autonomy which imagination exercises is difficult to explain. Their intention to explain transformative learning primarily as critical activity results in their playing down its poetic dimension. In the explanation of imagination’s role in transformative learning which I advance in this thesis, there is neither rivalry nor subservience. It is not my intention to elevate imagination above critical thinking. However, I do advocate an understanding of imagination as a way of knowing which participates in the initiation and orchestration of the movement, whose outcome is autobiographical learning, and the recomposition of the learner’s life story. The interpretation of image, symbols and metaphor within the narrative compellingly presents itself as the means of bridging the “said” and the “to-be-said”. Learners make sense of disconfirming experience and reshape their narratives imaginatively and rationally.

5.19 SUMMARY

In the Introduction, I proposed to approach transformative learning from experience through the metaphor of autobiography to find a more comprehensive understanding of the processes of adult learning in times of significant personal change. By our co-operative inquiry, gathering and interpreting the six life stories of transformation, this research group reached a more adequate understanding and explanation of our autobiographical learning.

The subject of autobiographical learning is the author of the life story. The reflective processes in autobiographical learning, which are crucial to the transformation of the narrator and the formation of the narrative, are named here as imaginative and poetic to distinguish them from critical reflection and critical thinking (Mezirow, 1990, 1991; Brookfield, 1985, 1987b). Through imaginative reflection, the learner tells and retells the life story, thereby composing and reinventing it in response to “interruptions” in the context of social and personal circumstance (Bateson, 1990). Life storytelling is facilitated through hermeneutic conversation. Critical questioning of personal and cultural assumptions leads to the discovery of relationships of social power in the life story which distort the ways in which people and groups construct their lives. A transforming insight provides a stimulus to an exploration which is imaginative and critical. The outcome of autobiographical learning is the reinvented narrative, and the learner’s practice which shows emancipation from the constraints of earlier assumptions and relationships. The approach of imaginative critical reflection or critical hermeneutics in autobiographical learning invites other researchers to include imagination, along with cognition and other ways of knowing (Mulligan, 1993), in their theory and practice of adult learning and adult education. 4

The learner’s imaginative and critical reconstruction of their life story is an interpretive process. In Chapter Six, the critical theory of Habermas, the hermeneutic approach and method of Gadamer, and the critical hermeneutics of Ricoeur will be examined briefly as approaches to the interpretation of the text of human life and its accounts. An explanatory

understanding of autobiographical learning, expressed in the metaphors of journey and conversation will also be presented.

ENDNOTES

1 Within the past decade, there has developed a stream of scientific literature which appreciates the implicate order of things, and avoids narrow positivist explanations.

2 Avens (1980) argued that Kant, by proposing imagination to be foundational for knowing, had likewise perceived it as a middle ground. Kant clearly regarded the creative dimension of imagination as active, spontaneous and prior to experience. By ordering sensory data into schemata or “sensible concepts”, which it invented when necessary, imagination rendered experience intelligible. Though it was essential to all knowing, imagination itself was barely known. Kant faced a contradiction; imagination, itself unexplainable, was nevertheless foundational for all knowing. Alarmed at the abyss he contemplated, Kant reverted to proposing the supremacy of pure reason in knowing (Avens, 1980: 15).

3 The unifying potential of imaginative forms for knowing has been noted by Schneiders (1991: 103), who claimed that images, such as metaphor, are capable of being “dynamic and tensive principles of wholeness governing entire realms of reality and experience”. She cautioned that when images are distorted they may also deform and diminish knowing.

“Whenever the great images that structure experience ossify in a person, we encounter the narrowness and rigidity that characterise the ideologue, the compulsive, the fanatic” (1991: 104).

4 Schneiders (1991) perceived the constructive imagination at work in knowers when ossified images of the past are broken down and reformed, often through therapy, prayer, and active imagination. She proposed that the spontaneous images, which may emerge from these forms of reflection, inspire the knower’s understanding of what new shape their life situation may take. By elaborating the spontaneous images, the constructive imagination also offers a way to interpret the reality which is constructed.

CHAPTER SIX

AN EXPLANATORY UNDERSTANDING OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

6.0 INTERPRETATION, IMAGINATION, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

In Chapter One, the factor of telling and retelling the life story was observed to be at the heart of autobiography (Bruner, 1987), and identity formation (McAdams, 1988, 1993). It appeared as an important constituent for gaining creditability in social interaction (Shotter, 1986), for therapy (Kepnes, 1982; Viney, 1993), and soul making (Hillman, 1975a; Randall, 1992). Retelling is neither mere reiteration, nor even paraphrase. It is the serial reconstruction of the life story, which takes its form within and through the process of the author's ongoing self-interpretation. Each new telling of the life story reveals how the self-understanding of the author is emerging. The reimagined and reinvented forms of the life stories disclose the transformative outcome of the learning, and communicate an explanation of the transformation.

The life stories of Stephen, Paul, Mark, Matt, Luke, and Dan were presented in Chapter Three as accounts of transformative learning. These life stories clearly contain moments of epiphany which are outside the control of the authors' "sovereign consciousness". They also show evidence of critical reflection in the dismantling of assumptions. I proposed in Chapter Five that the six authors, with imagination and critical reflection, composed and recomposed both their lives and their narratives. A constituent, common to their autobiographical learning and the composition of the life story, is the work and play of interpretation.

In Chapter Five, I argued also that approaches to adult learning which employ critical reflectivity, generally place minor emphasis on the quality of epiphany, or the spontaneous expression of imagining in reflection. In describing critical reflection, they give prominence to the directive function of the rational ego in consciousness. I have agreed with Boyd and Myers' (1988) assertion that Mezirow (1981) had adopted, perhaps unwittingly, a Freudian model of the self in his explanation of perspective transformation. This led him to relegate imagining to a minor place in the processes of transformative knowing. I have suggested that a reason for Mezirow's emphasis on the critical dimension of reflection is his explicit reliance on Habermas' critical theory to explain perspective transformation. In this chapter, by way of contrast, I will consider Habermas' (1972, 1977, 1990) critical theory, especially in relation to Gadamer's (1975) hermeneutical approach. I will also discuss elements in Ricoeur's (1970, 1971, 1976b, 1980) phenomenological approach to interpretation. In the light of this theoretical consideration, I will propose an explanatory understanding of the transformative learning which the life stories portray.

In this chapter, I propose to examine the process of interpreting the data of lived experience, through which the author reaches an "explanatory-understanding" (Mendelson, 1979). To reach an account of the relationships between imagination, interpretation and transformative learning in the autobiographical act, I intend to explore further some concepts employed in earlier chapters. In those chapters, I explained only briefly the concepts of interpretation, tradition, hermeneutic consciousness, conversation and play, and questioning. In the latter part of the current chapter, with reference to the life stories told in Chapter Three, I will propose two ways of understanding the processes of autobiographical learning, through the metaphors of journey and conversation.

6.1 INTERPRETATION

An examination of the differing approaches to interpretation, which Gadamer (1975), Habermas (1972, 1977), and Ricoeur (1976b, 1980) propose, shows that they all contribute to the understanding of autobiography and transformative learning which I present in this chapter. Though each of the three philosophers places emphasis on diverse dimensions of interpretive knowing, they hold in common that interpretation aims at an explanatory understanding of texts and human actions. In some instances, interpretation has as its focus other people's actions, and other writers' texts. However, it is also of prime importance for the self-formation of the knower. In autobiographical learning and autobiography, it is the author's life which is the focus of interpretation. The primary concern in the discussion which follows is to consider the interpreting which learners do to understand events in their lived experience. The interpretation of their experience leads to self-formation and the construction of their autobiography.

Each life story in this study, in whatever form it is considered, is an account of meaningful and intentional human action. Consequently, as Ricoeur (1971) argued, it may be considered as a text suitable for interpretation, just as any written text is. In Chapter Two, it was stated that interpretation played a part in two related phases of this co-operative inquiry. Proximately, in the group's hermeneutical conversation, the co-researchers interpreted their life stories to gain for themselves further understanding of their autobiographical learning. Remotely, it was through interpretation that the authors already had reinvented their lives, and composed stories of transformative learning. Therefore, authoring and autobiographical learning continued to occur within the research process, and because of it. The co-researchers responded to each other's invitations to tell their accounts of transformation in various forms, and they interpreted their narratives once again in this inquiry, in its most recent telling. The various forms of each life story revealed that change had taken place in what their author initially had understood his tradition and his experience to mean. Gadamer (1975) considered that texts such as these serve to indicate the author's

current self-understanding, and constitute explanatory accounts of the author's decisions and actions.

Besides having a *cognitive* function of explanation and understanding, interpretation of the life story also exercises a *normative* function. The interpreter expects to reach an understanding which measures up to his or her received tradition. Therefore, the life story of the author's experience may be formed normatively in a process of ongoing interpretation which structures and maintains it. On some occasions, when the author's self-interpretation of personal transformation leads to a critique and revision of the tradition, the reinvention of the life story is likely to occur (Bateson, 1990).

Prior to the co-operative inquiry, the six co-researchers had already recomposed their life stories through interpretive consciousness. Their new life stories are the outcomes of diverse experiences and processes of autobiographical learning. By interpreting their autobiographical accounts once again in the co-operative inquiry, the co-researchers gained for themselves an understanding of remarkable change as a phenomenon common to each. I noted, in Chapter Two, that, in gathering and interpreting the life stories, the research group's intention was to discover each life story as its own explanatory understanding of autobiographical learning. Gadamer insisted that hermeneutic consciousness does not set out to "grasp the concrete phenomenon as an instance of a general rule" (1975: 6). Nevertheless, as Kotre (1984) observed, it is possible to weave the individual threads of each life story into "coherent statements of a general nature" which are "nothing more or less than summaries of recurring motifs" or "variations on a theme" (1984: 36). The principal focus on Stephen's story does not exclude the diversity found in the other stories. The uniqueness and commonality of the life stories are presented in the explanations of autobiographical learning given later in this chapter.

From his perspective of hermeneutical phenomenology, Ricoeur (1971) argued that meaningful action has characteristics similar to those of a literary text. The meaningful

actions, which constitute the “texts” of this study, include all those events and processes of autobiographical learning which led to the authors’ choice to exit from the priesthood and to enter into marriage. For Ricoeur, both written texts and meaningful actions leave their *mark*, have *unforeseen consequences*, *disclose a world* before them, and are always *open to reinterpretation* (Capps, 1984: 37).

The actions of entering and exiting the priesthood left their mark on the authors, on all those who participated to a major degree in their choices and enactment, and on those whose tradition was contradicted. The mark left by remarkable change is such that it requires both its subjects and its observers to interpret it. Seeking to understand for themselves the meaning of the events of their experience, the authors undertook dramatic changes, challenged the tradition of compulsory celibacy, and composed a new form of their life story. Their reinvented narrative also served as an explanation to offer to others. It is likely that other people, who participated in and observed the events which led to the departure of these priests from ministry, also strove to interpret these new accounts. The ways in which the authors' action of leaving the priesthood has left its mark on the Roman Catholic church has been discussed more fully in Chapter Four. 1

Meaningful actions and texts have an autonomy which evades the control of the author’s intention (Ricoeur, 1971, 1980). Consequently, like any other text, the life stories in this inquiry are open to interpretation in ways other than those which their authors intended. Some priests have found to their sadness, anger or disgust that their choice for marriage was interpreted by other priests and laity as proof that they lacked sincerity, and emotional and spiritual stability (Rice, 1990). On the other hand, some of the co-researchers have had the pleasant surprise of being regarded as people of courage and conviction. In response to the growing phenomenon of priests choosing to marry, a brief discussion about revision of the requirement of celibacy for priests took place during the Second Vatican Council. In the subsequent twenty five years, the Catholic church's official interpretation of the phenomenon has relied heavily on a tradition which favours stability and excludes dissent (Powers, 1992).

As they interpreted their experience in the light of their tradition, the six co-researchers had found that repetitive interpretation had brought stagnation. Due to the influence of their persistent questioning and an epiphany, their narratives began to disclose a world to them that went beyond their description of their immediate historical context and ecclesiastical tradition. Ricoeur has observed; "A work does not only mirror its time, but it opens up a world which it bears within itself" (1971: 544). Thus, the ongoing interpretation of their experience revealed to them a world which was *imaginatively* possible. Interpretation, which included imagining, led them to rewrite their life stories by leaving the priesthood and marrying.

In Chapter Four, it was noted that the development of new styles of lay ministry within the Roman Catholic church has been an unforeseen social consequence of the phenomenon of priests leaving active ministry during the last thirty years. From Ricoeur's (1971, 1980) perspective, the meaning of "the world in front of" the social movement of exiting priests has not yet been exhausted (Rice, 1990; Powers, 1992). The texts of the autobiographical learning considered in this inquiry, with its personal and social dimensions, may continue to be read and interpreted in new and different ways. Indeed, it is likely that the authors themselves may reach further interpretations of their own life stories.

For Ricoeur (1971), comprehension of a text or action does not consist in the reader's apprehension of what lies *behind* it, namely the original situation, context, or even the author's intention.

"It is because it 'opens up' new references and receives fresh relevance from them, that human deeds are also waiting for fresh interpretations which decide their meaning" (Ricoeur, 1971: 544).

"To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference, from what it says to what it talks about" (Ricoeur, 1971: 555).

To understand the actions in the life story, an interpreter must become aware of what these actions point toward in disclosing a possible world, and how he or she might stand in it. Interpretation enables autobiographical learners to imagine *what* might take place in their life, and *how* to enact their new account of self (Casey, 1976). The six narratives show that the ongoing interpretation of experience and tradition leads sometimes to a patently different self-understanding, and to the enactment of remarkable change. Autobiographical learning, which entails a change from living on the basis of an unquestioned self-evident worldview to living from a new perspective, requires both spontaneous epiphany and controlled imagining in the process of interpretation (Casey, 1976).

The question presents itself about whether the interpretation which brings a new perspective and practice actually constitutes an understanding, rather than a misunderstanding of one's meaningful action. It is not a matter of deciding the worth of the interpretation according to the criterion of consistency in the learner's worldview and actions, since the very nature of transformative learning is change in perspective. Moreover, this question about validity goes beyond a concern about whether the interpretation accurately represents what the authors say in the life stories. It is not answered by a retrieval of the circumstances of the act, or by uncovering the author's intention. The question about validity of interpretation asks whether a particular interpretation expresses the truth claims of the account of transformation.

The question about what constitutes genuine understanding or a valid interpretation of the ongoing life story is a crucial one for people who are making choices for remarkable change. Obviously, not all interpretations of experience and tradition are equally valid. Following Hirsch (1967), Ricoeur stated that the practice of valid interpretation of texts relies on good guesses, because each text or action is plurivocal, and "open to several readings and reconstructions" (Ricoeur, 1971: 544). The guess, which enables the process of interpretation to begin, is a necessary step in judging what is important for understanding the text of life. In turn, there is a question about how to authenticate guesses.

Since the certitude of one's interpretation of human actions cannot be demonstrated, an interpretation which purports to understand the text of a life authentically needs to be more probable than any other. The decision to accept one rather than another is based on a judicial consideration of alternative and opposing interpretations. Schneiders (1991), sympathetic to Ricoeur's approach, proposed a number of criteria for valid interpretation. Some criteria have a global quality, others are specific. For example, she asked whether the interpretation takes into account all the dimensions of the story which are likely to have a bearing on its interpretation, such as the social context in which the story is composed. Again, the criterion of a particular interpretation's fruitfulness refers to its capacity to open up the potential of the text to explain the actions it portrays. The ongoing recomposition of the life story is sustained by a fruitful understanding of the interplay of experience and tradition in the author's social context. Referring to the interpretation of written texts, Schneiders (1991) proposed that a valid understanding takes the story as it stands, unless there is good reason for reshaping it. A valid understanding brings an internal consistency which is not achieved at the price of violating the whole of the story, or the story as a whole. It also offers a plausible account of what appears to be anomalous in the story, and it is compatible with what else is known about the situation from other sources. Although, after due consideration, one particular interpretation is judged to be the most genuine, it is "a verdict to which it is possible to make an appeal" (Ricoeur, 1971: 555).

The reinterpretation which brought about the reinvention of the co-researchers' lives and life stories is an example of an appeal against the verdict of interpretation according to longstanding tradition. In autobiographical learning, the author's reflection on disorienting events in experience leads to interpretation of the life story. Recurring interpretation, which involves both imagining and critical reflection, understands particular events and the whole life story, in such a way as to disclose new stances and practice. Ricoeur (1980) proposed that interpretation, such as that which occurs in autobiographical learning, belongs to the realm of the poetic. Referring to the broad domains of poetic discourse, he argued that the

poetic or metaphorical dimension of language has a revelatory function. The poetic quality of language,

"... incarnates a concept of truth that escapes the definition by adequation as well as the criteria of falsification and verification. Here truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, i.e., letting what shows itself be. What shows itself is in each instance a proposed world; a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities. It is in this sense of manifestation that language in its poetic function is a vehicle of revelation" (Ricoeur, 1980 :102).

To arrive at a valid interpretation is to reach an explanation, and an understanding of the text's capacity to disclose its world of meaning. Thus, the interpreter has appropriated what the text or action contains. The world of meaning which is disclosed brings an understanding which goes beyond what even the actor or author of the text may have understood. To gain this expanded horizon, the interpreter's reflection must involve a dialectic of distancing and participation. Ricoeur (1980) described reflection as emerging unexpectedly within ongoing experience like a crisis. In a critical moment of distancing from the testimony of what the ego thinks about itself, the knower becomes reflectively aware of the tradition in which the text or action stands. However, critical reflection alone cannot dismantle the claim of the tradition to be sovereign in interpreting. Ricoeur (1980) argued that it is poetic understanding that receives the manifestation which the text itself bears within it.

"The power (of the text) to project this new world is the power of breaking through and of opening" (1980: 104).

"To understand oneself before the text is not to impose one's own finite capacity of understanding on it, but to expose oneself to receive from it a larger self which would be the proposed way of existing that most appropriately responds to the proposed world of the text" (1980: 108).

In autobiographical learning, the manifestation of meaning, which presents a possible reshaping of tradition, occurs through the author's poetic and critical interpretation of events in experience. Whereas the author's submission to a literal understanding of the text of experience would close down the revelation of meaning, imagining responds receptively to

the manifestation. 2 In so far as the author embraces the new world of meaning and enacts it, he or she composes a new form of the autobiography.

It is clear that, in the case of autobiographical learning, interpretation is transformative. The narratives in Chapter Three show that when imagining brought a change in their hermeneutical approach to lived experience and their tradition, the authors reached a further transformative reordering of the story. A transformative interpretation appropriates the meaning of a text, and achieves the fusion of the knower's horizon with the world which the text projects (Schneiders, 1991). Interpretation which emerges from a fusion of horizons is the more compelling when it is based on the current praxis of the interpreter, as well as on his or her reflection. Such existential interpretation is critical as well as poetic, since it reaches not just for what the text of experience says but for the truth of it.

"It involves a radical personal engagement with what Gadamer calls the truth claims of the text. Truth claims are not merely dogmatic propositions, assertions of fact, or deliverances of information but the presentation of reality that offers itself to us as a way of being, as a possible increase or decrease of personal subjective reality... When one arrives at the stage of existential interpretation, one's engagement with the text's truth claims has ultimate personal significance, but the engagement remains a critical one" (Schneiders, 1991: 174-175).

The retelling of each person's story of remarkable change in this inquiry was an occasion for a possible new interpretation. The narratives reveal that their transformation came, not primarily from the conscious ego, but from a poetic attending to their experience and its narrative. In so far as "narration preserves the meaning behind us, so that we can have meaning before us" (Ricoeur, 1984: 22), the autobiographical learning of the co-researchers generated a new composition of their life story.

"The task of hermeneutics is to charter the unexplored resources of the to-be-said on the basis of the already said. Imagination never resides in the unsaid" (Ricoeur, 1984: 25).

In interpretation, it is the exploration of the "to-be-said" which promises a disclosure of what may yet be part of the meaning of remarkable change. This hermeneutical approach to autobiographical learning does not expect to unearth some hidden meaning hitherto inaccessible to the narrator. The author reaches for an interpretation which achieves the continuing creative reordering of the life story.

6.2 HERMENEUTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Gadamer's (1975) approach to interpretation is best situated within his description of effective historical consciousness. The initiative to interpret reality does not come from the knower. "Understanding begins when something addresses us" (1975: 266). Thus, an interplay commences between what is strange and new to the interpreter, and what is familiar.

"Understanding is, for Gadamer, inextricably bound up with interpretation, with an articulation in the interpreter's language of meanings constructed in another universe of discourse" (McCarthy, 1978: 172).

What is strange to the interpreter presents him or her with a question. The question requires the interpreter to hold in suspension the prejudices or prejudgments of tradition, and to seek the truth in company with the stranger (Ogletree, 1985). Gadamer proposed that to stand in a tradition is not, therefore, merely to apply it fixedly without heeding what appears as strange to the interpreter. Instead, because its prejudgments may frequently be questioned by what appears to be strange, tradition must be considered to be always in a process of formation. Although tradition is, in principle, open to modification it is also obvious that circumstances in particular social contexts serve to maintain it and to resist its reformation. The high value placed on law and order, loyalty, the fear of innovation, the suppression of dissent and unrecognised ideology are factors which distort the ways in which institutions

and individuals appropriate tradition, and employ it in interpreting everyday events (Habermas, 1972).

There are three kinds of possible interpretive relationship between the "I" of the knower and the "Thou" of tradition (Gadamer, 1975). Only some of these interpretive stances are suitable for the human sciences. In seeking to emulate the methods of the natural sciences, positivist social sciences seek understanding of the phenomena of human nature for the sake of predictability and control. This mode of relationship effectively regards the "Thou" as an "It", an object whose content can be discovered. Therefore, it detaches the observer from an ongoing historical process of relationship with what is observed. A second approach, that of historical consciousness, aims for reflective understanding of what it studies. Though it may appear to be mutual, this interpretive relationship leads to domination, in so far as the interpreter claims to know and understand the other.

"The claim to understand the other in advance performs the function of keeping the claim of the other person at a distance" (Gadamer, 1975: 323).

Although this mode of relationship to tradition genuinely "seeks in the otherness of the past, not the instantiation of a general law, but something historically unique" (1975: 323), it acts without awareness of its own prejudices, relying on objective procedures for interpretation. Gadamer claimed that critical methodology destroys the immediacy and mutuality of the relationship between a knower and his or her tradition, by leaving out the historical quality of the interpreter's understanding. He asserted that it is only through *effective-historical consciousness* that an interpreter stands in a mutual relationship with the tradition. Hermeneutic consciousness is hospitable to tradition, rather than suspicious. It seeks to extend a similar principled openness to the strangeness of other traditions and their prejudices whenever they become apparent in the disconfirming events of experience.

"The hermeneutical consciousness has its fulfilment, not in its methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience which distinguishes the

experienced man (sic) by comparison with the man captivated by dogma" (1975: 325).

To illustrate how hermeneutic consciousness interacts mutually with its partners, Gadamer (1975) employed two important and related metaphors, play and conversation. Before considering these concepts, it is important to give attention to Gadamer's understanding of tradition.

6.3 TRADITION

Responding to critics of his first edition of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1975) admitted to a certain one-sidedness in his approach to hermeneutic consciousness. By emphasising the place of tradition in the process of understanding, he intended to provide for a "truth of remembrance". In this way, he wished to correct what he saw as the tendency among contemporary philosophers to criticise all that has gone before. In his estimate, their critiques had intensified "to the point of becoming a utopian or eschatological consciousness" (1975: xxvi). By contrast, he confidently asserted that by attending to tradition, knowers would remain alert to the reality in which their life is grounded. Moreover, they would discover that tradition is neither a matter of their subjective preoccupation, nor a fixed set of culturally inherited prejudgements which dominate the interpretation of the text of human choices and action.

"To stand within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge, but makes it possible" (Gadamer, 1975: 324).

Gadamer (1975) proposed that tradition serves the process of interpretation by bringing forward prejudices or prejudgements. These prior understandings "condition our understanding both in what is accepted immediately because it is familiar and in what is disturbing because it is new" (Warnke, 1987: 78). The life stories told in Chapter Three clearly indicate that the authors stood within a common historical, religious and cultural

tradition. In Chapter Four, the historical tradition of celibacy and obedience, and the changes in the Catholic church's tradition during the Second Vatican Council were described in some detail. Though learners may not belong to formal organisations such as the Catholic church, they still stand within large traditions such as patriarchy or feminism, or Western democracy or centralised government, or smaller traditions of national or ethnic identity. The influence of tradition is effective with or without the knower's awareness of it. In interpreting any experience, hermeneutic consciousness acts from within a familiar tradition, facing both what is familiar and that which has turned out to be strange.

The person seeking understanding may question tradition from his or her specific stance in lived experience, so that a new joined horizon may be reached. For Gadamer, openness to the possibility that there are better opinions and understandings (prejudices) than those one currently holds is a fundamental quality of rationality, which is not tied to any one tradition of knowledge (Warnke, 1987). Prior to the knower's meeting with the text of their own human action, it is not possible to know which prejudices of a tradition are likely to survive questioning in the process of interpretation, and which will give way to a new understanding. For Gadamer (1975: 260) the really critical issue in hermeneutics is to sort out "the true prejudices by which we understand from the false ones by which we misunderstand". Tradition is a history of prejudices which have been revealed and overcome through hermeneutics. The sorting of tradition needs to proceed from two standpoints (Farley, 1993).

"On the scholarly side, sorting is a kind of relativizing, a display of the historical and cultural frameworks in which tradition was conceived and passed along. On the moral side, sorting uncovers the oppressive complicities at work in those frameworks" (1993: 76).

The personal and communal quality of tradition strengthens its authority to establish a ground of understanding to interpret the text of human experience. Farley (1993) noted this as especially relevant for a tradition which proposes to speak of ultimate concerns.

“One reason tradition is more than the factual past, the aggregate of past contents, is that tradition’s past is a past of persons: thus, anonymous sages, ancestors, founders, revered predecessors, deceased members of clans and families. And what tradition passes along is the residual influences of past persons of the present community” (Farley, 1993: 68).

A striking fact in the life narratives of Stephen, Paul, Mark, Dan, Matt and Luke is that, for a considerable period of time, all found difficulty in making and enacting their choice for remarkable change. They explained that their immobilisation was due, partly, to their anticipation that if they chose to marry, they would disappoint friends and colleagues. Their choice for remarkable change contradicted the tradition of theology and church order in which some valued friends still participated. Their remarkable change has disrupted the basis on which former relationships of work and community had been based. Their life stories have become part of an alternative tradition concerning celibacy, authority and forms of ministry (Powers, 1992).

When the six authors began to compose their lives, the prejudices which they brought to interpret their experience were those which they had drawn from within the historical tradition and their contemporary social context (Warnke, 1987). The narratives show that, even in the early years of their formation, each author participated in that tradition from within a specific stance or horizon. In the seminary, when Stephen faced anxieties about his future as a celibate, the spiritual director invoked as normative the criterion of “wanting to be a good priest”. By accepting this criterion to interpret his experience, Stephen reaffirmed the tradition of celibacy which assigned meaning to his sexuality and personal authority. The tradition of the Catholic priesthood, as theology, ideology and social practice, was normative in the composition of the early forms of the co-researchers’ life stories. Even after they had chosen to reject it in favour of a new “horizon”, this tradition has remained normative to some degree by continuing to influence their opportunities for employment and participation in the ritual life of the Catholic church. Their new horizon had relativised the tradition of compulsory celibacy as necessary for priesthood. Farley (1993) has argued that the authority of tradition becomes abusive when it claims to have universal significance.

From Gadamer's (1975) standpoint, the outcome of remarkable change might well be understood as one of a number of possible fusions between the horizon of Catholic theological tradition and practice on one hand, and the experiential autobiographical horizon of each learner. His optimistic view, that the dialogic structure of understanding leads to the "truth" of the situation through a fusion of horizons, is not shared by Habermas (1977).

In Habermas' (1977) view, Gadamer's assumption, that the prejudices of tradition reflect a genuine consensus, ignored the influence of social and economic factors on the formation and maintenance of tradition (Warnke, 1987). Habermas (1977) argued that hermeneutic consciousness is insufficient by itself for interpretation. A complementary process of critical reflection is needed to detect and dismantle ideological distortions which conceal coercion, and exclude "ideal speech" in the development of the tradition. With a countering criticism that critical reflection is not free of its own historical and political grounding, Gadamer defended hermeneutic consciousness as being particularly suitable to uncover complexities of meaning in texts, norms and human actions. Gadamer appeared to regard ideology as equivalent to the prejudices in tradition to which hermeneutics has access in a dialogic manner (Warnke, 1987). Despite Gadamer's confidence in the revelatory and corrective power of hermeneutics, Habermas argued that, without critical reflection, the hermeneutic dialogue does not have a "criterion for determining when a traditional consensus betrays the effects of force and coercion" (Warnke, 1987: 120).

In their life stories, the six co-researchers showed a basic trust in the Church's claim to bear authentic tradition. At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic church remembered that tradition develops through interpretation. **3** Its decrees contained re-visions and re-formations of important aspects of the tradition. Even more, a popular consciousness emerged in the Catholic church that the work of traditioning belongs to the whole Church, clergy and laity. This new interpretation of Catholicism held out a promise of a new "ideal speech situation" in the Catholic church (Boff, 1990). Stephen's story reflects

well the way in which he responded to his understanding of the tradition as it opened and closed.

6.4 CONVERSATION AND PLAY

The paradigm for the process of understanding is that of a conversation between the interpreter and the text (Gadamer, 1975). Tradition is present as a "genuine partner in conversation, with which we have fellowship as does the 'I' with the 'Thou'" (1975: 321). Consequently, to be open to one's tradition, as to a conversation partner, is to approach it as someone who has something of significance to say to us.

"When two people understand each other, this does not mean that one 'understands' the other, in the sense of surveying him (sic)... Openness to the other means that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me" (1975: 325).

"I must allow the validity of the claim made by tradition, not in the sense of simply acknowledging the past in its otherness, but in such a way that it has something to say to me. This too calls for a fundamental sort of openness" (1975: 324-325).

To be open to tradition is to allow its claim to truth to have an impact on oneself. In conversation, the traditions of each partner initially propose their own prejudice as the criterion for understanding what emerges in the discourse. The self-evident interpretation of life events, which learners inherit, maintain and co-create, is rooted in the personal and communal history of each person in the conversation. Much of the tradition is explicitly known to the one who holds it. Some of it remains tacit until it is revealed in the course of the conversation. In hermeneutic conversation, the autobiographical learner stands in an I-Thou relationship with his or her received tradition, and, indeed, with any other conversants. In understanding the strangeness of experience, learners may notice questions which emerge suddenly in their consciousness. The pursuit of these questions in dialogue may be expected to lead learners to abandon sometimes their customary prejudgements. Though initially

appearing to have no need for alteration, their traditions may be revised in the light of questioning.

The hermeneutic conversation may proceed, once it is ensured that the participants engage with each other as partners. The aim is not to out-argue the other, but to discover the strength in what she or he has to say. It is neither technical skills, nor therapeutic diagnosis, nor cross-examination which bring hermeneutic conversation to its outcome of community and agreement. As long as questions and answers move to and fro between the partners, as long as the partners enjoy freedom from domination by the other, the play of conversation continues.

"We say that we 'conduct' a conversation, but the more fundamental a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner" (Gadamer, 1975: 345).

The playful dimensions of conversation and interpretation have nothing to do with triviality. The "to and fro" play of thinking in hermeneutic conversation is concerned with serious possibilities. Nor is play such that there needs to be in the conversation someone who is consciously playful. Play represents an order in conversation in which movement backwards and forwards follows of itself.

"The movement which is play has no goal which brings it to an end; rather it renews itself in constant repetition" (1975: 93).

The movement of play tends toward achieving self-representation through playing oneself out. Thus there is a transformation, since what was hidden before is now brought into view. In the conversation of interpretation, each partner brings their horizon into play with that of the other, thereby risking its transformation. When the conversation proceeds genuinely, through open questioning and answering, the outcome is a fusion of horizons. Through the mutual interaction of interpreter and the text, something which belongs to both comes into language.

"We can now see that this is the full realisation of conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common" (1975: 350).

The interpretive stance of hermeneutic consciousness which reaches such understanding is also the fruit of methodical observation (1975: xvii). In a hermeneutic conversation which has an outcome of autobiographical learning, the author questions vigorously and imaginatively both the tradition which is embodied in the life story as it stands, and the strangeness which presents itself in disorienting events. The tradition in which the author stands has an authoritative voice in the conversation. Experience also gains a hearing. In the story of Stephen, it is clear that, at first, he attended to the *dogmatic* prejudgments in his tradition which aimed to order and control the strangeness in the questions which rose up within his experience. However, there was also a *pastoral* prejudice in his appropriation of the tradition, which sought to listen hospitably to the experience. With each of these prejudices, Stephen interpreted the questions which presented themselves (Boff, 1990). In the initial stages of his life story, Stephen's pastoral stance led him to listen attentively to the questions of the laity. Because of his confidence in the teaching authority of the Catholic church, he sought to persuade and encourage others to accept the order and meaning in the church's tradition as being to their ultimate advantage. In his internal conversation, the pastoral dimension of his tradition received kindly his questions about celibacy. As his spiritual director had done, he interpreted his questions as referring only to his own capacity and determination to persist in his undertaking "to be a good priest". In these early interior conversations, his appropriation of tradition did not allow him to question the structure of the Catholic church's requirement for celibacy.

Chapter Four described the effect on contemporary Catholics of the Second Vatican Council's ethos of "throwing open the windows of the Catholic church to the world". Chapter Three related Stephen's story of how his hermeneutic consciousness in interpreting events, and the questions which presented themselves, changed towards greater openness, and less suspicion and guardedness. He observed the world wide phenomenon of priests resigning from ministry. Instead of perceiving these departing priests as deserters from a

serious commitment, Stephen regarded these "strange" actions in a compassionate way. Later again, his horizon of what it meant for him to be faithful changed. He reached a new interpretation of his own life story, which brought him the freedom to act in a way unimaginable to him at the time of his ordination.

6.5 QUESTIONING IN HERMENEUTIC CONVERSATION

Gadamer's (1975) assertion that hermeneutic consciousness relies on the dialectic of question and answer in dialogue may give the impression that interpretation is the fruit of consciousness and rational processes only. There is no doubt that logic and critical awareness play a part in the ordering of experience towards meaning. However, in Gadamer's estimation, the play of hermeneutic conversation is clearly not under the conscious direction of either an interpreter or the author of the text. Just as questions rise up unbidden in conversation, so too do sudden answers present themselves independently of conscious thought. In hermeneutic conversation, the dynamics of tradition, questioning, and play interact in the participants' efforts to reach a genuine interpretation.

Drawing on Plato's concept of dialectic, and specifically the method of "question and answer", Gadamer (1975) proposed that, in hermeneutic conversation, the partners stand ready and willing to pursue whatever questions present themselves for consideration. These questions are of two kinds. They either serve to clarify the meaning of the horizon of each partner, or they search for the basis on which a common meaning can be reached in truthful agreement. Because the partners are in a mutual relationship, it is to be expected that the horizon of each will change in the direction of fusion. Thus, hermeneutic conversation yields an understanding of one's self, the other, and the relationship between the two.

The questioning found in genuine conversation is an integral part of interpretation. As part of the processes of knowing which lead to autobiographical learning, questioning serves to

explain the presence of both stagnation and change in the authors' lives and their narratives. Autobiographical learning stagnates whenever authors avoid, or are unable to answer the questions which rise within their internal and external hermeneutic conversations. When emerging questions disrupt the coherence of their current understanding of their life story, or when learners feel threatened by what they perceive as answers to their questioning, they may prefer to tell a repetitive or closed life story. Interpretive conversation opens the life story when autobiographical learners recognise the questions, for which their puzzling experience is an answer. Through open and active questioning of the text of their experience, learners gain not only a new coherence in their self-understanding, but also a deeper relationship with their traditions

"To reach an understanding with one's partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one's own point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were" (Gadamer, 1975: 341).

An essential quality for participation in hermeneutic conversation, whether in a self-reflective way or with other learners, is the awareness that one does not know everything. Learned ignorance and the desire to know are necessary for questioning to take place. A further quality is the courage to pursue questions with energy, especially when they carry within them the risk that the answer may require the questioner to reshape his or her life. Murry warned of the cost of personal transformation.

"For the good man (sic) to realise that it is better to be whole than to be good is to enter on a strait and narrow path compared to which his previous rectitude was flowery license" (quoted in Palmer, 1980: 56).

From Gadamer's (1975) description of the dialogic structure of understanding, Ruffing (1989) drew out some implications for the conversation which takes place in spiritual direction. She argued that when the partners meet in a mutual and non-adversarial climate, their conversation is likely to promote the ongoing interpretation which leads to self-formation, and the reinvention of their life story. If the conversation is to lead to

autobiographical learning, authors need also to allow for a quality of unpredictability in their dialogue with their life story, and their ongoing experience of events. They must be willing, therefore, to question both what they experience, and their present interpretations of their life. However, this does not mean that the outcome of such a hermeneutic conversation is entirely indeterminate and open ended. The authors' intentional focus in the interpretive conversation is directed to their self-understanding, and the expression of their life story. It may be expected, therefore, that over a considerable period of time such a dialogue will lead the authors, through questioning, to a more truthful interpretation of their life stories.

The stories told in Chapter Three show that autobiographical learning proceeds through a dynamic interplay between internal and external dimensions of the author's hermeneutic conversation. Critical reflection is present with poetic construction in both these spheres. Conversation, as a model for hermeneutics, does not aim to understand and reconstruct the inner states of the partners through psychological empathy. It is concerned with understanding the meaning of the whole situation of the text, including its context.

If the text of the life story may be considered to be an answer to a question, or series of questions, it may also be possible to discover which questions have shaped the ongoing composition of a particular narrative. It was reported in Chapter Four, that events in the global context, and changes within the institution of the Catholic church in Australia in the years following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), stimulated questions which led to change in the perspectives of the authors of these autobiographies. The life stories show which events evoked pivotal questions for the particular authors. They also indicate the changes in the interpretive horizon of the authors which brought about change in the direction of the narratives. In the late 1960's, the questions which formed Stephen's life story changed from those which related primarily to his faithful following of his calling, and his instrumental communication of the tradition he had received. New questions emerged for him which concerned the mutuality of his relationship with other members of the Catholic church, and the quality of his self-awareness. They also questioned seriously the validity of

his prejudice to interpret his experience from a principally rational standpoint. As a consequence of his discovery of a deep desire to integrate his “head and his heart”, further questions emerged to address his tradition. Finally, Stephen’s questions led him to choose to reinvent his life, his personal authority and sexuality, his understanding of the tradition, and to construct practical possibilities For his future. As Gadamer (1975) insisted, questions press in on us in much the same way as does a sudden idea, although a sudden idea is more correctly a solution which has been generated by a prior question. Stephen's sudden imaginative insight "Why can't I?" is the simultaneous exclamation of an epiphany and a question.

In Chapter Five, I observed that Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1989, 1990, 1991) had explicitly adopted ideas from the critical theory of Habermas. He appropriated these concepts as a basis for the theory and practice of perspective transformation. Mezirow has been criticised as misinterpreting Habermas (Collard and Law, 1989; Hart, 1990b), principally on the grounds that he virtually ignored the dimension of social power in his descriptions of the domains of learning, and did not emphasise the necessity of social action as an outcome of transformative learning.

An analysis and summary of the rich theoretical frameworks of Habermas (1972, 1977, 1986, 1990) are beyond the scope of this thesis. His thought is still evolving (Hart, 1990b). Studies of his early writings, which are relevant to this discussion, may be found in Mendelson (1979), McCarthy (1981), and Thompson (1981). It is important, however, to note and examine briefly those concepts in critical theory which may contribute to an understanding of transformative learning. Howard (1982) described Habermas as seeking an interpretive methodology for texts and human actions. The issues which triggered Habermas' search are of serious import. He sought a way to insure that the interpretation of experience would be free from hidden systematic distortions which represent the interests of the centres of power within society. Habermas also wanted to find an interpretive method which would form the interpreter as a critically aware self. Not content with approaches of

hermeneutical consciousness, Habermas (1972) looked for a way to detect distortions in the processes of human communication. He proposed that critical self-reflection would enable knowers to become aware of their internalised understandings as “conditions of their existence which had hitherto remained opaque” (Thompson, 1981: 180).

Habermas (1972) proposed to replace the distortions with emancipatory awareness which would serve the interests of truth, justice and freedom for the participants in the discourse. He conceded that manifest distortions might be unearthed readily enough through hermeneutics. However, other distortions in communication, which are prejudicial to the interests of some or all participants, are not so easily detected. These internalised codes have a self-evident quality for the knower, and appear to be beyond the questioning which Gadamer (1975) proposed. At first, Habermas was drawn to psychoanalysis as a paradigm for the interpretation of discourse. He argued that it brought self-awareness and social emancipation through a kind of illumination. Even though his reliance on psychoanalysis brought the recognition of knowing which is outside of consciousness, the model of personality which Habermas accepted places the rational ego at the centre of the critical process. Habermas developed his critical theory further, from his analysis of language and communication (Thompson, 1981). By engaging in critical reflectivity, participants in discourse may see what lies behind their assumptions, dismantle dominating systematic distortions, and gain emancipation.

The debate between Habermas’ critical theory and Gadamer’s hermeneutic consciousness finds an important focus in the place of tradition in knowledge. Thompson (1981) observed that, "hermeneutic philosophy regards tradition as a dimension of historical consciousness through which the individual participates in cultural heritage, whereas critical theory sees nothing but distortions and alienations in the same traditions, contrasting them with the regulative idea of communication free from constraint" (1981: 66).

Habermas recognised that critical reflection does not discard all prior knowledge or preunderstandings (Mendelson, 1979). Mendelson argued that Habermas distinguished between “inevitable preunderstandings which derive simply from one’s participation in culture, and those false preconceptions which are anchored in systematically distorted forms of communication” (1979: 62). Whatever remained of tradition after critical reflection was open to scrutiny, and no longer accepted on the authority of tradition.

“A reflected prejudice can no longer function *as* prejudice, although it can certainly be adhered to. This is the point, and Gadamer has not seen it” (Mendelson, 1979: 62).

Habermas (1977) considered that Gadamer had placed the major emphasis in hermeneutic consciousness on participation and dialogue, rather than on the need for distanciation and critique. He asserted, therefore, that hermeneutics alone would reduce social inquiry to the level of translation or to the explication of meaning, thus concealing, rather than revealing, the structures of domination. He concluded that hermeneutic consciousness failed to contain any emancipatory interest. Gadamer resisted what he considered to be Habermas' aim to arrive at authentic understanding through the technique of critical reflection. He opposed critical reflection, asserting that "truth happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (Gadamer, 1975: xvi).

Ricoeur’s approach to interpretation as critical hermeneutics has offered further perspective to the debate between Gadamer and Habermas (Thompson, 1981). Ricoeur claimed that in the hermeneutic of tradition there is a moment of critical distance in which the structures of the text are brought into view. Thus, the interpreter's critical relationship with the text may expose its ideological distortions. On the other hand, he agreed with Gadamer that critical theory may not claim to be without its own historical tradition.

“First, that a hermeneutic of traditions can only fulfil its program if it introduces a critical distance, conceived and practised as an integral part of the hermeneutical process. And, secondly... that a critique of ideologies too can only fulfil its project if

it incorporates a certain regeneration of the past, consequently, a reinterpretation of tradition” (Ricoeur, quoted in Thompson, 1981: 66-67).

McCarthy (1981) considered that there is no need for the debate between critical theory and hermeneutics to remain at an impasse. Hermeneutic understanding may be pursued critically, with an interest in insight into the structure of domination and emancipatory practice. Wallulis (1990), quoted in Fontinell (1993) argued that Gadamer’s emphasis on the common belongingness of tradition, and Habermas’ emphasis on the individual achievement of critical self-reflection, are both integral to the project of self-formation through interpretation.

In approaches to transformative learning which endorse critical reflectivity, the assertion that imagination plays a revelatory or manifesting role in reflection raises suspicion. This resistance to an autonomous imaginative dimension in reflection seems to be rooted in philosophical assumptions that the knower “is master (sic) of his thoughts” (Ricoeur, 1980: 105). In particular, Mezirow’s (1981) explicit adaptation of Habermas’ critical theory, and his implicit assumption of a psychoanalytic model of the self, have led him to regard the critical consciousness of ego as the principal agent in interpretation which leads to transformative learning. Admittedly, he has not ignored the presence of imagining in his review of accounts of research into perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). However, as I pointed out in the preceding chapter, his attempt to offer imagination a place in his account of perspective transformation resulted in ascribing to it an inferior status.

The life stories of transformation told in Chapter Three clearly show moments of epiphany, which are outside of the control of the “sovereign consciousness”. They also give evidence that the authors used critical reflection in their interpretation of the disruptive events in their experience, and in their interpretation of tradition, and the context in which their autobiographical learning occurred. In the next section of this chapter, I will present an explanatory understanding of autobiographical learning, portraying it as an interpretive activity which is both critical and poetic.

6.7 IMAGINATION, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: SIX PATHS FOR A COMMON JOURNEY: SIX WAYS TO COMPOSE A LIFE AND ITS STORY

Having proposed, in Chapter Five, that imagining is a partner with critical reflection in transformative learning, I now intend to illustrate this proposal. I intend to present two ways to understand the life stories as accounts of transformative learning, in which imagining played a role in conjunction with critical ways of knowing. I have enlisted metaphor, "an active attempt to impose order and meaning on the infinite complexity of our realities" (Candy, 1986: 93), to assist in the imaginative work of interpreting the stories in this light. The first metaphor I have chosen is that of *journey*; the second is that of *conversation*. Both metaphors depict the transformative learning which the life stories portray.

The metaphor of journey initially suggested itself to me as an apt way to trace transformative learning. The metaphor is appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, the passage of human life is often portrayed as a journey (O'Collins, 1978; Elsbree, 1982), and autobiography as a traveller's tale. ⁴ In several of the stories reported in Chapter Three, the author explicitly depicted his life as a journey or a search. For some of the authors, the journey is what occurs between a point of setting out and a destination. For others, the journey is home.

Secondly, the explanations for changed lives, which the retold stories provide, function as maps of these journeys. The explanations allow those who read the stories to understand the diverse journeys of transformation from a distance, and they invite readers to consider their own life journeys in the light of these stories.

Thirdly, the metaphor of journey is already familiar in descriptions of movements in consciousness (Valle and von Eckartsberg, 1981), and development in values, faith and self-understanding (Fowler and Keen, 1978). Moreover, explanatory accounts of transformative learning often appear as a list of sequential phases (Brookfield, 1987), or a set of steps taken

and turning points negotiated (Mezirow, 1981; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Keane, 1987; Jarvis, 1987; Boyd and Myers, 1988).

Having reflected at length on the six autobiographies, I now propose an explanatory understanding of them through the metaphor of journey. The journey has five moments or phases. The first is an initial interpretive stance in which the learners anticipate confirmation and extension of their current meaning perspectives. In the second phase of the journey, as the learners experience disconfirmation of their interpretive stances, they strive to recover from the disruption to their lives. Their efforts to adjust, while retaining their initial interpretive stances, lead to the experience of immobility and stagnation. The journey of transformative learning is stalled for a considerable period of time. In the manner of some remarkable scientific discoveries, the third phase of the journey brings sudden and spontaneous manifestations of possible ways out of stagnation. The epiphanies illuminate possible new interpretive stances for the learners. In the fourth phase of the journey, the act of spontaneous imagining, which characterised the previous phase, stimulates imaginative exploration of the possibilities it heralded. The learners are on the move again. Their exploration of possibilities leads the learners to arrival at their destination, which is a new interpretive stance. The tradition in which they stand in the final phase of the journey has some continuity with their initial tradition. However, in the journey of transformative learning, this tradition has been imaginatively revisioned and critically reformed.

The autobiographical accounts presented in Chapter Three manifest a common sense of direction in the journey of transformative learning. In the five phases of the journey, the life stories show the diversity of the content and process of each transformation.

6.7 SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY : AN INTERPRETIVE STANCE IN THE TRADITION

The life narratives told in Chapter Three show that the starting point for their journeys of transformative learning, lay within the authors' relationship to their cultural setting. In Australian Catholicism, thirty or forty years ago, there existed a cohesive and comprehensive tradition. **5** It provided members of the Catholic church with a map of life - a vision and a prejudgement of reality, which required of the members their acceptance in practice. The tradition defined the personal and social identity of Catholics, the parameters of order, authority and obedience, and the place of human experience and reason in formulating church teaching. Ritual and education formed and maintained the values and truths of the tradition, sanction guided its practice. There was a self-evident quality about the tradition. Church tradition was beyond question, except for questions which sought clarifications, didactic explanations or direction. It interpreted everyday experience, and provided the principal social and cultural context for the practice of the faith. When ethical dilemmas occurred, they were referred to ecclesiastical authority, which, as the bearer of tradition, was also virtually unquestionable.

The directive quality of Catholic church tradition was replaced, in principle, by a more collegial ethos during the ten years which followed the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The new atmosphere began to make itself felt during the seminary years of Paul and Mark. By the time Luke and Matt arrived in the seminary, the theology and practice of the formation of priests had changed considerably. Stephen and Dan, who had been educated in the years prior to these changes, encountered them in their parish ministry. Despite the new ethos in Catholicism, which the Second Vatican Council had brought, the old atmosphere of hierarchy and clericalism persisted among priests and laity in many areas of the church.

The interpretive stance which the co-researchers took towards Catholic tradition was deeply influenced by the theological significance attached to their vocation. They felt under serious

obligation to follow their divinely inspired calling to the priesthood through a lifelong commitment to service and celibacy. 6 There was a prejudgement in the tradition of Australian priesthood which favoured a commitment in clergy to serve people in parishes and institutions, rather than to contemplate and study. This was summed up in their being called "secular" priests. Although many questions were being raised about the work and identity of priests, the principal theological meaning of priesthood was represented as service, with an emphasis on pastoral care and the provision of sacraments. The Catholic church's orientation towards service was sustained by the priest's promise of obedience. Awareness of the church as an institution or a social system was foreign to this understanding of priesthood, so most priests saw social analysis as no concern of theirs. Change in church practice came by decree, after which followed processes of directive education. The energetic devotion to service delivery and maintenance of the church system often masked an anti-intellectualism in priests, which was common enough already in Australian culture. Celibacy was perceived by priests mostly as a means to an end. It was a necessary condition for ordination, and beyond public question. Any critical awareness of the implications of compulsory celibacy for personal development was largely absent from both theological education and the aspirations of the priests.

The life stories portray diverse interpretive stances in the way which each author followed his vocation in this common tradition. Stephen relished the certainty his tradition offered him, and showed a ready obedience and trust. On the other hand, Luke experienced a persistent sense of disease, all the time hoping that in the priesthood he would find an answer to his yearning for connectedness with people, and intimacy with God. Shocked that survival in the seminary appeared to require him to suspend his personal growth, yet determined to follow his vocation, Mark responded with compliance, hoping for better times ahead. Dan, in search of a place where there was access to a truth he could live by, and the opportunity to be a carer, saw the tradition to be worthy of trust. Matt, for whom the tradition provided the stage on which he could achieve significance and acceptance, had the impression that the role of priesthood would bring him freedom and self-determination, as

well as the chance to be of service. Paul believed that the church was a community of faith wherein he saw for himself the possibility of a life of heroic service. Sustained by an adventurous theological outlook which sought to encounter the social sciences, Paul was excited at the prospect of work in the church. Ambivalent about his own needs, he decided to set them aside for the good of the community. Despite their differing orientations to the church's tradition, their first steps in the journey of transformative learning were taken with some common attitudes. The authors showed an explicit trust in the Catholic church, a willingness to accept ecclesiastical authority, idealism in their desire to serve people, and a dislike for clerical privilege.

6.8 FINDING ONE'S FEET ON STRANGE AND ROUGH ROADS : THE EXPERIENCE OF DISORIENTATION

The second phase in the journey was the narrators' encounter with disorienting circumstances. The disruptions they experienced were not always a source of distress, because there were pleasant surprises, as well as shocks and bewilderment. A disjuncture between the life story and ongoing experience, is widely considered to be fundamental in promoting human learning (Mezirow, 1978; Brookfield, 1987b; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Jarvis, 1987; Schon, 1987). The disconcerting quandaries, in which the narrators found themselves sooner or later, had their origins in personal, institutional and cultural dimensions of human lives (Deshler, 1990). Some of the authors first became aware of these dilemmas when changes had taken place in their social and cultural context, and in the church's tradition itself. Over a long period of time, these changes shook the foundations of their tradition and practice. The perplexity that some of the authors experienced was more immediately intrapersonal (Hillman, 1975a).

The promise of obedience, which these six priests had made to church authority, was founded on an explicit and largely uncritical acceptance of church teachings and practice.

As a consequence, obedience required them to take seriously the changes in theology and church life decreed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). For Stephen, Dan, Luke, Mark, and Paul these changes constituted an exciting new vision. The church's new self-understanding and attitudes to the world in which it lives sometimes contradicted what the narrators had learned previously. The collaborative style of authority which was proclaimed challenged their prior experience of church authority, which had always determined faith and practice in a parental way. Matt, who was ordained in 1979, inherited a tradition which had already incorporated these changes to some degree in the wake of Vatican Council II.

All over the world, although somewhat unevenly, the new theological understandings and practice were being gradually incorporated into the Catholic church's tradition. The church appeared to have expected compliance with its decrees. Disturbance surfaced within the church when it became clear that significant aspects of the Second Vatican Council's vision were being ignored by some of the hierarchy. In some places, implementation of reform was stalled, or only reluctantly permitted. It became clear that potential for intramural conflict also lay in the fact that it was not only some content of the tradition that had been changed, for example, the abolition of Friday abstinence from meat. As well, the process and the practice of traditioning were being reshaped. Emphasis was now placed on consulting the experience and wisdom of the laity, and on taking notice of the critical sciences in the formulation of decisions for the church's practice. Theologians proposed that tradition is multiple, and capable of development through critical study. The laity, formerly consigned to passive conformity to church law and practice, discovered for themselves the freedom to dissent. Religious men and women searched untiringly for an authentic interpretation of community life and their mission in the light of the signs of the times. There was open conflict among priests, between priests and laity, and between priests and bishops (Parer and Peterson, 1971; Noone, 1993).

What also disoriented some of the narrators was the realisation that some interpretations of events, which their tradition had offered them, no longer sounded convincing to them.

Former certainties were clearly contradicted by what they had learned from experience to be true. There was disillusionment for Stephen and Dan when church authority discounted the wisdom of the laity about birth control, and for Matt, Paul, Mark and Luke when the church failed to enact its own vision of being at the margins of society. Mark was shocked to find that courage among priests who voiced dissent was being suppressed and timidity rewarded.

These intramural conflicts over internal reform were exacerbated for some priests who, in the context of social and political events, wanted to present the Catholic church publicly as a plausible part of Australian society, "a church in the modern world". Despite the disturbing social circumstances of those years (1965-1975), and the fact that many other priests were leaving the ministry, the priests in this study did not choose to leave at that time, or for those reasons. ⁷ In Chapter Four, some reasons were proposed to explain why they remained within the priesthood, despite their lengthy experience of disorientation and ambivalence. Although they experienced disillusionment, from time to time the co-researchers returned to optimism when they heard interpretations by respected experts, which promised positive changes in the church's policies and practices. ⁸ At other times, the intensity of their own critical questioning seemed to threaten them, evoking a retreat into defensiveness and avoidance. They also felt paralysed by a fear of how they would manage their future financially if they were to leave the priesthood. Their fear escalated as they reflected on what they saw as the struggles of priests who had left already. During the lengthy periods of stagnation, their decisions to remain in the priesthood were motivated also by their sense of loyalty to other priests and the people whom they served at that time.

Attempting to manage his experiences of disorientation, Stephen sought out frames of reference within the church's tradition to help him understand the drama in which he was living. Luke explored other paths in the maze. Mark, seeking whatever opportunities were available to live up to his ideals, experienced a long agony, often feeling stifled. Despite the university being a site which exposed him to criticism of church policies and attitudes, Dan found there a place in which he could think, and be relatively free from the constraints of

close oversight by church authority. The work which Paul enthusiastically threw himself into engaged his energies, bringing him satisfaction for a time. However, as time went on, he became dismayed that his vision for the church was shared by so few priests. It was about this time when he came to the conclusion that celibacy was not for him. For Matt, on the other hand, his early disconcerting experience came from trying to be the perfect priest in conformity with the church. He managed his disorientation by compliance and by defending the Catholic church's teaching. Matt felt uneasy afterwards about the way in which this stance had restricted him.

The narrators' various interaction with these disconcerting circumstances extended their learning, without changing radically their relationship to the prevailing tradition. The initial strategy taken was to explore ways to incorporate their new learning, while they remained within the tradition. Mezirow (1985) noted how identification with the social context can impede critical reflection and the emergence of new perspectives. Stephen, Dan, Luke, Matt, Mark and Paul saw no clear way forward during their times of disorientation. The prospect of breaking with convention was fearful for these learners. They were reluctant to contradict church teaching, and they knew how the Catholic church treated dissenting or resigning priests. Nevertheless, their questions did not go away. However, the recent expression of Catholic tradition, which endorsed the sovereignty of conscience and the dignity of human experience, permitted them to make a critical interpretation of their situation. With this alternative understanding, the six priests developed an intellectual and moral conviction which also did not go away. 9

Convinced that they had a right and an ethical responsibility to value and interpret their experience, rather than to dismiss or deny it, the authors became more self-aware. Gradually, they owned the fact that there were clear contradictions between what they had once learned as what the church required of them, and what they now held conscientiously. In the light of their experience of friendship with women, and their newly acknowledged desires for intimacy, they questioned their commitment to celibacy. 10 The search for a genuine

compromise between what had been posed as opposites, friendship with women and celibacy, began to take on new significance for them. Clearly, their hope was that the Catholic church might make a new arrangement to incorporate their aspirations for both intimacy and ministry. The church's resistance to such a practice evoked a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness in them. They felt disappointment at the church's refusal to review its prejudgment on compulsory celibacy. Several of the participants felt guilt at the prospect of going back on their word by leaving the priesthood, and anguish at having to do so to respect their conscientious convictions.

When other priests left the ministry during the years of their disconfirmation and disturbance, the priests in this inquiry seem to have managed the tension of living in two worlds. One world was that of public role maintenance and their ongoing performance of duties. The other world was that of searching, in various ways, for inner clarity and coherence between their private and public life. Matt, whose disconcerting circumstances occurred later than the other narrators' and differed considerably from them, described the two worlds as "the stage and the dressing room".

This second phase of their transformative journey had brought disconcerting experience, which unsettled their interpretive stances in the hitherto firm tradition. In the face of events which disoriented them, these autobiographical learners strove to find their feet in a variety of ways. They experienced, from time to time, an oscillation between the inclination to submit to the authority of tradition, and the choice to question the prejudices of that tradition. They sought and welcomed alternative theological and sociological interpretations of their situation. Some turned to formal study, others took up informal opportunities to learn from their experience. However, a new perspective, or a fusion of horizons did not arrive yet. For most of them, this period of disorienting dilemmas was rather prolonged. They found it necessary to form new interpretive stances to preserve their integrity and restore order in their understanding. Central to their ability to persist with their struggle, was their resolve to value their own experience and what they were learning from it. During

this time of struggle to find a new footing on the journey, the experience of significant relationships with women raised questions to challenge the tradition which asserted that priesthood and marriage are mutually exclusive. For the time being, their friendships brought them support, and enabled them to remain within the priesthood.

6.9 GLIMPSES OF A WAY AHEAD: EPIPHANIES AND TRANSFORMING MOMENTS

Despite their persistent efforts to find a way through their dilemmas, the autobiographers were stuck. Their former ways of interpreting their lives had come to an end. They were unable to go back on their new self-understanding without a loss of integrity. Yet, they were unable to go forward, to "jump the gap" as several described their situation. They felt bound by ties of loyalty and responsibility, guilt, and fear of the future. Something was missing, which would enable them to see through their confusion and ambivalence, and embrace with confidence a new horizon for interpretation and a new social practice. Table 1 (**Appendix 1**) indicates that their process of transition and transformative learning lasted from seven to ten years for most of the narrators in this inquiry. During this period of immobility, they appear to have negotiated tortuously the challenge to redefine their psychosocial identity through disobedience. ¹¹ Bridges (1980) noted that a sequence of "ending-neutral zone-beginning" found in adult life transitions is characteristic of rituals of passage. The learners seem to have experienced a prolonged liminality, because the reality of ending was more obvious to them than the prospect of a beginning. Within their time of stagnation, each narrator experienced a manifestation which heralded the possibility of a way forward. The new awareness came as an unsolicited gift. ¹²

After a swim one day, Luke, for whom the sea has always been a nurturing element, voiced to himself the conviction that he did not have to return to ministry. Later, during a retreat, he considered an image of two roads. One road led to health and life, and the other led

toward living with celibacy as a burden. On that occasion, for a second time, he had the conviction that he could leave the priesthood.

"As soon as I was posed the question of the two roads, it was almost automatic. I knew that I could leave".

. On Stephen's dramatic bus ride, his "head and heart" came together. His sense of being excluded from marrying Justine gave way to a new assertive question, "Why can't I?". In his parable, he described the Wise One telling him, "You are free to choose your life. This is God's gift to his people".

Dan's glimpse of a way forward came as he felt the coin in his pocket. The coin of his livelihood, which he had lost earlier, had always had two sides! One side bore the inscription "Freedom", and the other "Responsibility". With further reflection he became convinced that, in the two-sidedness of his life, marriage and the priesthood do not exclude each other.

The party to farewell Matt, in his transfer to another parish, turned out to be the occasion for him to take to heart the admonitions he had received; "Leave the stage, if you want to. You are free to be yourself".

Warned that he would die, if he continued to live in the tension he was experiencing, Mark, nevertheless, felt trapped and unable to free himself. During his silent meditation retreat, the awareness came to him, "You will not die a priest". That proved to be sufficient to release him from his constraints.

Paul appears to have had several epiphanies. One, which came at the parish dance, when he knew that he was finished with celibacy, was more like the closing of a door behind him. The conviction did not resolve his troubles, but rather brought him a time of uncertain identity and initiated his search for a way forward. Subsequent glimpses seem to have come

to him over a long period of time. They found expression in his reinterpretation of the parable of the talents in terms of risk rather than security, and in his confidence that it was possible for him to be both Christian and to value his sexuality. In a cumulative way, the glimpses authorised him to take some risks in his search for identity.

For the six authors of the life stories, these varied glimpses of a way forward in the journey of transformative learning were like flashes of lightning over the darkened landscape of their disorientation and disturbance. The epiphanies came, unexpected. For some narrators, the glimpse was a sudden and specific moment whose significance is central as a turning point, after which nothing was quite the same. For others, there was a cumulative quality in the emergence of a new vision for life. In all cases, the state of managing life in two worlds now changed to a state of conviction that made their incongruence no longer bearable. Mark felt empowered to resolve his disequilibrium promptly. The others chose a strategy of taking leave from ministry, realising that it might take some considerable time before they could embody their new insights in practice.

The phenomenon of epiphany, or spontaneous imagining has been described in Chapter Five. The glimpse of a way forward emerged spontaneously within the author's experience of immobility. Loder (1981) described the epiphany as the turning point in the movement towards transformative learning.

"The third step in the event of knowing is the *constructive act of the imagination*: an insight, intuition, or vision appears on the border of the conscious and unconscious, usually with convincing force, and conveys in a form readily available to consciousness, the essence of the resolution" (Loder, 1981: 32).

"It is this third step, the construction of insight sensed with convincing force, that constitutes the turning point of the knowing event. It is by this central act that the elements of the ruptured situation are *transformed*, and a new perception, perspective or world view is bestowed on the knower" (1981: 33).

Casey (1976) proposed a relationship between the spontaneous and autonomous activity of imagining, such as an epiphany, and the conscious activity of controlled imagining.

6.10 IMAGINATIVE EXPLORATION OF A NEW WAY

Imaginative exploration in the journey of autobiographical learning signifies the joining of the active dimension of search to the element of glimpsing the spontaneous disclosure of possible worlds. The learners searched for a way to make a concrete choice for a future, about which they felt deeply convinced.

Prior to the moment of epiphany in the authors' stories, the logic of obedience to tradition ruled out their choice for marriage, without the authorisation of a new church law. For Stephen, Mark and Dan, their desired but outlawed prospect of marriage remained a fantasy, inviting but unable to be realised. For Luke, Paul and Matt, recovery and integration in their own lives appeared to have some priority over marriage. The interpretive movement of imaginative exploration, in which the narrators began to authorise their new life stories, translated the imaginative insight of epiphany into lived experience. 13

Disturbing events in the social context, and specific circumstances in individual lives are necessary preconditions for autobiography and transformative learning. However, the crux of the phenomenon of reinventing lives is the exploration of what is revealed in the epiphany as imaginatively possible. This metaphor of exploration associates itself well with that of the journey of transformative learning. It describes aptly how the autobiographers in this study, with the gift of a spontaneous manifestation of possible worlds, ventured into unknown and daunting terrain as they sought a new form for their life stories. 14

Before their experience of epiphany, through many internal and external conversations, the autobiographers had been engaged already in active exploration to find a way forward through their experience of being stuck. Dan, Luke and Paul had undertaken therapy for considerable periods of time to aid their exploration of questions about identity, sexuality and intimacy, autonomy and agency. Stephen, Dan and Luke had engaged also in reflective conversation with spiritual directors. Retreats were important reflective occasions for all of

these autobiographical learners. Their times of reflection enabled them to consider their vocation and faith, the tradition of the priesthood, and the current circumstances of their life story. Several gained insights also through their reading, some through formal study or educational programmes. For all of them, sustaining conversation with significant friends, especially the women whom they married, brought encouragement and challenge to their exploration.

The imaginative exploration and interpretation which followed the experience of glimpsing a way forward, embraced both the content and the process of the life story. A change took place in the way in which they now constructed their life narrative. The narrators had become convinced that their learning from experience also deserved some authority, not over and above, but in relationship with the Catholic church's tradition. They became convinced that to honour their conscientious conviction about the authorship of their lives is to interpret genuinely what the Second Vatican Council had articulated, in principle, as the reformed practice of the Catholic church.

Before the epiphanies had disclosed the possible worlds in front of them, the authors had searched for ways to meet the challenge of their changing life experience within the meaning perspectives of the tradition. As they continued to attend to the interplay of their experience, the prejudgments of tradition, and their moment of manifestation, each author recognised that within the Catholic church there was resistance to its own new collegial vision. They observed that the defence of the new vision was labelled as dissent. They discovered that a fusion of the horizons of their experience and the regulations of the Catholic church's directive tradition could not take place without suppressing their learning from experience. With some disillusionment, they recognised that, despite the profession of a collaborative ethos in the church, political interests and power relations still played a major part of the making and remaking of its tradition. They realised that authorisation for them to marry and remain priests would not come readily through church regulation. Their relation of obedience to their tradition, the very starting point and foundation for their autobiography,

itself came into question. Their hermeneutic of hospitality to tradition was joined by one of suspicion. From this new interpretive stance, they continued to question tradition in the light of their experience. Persistent questioning brought a critical distancing from the prejudices of tradition. It showed that what was impossible, according to the logic of tradition, was imaginatively possible. Needing to complete their imaginative and critical interpretation for the sake of their integrity, the authors improvised their life stories, according to the possible worlds which spontaneous imagining had disclosed. The exploration of their imaginative insight led them to new perspectives, from which they made a decisive change.

The fact of their entry into marriage signified that the authors subsequently acted on their own authority. Their marriages embodied their choices for remarkable change. Marriage brought one cycle of their autobiographical learning to an end, and signalled the beginning of a new chapter in the life story. In this new phase of their cycle of learning from experience, the authors have entered further into the critical and imaginative interpretation of their experience and their tradition.

6.11 ARRIVING AT THE DESTINATION : A NEW INTERPRETIVE STANCE IN THE TRADITION

It is obvious from the life stories in Chapter Three that the authors' glimpse of a possible next chapter in their life story did not automatically bring transformation. They could not simply invent a future without reference to their past and present circumstances. Through imaginative and critical exploration of their tradition, they fashioned a reinterpretation of their life stories. Exploration, which combines critical reflection and imagining, appears to be similar to the process of imagination-insight (Sloan, 1983), which involves feeling, valuing, thinking and willing. Their decision to make a second start in life positioned the

authors to construct the next chapter of their autobiographies, from a different stance in the tradition.

The decision to change tracks brought peace for Stephen "after a lot of trauma". Having taken off his mask, Matt felt that now he had the opportunity to receive the acceptance and love he had always desired. For Paul, the risk he embraced in leaving the priesthood and continuing to search for authentic identity and intimacy was rewarded. Glad to be free of the burden which celibacy had been for him, Luke found, nevertheless, that he needed to spend further time defining a new identity, which would honour both his sense of priesthood and his desire for marriage. Mark was obviously relieved to perceive in himself the freedom to leave. Dan's excitement at discovering the other side to his life gave him the energy to reinterpret his story.

As an outcome of their imaginative and critical interpretation of the Catholic tradition, and the fact that their marriages exclude them from the exercise of priesthood, the authors stand in an alternative tradition within Catholicism. Their prejudice, which values questioning and attending to the possibilities revealed by spontaneous imagining, is critical of Catholic church tradition but not hostile. They stand with others in a loose worldwide alternative community within the Catholic church (Powers, 1992; Rice, 1990). 15

Even after their decision to leave the priesthood, the narrators felt some need to continue their imaginative exploration and reinterpretation. The obstacles to continual reinterpretation and reinvention are similar to those which distort the life story in the first place. The co-researchers agreed that the inquiry itself, as an explicit autobiographical process, had brought them further conceptual coherence and personal integration.

The final phase of this particular journey of transformative learning involved both joy and pain. There was the pain of critical self-scrutiny, of waiting without knowing how to proceed, of grief at the irretrievable loss of one's former work, many relationships, and

identity (Marris, 1986). Pain lay in the nightmare fantasies about failure to reconstruct one's life, shame in meeting with social disapproval, and vulnerability in confronting authorities within ecclesiastical structures. The joy came from a sense of integration and personal integrity, the delight of companionship, and new life stories.

6.12 CONVERSATION AS A METAPHOR FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

It is axiomatic that experience is transformed into learning through some form of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985). Mezirow (1991), has identified critical self-reflection, with its emphasis on appraising one's interpretive frames, as the way to transformative learning. ¹⁶ Likewise, as an outcome of critical thinking, learners take up an alternative stance in adult life which is characterised by effectiveness, creativity, inclusiveness and authenticity (Brookfield, 1987). I have noted in Chapter Five that both Brookfield (1987) and Mezirow (1990) claim that imagination has a significant part in critical thinking and reflection. I have argued that, in the full context of their paradigms of transformative learning, they reduce imagining to a prelude to critical thinking, or a useful way to reframe problems.

In approaches to adult transformation that emphasise rationality, imagination is treated warily, and the value of controlling feelings is esteemed. "Getting our thinking straight" and "getting a hold on our feelings" suggest that in the paradigm of rational consciousness, rigour and control are the most highly prized dimensions of knowing and learning.

In this second explanatory understanding of transformative learning, I have proposed conversation as a metaphor for transformative learning. It is obvious from the discussions of conversation in Chapter Six that the critical and often inimical discourse, which commonly

passes as dialogue in debates or media interviews (Stephens, 1994), bears no relation to the process which I aim to describe.

In Chapter Two, I noted that the co-researchers in this inquiry used the *method* of a hermeneutic conversation to tell and retell their life stories (Van Manen, 1990). I am proposing here that conversation is a *metaphor* which illuminates the interplay of the processes of knowing through which transformative learning occurs (Gadamer, 1975). As a metaphor for transformative learning and autobiography, conversation which reinterprets and reconstructs autobiography may be seen as the gathering together and joint activity of a number of dimensions of knowing and learning. My examination of the six autobiographical accounts has led me to include emotion, imagination, memory, values and beliefs, reason, critical reflection and choosing among the partners in the conversation of transformative learning. Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) and Jarvis have argued that there are also unconscious aspects of reflection on experience. 17 Mulligan (1993) has suggested that the internal processes in learning from experience include sensing, intuiting, remembering, imagining, feeling, reasoning, and willing. Hillman (1975a) and Avens (1980) have claimed that psychological discovery, which accompanies transformation, occurs in the conscious domain principally because of the activity of the collective unconscious. I propose that, as a partner with critical reflection, imagination occupies a central place in this conversation of knowing and learning.

Although this thesis focuses primarily on the role of imagination, I recognise the interaction of a plurality of internal processes of knowing, and intrapersonal presences such as anima, animus, and shadow, as partners in a conversation which leads to transformation, and the composition of the life story. I intend to portray now a process of conversation in which imagination acts as an illuminating, unifying and constructive agent in the learning that effects transformation, and through which narrators become authors.

6.13 TRANSFORMATIVE CONVERSATION

There is movement in the conversation of autobiographical learning as it proceeds to redefine and reinvent perspective and practice. However, unlike the progress of the journey to transformative learning, this movement of knowing is not linear. Clearly, the metaphor of conversation allows for fluidity, for order which forms from chaos and lapses into new chaos, moving forwards and retracing one's steps, for sequence and tangents, single voices and chorus, speech and silence. As an explanatory understanding, conversation presents every process of autobiography as unique, and asserts that it is not possible to state a fixed *sequence of events in knowing*. As a metaphor, the explanation takes the stance of disclosing the possibilities of the movement towards transformative learning, rather than declaring its process. The metaphor allows, therefore, for a multiplicity in knowing that is not restricted to the processes of rationality and consciousness.

In reflection, the internal conversation of the processes of knowing is a background to the learner's conscious interaction with the events of the outer world. The inner conversation's interplay with the unconscious is known to the learner only through imagination. The foundation for this internal conversation which may lead to transformation, is the learner's customary interpretation, of the minor irregularities which everyday events present. Because the interpretive frame is a stable and self-evident tradition, there is a habitual quality in this conversation (Wildemeersch and Leirman, 1988).

Events of major irregularity which occur in the external interaction with experience, interrupt the learner's capacity to live with continuity and efficacy (Jarvis, 1987). So, too, do the intrapsychic events of individuation (Boyd and Myers, 1988). Both these sources of disruption break into the learner's customary internal conversation with demands or pleas for a hearing, though not necessarily at the same moment. The learner's emotions respond to disruption, even though appropriate emotions are not expressed consciously at the time (Heron, 1982, 1992). Feelings of distress may include fear, anger, and various symptoms of

grief. There may also be shame and guilt; depression and despair. On the other hand, and even at the same time, there may also be joy and elation, awe and wonder, excitement and curiosity, relief, attraction and affinity.

Especially when learners choose to restore order in the face of either pleasurable or painful disruption, they may show a primary reliance on rational dimensions of knowing. Therefore, in this transformative conversation, at least immediately, the voice of emotion may gain only a wary hearing, or scant attention. The voices of analysis, along with those of inductive and deductive logic, are likely to be heard as they explore carefully the perimeters of the learner's tradition. They seek to discover whether this irregularity which has appeared may be accommodated. Where the contradiction cannot be contained within the tradition, it may be dismissed from the conversation as an aberration, a deviant voice which is not to be heard. Despite this strategy, the voice of disruptive inner or outer experience may refuse to go away. Its persistence prolongs the state of disruption. One after another, cognitive strategies to control the continuing state of disequilibrium may be adopted. When all the logical and rational capacities have been employed, and disorder still remains, the conversation may become a cycle of arguments, or it may lapse into an exhausted and uneasy silence. This may be the time when, at last, emotion finds a hearing. Following the relief which the expression or transmutation of accumulated feelings may bring, there may be a time of waiting and "unknowing".

Now may be the time when, conscious efforts having failed, the unconscious communicates out of its silence. The voice of imagination, between the unconscious and consciousness, may speak in the language of image, symbol and metaphor. The spontaneous epiphany of imagining shows a way forward which traverses the boundaries of the knower's understanding. Even though the possible futures which it discloses are not clearly delineated, imagination invites the knower to surrender past certainty, and assent to the possibility of a new understanding and practice.

With the prospect of change in perspective and practice, a plurality of voices may clamour for a hearing. Customarily suspicious of the irrational and the unconscious, logic may express scepticism, yet interest, too, in further exploring the implications of the imaginative resolution of the state of disorientation and disorder. Even though a way forward promises an expansion of consciousness and emancipation, the prospect of loss is likely to summons to the conversation the voice of emotion. Despite the disorganisation which grieving brings, it also makes possible the transition which has been foreshadowed.

What does imagination contribute as a partner to the other voices in this conversation? Imagination forms a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, giving expression to an image which is not of its own making. With foresight, imagination sees beyond what is immediately present, and challenges logic to explore the implications of the question "What if?". Through empathy, imagination partners emotion, recognising the need for catharsis and the transmutation of distress, and valuing the energy for reconstruction which is available in positive affect (More, 1974; Heron, 1982). Imagination is playful and autonomous in the conversation, willing to cooperate with both critical reflection and the unconscious.

The voice of critical reflection undertakes to explore the new vision in a collaborative way to find an alternative perspective and practice. With courage and persistence, it joins with emotion to grieve over whatever must be relinquished. With discipline and interest, it collaborates with logic to review the perspective from which the learner has constructed reality perceived until now. With imagination as its partner, critical reflection addresses itself to the future, not knowing exactly what emancipation it might bring. Now, the voices of emotion, values and beliefs, critical thinking, logic, and imagination are all engaged in a conversation of active exploration, alert to the possibility of further communication from the unconscious, and waiting constructively for a clear future to take shape. **18**

Because the movement of conversation is not linear, the emergence of a consensus requires an exploratory attentiveness which goes backwards and forwards, visiting all the areas of

knowing in order to arrive at a coherent understanding of the situation. In its own time, a cycle of conversation turns and returns, the learner's perspective is transformed, and the learner is more authentically an author, composing the next chapter of the life story. 19

6.14 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have considered interpretation as an exercise of imagining and critical reflection, through which people compose their life stories and learn autobiographically. In Chapter Five, I observed that Mezirow's (1981, 1990, 1991) reliance on Habermas' critical theory for a philosophical foundation for his theory of perspective transformation, led him to accept a psychoanalytic understanding of personhood and interpretation. In perspective transformation, the agent of critical reflection and the subject of transformative learning is virtually the conscious ego. Although Mezirow's (1990, 1991) descriptions of transformation have included imagining, they are obliged by their critical and psychoanalytic heritage to deny, in effect, the autonomy of imagining in the process of transformative knowing. It is not surprising, therefore, that he prefers to account for transformative learning by rational explanation rather than by a literary form, such as autobiography, which accommodates both critical and imaginative knowing. I have noted alternative theoretical positions which acknowledge that interpretation includes both distancing and the appropriation of tradition. The alleged opposition between critical theory (Habermas) and hermeneutic consciousness (Gadamer) appears to be unnecessary in critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur). The strengths of each standpoint contribute to an adequate account of interpretation in transformative learning.

Drawing upon the life stories told by the participants in this co-operative inquiry, I have presented an explanatory understanding of their transformative learning. The metaphor of journey illustrates order through sequence; the metaphor of conversation points to the order which lies in the interaction of multiple processes of knowing within a self which is

polycentric. Through autobiographical learning, authors compose and reinvent their lives as *poiesis*, with art and authority.

6.15 IMPLEMENTING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING

Though it is not the primary intention of this thesis to provide a comprehensive guide for adult education for personal transformation, it seems appropriate to make note of some aspects of practice which have presented themselves in the course of this inquiry. Some ways in which adult educators and learners might prepare themselves for a fruitful venture in transformative learning include “reading to feed the imagination” (Keller, 1992). Exposure to literature, to storytellers, and to people who relish language is important for nourishing imaginative knowing. The craft of story, with its element of constructing alternatives rather than accepting a master story as given, serves both critical reflection and imagining (Greene, 1990). Kelsey (1981) recommended sculpting, building, weaving, gardening, dancing and acting as activities which help foster receptivity to, and partnership with, imagination. Drawing a picture or making a collage to illustrate metaphorically how the partners in a hermeneutic conversation see the situation leads to a better conceptual understanding. The expression of feelings which require some symbolic representation is an important ingredient of transformative learning (Doran, 1988). Casey (1976) recommended the elaboration of spontaneous images in metaphor as an example of active controlled imagining. Neville (1989) proposed a wide array of ways to “educate psyche” in both formal and informal educational settings.

Autobiographical learning relies on the telling and retelling of the life story in both internal and external hermeneutic conversations. The listening which fosters autobiography is less a matter of technique and more a matter of spirituality, understood as the listener’s stance in the conversation. The qualities required in conversation partners may be described in various ways. Daloz (1986), and Witherell and Noddings (1991) advocated care for the learner, which entails hard work for the educator. A hermeneutic of hospitality towards the strangeness of the narrative and the narrator was suggested by Moseley (1991). Gadamer

(1975) reminded the partners to be willing to recognise that conversation happens to us, and to have the courage to pursue questions which present themselves.

6.16 CONCLUSION

The area of convergence between the study of life narratives and that of transformative learning promises to be a fertile place for research to develop theory and educational practice. Already in adult education practice, reflective writing and journal-keeping are well established (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Lukinsky, 1990). As it is clear from this inquiry, written forms are not the only media for the composition of a life narrative (Lantz, 1993, Liebmann, 1986). These forms of critical reflection and imagining are, at least implicitly, autobiographical and self-formative. I have noted that there is more emphasis in adult education on these accounts as *critical* reflections. A more explicit acknowledgment by adult educators that experience has a narrative quality, and a clear awareness that the autobiographical accounts which learners present are *stories*, will bring a more adequate understanding of the role of imagination in interpretation.

The claim articulated in this thesis that imagination occupies a place of partnership with critical reflection in knowing and learning eschews the dichotomy that is exemplified in the debate between Habermas and Gadamer. That debate has clarified the relative strengths of each position, and exposed each to the possibility for relationship in a critical hermeneutics. In this thesis, the value of such an approach to interpretation has been shown in the study of autobiographical learning. The explanatory understanding proposed as a result of this co-operative inquiry asserts more than what has been assumed by many adult educators as the relationship between imagination and critical thinking and critical reflection. I have enlisted the metaphor of *partners in conversation* to explain the interaction of these two processes of learning. In the work and play of interpreting the life stories presented in Chapter Three, it has become obvious that the range of internal processes that participate in knowing and learning from experience extends beyond these two. Further research into life story and transformative learning will be inadequate without a more profound investigation of the

interaction of feeling, imagining, critical thinking. The paradigm of personhood and knowing which Heron (1992) proposed, and the model of learning processes which Mulligan (1993) has constructed, offer both a stimulus and a sense of direction for this research.

The dimension of the personhood of the adult learner has assumed great significance for postmodern research and educational practice which is aimed at personal transformation (Stanage, 1989). Boyd (1991: 203) stressed that transformation conjointly resolves some personal dilemma, and expands the learner's consciousness, "resulting in a more fully realized personality integration".

"Although the ego is the center of consciousness, the development of consciousness comes about in triadic transactions dynamically determined by the psychic components of Self, the outer world, and the ego. The conscious relating of the transactions among these three is here described as a 'dialog'" (Boyd, 1991, 216).

The metaphor of autobiography portrays a dialogue which provides a way for learners to gain self-understanding and engage in self-composition. The way of autobiography in research practice is sensitive to the archetypal, environmental and autobiographical elements which interact in personal transformation. The interpretation of the six stories told in this inquiry has discovered this kind of triadic conversation. Social context and tradition, the inner world of psyche, and the learner's self-understanding or autobiography were seen to be drawn into a relationship which sometimes stalled, and sometimes launched into movement.

The assumption that the conscious ego's agency is paramount appeared to be inadequate to explain the phenomenon of transformation in the autobiographical accounts. The portrait of the author, which presents itself in the six stories, is a polycentric one (Hillman, 1975a). Assuredly, a plurality in the learner that is not completely known poses a threat to research which prefers to know everything about what influences the situation before it commences. A humbler approach, the narrative mode (Bruner, 1990), acknowledges that the *poiesis* of self in autobiography is co-authored, and that interpretation depends on the revelatory event as well as on critical reflection. The understanding of interpretation presented by Ricoeur

(1980) is an important resource for an adult education theory which seeks to explain personal transformation and the composition of the life story.

Autobiographical learning proceeds as an interpretive activity. McReynolds (1993) summarised Ricoeur's various rich descriptions of metaphor and parable. The role of imagination in autobiographical learning, which this co-operative inquiry has illustrated and clarified, corresponds well with her statement.

“Imagination facilitates every step of interpretation. The shock of unlikely combination, the metaphoric impertinence, functions to engage the imagination. The interpreter is helped to abandon preconceived notions and destructive feelings and enter into the possible world of belonging projected by the parable. The imagination then must first exert a certain discipline to distance the interpreting subject from the mystifications of vanity, greed and domination that fascinate human consciousness. Then imagination opens the subject to the interplay of images and configurations of time presented in the parable. Metaphor stimulates the subject to rethink relationships and to bring images to this emergent meaning. Intellectual explanation and imaginative understanding interweave in this task. Ultimately, the interpreter appropriates the world projected by the text as a new way of being in the world. Feelings accompany this process and are structured by it to give rise to hope and action.... In the work of interpretation, imagination creatively orients human existence to the past as memory, to the present as possibility, and to the future as hope” (McReynolds, 1993: 534-535).

The life stories told and retold in this co-operative inquiry reveal the presence and role of imagination.

ENDNOTES

1 The action of priests exiting from active ministry has been interpreted repeatedly as a betrayal and rejection of the church. Conversely, many priests who have resigned and married express the view that the church's unwillingness to revise its practice in the light of their accounts of transformation amounts to rejection by the Catholic church. The reciprocal sense of having been offended seems to generate a common grief, but not a joint grieving.

2 The dilemma which faces priests in the Latin Rite of the Catholic church is that their choice of marriage is interpreted literally as a rejection of priesthood. Although the Catholic church's tradition that associates priesthood with celibacy may be to good purpose, it is nevertheless arbitrary. Because it is presented as absolute, this interpretation demands an obedience of submission. An obedience of imagination would value possibility, and expose the tradition to the manifestation which each person's life story bears.

3 Interpretation may engage in a retrieval of tradition as well as a critique of it. A hermeneutic of hospitality towards tradition will acknowledge that there is a quality of strangeness in tradition. Conversation with tradition offers a means to discover dimensions of it which may often be ignored or simply unknown (Moseley, 1991: 130). When the hermeneutic is imaginative and critical, conversation with the "living stream of tradition" (Bryant, 1989) may reach a new construction of reality.

4 O'Collins proposed that life is composed of three journeys. The second journey of the midlife crisis "means being called forth to walk strange roads, experiencing massive disruptions and facing the pain of a rebirth. In short, a second journey invites one primarily to acceptance rather than activity" (1978: 79). Bateson (1990: 6) criticised a common Western understanding of human lives as quests "in which it is essential to resist the transitory contentment of attractive way stations and side roads, in which obstacles are overcome because the goal is visible on the horizon, onward and upward". The journey of transformative learning may be full of interruptions and side tracks.

5 Tradition (Gadamer, 1975), meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1981, 1985), life-world (Wildemeersch and Leirman, 1988) and living context (Usher, 1993) are considered here equivalently, signifying personally maintained cultural frames of reference which act as prejudgement and interpretation of personal and communal experience. The meanings and values in tradition are both explicit and implicit. Fowler (1987) proposed that the personally constructed appropriation of one's faith within a particular tradition could be expected to develop in certain circumstances.

6 Turner (1992) noted the cultural atmosphere of social expectation and moral obligation in which young women and men followed their vocation to religious life.

7 Few priests' lives were untouched by the widespread self-questioning which followed the Church's own institutional renewal. As well, priests examined their role in the face of the burgeoning professions of social work, psychology and counselling. Often they felt inferior, and many undertook studies in the social sciences in a search for effectiveness and relevance. Unprepared by their education to deal with social and political currents of the 1960's, many often felt awkward because of their own lack of ability to respond to events which regularly evoked either silence from church authorities or a vigorous condemnation. Some priests risked their own responses, to find themselves called to order, or punished in some way by church authority (Parer and Peterson, 1971).

8 In 1970, anticipating the Synod of Bishops, a number of prominent theologians had forecast the implementation of optional celibacy at the discretion of local church leaders (Powers, 1992). As well, the papal encyclicals on peace and world development, published about this time, fired the enthusiasm of some priests to adopt a radical lifestyle which seemed to justify their celibacy.

9 In the form of the tradition that emerged in the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, there was an explicit focus on conscience as an honourable instrument for Catholics to discern practical action. Allied to this, was the principle that the church ought to interpret experience conscientiously, with the aid of the critical sciences and cultural studies, to discover ways forward in times of social crisis. Together, these new values and approaches acted as something of a Trojan horse for church authority. These extraordinary shifts altered the significance of personal and communal experience, from being passive data requiring direction to being a respected voice in a critical dialogue with tradition and cultural wisdom. Turner (1992) considered that a widespread emancipatory outcome from this reappraisal of authority and identity was observed in the number of persons who made a second choice about their vocation in the years which followed the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

10 The encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, apart from pronouncing on contraception, had portrayed sexuality in a way which stressed the importance of personal relationship in human development. Church teaching changed, to emphasise intimacy in marriage, as well as reproduction. Celibates were influenced by this shift also, and were encouraged to develop personal and community relationships.

11 There was a conflict between the tradition which shaped the priests identity and interests, and their inchoate awareness that a new tradition might be developed. Their aspiration and expectation, that after Vatican Council II the tradition would soon change its requirement of celibacy to a freely made option, certainly contributed to the prolonged process of exploration. A reluctance to confront the church by acting on their convictions reflects the ecclesiastical culture of dependency and their fears of exclusion.

12 Loder has proposed the term "convictional experience" to describe a knowing event which "discloses reality and calls for new interpretations" (1981: 6). Other writers refer to experiences of epiphany.

13 For Loder (1981: 34), "interpretation of the imaginative solution into the behavioral and/or symbolically constructed world of the original context" constitutes the final step in the knowing event.

14 Brookfield (1987b: 26) listed exploration as a phase of critical thinking, in which learners search for new ways to organise their understandings and practice. Actively concerned with reconciling contradictions and gaining personal equilibrium, Brookfield's understanding of exploration seems to emphasise logical explanation rather than imagination or intuition.

15 The International Federation of Married Catholic Priests is a worldwide organisation of groups of those who aspire to the restoration of their exercise of ministry. These groups ally themselves with others for whom the Catholic church's tradition and practice is restrictive. These others include people who seek greater public participation in the church, including ordination for women (Rice, 1990).

16 Mezirow (1990) proposed that transformative learning is initiated by a critical review of the previously held assumptions which govern the construction and maintenance of one's life. The tool for assessing the psychic, epistemic or sociocultural distortions in one's perspectives is critical self-reflection. The outcome of the review is a more integrative perspective which sets the scene for decisions and practice based on the new awareness. Recognising the hidden conflict of interests between the master story of social ideology and personal autobiography, Kennedy (1990: 100) suggested the metaphor of a cocoon to depict the way in which "human beings are formed and form themselves within some limited perspective". The metaphor of the cocoon seems to suggest that transformative learning may take considerable time.

17 Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) have pointed to unconscious reflection as commonly occurring in reflective learning. Jarvis suggested that innovative solutions to problems long pondered, which suddenly presented themselves without elaboration, "may be related to the fact that unconscious reflection is less constrained by the structures of analytic and deductive thought and by the burden of having to produce proof for the outcome of the thought" (1987: 101). It may be that Jarvis is naming imaginative activity as unconscious reflection.

18 In conversation, the partners take up a stance of being willing to pursue the questions which present themselves for consideration. The quality of relationship between partners is that of I-Thou (Buber, 1970). As Gadamer (1975) pointed out, conversation may reach a point of stagnation when questions are avoided. However, a sense of stuckness may also occur when, in facing the questions, the coherence disappears from the person's interpretive frame, or when a dimly perceived answer threatens to disrupt their whole worldview. Viewed through yet another lens, imaginative exploration is like a ritual dance which serves both as a critique for the story and as personal integration. Joined as partners in a Shaker ritual dance, the various aspects of knowing arrive at a new place in which "everything turns out right".

19 MacIntyre noted a paradoxical quality of agency and authorship, proposing that we are "never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives" (1981: 198)

APPENDIX 1

TABLES

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

	STEPHEN	DAN	MARK	PAUL	LUKE	MATT
Year of Birth	1936	1940	1933	1941	1945	1955
Year ordained	1958	1963	1965	1965	1974	1979
Years in Seminary	1951-58	1957-63	1958-65	1959-65	1968-74	1973-79
Year of being unsettled for the first time	1974	1974	1968	1965	1976	1981
Year of taking leave	1985	1985	n.a.	1976	1980	1986
Year of leaving ministry	1986	1986	1985	1979	1980	1986
Years ordained at time of leaving	28	23	20	14	16	7
Year met future wife	1977	1983	1978	1983	1978	1984
Year decided to marry	1986	1986	1985	1983	1980	1986
Year married	1987	1986	1986	1984	1986	1987

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' FIRST DRAWING
THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I BECAME A PRIEST

NAME	AFFECTIVE STATES	IDEAS & UNDERSTANDINGS	MOTIVATIONS AND DECISIONS	IMAGES
DAN	Confidence in church; enthusiasm for caring	Church has all means to care for society; agenda already set for me.	Idealism; sexuality set aside, not really considered.	Seminary was blanket of protection, restraint; Lightning from the Vatican Council, stormy weather ahead.
LUKE	Isolated among church, clergy; Involved with rough and tumble people and society.	Church has a new vision; power and energy in it.	Idealism: attracted to energy of new vision. Decision for celibacy was intellectual; sexuality sealed off.	Self clothed in clerical garb; grey church; Lightning sticks of Vatican II; Beach, sea are images of my deepest parts, of lightness, vitality - set apart from rest of the picture.
MARK	Agony in facing the difficulties; vitality in achieving the goal; hope that things would change. Disappointed if I were not to reach the goal.	Looking for a church which was happy home; wanted to achieve a goal of growth for self, and care for the world.	Decided I had to stop my growth as a person, if I wanted to reach goal. Once I started out I kept going.	The happy home I came from; obstacle course; big question marks; black time; a train to the goal.
PAUL	Isolated from other students; not comfortable with "man of God" stuff, cautious and fearful about sexual tension.	Time of great intellectual stimulus; excited by teachers, ideas and books. Questions about celibacy in final years.	Idealism drove me; wanted to be a "man among men"; put the lid on sexual tension, felt I could be celibate; not able to be genuinely assertive	Seminary was hedged place, looking out to real people and life. Green patch of some growth for me. Question marks.
STEPHEN	Full of life, enthusiasm: pain in separating from friends, fear of failure as celibate. Confident.	Church not vibrant but disciplined, bureaucratic, structured to serve society. Wanted to proclaim Catholicism.	Idealism makes up for everything. a definite choice to close off sexuality.	Self with "arms closed" to lock off sexuality. Railway line brought me to seminary and now takes me to the real world.
MATT	Confidence in the church's mission; defiance to constraint, bureaucracy in church. Enthusiasm.	Journey of faith with a community of people, sharing my values. Not in control of people.	Played the church game to win, to be able to be a people's man.	Ordained into a party, which also had its structures.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' SECOND DRAWING
*THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I HAD REACHED THE
 DECISION TO LEAVE THE PRIESTHOOD*

NAME	AFFECTIVE STATES	IDEAS & UNDERSTANDINGS	MOTIVATIONS AND DECISIONS	IMAGES
DAN	Felt bound, pain at facing question. Sad to leave people; guilt about letting people down.	Old me is dying, new me is rising. What to do with my life? Will I manage? How to explain to family and friends? How to keep the caring and sacred part of me without killing me? Wanting to let go my burdens. Can I? I need time to think all this through.	Life or death choice; I choose where I can be alive. I've made the decision but still need to make a leap over a gap, which looks very big. Needed the courage to make the decision concrete.	Over the rainbow, why can't I? Gap. Four o'clock is getting late. New world of life; old world a whirlpool of death. Joy in the square dance. Being a blessing for people also when I leave.
LUKE	Strangled, sadness, depression over lost identity. Waxed and waned with enjoyment of relationship.	Found the marginal church and felt at home there. What to do now? Could I live in the marginal church? What would church mean when I left?	After a retreat I felt called to be priest still. I saw two roads and knew what I had to choose. Didn't marry for 6 years because I had to come through my depression from childhood separations.	Chains shackling me are stretched by my leave. Bottles, cross and gun signs of the new church. Energy and fire are taking over in my picture. Dance is full of life, power and lightning. Beach and swim brought a sense of freedom. Black depression.
MARK	Down and out feelings. Trapped and shattered, losing control of myself. depression, stressed, feeling failure and guilt.	Torn in all directions. Could I get a job? Would I make a good husband? Can she accept me as failure, a 9-5 boring person. Dream of a home kept me alive, literally. Her love was greater than mine.	The jump had to be made! In a course on meditation, it hit me that I would not die a priest that was it! After agonising for seven years.	Egg is broken. Trapped in four walls. Dream of house. Edge of the precipice. Hanging on a rope of guilt.

PAUL	Fear for my future self. Felt stuck. Depression, sense of not belonging, yearning for relationship, vulnerable, shame, regret at letting people down. Unable to cope. grief and sadness in therapy.	Will I become like some older priests. Hit me in 1974 how much I need somebody; knew I was finished with celibacy. Being Christian doesn't mean having to abandon my sexuality. Didn't want to leave and let the bastards run the church.	Took leave in 1974 because I was a wreck. Explored relationships with women. Knew I was finished and took leave in 1979. Went to Uni, like a teenager in friendships. Having seen that celibacy is not for me, it took 9-10 years to achieve what I needed. Now, I work in church for the people of God.	Two hands keeping people at a distance. Dance - felt clumsy, needy. Cracked open. Woman who accepted clumsy me.
STEPHEN	Tension, uneasiness, turmoil. relief and peace.	Conflict of head and heart. Priesthood is life-giving, but not as much as love for and from Justine. Am I letting church down? Can I get work? No money and nothing to offer her. What about the effect on my family and friends?	The jump - can I, will I? I want to. Knew in my heart that is where I wanted to go; the most life-giving choice. I had to jump across a ledge. Regardless of grey areas, this is where I am going. Strength to jump came in love of Justine and friends. Culmination of a process of eight months. final decision led to great peace.	Twenty years of grey uneasiness. Yellow areas of tension. Green sources of vitality. Flutters. Heart. The precipice.
MATT	Relief, sense of urgency to act with integrity. Surprise that friends were supportive.	An opportunity to be my true self, more introvert. Wanting to get back to my own values again. I had been an introvert who had been the party clown.	Decided to explore what relationship meant to me, rather than explore other ministries. Encouraged by the example of another resigned priest.	The road back. Withdrawal from the crowd. Break down the wall of extroversion, and get in with my true self.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHERS' THIRD DRAWING

THE LANDSCAPE OF MY LIFE AT THE TIME WHEN I WAS FACING DILEMMAS, QUESTIONS AND CONFLICTS ABOUT MAKING A DECISION TO REMAIN IN OR TO LEAVE THE PRIESTHOOD

NAME	AFFECTIVE STATES	IDEAS & UNDERSTANDINGS	MOTIVATIONS AND DECISIONS	IMAGES
DAN	Ambivalence. Fear of intimacy, and desire for it. Fear of being controlled by church.	I felt held in place, wanting to be there, wanting to be free. Sustaining friendship made being stuck bearable. Felt like I was under a curse. My life not very important - live till 40. I can't because I have to... Needed to break out for my sake before I could marry K.	Curse broken by image of the two sided coin. I realised that I was free of destiny.	Cloud of doubt. Held in a web. Going round and round. Blue vitality. Beard clothed grim face. Weighed down, pushing up. "Little" church was vital for me. Red - passion reviving.
MARK	Guilty, depressed, hopeless.	Whatever move I made, I was finished. I was stuck maybe for 10 years. Health failed. I went to L diocese for a rest. I was disillusioned by the middle class church. I wanted to express my idealism. I proposed once but took it back because of guilt.	Doctor told me I'd be dead soon. Then, I threw off the church's superstructure and began to fight my way back to be somebody. S was with me looking at life together. We were slowly forming into a "family", a normal life. Went to B to have a chance to express my ideals. I wasn't representing Bishops' views any more. I didn't believe in them. On retreat, it became clear to me.	Rope, handcuffs. Hung, drawn and quartered. Boxed in. Bottleneck. Heart - S.

PAUL	Isolation, tension, failure. Love-hate for the church. Anxiety about the effect on my family.	A sense of deserting, and of my skills being lost to the church. 1980 - I'm now starting all over again. Exploring my identity in groups. New friends, some old friends. Realised that I'd not grown up. Going back to basics. Public Service hard - explored my anger at the loss of my skills to the church. Accepting my sexual identity.	Chose to go to Uni at 38; work in Public Service. Went back to start to find my identity.	Waiting for the phone to ring, waiting for a letter. Church a brick wall, restricting people.
STEPHEN	Sadness at not being able to follow her. Emptiness. Excitement at the possibilities. Fearful of risks, anxious.	Two incidents important; 1982 Justine told me of her plan to "cross the bridge"; choice for quality of life. Unable to go with her. Life still grey and full of questions. 1983 holiday; read a book and encountered God, myself at depth of fears and desires. Why can't I?	Decided to stay in priesthood despite mixed feelings. Shared ideas with travelling companion. Returned to work, with intention to resolve the issues.	Crossing bridge. Her head and heart together. Chains linking me to church. Money - security. My confused head. 1983 journey, read book on bus trip. Upside down; greyness lifted and also weight. Song - "Do you know where you're going to?" was going round in my head at the time.
MATT	Isolated from clergy, but enjoyed resisting clericalism. Felt stuck; wanting to stay, wanting to go.	Dichotomy in my experience of church; Held back from leaving, urged to leave for health's sake.	Choice about integrity of relationship and/or celibacy.	Church divided into the edge and the monolith. Candle in barbed wire - my light was smothered. "You have a death wish."

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF METAPHORS USED IN LIFE STORIES

STEPHEN	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	<p>A train journey on the track for priesthood. Luggage of idealism.</p> <p>Trained to learn answers, to care for people.</p> <p>Meeting others on train, shedding luggage, stops for learning and refreshment.</p>	<p>Train driven by the church; destination known; no extra luggage allowed.</p> <p>Church as institution stifles, church as people of God challenges and excites.</p> <p>Confidence in church's answers shaken.</p> <p>Fruitful years of learning and ministry.</p>
TIME OF BEING STUCK	<p>Backing off from the risks of friendship. Stuck and cannot follow across the bridge. Head and heart not together; turned upside down; head and heart come together.</p>	<p>Talking to driver about becoming driver of my own train.</p> <p>Which journey?</p>
TIME OF EXIT	<p>Leaving meant integration.</p> <p>Choosing a lifegiving track.</p> <p>Regard for the priesthood track remains, and grief for losses.</p>	<p>Church has one or other track, not both.</p> <p>Got off one track and got on the marriage track.</p>

LUKE	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	<p>Born into a Garden of Eden, but separated early childhood. Could not get back into it. A lifelong search for belonging, a home.</p> <p>God as mother, a holding God, spiritual yearning. Sea mothers me.</p>	<p>Hated clerical culture; love for a marginalised church of ordinary people.</p> <p>Looking for God in and through priesthood.</p> <p>Vatican Council II promises a church not separated from life.</p>
TIME OF BEING STUCK	<p>Maze - exploring many tracks, dead ends.</p> <p>Hourglass - running out of time.</p>	<p>Exploring the other church for a place, a home.</p> <p>Shackled, chained to huge black rock; the weight of commitment..</p>
TIME OF EXIT	<p>Sea - I don't have to go back</p> <p>Two roads; one chosen for health and life and belonging.</p> <p>Some clouds of depression.</p>	<p>Breaking out and away from a strangling, shackling life.</p> <p>Mourning lost identity.</p>

DAN	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	Playful and serious child, seeking a place of wisdom, and opportunity to care. Priest embodies learning and friendship.	A place for truth, answers which show care and wisdom. Looking for love, and chose to have power to serve. Looking for authentic truth, and found orthodoxy.
TIME OF BEING STUCK	Changes mean new ways of knowing, caring. Looking for a place of integrity and care. Surprised by love and intimacy. Held in place by friendships, loyalty. Old man, dying, burnout.	Finding a place at the edge of the church lets me enjoy both worlds. "Little church" has joy and hazards. Place and time of tension.
TIME OF EXIT	Searching for the pearl of great price. Where? Seeing the "vital lie", new embodiment, learning and unlearning. Coin has two sides - life is not onesided. Choice for life.	Free to love, receive love. A hangover of grief over loss of identity, work. What place now?

MATT	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	Actor on stage who liked to be centre of attention. Performing.	Seminary like a drama school, mix of tedium and excitement. Green light for Go! Sharing life with people, especially the marginalised. A church where we are not controlling each other.
TIME OF BEING STUCK	Candle in barbed wire - but didn't know what to do with it any more. Period of stuckness. Became androgynous, self-effacing. Putting on a mask. Not being fair dinkum to myself. Self-questioning; tied up in knots. "You have a death wish."	Discovered that life in church was directed by others. A set play. Regression. Church a monolith versus church of the people. Red light for Stop! Bound into celibacy.
TIME OF EXIT	Leaving means keeping integrity. Also means leaving the public stage for private life, my own script, no mask. Realise now that I was sick of playing extrovert, not really me.	Image of marriage and family. Green light for Go! On the path I started on, to the fringe dwellers.

MARK	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	<p>Leaving a happy home, in search of a happy home.</p> <p>Ideals of work for justice.</p> <p>A goal to reach; I decide to stop growing in order to succeed.</p>	<p>Avoiding privilege is part of my father's values.</p> <p>Dislike for clergy club, found church was not a home for me.</p> <p>Preference for the rough and tumble people.</p>
TIME OF BEING STUCK	<p>Dream of a home.</p> <p>Trapped, shattered, pulled in all directions. Needing to struggle, cif it kills me; "You will die soon..."</p>	<p>Loyalty to Church, guilt.</p> <p>A long agony.</p> <p>Cannot succeed in living my ideals.</p>
TIME OF EXIT	<p>Facing a jump.</p> <p>"I will not die a priest."</p> <p>Making a jump.</p>	<p>Negotiated a quick exit.</p>

PAUL	PERSONAL DOMAIN	INSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN
TIME OF ENTRY	<p>World War II important as a context for my early life.</p> <p>A man among men, hero stories and sports. Talents are gifts to be used in service. Idealism for self-sacrifice.</p>	<p>Disliked status and privilege for clergy, and "man of God" stuff.</p> <p>Love for underdogs in society. Hope from Vatican Council II for the future church.</p>
TIME OF BEING STUCK	<p>Felt awkward and stuck. Cracked right open; knew I was finished with celibacy.</p> <p>Waiting for someone to call, write. challenged to explore friendships.</p>	<p>A brick wall preventing people's growth.</p>
TIME OF EXIT	<p>Discovering self like a teenager. No need for Christians to abandon sexuality.</p> <p>Talents means taking risks.</p> <p>Leaving means deserting, also finding acceptance and marriage.</p>	<p>Church loses my skills; my leaving means letting Church fall into the hands of the bastards.</p>

APPENDIX 2

PARABLES

MATT'S PARABLE

Not so long ago, a child was born. His parents were peasants and although times were difficult, they lived simply and cheerfully, full of peace and joy, because they belonged to the Society of the Table.

The Knights of the Table proclaimed an awesome message among their people. One did not have to live in fear, as many did. One did not have to be as cold and dead as stone, as many were. Life was for living - Be Happy! Be Free! Do Not Be Afraid!

Many wonderful signs accompanied the Knights' message, and the peasants initiated their child into the Society. As he grew, he was introduced to the Signs of the Society - signs that healed, nourished and strengthened.

When the peasants' son reached adulthood, he looked and saw all manner of pain and suffering. He knew that to be a member of the Society was to find happiness, and to be able to shake off the chains of oppression. He yearned to become a Knight of the Table, a Steward of the Signs, so that he could shower happiness and freedom on those whom he met.

And so, the apprenticeship began. He journeyed to the Castle in the Sky and found tranquillity. He journeyed to the Castle by the Sea and found challenge.

His apprenticeship ended on a fine Spring morning. New life was being brought forth as the apprentice was being brought before the Table to receive his Knighthood. The Princes of the Table were gathered round to proclaim that the peasants' son was a Knight. There was much music and singing and dancing to accompany the proclamation, and the bells of the Castle pealed out over the whole city. Thousands rejoiced at the proclamation. The Knight had forsaken wife, family and even friends, but was now the possessor of the wondrous signs that would bring happiness to so many.

He set forth. Many came to him, and through his words and touch were healed. Truly, the power of the Table accompanied him and transformed suffering to joy and oppression to freedom.

The Knight worked hard. As time passed, he became tired and sick. Some of his fellow Knights gathered around to lend him their strength, but he seemed to become sicker and more tired.

He liked being a Knight, but he seemed to be losing the ability to draw strength from the signs of the Society. While everyone still saw him as a Knight, he felt as though he was slipping away from the Society - being drawn into a chasm of fear and pain.

He needed a holiday, and now. He went to the country, and ate and drank and made merry, but it was as nothing to him. He was still a Knight and could not run away, and so he returned to his people after a short while.

A cloud came over him. Others - Knights of the Table, his people, his family - tried to return gifts to him, but he needed something different. He felt his heart slowly turn to stone. One day over a meal, he looked up to see a peasant girl he had known for some time, but she was no longer a peasant. Rather she shone as a Princess. This was new in many ways. The Society of the Table had many Princes but no Princesses. Why had he mistaken this Princess for a peasant? What was the nature of her Royalty?

The Princess showed the Knight her heart. Her Royalty was of the Heart, not of Proclamation. She could show him this Royalty of the Heart. She could lead him to discover his own heart.

The Knight discovered what he had suspected - a heart of stone. The Princess brought her own gifts to the Knight, and he started a journey of discovery. His heart was thawed; he learned to love; he learned to live; he learned to receive as well as to give. He had become a Prince of the Heart.

The peasant's son had become a Prince - his castle is smaller than before, and his people are fewer than before, but he still gives of his gifts. And yes, his Princess keeps his heart from turning to stone.

STEPHEN'S PARABLE

"There was once a young man named Tiger who wanted to help people know more about the Wise One who lived high above the clouds. He was told that, if he spent several years with the learned men, he would be given a share in their knowledge of the Wise One and then he would have a lifelong opportunity to share that knowledge with others. Tiger believed what he was told so he decided to go on the journey to the mountains where some of the learned ones lived. There he spent several years listening to and learning from those men about the sayings and the teachings of the Wise one.

After some years in the mountains, he journeyed down to the sea where other learned men lived. There he spent some years listening and learning. During this time, he realised that if he wished to share his newly acquired knowledge with others he must be prepared to live without wife or children. Sometimes Tiger thought, "I cannot do this! This is too hard to endure!". Eventually, after many years of listening and learning, he decided that life without

wife and children would be difficult, but he could, with the Wise One's support, be able to live such a life.

When he finished his training, the learned men praised Tiger and sent him to live among the people, to share with them his knowledge about life, their problems, their search for the Wise One; and they became his people. Tiger was content - he was helping his people, he was leading them to the Wise One.

Time passed, as time does. Tiger listened more carefully to his people and he began to hear more clearly their uncertainties, their anxieties, their pain. As he listened, he found his answers. No longer satisfied their needs, his answers did not quell their uncertainties, their pain. Tiger became disturbed, he became confused because he thought the learned men had given him all the knowledge and teachings of the Wise One that he would ever need to help his people.

Tiger continued to explore more deeply what the people were saying. He spoke with them, he listened to them. They challenged his knowledge and his words about the Wise One.

Gradually, while with his people he listened more deeply to what they were saying, he listened to his own thoughts, but also to his heart. He began to realise an emptiness in his heart. The thoughts of his head and the feelings of his heart seemed at odds - his thoughts were clear, his knowledge and training insured this but his heart was disturbed!

Gradually, as he continued to live and share life with his people, Tiger came to realise there was an emptiness in his heart, an emptiness that would not be filled by his people or by the knowledge and teachings of the Wise One.

One day whilst sharing with his people, he became aware of a beautiful lady. Their eyes met, they smiled at each other, they spoke. Each seemed to like what they saw and heard in the other. They decided they would keep in contact, and as time passed their friendship developed. Tiger began to realise that this lovely lady's friendship was becoming very important to him.

Steadily, she was filling that emptiness in his heart. The warning bells of the learned men began to ring, for they had instructed him that his life was for all - to love all but to belong to no one - to be a father to all and yet a father to none.

Now conflict arose in Tiger's heart. While his heart said "It would be good to marry and have a family", his head said, "That's not for you - remain faithful to your calling". Tiger was not at peace; this dilemma threatened the very pattern and order of his life. His struggle continued until one day Tiger went on a journey to another mountain to search out his answer to the conflict in his heart. As he journeyed, he talked to the Wise One, he listened to the Wise One. And as he spoke and listened, he realised that to marry or not to marry was *his* decision, *his* choice - that was the Wise One's special gift to all his people. This realisation was like a bolt of lightning illuminating his understanding. The experience shook

Tiger, and he began to understand the possibility that marriage could be for him. Tiger was excited.

Tiger grew fearful and anxious about many things. Would the Wise One and the learned men still be pleased with him? Would his people understand or reject him? How could he provide for a wife and family? Despite these uncertainties, new hope and a yearning for intimacy filled his being.

On returning from the mountain, Tiger took leave of his own people and he walked among another people while he searched out his answer. During this time of uncertainty and searching his heart was reaching out more fully to his beloved Justine. He felt her understanding and support ever present - not stifling, but in a lifegiving way.

Finally, Tiger's journey led him to the point where in the stillness of the lakeside, he peacefully, happily knew that his life and Justine's were meant to be one. As he came to this decision, the many difficulties and problems which had seemed insurmountable disappeared. Peace flowed into his heart. He felt the warmth of the Wise One's smile and Tiger felt very comfortable before the Wise One, with the world and with himself. He felt a new harmony develop between his head and his heart, he felt the emptiness within his heart being filled with new happiness and peace.

Tiger, with head held high, began another phase of his life's journey, walking confidently ahead with the knowledge that he and Justine would walk together, sharing their lives fully and strengthened in each other's love. He looked to the future with contentment, knowing the Wise One asks only this of us: that we love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with our God (Micah, 6: 8b).

LUKE'S PARABLE

Once upon a time there lived a young man whose heart began to stir with a painful yearning for a home--that he seemed to sense he had lived in many distant ages ago.

And so it happened one day that the young man came upon a priest who assured him that the place he was searching for was to be found in an ancient church that he himself had lived in for many years.

So the young man (and his child) went and made his home within the church.

At first the young man (and child) was captivated by the age and splendour and richness of the church and the gathering of its family members.

But as time went on the young man (and child) began to sense an emptiness and restlessness in himself that seemed at odds with the security and satisfaction expressed by his fellow brothers and sisters of the church family.

And so the young man (and child) began to wander through parts of the Church that his fellow brothers and sisters had either forgotten or closed off.

To his surprise he discovered other members of his family that he never knew about, living deep within the bowels of the church, abandoned and despised. Indeed they were not easy to behold in their deformed and suffering appearance, but they radiated a vitality and an earthiness that he had not ever seen before. And in some strange way, this quality reminded him of a home that he sensed he had lived in many ages past.

As he (they) continued to wander in the depths of the church he discovered a further group of people whom he (they) also realised were part of the one complete family of the church.

They seemed captured by a vitality; spontaneity, creativeness and a passionate desire for *common-union* that they contrasted dramatically with the lifeless rigidity and emptiness of the main family of the church. Their appearance seemed not unlike that of women.

As the young man (and child) spent more time in the bowels of the church with his neglected brothers and sisters he discovered that they were immersed in a life giving wisdom drawn from the church of ages past. It was this wisdom that the main family of the church had forgotten or had no inkling of its existence.

And so it came to pass that the young man (and child) felt drawn to live with these neglected brothers and sisters for he sensed that he was in some way finally home in a family who lived in the belief that their homeland lay beyond the present horizon.

DAN'S PARABLE

Once upon a time, in the city of mists, there lived a young man who built ships. He was strong and handsome, clear blue eyed and dark haired. In his work he took great pride, and people admired him for his quiet manner, his honesty and his good workmanship. He lived in the eastern part of the city.

One day he met a beautiful young woman. She sang with a lilting voice as she walked along, and when she laughed there came to mind the image of an innocent fun-loving child. Ah, she was very pretty, with long hair and a welcoming smile on her face. Her father was a merchant and she worked hard to help him because she loved him very much. She was his favourite daughter. At first sight, the young man's heart was touched by the young woman's liveliness and beauty and he decided to see her again. In a short while they had fallen in love.

He discovered that she came from the western side of the city. There was an unwritten law in that city that one should marry only someone from the same side of the city. At first, the

two young people were deeply troubled by this law. So too were their parents, and family who said that it was unwise to marry another who is “not quite the same.”

But the young man and woman told them, “The law of love in our hearts which draws us together is truer than any law which divides people.” So they married and settled down-- poor but happy together. Both worked to make their home a place where they could care for each other and enjoy their life.

It was not easy. When people discovered that they had broken the unwritten law they disapproved of them. Although some friends stood by them they realised that in either part of the city they were regarded as being “not quite the same”.

Sometimes work was scarce for the young man. He had to travel to other cities to find ships to build or to repair. The young wife felt lonely when he was away and always looked forward to his return.

After a few years, they began to have their family. First, they had a daughter, then a son, followed by two more daughters. Three pretty little girls and a handsome boy. Both parents loved their children, were proud of them and worked to provide for them a happy and secure life. But that was difficult in the city of mists.

The boy admired his father’s strength and his mother’s beauty. He did not understand their hardship because he was very well cared for; but as he played among the children in his neighbourhood he discovered that he was “not quite the same” as they because his parents had come from opposite sides of the city. In fact, he found that wherever he went he was somehow “not quite the same”. He learned to avoid embarrassment by sometimes being silent, by being helpful or cooperative at other times. In that way his being “not quite the same” seemed to go unnoticed most of the time. One day his father and mother had a long talk together. He could hear them speaking together. “Let us leave behind this struggle and go away from this city of mists”, said his father. “But where can we go where life will be better?”, asked his mother. “I’ve heard of the city of the sun where there is plenty of work, and room for our children to grow up without having to face this city’s unfairness.”

His mother was sad to leave behind her birthplace and her family, but she agreed to go. “It will be better for our children and that is most important,” she said.

Soon they had made all their preparations for travel. His father gathered up the tools of his trade, while his mother packed their treasured possessions, their best clothes and some of the children’s toys and books. They sailed south to the city of the sun.

Such an adventure it was to pass through lands that seemed so strange to them, strange voices and music and animals seen only in a zoo. After two months they came to the city of the sun. It was so different from the city of mists. All the seasons were reversed and instead of rolling green hills and pastures, the landscape consisted of forests of straggling tall trees and dry sandy soil. It was difficult to feel at home in this new place. At school, they boy felt

that once again he was “not quite the same”. His voice sounded different to the others and he did not know the games of the children of the city of the sun. He felt awkward. His quietness and helpfulness soon enabled him to find a place in the group of children but he was mostly on the sidelines. There were other children there from other lands of mists. But he seemed to be different from them also. He was “not quite the same” as anybody. It puzzled him, but by now he had learned to live with it.

His family faced hard times as well as happy ones. There were times when he saw his mother sad and silent, dreaming of her home city. He also saw how his father missed his work with sea-going ships, because now he worked with machines to make electricity out of coal. His parents worried over the illness of their newborn sister and wondered whether they had been wise to come to the city of the sun. At times, they talked of sailing back to the misty island.

Just as they were deciding to return they met the Black Prince. He befriended them and offered to help them settle in another city in the land of the sun. His parents decided to do this, and with the Black Prince’s help they found a house to live in there.

To the boy, the Black Prince seemed so powerful and kind. He was certainly “not quite the same” as other men. Nothing seemed to be difficult for him, and the boy secretly desired to be like this Black Prince.

Knowing the young boy’s admiration, the Black Prince asked him whether he would also like to be a Black Prince. “Well, yes, but do you think I could be?”, asked the boy.

“Yes, I do. I think you would be very good. There is a special castle where young men go to learn to be Black Princes. There you can learn the special language and acquire all the knowledge.”

The young boy was very excited. After a while he told his parents, who agreed even though they were still struggling to make ends meet.

So he left home. And went to the castle. There he would find a way of being “not quite the same” that was helpful and respectable.

For a long time he studied. He learned the laws of the kingdom, how to enable people to understand them and observed them. He learned also how to help people officially celebrate their times of birth, death and marriage. In time he also received “the order of the Black Prince.” His parents were proud of what he had done.

Because he listened to people and tried to serve them well, many praised him. He slowly realised that he was well appreciated by people and admired. When he looked about him he saw so many people in need. He wanted to help in any way he could. Work was hard but he found a sense of elation in it despite fatigue.

At times he would meet people who admired him saying, "You are very special", or "You aren't like the others". Hearing this delighted him, but he also felt some alarm because, although he desired to come close to people, he feared that they would see how he was "not quite the same" as everyone else. So he avoided getting close to people he was serving. Because he wanted to be valued very much by others he kept himself very busy. But he felt that he was on the edge of other people's lives, looking in. It seemed as if he had forgotten his own life.

As the years went on he became weak and tired until finally he felt ill inside himself. Despite his efforts to keep on working, he came to a stop, feeling numb and exhausted.

Some wise friends told him that he really needed to go away to rest. But where? One said, "In the city of the wind there is a wise woman. Ask her what to do!" He spent a long time putting his affairs in order. Then he bade farewell to his family and friends, and set out for the place where the wise woman lived.

When he met her she held up to him a mirror.

"See", she said. He did not like what he saw. He felt ashamed of the pallid, weakened man he saw in the mirror.

"See again", she said. This time when he looked he caught the merest glimpse of a little boy inside himself. It was the little boy he had once been in the city of mist.

"Who is this child?", asked the wise woman.

"The child is me", he cried.

"If you want to save your life, before you lose it completely, you must meet this child of yours," she said.

"But I don't know how or where to find him."

"If you have a party, he will be there. Enjoy playing games and he will join in. Take time to see the sun rise and set and you will sense him at your side, his hand in yours. Run, swim, play and you'll find him as near as your shadow, or the echo of your laughter. Take care of your life and you will find him helping you. Don't worry about pleasing other people -- just live as fully as you can. Take this looking glass with you. Use it to see your child come alive in you."

So he went away with the mirror held firmly in his hand. At first, all he could see was the face of an isolated, fearful tired man. But more and more, at odd times, he would see himself as a child. Sometimes he saw images from his childhood -- there he was playing marbles in the middle of the street, or soccer with a tennis ball. He remembered his dream to be the captain of the world's best soccer team, and smiled happily to himself. There were dark images also -- times when street games came to an end because of the hostility that surfaced, days when he was obliged to stay indoors because his being "not quite the same" became an obstacle even for children's play. He saw in the mirror a whole variety of scenes of times past, and knew for the first time something of the ways in which he had come to look at his life. There were so many happy memories; of the motor bike races, the Easter picnics, walks in the park on Sundays and short trips to the seaside. Woven through all his

images was the sense that he had to be careful and cautious. As long as he kept himself in rein and did not offend other people, then he could enjoy his life a lot.

As he looked into the mirror he found pleasant surprises in his memories but there were also some painful moments of awareness when he saw how his attitude toward his life brought some distortion to its meaning. At times he felt foolish and ashamed. Sometimes he cried, grieving his lost vitality.

But all this time he was learning to play again. It was difficult at first -- like learning to walk again after one's leg had been broken. He felt awkward. But he honestly tried to trust the child in him.

After a while he began to see the world more clearly -- the changing beauty of the lake, the clear sky, sun on his skin, grass beneath his bare feet. He opened his ears to the sounds of the world and reached out to touch and taste the beauty of nature.

New people came into his life. And he felt the warmth of hands in friendship and the comfort of an embrace. Again he experienced the delight of laughter, and the healing power of tears. His body was coming alive from the inside. As new expressions of the life within him broke the surface of the former hiddenness he was surprised and overjoyed. Sometimes he would say to himself, "Hey, look at me!"

One day he went back to the wise woman. "Here is your looking glass. I don't need it any more because I have a way of seeing inside me now that will always stay with me."

"Good," she replied, "What have you seen?"

"I have seen my whole life up till now. And I have seen how much I have been at pains to avoid being "not quite the same" as others.

"Have you learned that you are "not quite the same" as anyone else in the whole world, to even your parents and your dearest loved ones?"

"Yes", he replied.

"Do you realize that no one is "quite the same" as anyone else?", she asked.

"Yes. I used to think that it was something I could be blamed for, so I tried to protect myself. It took a lot of energy to do that."

"Your being different is a fact. Being led to believe that you had to be the same was like being under a spell. Somehow the cruel unwritten law of the city of mists influenced you. Your parents bravely defied that law, in order to marry, and they again showed courage by going to the city of the sun. There they could not be harmed by unjust belief systems. But you, my friend, as a child did not understand how the unfairness worked and you somehow took it to be what is true."

She paused for a while to look at him. A wave of understanding passed over his face. Some tears came to his eyes at the memory of his being held back under the spell of being “not quite the same”. But they cleared and his eyes twinkled with a sense of hope and delight at new freedom.

The wise woman continued, “Your being different means that you are special and unique in all the world. You have your own gifts, your own story to make with those talents and your own struggle to be true to the life that is given to you.”

“Yes. I can see that now. All this time I’ve felt that I had to hold something of me back in order to be the same as others. But I’ve never been the same as others -- neither in the city of mists, nor in the city of the sun, or as a Black Prince or even here in the city of the wind. And that is wonderful. My life’s work and delight is to be myself with all the gifts and limits I possess.”

“Where will you go now?,” asked the wise woman.

“I have already made a new start. Now I have a looking glass to see into my inner world. I will be alert to other magic spells and look for what is real and true instead. From now on I will have care for my life instead of being careful to avoid life. I have a sense of direction and I will follow that. I don’t know the name of my destination yet, but I will learn of it as I travel.”

So he said goodbye to the wise woman and set out to make the second half of his life’s journey.

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