Inquiry is not an academic discipline, a learned knack, but an *Existierkunst*, an "art of existence." (Farell Krell 41)

University of Alberta

Epiphanies of Finitude: A Phenomenological Study of Existential Reading

by

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Abstract

A prominent hypothesis in literary studies is that readers, especially those that are fully immersed, engage empathically with fictional characters. This dissertation provides a critique of the Cartesian assumptions embedded in contemporary (cognitive scientific) models of empathy and then goes on to provide an alternative account of empathy based on especially Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology. According to this alternative, empathy does not establish but rather discloses in reflection an already present intersubjectivity from which it is derivative.

It is also held that readers who are fully empathically engaged in a literary text lose self-awareness. I provide a critique of this view and present a Husserlian model according to which full engagement with the other and continuation of a certain kind of self-awareness occur simultaneously. This phenomenological alternative is based on the notion that an experiential self-givenness or "mineness" accompanies all my experiences and is prior to any objectifying forms of self-awareness.

I then critique Cartesian models of (self-)reflection and self-modification in literary reading and with the help of Heidegger suggest a phenomenological model within which the distinction between modification of beliefs and the modification that is inherent in experiencing becomes understandable as contingent on the form of ontological interrogation that Merleau-Ponty terms "radical reflection".

Finally, I present a series of empirical studies investigating whether the preceding theoretical distinctions are borne out in the experiences of actual readers of literary texts concerned with human finitude. Phenomenological methods, (Kuiken, Schopflocher, and Wild; Kuiken and Miall, "Numerically Aided Phenomenology") were employed to 1) identify several distinct types of reading experience, 2) spell out how one of those types instantiates 'existential reading' as conceived here, and 3) provide convergent and discriminant validation of this type of reading experience. Of particular interest was whether a form of existential reading can be understood as an event during which readers engage the text through a form of empathic engagement that is grounded in an *a priori* intersubjectivity, that retains an experiential self-awareness or "mineness" simultaneously with empathic engagement, and that supports a non-Cartesian form of "radical reflection" that opens onto an ontological consideration of finitude.

Acknowledgement

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1. Introduction

There is a worm at the core of even our most memorable and beautiful experiences. This worm is the "most basic, most universal and inescapable" anxiety of death (Tillich 42). But do we really *experience* this existential anxiety explicitly? Most of the time, it seems, we know well enough that all living things, including us, will eventually die. Yet, isn't *our own* non-existence essentially unthinkable? Doesn't the understanding of *our own* finitude remain a rather abstract belief? What might the experience be like of this worm at the core, this "existential awareness of [our] possible nonbeing" (Tillich 35)?

Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych begins to provide answers. Confronted with his impending and inescapable death, he becomes aware of the crucial difference between knowing that all things die and the experience of *his own* finitude:

> Ivan Ilyich saw that he was dying, and he was in continual
> despair. In the depths of his heart he knew he was dying, but not
> only was he not accustomed to the thought, he simply did not and
> could not grasp it. The syllogism he had learned from

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Kiesewetter's Logic: "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal," had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not as applied to himself. That Caius—man in the abstract—was mortal, was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite, quite separate from all others. He had been little Vanya … Had Caius kissed his mother's hand like that? … Caius really was mortal and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilyich, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible. (Tolstoy 33)

For Ivan, anxiety arises not from the belief that everything and everyone is transitory, but rather from the experience—in depth—of *his own* finitude. His intellectual grasp of his own finitude as a logical consequence of all humans being mortal did not prepare him for the devastating blow of *experiencing* his own mortality.

Many influential literary texts, such as Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, and Sartre's *The Wall*, portray a character's transition from the belief in to the experience of her or his own finitude. But what happens to readers of these texts? Do they follow a transition akin to Ivan's from knowing as a *belief* that they will die to an acute *experience* of their own finitude? How might such a transition to existential awareness, as Tillich construed it, occur during literary reading?

A prominent hypothesis is that a precondition for such a transition during literary reading is the reader's empathic engagement with fictional characters who manifest that transition themselves. But what does it mean to empathize with an other, let alone with a fictional character? How is it possible to understand another person's thoughts or feelings sufficiently to empathize with her or him? These questions and others surrounding empathy have been discussed at length in the cognitive sciences. However, most of the theories of empathy are rooted in a Cartesian ontology, which posits an epistemic divide between subjects and objects. Since, according to these theories, other peoples' inner states and activities are essentially obscure to us, we must *infer* their states of mind and feelings on the basis of mental representations we form of their expressions and behavior.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I provide a Heideggerian critique of the Cartesian assumptions embedded in contemporary models of empathy. I then go on to provide an alternative account of empathy based especially on my reading of Husserlian phenomenology. According to this alternative, empathy does not establish but rather discloses in reflection an already present intersubjectivity from which it is derivative. I will close this first chapter with a description of how this phenomenological conception of empathy is a first step in my proposed characterization of existential reading. It contributes to an understanding, I will argue, of how a reader might follow Ivan's transition from the belief in to an experience of her or his own finitude.

Chapter 3 focuses on the loss of self-awareness during full engagement, including empathic engagement, with a literary text. After providing a critique of the Cartesian model, according to which self-awareness is lost during full engagement with the other, I present a Husserlian model according to which full engagement with the other and continuation of a certain kind of self-awareness occur simultaneously. This phenomenological alternative is based on the notion that an experiential self-givenness or "mineness" accompanies all my experiences and is prior to any objectifying forms of self-awareness. This first personal givenness of experience contributes to my sense of existential reading by providing a characterization of how readers can be fully empathically engaged with, for instance, Ivan and simultaneously fully present to themselves.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion regarding the self, however, with a focus not on the loss of self-awareness, but rather on the form of (self-)reflection in literary reading that may lead to self-modification. After providing a critique of Cartesian models of (self-)reflection and self-modification in literary reading, I provide a phenomenological alternative within which the distinction between modification of beliefs and the modification that is inherent in experiencing becomes understandable as contingent on the form of ontological interrogation that Merleau-Ponty terms "radical reflection" (280). I then argue that such "radical reflection" is the ontological turn that constitutes existential reading. This enables me to characterize more fully how readers, through engagement with Ivan, move from beliefs about finitude to the experience of their own finitude.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation presents a series of empirical studies investigating whether the preceding theoretical distinctions are borne out in the experiences of actual readers of literary texts concerned with human finitude. Phenomenological methods, (Kuiken, Schopflocher, and Wild; Kuiken and Miall, "Numerically Aided Phenomenology") were employed to 1) identify several distinct types of reading experience, 2) spell out how one of those types instantiates 'existential reading' as conceived here, and 3) provide convergent and discriminant validation of this type of reading experience. Of particular interest was whether existential reading can be understood as an event during which readers engage the text through a form of empathic engagement that is grounded in an *a priori* intersubjectivity, that retains an experiential self-awareness or "mineness" simultaneously with empathic engagement, and that supports a non-Cartesian form of "radical reflection" that opens onto an ontological consideration of finitude.

2. Perspectives on Empathy

Within continental philosophy, Martin Heidegger keeps his discussion of ontological reflection and finitude especially close to his consideration of the pervasive a priori intersubjectivity of our Being-in-the-world. Although other phenomenologists, such as Husserl, have provided a much more detailed account of intersubjectivity and empathy, Heidegger remains a constant presence in the following discussion of empathy, since my inclusive account of existential reading relies heavily on his work. For instance, I present my resistance to a Cartesian characterization of human cognition, intersubjectivity, and empathy largely through Wheeler's Heideggerian reconsideration of these phenomena.

In this chapter, then, I will first present the Cartesian principles underlying contemporary models of cognition (and in extension empathy). Thereafter, I will discuss how these Cartesian principles are at work in the currently popular Theory of Mind conceptions of empathy, before providing a phenomenological alternative according to which empathy discloses rather than establishes an a priori intersubjectivity. Finally, I will discuss how such a phenomenological concept of empathy contributes to my understanding of existential reading.

2.1. Contemporary Models of Empathy and Their Cartesian Assumptions

> It is not easy, given the analytic mode of science, to replace the
> clockwork mind with something less silly. Updating the metaphor

by changing clocks into computers has got us nowhere. The
wholesale rejection of analysis in favor of obscurantist holism has
been worse. Imprisoned by our Cartesianism, we do not know
how to think about thinking. (Lewontin 16)

In what follows, I will provide an overview and critique of theories in
cognitive science dealing with intersubjectivity and empathy, particularly those
that appear in the Theory of Mind debate. With the help especially of Michael
Wheeler but also Hubert Dreyfus and John Haugeland, I will discuss to what
extent these theories are indebted to three Cartesian principles regarding
cognition: the subject-object dichotomy, the constitutive role assigned to mental
representations, and the inferential characterization of thinking.

2.1.1. Three Cartesian Principles of Theory of Mind Approaches to
Empathy

Over the past decade, it has become increasingly popular in some corners
of cognitive science to pay lip service to an alleged anti-Cartesianism. As
Wheeler points out, however, these attempts often operate on "received
interpretations of Descartes' view that, when examined closely, reveal
themselves to be caricatures of the position that Descartes himself actually
occupied" (15). In addition, while determinedly rejecting one Cartesian
principle, such as mind-body dualism, by appealing, for instance, to some
(watered-down) form of "embodied cognition" (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson), many
of these critics remain firmly Cartesian in their enterprises regarding other
fundamental principles of a Cartesian ontology. According to Wheeler, even

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such influential anti-Cartesianists as Dennett, Dreyfus, and Haugeland have failed to strengthen the plausibility of their claims through a thorough and systematic study of Descartes' scientific and philosophical work. Wheeler fills this gap and extracts from Descartes' writings principles that constitute an "integrated conceptual and explanatory framework for scientifically explaining mind, cognition, and intelligence" (15). He calls this framework *Cartesian psychology* and holds that it underlies, whether explicitly or implicitly, the vast majority of studies in contemporary cognitive science. That, I will argue, includes the majority of studies of the cognitive processes involved in empathy. I will begin with the principle of the subject-object dichotomy.

The Subject-Object Dichotomy

Although modern cognitive science no longer adheres to Cartesian substance dualism, which posits a metaphysical divide between mind and body, it postulates another form of dualism, namely the dichotomy between a cognizing subject and a world of objects spread out before it. Descartes seemed to conflate these two dualisms, by equating the subject with the immaterial mind and the object with the physical world of objects, including the subject's body. However, as Wheeler points out, the subject-object dichotomy can be conceptually separated from substance dualism, since cognitive theorists today tend to conflate the mind with the brain and locate it in the physical world. Instead of Descartes' pineal gland functioning as the bridge between the physical and mental, the interface between subject and world of objects is situated somewhere in the cognizer's body. Wheeler describes this notion as follows:

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[A]lthough freed from substance dualism, many stay firmly in the grip of a recognizably Cartesian spirit, by continuing to assume that the subject-object dichotomy is a deep feature of the cognizer's ordinary epistemic situation. On such a view, the subject-object interface may be located at the skin, the boundary of the brain or central nervous system, or indeed elsewhere, depending on what other commitments the theorist in question sees fit to make. (23)

If the objective world is conceptually separated and largely independent from the cognizing subject, however, the question remains how one gains epistemic access to it in a way that allows acting upon and in the world. This brings us to Wheeler's second principle of Cartesian psychology according to which cognition is representational in nature.

A Representational Theory of Mind

That mind, cognition, and intelligence can only be explained on the basis of representational states is one of the fundamental convictions of the vast majority of theories in mainstream cognitive science. Representational states are how certain events and characteristics of the environment are "taken" by intelligent agents, that is, how these acquire meaning. Put differently, representations are "neural inner states whose functional role is to *stand in for* (usually external) objects and situations (such as predators and threats) in the agent's internal goings-on" (Wheeler 58-59). That the subject-object dichotomy

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is closely bound to this principle is easily recognized, since "if one unpacks the basic epistemic context in which representation talk gets its grip, one will describe a situation in which a *subject* takes an independent, *objective* world to be–that is, *represents that world as being*–a certain way" (Wheeler 25).

An important consequence of the subject-object dichotomy and the notion that cognition, mind, and intelligence are representational in nature is that these representations are *context independent* and determinate. Context independence here does not imply that representations are simply determined by "the needs, projects, [and] previous experiences of an intelligent agent acting in and on the world" (Wheeler 25); that is, it does not imply that subjects represent the world objectively, as though by direct epistemic access. Of course, cognizers can and do misrepresent events and situations. What context independence does indicate, however, is that needs, projects, and experiences do not enter the *process* of representing the world.

The Inferential Nature of Human Cognition

Within the Cartesian model, representational processes are seen as essentially *inferential*, and inferences are derived from an initial and immediate apprehension of a stream of sensory stimuli. In a first phase, the body merely mechanistically registers the input in the form of changes in itself. In a second phase, the mind, receives these bodily changes in a form that is as yet unmediated by judgment. It is precisely in this second phase that Descartes' and numerous cognitive scientists' notion of embodiment comes into play. The mind, although "so intimately conjoined with the body that it is affected by the

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movements that occur within it" (Descartes 175), perceives the body as an object among the other objects of the world. It furnishes the mind with immediate (unmediated by reason) sensory input, which is translated into perceptual representations forming the experiences of the senses (e.g., hot-cold, smell, sound, etc.).

On this view, a third phase of perception involves the establishment of internal representations of external objects, events, and situations that are entirely mental and the product of rational judgments. In his account of this third phase of perception, Descartes tackles the problem of why, using his example, he sees "men crossing the square" (17) rather than a flux of shapes and colors. His solution to the problem is that we only have the *impression* of perceiving men. It is in the mind through acts of judgment that the input of data is transformed/ translated into meaningful objects. Wheeler comments on this as follows:

> There exists an epistemic gap between the data available to the
> Cartesian cognizer in sensory experience, and what she comes to
> believe about the world on the basis of that data. According to
> Descartes, this gap is repeatedly traversed by acts of judgment, the
> cognitive calculations performed by the rational intellect in the
> third grade [phase] of perception. And perhaps the most striking
> feature of these calculations is that their informational outputs go
> *beyond* their inputs, a fact that indicates that *inferential* processes
> are at play. (42)

As mentioned above, to Descartes and the Cartesian psychologist the body belongs in the realm of objects. The interface bridging the epistemic divide between the subject, which is located in the mind, and the world of objects is situated somewhere in that body. Also, within the Cartesian ontology, intelligent behavior is representational and inferential in nature, and intelligent processes responsible for representing the world and planning a course of action are located in the mind, albeit also operating with representational translations of sensory input provided by the body. Popular conceptions of embodiment in cognitive science (e.g., Damasio's in *The Feeling of What Happens*) retain this structure. From this it follows that notions of "embodied cognition" grounded in a Cartesian ontology remain impoverished mind-plus-body approaches, since insights into a cognizer's physical embodiment are conceptually separate from (i.e. do not add to an understanding of) the reasoning processes that constitute intelligent behavior. Given this explanatory mind-body dualism, then, Wheeler argues that "for the Cartesian psychologist, the cognitive-scientific explanation of the agent's mind must be theoretically independent of the scientific explanation of the agent's physical embodiment" (46).

In sum, the majority of contemporary cognitive scientists operate from within a Cartesian ontology, since they posit an epistemic divide between subjects and objects that is overcome by inferences based on mental representations. In what follows, I will discuss how these principles inform, shape, and limit cognitive scientific theories of intersubjectivity and empathy, and how these theories, in turn, inform discussions of literary reading.

2.2. Contemporary Models of Intersubjectivity and Empathy: The Theory of Mind Debate

''Do you look into yourself in order to recognize the fury in his face?" (Wittgenstein, Section 927)

Even when empathy during literary reading is not construed as identical with empathy in everyday life, the former is usually understood as a special case of the latter. Thus, our sense of empathizing with Ivan in his growing despair at the experience of his own finitude hinges on a theory of how it is possible for us to empathize with others at all. The following everyday example will add concreteness to our consideration of some basic questions about empathy: As I slow down to stop at a yellow light, I see the car beside me suddenly stop to avoid hitting the van that just cut in front of it on its way through the yellow light. Through the windows, I look at the driver who is now stopped at the intersection. He is *clearly* furious. But how do I know that? Most likely, something in his bodily expression strikes me as anger. What is unclear, however, is how I am able to endow an observation of bodily expression with meaning. Do I apply folk psychology to my "mind reading"? Do I imaginatively simulate being the one that was cut off and then project my state of mind onto the person I am observing? Or might the recognition be more immediate? Are these conscious or unconscious processes? By extension, these issues arise again when we consider how Tolstoy's narrative enables *recognition* of Ivan's plight and growing insight as well as the *vicarious experience* of Ivan that we call empathy.

Questions about empathy have generated a lively discussion across various disciplines that has become known as the "theory of mind" (ToM) debate. Since Premack and Woodruff coined the term in 1978 it has been employed "as a shorthand for our ability to attribute mental states to self and others and to interpret, predict, and explain behavior in terms of mental states such as intentions, beliefs, and desires" (Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood* 188). Despite the fact that there are various hybrid approaches to ToM, they remain somewhere between the two poles of a *theory-theory of mind* (TT) and a *simulation theory of mind* (ST). I will first present the Theory-Theory of Mind (TT), also referred to as *mindreading*, and discuss to what extent it follows the Cartesian principles identified by Wheeler, namely the *subject-object dichotomy, representationalism, and inference.*

2.2.1. Theory-Theory of Mind

Baron-Cohen, one of the first and still one of the most prominent advocates for TT, defines mindreading as "the ability to interpret one's own or another agent's intentions as driven by mental states" (468). Within this mindreading model, the Theory of Mind Mechanism "allows *epistemic* mental states to be represented, [and] it integrates the full set of mental state concepts (including emotions) into a theory" (470).

According to TT, it is precisely this theory consisting of a catalogue of mental state concepts that we draw on in order to *infer* the mental states behind others', but also our own, expressive behavior. External sensory impressions are interpreted (by running through the three phases described above) according to

abstract theoretical conceptions, which after the age of four are largely already available within this theory. TT is thus perhaps best characterized as a form of abstract cognition, since intersubjectivity and empathy (but also self-understanding) are interpretative inferences form a third person perspective. In this short introduction to TT, the three Cartesian principles of cognition already begin to stand out, according to which the epistemic divide between subject and object is bridged by inferences based on mental representations. In what follows this commitment will become clearer.

The Cartesian Principles of TT

To my understanding, the sequence of the abstract cognition that constitutes TT runs roughly as follows: After the body mechanically registers the presence of sensory primitives (Descartes' first phase), it furnishes the mind with these stimuli in the form of bodily changes. The mind then forms *perceptual representations* of these changes (Descartes' second phase), which constitute the experiences of the senses. Theoretically, these perceptual representations are as yet devoid of any judgments regarding the external world and consist of the basic experiences of touch, smell, sound, etc. In a third phase then, *internal representations of external objects, events, and situations* are formed by drawing inferences based on the *perceptual representations*. In TT, these *inferences* are entirely the product of interpreting perceptual representations according to the abstract theoretical conceptions of mental states available in our ToM. Moreover, this form of abstract cognition retains a third person perspective not only on the

other or object of perception, but also on my self and body, since I draw on my ToM to *make sense of* my own perceptual representations.

Baron-Cohen argues that this ToM mechanism, which develops between the second and fourth year in a human child's life, is the reason we can represent states such as "'Mother *thinks* this cup contains water' or 'Mother *pretends* this cup contains water'" (470). He cites extensive developmental and clinical data to support his model of mindreading.

The most well-known attempt to apply the TT brand of ToM to enrich literary investigation is developed in Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. She describes her project as making

> a case for admitting the recent findings of cognitive psychologists
> into literary studies by showing how their research into the ability
> to explain behavior in terms of the underlying states of mind–or
> *mind-reading* ability–can furnish us with a series of surprising
> insights into our interaction with literary texts. (4)

She bases her "case studies" of novels, such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Nabokov's *Lolita*, etc., on the theories of mind of Simon Baron-Cohen, as well as Peter Carruthers. Drawing on these authors, she describes TT as follows:

> 'Theory of Mind' [describes] our ability to explain people's
> behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires.
> Thus we engage in mind-reading when we ascribe to a person a

certain mental state on the basis of her observable action (e.g., we

see her reaching for a glass of water and assume that she is

thirsty); when we interpret our own feelings based on our

proprioceptive awareness …; when we intuit a complex state of

mind based on a limited verbal description … (6)

In this short passage, we can plainly see evidence of the Cartesian

principles identified earlier. Although she describes ToM as an "ability" rather

than an available theory of mental state concepts, phrases such as "ascribing

mental states," "assum[ing] that she is thirsty," and "intuit[ing] a state of mind"

on the basis of observed actions, reveal the kind of third person abstract

cognition that is characteristic of TT and Cartesian psychology more generally.

Moreover, Zunshine presents a model of cognition in which the *external world is*

conceptually separated and independent from the cognizing subject. Zunshine's

descriptions directly echo the subject-object dichotomy in Baron Cohen's model,

in which the observer "automatically interprets or represents" the mental states

of others.

As discussed earlier, *representationalism* is one consequence of a

subject-object dichotomy, since to gain epistemic access to the independent

objective world, internal representations have to *stand in for* external objects and

situations. Moreover, the epistemic gap between the sensory primitives furnished

in observing someone reach for a glass and *assuming* she is thirsty must be

traversed by interpretative inferences. The Cartesian notion that cognition is

inferential in nature is apparent in Zunshine's use of the terms "interpret,"

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"assume," and "ascribe." Again, this echoes Baron-Cohen's characterization of ToM as the process of interpreting observed activities as mental states.

Zunshine holds that the same processes that are at work when we engage real people are also at work when we empathically engage literary characters. She believes in fact that "*on some level* our evolved cognitive architecture indeed does not fully distinguish between real and fictional people" (19). According to Zunshine, the very reason we read literary texts is to exercise our mindreading ability, which she (drawing on Baron-Cohen and Carruthers) sees as an evolutionary adaptation in humans: "… works of fiction provide grist for the mills of our mind-reading adaptations that have evolved to deal with real people, even though on some level we do remember that literary characters are not real people at all" (16).

A Critique of TT

A number of empirical findings undermine TT's claims. If "the mental states of others (and indeed ourselves) are completely hidden from the senses [and] can only ever be inferred" (Leslie 139), anyone who lacks a ToM could have no experience of the self nor of the other. However, as Gallagher and Zahavi (175) point out, developmental research is unanimous in the view that human beings develop a ToM only at the age of about four. According to TT, children three years old and younger could thus understand neither themselves

nor others.[1] Logical and empirical evidence speaks against such claims. How could children develop a ToM that draws on abstract mental concepts in the first place, if they have no understanding of self or other on which such a theory could be based? Put differently, to draw the interpretive inferences of abstract third person reflection "we already need to have specific pre-theoretical knowledge about how people behave in particular contexts" (Gallagher, "The Practice of Mind" 86). As a result of such criticism and because of its extremely intellectualized view of intersubjectivity and empathy, the TT model has largely been abandoned, usually in favor of the Simulation Theory of Mind (ST).

2.2.2. Simulation Theory of Mind

In the cognitive sciences, TT has been mostly displaced by some form of ST not only because of the latter's greater explanatory power, but also because other processes arguably crucial to cognition, such as acts of will, emotions, and intentions cannot be accounted for by TT. The philosopher and cognitive scientist Shaun Gallagher describes the situation as follows:

> When it comes to explaining how we understand other people some of the very best contemporary philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists are simulationists. Rather than appealing to a theoretical use of folk psychology, they appeal to their own experience as a measure of others' experience. ("Simulation Trouble" 353)

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[1] For a discussion of how TT and ST attempt to account for these empirical and logical inconsistencies see, for instance, Gallagher & Zahavi (175), Zahavi (*Subjectivity and Selfhood* 188).

Simulation theorists criticize theory-theorists for what they deem an overemphasis on "intellectual processes, moving, by inference, from one belief to the other" (Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood* 181). ST emphasizes that we do not need a "general psychological theory in order to understand others" (Zahavi, "Simulation, Projection and Empathy" 514). Instead, when we perceive (bodily) expressions in others we imaginatively imitate (simulate) these expressions, drawing on our own emotions and motivations. Based on the outcomes of pretending to be in the other's mental shoes, we then project the resulting mental state onto the other. Goldman describes the difference between TT and ST as follows:

> The chief contrast between ST and TT concerns the attributor's attempt to replicate mental states of the target, which includes the initial mental pretense … According to TT, an attributor uses only descriptions of a target's states and psychological regularities. The attributor does not try to clothe herself in those very states, so as to mentally mimic or "impersonate" the target. All processing in the attributor is purely inferential processing, which moves from beliefs to other beliefs about the states of the target. TT posits no essential use of mental pretense by attributors. ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 81)

Despite the fact that all simulation theorists subscribe to the minimal description that ST involves pretense, the theory seems to subsume two quite distinct explanatory models under its name and a heated debate about what

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counts as simulation is underway (see e.g., Goldman, "Mirror Systems").

Gallagher ("Simulation Trouble") accordingly differentiates between what he

calls *implicit* and *explicit ST*, although he notes that many simulation theorists

work with a model that is a *hybrid* of these. Goldman (*Simulating Minds*) makes

an analogous distinction between *low-level* and *high-level mindreading*, as does

Stueber between *basic empathy* and *reenactive empathy*.

Explicit Simulation Theory

     Explicit simulation (*high-level mindreading, reenactive empathy*) refers

to *consciously* imagining myself in another's situation (pretense) and then

projecting the resulting mental state of this *simulation* onto the other (see e.g.,

Gallagher, "Simulation Trouble"; Goldman, "Mirror Systems"; *Simulating*

Minds). Goldman describes this process as involving three steps:

> First, the attributor creates in herself pretend states intended to
>
> match those of the target. In other words, the attributor attempts to
>
> put herself in the target's ''mental shoes.''…The second step is to
>
> feed these initial pretend states into some mechanism of the
>
> attributor's own psychology, e.g., a decision-making or emotion-
>
> generating mechanism, and allow that mechanism to operate on
>
> the pretend states so as to generate one or more new
>
> states…Third, the attributor assigns the output state to the
>
> target…Clearly, the distinctive idea of ST is that mind reading is
>
> subserved by pretense and attempted replication. A mind reader

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adopts the mental "position" of the target and replicates (or

attempts to replicate) mental activity appropriate to that position.

("Imitation, Mind Reading" 80-81)

The Cartesian Principles of explicit ST

How Cartesian is the explicit ST of empathy and where does it differ

from TT? I will attempt to unravel Goldman's somewhat cryptic description and

establish ST's Cartesianism by going back to the everyday driving example. To

avoid misunderstandings, let me first mention, however, that Descartes three-

phase ("grade") model of *human cognition in general* is not to be confused with

Goldman's three-phase ("step") model of *intersubjective cognition*.

In my view, all three of Descartes' phases are a prerequisite for

simulation and for part of Goldman's first phase. Before I can imaginatively

project myself into the tense and energetic movements, the cramped face and

narrowed eyes, the wrinkled forehead, etc., of the wronged driver, I have to at

the very least perceive them as such. That is, in ST language, I need to somehow

understand which mental states underlie the observable behavior of the person in

the car beside me, before I can create "in [myself] pretend states intended to

match those of the target" ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 80). Only then can I "feed

these initial pretend states" into my own psychological mechanism (simulation)

and allow it to create the new state ("fury") within myself (Goldman's second

phase). This establishing of a new state is equivalent to Descartes' third phase

and involves internal representations of external objects, events, and situations.

Although ST is not clear on how the initial understanding of the other's mental

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state is achieved, such that I could "put myself in the target's 'mental shoes'" ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 80), within the Cartesian ontology it adopts it must involve *inference* and abstract cognition similar to that of TT.

Applying explicit ST to our example of empathizing with Ivan would lead to a similar stepwise process of understanding–or rather surmising–that his mental state must be one of despair and hopelessness. However, in Tolstoy's narrative we are obviously not directly perceiving and interpreting Ivan's overt behavior ourselves, but are rather presented with it in a form mediated by the narrator's description and interpretation (i.e. we are empathizing with Ivan through the empathizing view of the narrator). Depending on the style of narration, then, some of the simulation work described by Goldman may already be performed by the narrator.

In sum, then, all three phases of Descartes model of cognition are represented in both TT and explicit ST. The crucial difference lies in the fact that initial internal representations of external object, events, and situations are enriched experientially in explicit ST. Whereas TT does not go beyond the abstract cognition in which perceptual representations of sensory primitives are interpreted exclusively according to mental state concepts already available within our ToM, the "states" corresponding to perceptual representations are "mentally mimic[ed] or 'impersonate[d]'" (Goldman, "Imitation, Mind Reading" 81) within the interpretative phase of ST, *adding* (mimetic) experiential richness to the abstract cognition.

Thus, in Goldman's account, as in TT, empathy is conceived as *inferential* processing of *representational* states. Moreover, the language of imagining myself in another's mental state (simulation) establishes the trademark Cartesian *epistemic divide* between perceiving subject and perceived object, including the object body. In TT the exclusive focus on abstract cognition neglects completely the role the body plays in empathy. In ST, in contrast, the move away from folk psychology to simulation to enrich the content of representations arguably brings within conceptual reach a Cartesian version of embodiment. Although Goldman emphasizes the mental character of simulation, his version of ST does not categorically exclude the body in its model of intersubjective cognition and empathy. At least in theory, the "emotion-generating mechanism" (Goldman, "Imitation, Mind Reading" 81) he refers to reflects a form of "embodied cognition". That this is an impoverished notion of embodiment forms part of my critique of explicit ST below.

A Critique of Explicit ST

Considering the fact that ST is proposed as an alternative to the overemphasis on the abstract cognition involved in TT, I would argue that it is only partly successful in achieving this objective. There are three parts to my critique. First, as stated above, before I can simulate another's mental states I need to have an idea of what this mental state is. Explicit ST remains obscure about how this initial knowledge is achieved. Within the Cartesian ontology espoused by explicit ST, however, TT in fact seems the most probable candidate for explaining the cognitive operations leading up to simulation. Thus, in my

view, explicit ST does not provide an alternative to TT, it merely enriches/expands upon it. My proposal is that explicit ST's account of intersubjectivity and empathy merely adds "experiential" *input* through simulation to abstract cognition.

Second, as in TT, intersubjectivity and empathy are reduced to an understanding of the other's mental states, which remains within the realm of inference and abstract cognition, despite the introduction of an experiential (potentially embodied) element. The Cartesian version of embodiment that explicit ST espouses can be characterized as a mind-plus-body approach to representation, since to the purely abstract cognitions of TT, explicit ST adds information provided by a body engaged in pretense. This body, however, is situated on the other side of the epistemic divide and must be interpreted from a third person perspective. Wheeler refers to this impoverished version of embodiment as "explanatory disembodiment" and argues that "for the Cartesian psychologist, the cognitive-scientific explanation of the agent's mind must be theoretically independent of the scientific explanation of the agent's physical embodiment" (46; see also Haugeland 221).

Thus, as we have seen, rather than proposing a solution to TT's overemphasis on "intellectual processes, moving, by inference, from one belief to the other" (Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood* 181), it takes these processes (or the results thereof) for granted. Goldman's account also remains obscure on what might be involved in the "decision-making or emotion-generating mechanism" ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 81) underlying simulation. Even though the explicit

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ST account may provide an explanation for the experiential richness of intersubjective engagements such as empathy, the insertion of a pretense phase does not provide a more compelling solution than TT to the problem of how we are able to make sense of others' expressions. It merely defers it.

Moreover, within the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy of explicit ST, self- and other observations are made from a third person perspective. This means that the initial assessment of the other's mental state to be 'fed into one's own psychology' is necessarily a matter of abstract cognition. The epistemic divide between myself and my body as well as between myself and an other is bridged by means of interpretative inferences. Adding the black box of a potentially embodied mechanism in explicit ST (although Goldman stresses the mental aspect of it) merely allows Goldman to claim that intersubjective engagement and empathy are not "*purely* inferential" ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 81; my emphasis).

Implicit Simulation Theory

Whereas the conception of embodiment in explicit ST is impoverished, physical embodiment takes center stage in implicit ST. According to explicit ST, our embodiment merely furnishes our minds with sensory primitives, which have to be made meaningful through abstract cognition (inferences) plus simulation. Meaningful behavior, as in TT, remains reducible to mental states. In contrast, in implicit ST simulation already occurs on an unconscious and subpersonal level within neural resonance systems. The implication of this proposal is that no third person reflection, abstract or mimetic, is necessary for intersubjective cognition

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and empathy. This view is supported by rapidly growing evidence from brain imaging studies indicating that the same mirror neurons are activated in action recognition when imagining oneself perform an action, when observing another perform that action, and when preparing to imitate an observed action (e.g., Craighero, et al.; Di Pellegrino et al.; Gallese et al.; Rizzolatti, et al.; Decety et al.). Craighero et al., for instance, describe the mirror neuron system as: "a cortical network of areas that enables individuals to understand the meaning of actions performed by others through the activation of internal representations, which motorically code for the observed actions" (39).

Activation of the mirror neuron system is not limited to visual cues, but rather can occur in response to any sensorial cue. Thus, it seems that the sensory areas of the brain activated when performing a certain action are "mirrored" in the person perceiving or imagining this action being performed. Gallese, Keysers, and Rizzolatti have taken this claim further and hold that "a similar mirroring mechanism, bridging first- and third-person experiences, also exists for emotions" (396). This important step has led some neuroscientists to view such implicit simulation as the fundamental form of empathy (e.g., Gallese; Decety et al.). Take for instance the following claim made by members of the Parma group:

> We will posit that, in our brain, there are neural mechanisms
> (mirror mechanisms) that allow us to directly understand the
> meaning of the actions and emotions of others by internally
> replicating ('simulating') them without any explicit reflective

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mediation. Conceptual reasoning is not necessary for this

understanding. (Gallese, Keysers, and Rizzolatti 396)

This, of course, is diametrically opposed to the tenets of TT and explicit

ST, according to which internal representations are the product of "explicit

reflective mediation" and "[c]onceptual reasoning". Does this mean, then, that

the implicit version of ST no longer adheres to the Cartesian principles of

cognition? Below, I will argue that the findings of resonance systems

undermines some of the principles of Cartesian psychology, but that implicit ST

nevertheless remains within its grip.

The Cartesian Principles of Implicit ST

The phrases "internally replicating," "simulating," "activation of internal

representations," and "motor representations" indicate that the subject-object

dichotomy and representational character of empathy are still at work within

Gallese, Keysers, and Rizzolatti's (396) version of implicit ST. However, they

explicitly reject the Cartesian principle that empathic cognition is essentially

inferential ("…without any explicit reflective mediation. Conceptual reasoning is

not necessary for this understanding."). Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on

the role of one's physical embodiment, not just in a weak form (i.e. an object

body's input that must be interpretively made meaningful from a third person

perspective prior to projection) but rather as the *in itself meaningful* non-

cognitive neural activity (see Wheeler 46, and Haugeland 221).

A Critique of Implicit ST

Potentially misleading is the fact that representations in implicit ST are treated as identical to those discussed in TT and explicit ST when in fact they seem to be conceptually quite different. In TT and explicit ST, questions of representational content are easily answered. Internal representations of external objects, events, and situations are concepts from folk psychology in TT, enriched by simulations in explicit ST. In implicit ST, on the other hand, it is difficult to determine what the content of representations might be, since the concept of "neuronal mechanisms" seems to be employed interchangeably with that of "internal representations." Similar to explicit ST's black box of "some mechanism of the attributor's own psychology" ("Imitation, Mind Reading" 81) within which the simulation occurs, it remains unclear what these resonance mechanisms are actually doing and what their representational content might be. Nevertheless, within implicit ST's account nothing beyond the 'mirroring' activity provided by these resonance systems is needed to account for intersubjectivity and empathy. The drawback with such an account is that it does not explain how these mirror mechanisms get recognized as mirroring the mental states of *an other*. This introduces two problems. The first is the *homunculus problem*, to which I will return shortly, since it applies to all forms of Cartesian ToM. The second problem is that, in contrast to the strictly third personal perspective of TT and explicit ST, implicit ST gives a purely *first personal account* of intersubjectivity. It does not explain how another human being is

recognized as an *other*. That is, from an implicit ST perspective there is no way to account for *alterity*.

Hybrid Simulation Theory

Objections from within the ST camp to the purely first personal account of implicit ST have been acrimonious. Much of this criticism has been directed at equating neural mechanisms with content bearing concepts such as empathy. Gallese, Keysers, and Rizzolatti's statement that "in our brain, there are neural mechanisms (mirror mechanisms) that allow us to directly understand the meaning of the actions and emotions of others by internally replicating ('simulating') them without any explicit reflective mediation" (396) has become one such target. Goldman ("Mirror Systems"), for instance, writes: "Given the centrality of the understanding theme, one would like to be clear on the exact meaning of 'understanding'."

Criticizing Gallese and colleagues' conflation of "automatic" perception and understanding will later lead him to argue that intersubjectivity and empathy require both *low-* and *high-level* mindreading (Goldman *Simulating Minds* 43). In this view, an account of full-fledged empathy must go beyond implicit simulation (*mirror mechanisms*) and incorporate processes of *inference* and *projection* involved in *explicit simulation* (*high-level mindreading*). The bringing together of explicit and implicit ST described here, is an example of a hybrid

ST.[2] Gallagher's ("Simulation Trouble") distinction between *implicit* and *explicit simulation* and Stueber's between *basic and reenactive empathy* are analogous to Goldman's (*Simulating Minds* 140-147) distinction between low- and high-level mindreading.

The Cartesian Principles of Hybrid ST

It is difficult to determine the Cartesianism of hybrid STs in an encompassing manner, since different versions will emphasize different aspects and there is a certain degree of ambiguity in descriptions of how the strictly first personal account of implicit ST is made to mesh with the third personal understanding of explicit and conscious simulation. The hybrid ST that Goldman has moved toward, for instance, places emphasis on explicit simulation ("high-level mindreading"). In his version, implicit ("low-level") simulation in the form of mirror systems needs to be interpreted much in the same way as the sensory primitives in Descartes three phase model of cognition (*Simulating Minds* 140-147). Consequently, the three principles of Cartesian psychology remain in play quite clearly, including the Cartesian version of "embodiment".

Jeannerod and Pacherie's hybrid ST, in contrast, explicitly rejects the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy, the (necessarily) inferential character of cognition, and the view of embodiment that it entails (138). They develop a sequential account of simulation, which runs roughly as follows: Upon (1)

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[2] I will not discuss versions of hybrid ST which are a blend of TT and explicit ST (e.g. Perner and Kuhberger), since, as discussed earlier, to my understanding explicit ST depends on some version of TT in the first place.

perceiving expressive behavior in the other (as *intentional* behavior, "naked

intentions"), (2) our resonance system is activated. This resonance system

activation is neutral in regards to agency. That is, it does not yet determine

whose action it is. Only in a subsequent step (3) is agency determined (Jeannerod

and Pacherie 131-141; see also Becchio and Bertone on this point). In my view,

this last step, which involves "attribut[ing] authorship" (Jeannerod and Pacherie

140), reintroduces the subject-object dichotomy and the inferential account of

intersubjectivity and empathy along with the third person abstract cognition.

Thus, in my reading even those versions of hybrid ST that place a heavy

emphasis on the "automatic" simulations that resonance systems afford adhere to

the three Cartesian principles of cognition in order to explain how we *infer* that

the established (through simulation) mental state must be that of the observed

other and *project* that state (back) onto her or him.

2.2.3. An Inclusive Critique of ToM Models of Empathy

Despite the fact that hybrid approaches to ST attempt to merge the purely

third personal account of explicit ST and the purely first personal account of

implicit ST, the two seem in fact difficult to reconcile (Gallagher "Simulation

Trouble" 356-357) [3]. If, as Gallese holds, "we seldom engage ourselves in an

explicit, deliberate interpretive act" when we encounter others, and "[o]ur

understanding of a situation most of the time is immediate, automatic, and

almost reflex like" (102), then an explicit ST becomes obsolete or at least

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[3] For a detailed discussion of the shortcomings of implicit ST and its interpretation of neural
resonance systems see Gallagher & Zahavi (chapter 9) and Zahavi "Simulation, Projection and
Empathy".

marginal in an account of primary intersubjectivity, since our understanding of others already takes place at an automatic, subpersonal level.

However, because such a view of empathy potentially confines me to "my own system (a simulation in my own mind or motor system), nothing justifies inferring anything about what must be going on in the other person" (Gallagher and Zahavi 178). The solipsism (of being confined to my own system) identified by Gallagher and Zahavi in ST approaches to intersubjectivity and empathy apply to TT as well, I would argue, and has its true source in the Cartesian ontology that these perspectives adopt.

Hybrid approaches to ST, such as Jeannerod and Pacherie's have attempted to address the risks of such a solipsism by developing a sequential account of simulation, according to which the explicit inferential act of attributing agency and projecting the outcome of the simulation onto the other follows "automatic" simulation of resonance systems (131-141). Although the potential solipsism of STs of intersubjectivity and empathy are recognized and addressed by these authors, their account does not, I believe, satisfactorily counter the objection of solipsism. Instead, it only defers it, since this sequential model remains a simulation-plus-projection model. Moreover, like other STs, Jeannerod and Pacherie's sequential account introduces the *problem of infinite regress* of constituting levels in its attempt to provide a solution to the solipsism problem.

Wheeler's comments on this form of explanation are to the point:

Philosophically speaking, this "bottoming" out in low-level

neurobiology is important, since it is supposed to prevent the

homuncular model from committing itself to the debacle of an

infinite regress of systems, each of which, in order to do what is

being asked of it, must literally possess the very sorts of

intentional capabilities (e.g. the capacity to understand the

meanings of messages) that the model is supposed to explain …

In other words, the "bottoming out" is supposed to ensure that all

talk of "little people in the head" remains entirely metaphorical.

(Wheeler 65)

What Wheeler calls *homuncular explanation* is best explained through an

example. Let's once more consider our example of empathizing with the

wronged driver in the car beside us. According to ST, our empathizing involves,

first, the recognition of a mental state in some basic form. We then *pretend* that

we are in the driver's shoes *in order to* understand his mental state(s). Thus, we

"feed" the described observable symptoms of his fury, as well as the represented

mental state, "into some mechanism of [our] own psychology…and allow that

mechanism to operate on the pretend states" (Goldman, "Imitation, Mind

Reading" 81). Finally, we project the "output state" (fury) back onto the driver.

In the implicit ST account we have an "automatic" understanding of this output

state and from the perspective of explicit ST it needs to be inferred.

The problem with such an account is that it leads to an infinite regress of

levels. If asked *who* does the 'feeding into', the 'pretending', 'allowing', and

'projecting', or how these are made possible, the answer is usually that they are

developed out of basic subtasks. These subtasks, however, are all necessarily "performed by an internal 'agent' less sophisticated than the actual agent" (Wheeler 65). This particularization when continued to its logical end arrives either at the proverbial little man in the head (homunculus; explicit ST) or until it "bottoms out" at the neuronal level (implicit ST).

The problem of infinite regress of levels, as mentioned above, is introduced in the attempt to address the threat of solipsism by dividing the process of cognition and empathy into a sequence of subtasks. The solipsism problem itself is a direct consequence of positing the trademark Cartesian epistemic divide between subject and object (including the object body). Within this ontology, we have no direct experience of others' mental states and have to infer these either on the basis of theory (TT) or on the basis of theory plus simulation (explicit ST). From the implicit ST perspective, on the other hand, we do have direct experience of the other in the form of a mirrored neural activation, but nevertheless have to infer the "authorship" of these states. Thus, within a Cartesian ontology, we could make sense neither of ourselves nor of others without explicit inferential processes.

One objection to both ST and TT consequently is that they provide models of *intra*subjectivity rather than *inter*subjectivity. ToM, conceived as inferring the (hidden) mental states of others by "assigning a state of one's own to someone else" (Goldman, *Simulating Minds* 40), remains inherently solipsistic. If our default way of understanding others were through mindreading, be it based on a folk-psychological theory or on pretense (simulation), would this

understanding ever truly be of *others*? In the following section I will describe

why phenomenologists have answered this question in the negative and provide

a phenomenological alternative to ToM's inferential account of intersubjectivity

and empathy.

2.3. An Alternative Account: Phenomenology and Empathy

From the phenomenological perspective, the subject-object dichotomy is

an ontological fallacy. As Zahavi points out, despite its superficial plausibility,

we should "avoid construing the mind as something visible to only one person

and invisible to everyone else. The mind is not something exclusively inner,

something cut off from the body and the surrounding world" ("Simulation,

Projection, and Empathy" 520). There seem to be some mental states whose

meanings we can perceive *directly* in bodily expressions, without the need for

interpretative inferences or abstract cognition. Instead, as Zahavi argues: "not all

mental states can lack a natural expression if intersubjectivity is to get off the

ground" ("Simulation, Projection, and Empathy" 520).

It might seem that this is precisely what implicit simulation theorists

propose. But, there is a subtle but crucial difference between a phenomenological

and an implicit ST account of intersubjectivity and empathy. Interpreting the

neuroscientific findings regarding resonance systems in terms of ST, I believe, is

neither as compelling nor as parsimonious as a phenomenological alternative,

which sees neural resonance systems as part of intersubjective *perception* per se

(e.g. Gallagher "Simulation Trouble"; Gallagher and Zahavi; Gallese and

Sinigaglia; Zahavi *Subjectivity and Selfhood*). From the phenomenological

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perspective, intersubjective perception involves directly perceiving others'
actions as intentional. Also, intersubjective perception unfolds over time and is
enactive rather than reactive. Gallagher and Zahavi make this point clear in the
following passage:

> At the phenomenological level, when I see the other's action or
> gesture, I see (I *directly perceive*) the meaning in the action or
> gesture. I see the joy or I see the anger, or I see the intention in the
> face or in the posture or in the gesture or action of the other. I see
> it. I don't have to simulate it. And I immediately see that it is *their*
> action, gesture, emotion, or intention, and it is extremely rare that
> I would be in a position to confuse it with my own. (179, original
> italics; see also Ellis; Merleau-Ponty)

Simulation theories discount the possibility of such direct perception of
intentionality, but, in reply, Gallagher and Zahavi show that "what theorists of
implicit simulation call 'simulation' is not simulation in any genuine sense of the
word" (179), since it meets neither the condition of pretense, nor of
instrumentality.

On the personal level, we cannot instrumentally manipulate neuronal
activation and on the subpersonal level, it makes no sense to argue that our brain
compares or *uses* mental representations (recall the homunculus argument
earlier). Gallagher and Zahavi describe argue this point as follows:

> In precisely the intersubjective circumstances that we are

considering, these neuronal systems do not take the initiative; they do not activate themselves, but are activated by the other person's action. The perception of the other person's action automatically activates in our brain the same areas that are activated when we engage in similar action. The other person *has an effect on us*. The other *elicits* this activation. This is not a simulation, but a perceptual elicitation. It is not we (or our brains) who are *doing* it, but the other who does this to us. (180)

Moreover, describing neural resonance system processes as involving pretense is misguided, regardless of whether these processes are conceived as vehicles or as representational content: "As vehicles, neurons either fire or they don't. They don't pretend to fire … [W]hat these neurons represent or register cannot be pretence in the way required by ST. They do not fire 'as if' *I were you*" (Gallagher and Zahavi 180). In sum, interpreting the neural resonance systems as simulations, as implicit ST does, is neither compelling nor parsimonious. Rather, they must be construed as belonging to intersubjective *perception* itself.

What might an alternative and hopefully more compelling explanation of empathy look like? What is an ontological alternative to Cartesianism? And, ultimately, what can such a phenomenological account of empathy add to our understanding of literary reading? In what follows, I will present an alternative model of empathy based on my reading of phenomenology. Wheeler characterizes our point of departure as follows:

It seems to me, however, that these scattered anti-Cartesian insights … cannot ground the kind of systematic, global, integrated transformation in the philosophical foundations of cognitive science that we have promised to reveal. To bring that transformation into view … we need to enter more radical philosophical territory. (Wheeler 120)

I will begin with the more radical philosophical territory that is the notoriously difficult philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Although Heidegger does not develop the concept of empathy with the same precision as Husserl or Merleau-Ponty, there is a sense in which it is already present in his notion that our existence (Being-in-the-world) is essentially intersubjective. Heidegger, as we will see, argues that empathy may disclose the intersubjective nature of our Being-in-the-world, but it does not make intersubjectivity possible in the first place, as Cartesian psychologists would have it.

Furthermore, Heidegger's treatment of consciousness, intersubjectivity, and empathy figures within the context of his larger discussion of Dasein (human being) as the reflection on existence (Being-in-the-world), and in extension on Being as such (ontological reflection). To begin, however, a brief overview of Heidegger's theory of how we encounter things and others in the world, particularly as it is developed in *Being and Time*, is in order. As we will see, Heidegger argues that the precondition for any (theoretical) consideration of objects is the background of the entire structure of our practical involvement with objects and in the world. This structure of our practical involvement with

and in the world is essentially intersubjective and it is precisely this fundamental (a priori intersubjectivity) that, he holds, some forms of empathy may disclose.

2.3.1. A Brief Introduction to Heideggerian Ontology

Heidegger turns on its head the Cartesian notion that we make sense of the objective, external world at the end of a sequence of conscious and interpretative operations involving inferences formed on the basis of internal representations that stand in for external objects and events. He claims that, instead of consciousness endowing an independently objective world with meaning, it is our Being-in-the-world itself, i.e. *existence* in a Heideggerian sense, that is the condition of possibility for consciousness of any kind— including of an independently objective world. According to Heidegger (*Being and Time* 91-145), in our everyday dealings with and in the world, we do not usually encounter entities as independent objects with describable properties, but rather as *equipment* (*Zeug*). The mode of being that deals with equipment he calls *readiness-to-hand* (*Zuhandenheit*) and the mode of being which represents the world as an array of independent objects with properties *present-at-hand* (*Vorhandenheit*). We can thus say that entities are *intelligible* as *present-at-hand* (i.e., *things* describable by detached theoretical study) only against the background of their readiness-to-hand (how they (dis-)appear in the context of our ongoing purposive dealings with them). In fact, Heidegger holds, entities in the world disappear into the background in their readiness-to-hand (i.e., when we skillfully "cope" with them; see Dreyfus, "Why Heideggerian AI failed"):

> The ready-to-hand is not grasped theoretically at all … The

peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its

readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [zurückziehen] in

order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our

everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves

[die Werkzeuge selbst]. On the contrary, that with which we

concern ourselves primarily is the work–that which is to be

produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too.

The work bears with it that referential totality within which the

equipment is encountered. (*Being and Time* 99)

I will elaborate on the driving example to help clarify Heidegger's point.

It is while driving my children to hockey practice that I encountered the furious

driver in the car beside me. During such moments, and while driving in general, I

am not proximally aware of all the equipment/"Things" involved in successfully

driving a car and maneuvering through traffic, such as "pressing right pedal to

accelerate", "turning steering wheel to left by 75 degrees"[4], "push left pedal

down, then move lever in right hand up and over", etc. In order to successfully

drive a car in traffic, all these things have to recede into the background. The car

as equipment has to recede into the background and become transparent. Driving

it becomes an *in-order-to*, which itself is embedded into the web of *in-order-to's*

that structure my life. That is, even when I am stopped at a traffic light observing

the furious driver beside me, the *in-order-to* of driving my children to hockey

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[4] Merleau-Ponty convincingly argues that such seemingly objective notions as "left", "right", "above", and "below" already presuppose a Being-in-the-world, an ongoing and meaningful relation in and with the world. (288**).**

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practice remains. The car itself, however, is encountered as ready-to-hand, not present-at-hand.

2.3.2. A Phenomenological Take on Empathy: A Priori Intersubjectivity or "this prejudice in favour of being"

Readiness-To-Hand and Empathy

The notion of *a priori intersubjectivity* can be nicely developed against the background of Heidegger's ontology. As discussed earlier, Heidegger argues that our pervasive and fundamental mode of dealing with and in the world is not as disinterested spectators. We do not usually encounter entities as independent objects with describable properties (*present-at-hand*), but rather as *equipment* (*readiness-to-hand*). Crucially for Heidegger, however, we cannot understand our encountering of others as a special case of encountering "Things" in the world (*Being and Time* 162). In fact, we encounter entities in the world *on the basis of an a priori intersubjectivity*. This intersubjectivity, so to speak, forms the other side of readiness-to-hand. Hall summarizes Heidegger's arguments as follows:

> (1) the equipmentality or instrumentality ("readiness-to-hand") of things is ontologically basic; (2) the essential nature of human being ("Dasein") is purposive, practical involvement with things as items of equipment or instruments; and (3) the world is the referential context generated by purposive human activity. (251)

In Wheeler's terminology, we could say that we do not encounter entities in the world as "context independent" objects, but rather as tools in "coping" (readiness-to-hand). These tools, however, inherently refer to cultural background practices and to a "community" of others. Heidegger describes this as follows:

> The Others who are thus 'encountered' in a ready-to-hand, environmental context of equipment, are not somehow added on in thought to some Thing which is proximally just present-at-hand; such 'Things' are encountered from out of the world in which they are ready-to-hand for Others–a world which is always mine too in advance. (*Being and Time* 154).

Heidegger consequently criticizes the then (and now) prevailing notion of empathy (*Einfühlung*), which attempts to explain how an independent, disembedded (and often disembodied) subject, transparent to itself, gains access to (the concealed minds of) other human beings. He describes this as follows:

> This phenomenon, which is none too happily designated as *'empathy'* ["*Einfühlung*"], is then supposed, as it were to provide the first ontological bridge from one's own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off. (*Being and Time* 160)

Thus, for Heidegger, empathy is not *constitutive* of intersubjectivity. Rather, it *discloses* a pervasive *a priori intersubjectivity* (see also Zahavi,

"Beyond Empathy", *Subjectivity and Selfhood*). Consequently, Heidegger claims that "Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already is with Others. 'Empathy' does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does 'empathy' become possible" (*Being and Time* 162).

However, if Dasein (human existence, human being) is essentially and structurally intersubjective, as Heidegger claims, "the problem of other minds–how one (isolated) subject can encounter and understand another (isolated) subject–turns out to be an illusory problem" (Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy" 154). From this perspective a conscious effort to understand the states and experiences of others, such as ToM requires, is a rare phenomenon and derivative of an a priori intersubjectivity. Consequently, models in which empathy is understood as that which makes intersubjective understanding possible seem to be off to a false start and ultimately will provide a distorted account of both empathy and intersubjectivity per se. Zahavi comments on this as follows:

> [Even if the empathic approach to intersubjectivity] does not commit the same mistakes as the argument from analogy, it does misconstrue the nature of intersubjectivity, since it takes it to be first and foremost a thematic exchange between two individuals, where one is trying to grasp the emotions or experiences of the other (this connotation is particularly clear in the German word for empathy: Einfühlung) … But if this is so, an investigation of intersubjectivity that takes empathy as its point of departure and constant point of reference is bound to lead us astray. ("Beyond

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Empathy" 155)

This Heideggerian ontology is, of course, not alone in its anti-Cartesianism. Within the phenomenological tradition especially, many non-Cartesian models of empathy have been developed. The reason for choosing to spell out Heidegger's alternative is that within it he develops his idea that Dasein (human being) is essentially intersubjective *and* essentially defined by ontological reflection. The precondition for ontological reflection, according to Heidegger, is a reflection on our Being-in-the-world, that is, on our engagement in and with the world in the mode of the ready-to-hand. This relationship between the ready-to-hand and ontological reflection will become focal in chapter 4.

Perception and Empathy

Both Husserl (*Cartesian Meditations* 112-136) and Merleau-Ponty (e.g. 353-354) also emphasize the fact that our Being-in-the-world is intersubjective in essence by virtue of our practical involvement in it and due to the cultural background practices we are embedded in. Rather than assigning this intersubjectivity completely to the background, however, they both describe how this intersubjectivity is disclosed in our intentional relation to perceptual objects. Of perhaps particular interest to literary scholars is the importance of perspectival (in-)determinacy in this context.

The argument runs roughly as follows. Since I can only ever perceive one of theoretically indefinite profiles of any given perceptual object at once, I never

perceive any object in its totality. The concealed profiles of the object, however, point toward *possible* perspectives of perception and thus toward other subjects. Not only does the object exist thus for others, but this "horizon of every perception" (Merleau-Ponty 354) as well as my intentionality refers to an a priori intersubjectivity. Husserl describes this as follows:

> Thus everything objective that stands out before me in experience and primarily in perception has an apperceptive horizon of possible experience, own and foreign. Ontologically speaking, every appearance that I have is from the very beginning a part of an open endless, but not explicitly realized totality of possible appearances of the same, and the subjectivity belonging to this appearance is open intersubjectivity. (*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II* 289, as translated by Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* 119-120**)**

Embodiment and Empathy

Like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty (1962) wants to stress the inherently intersubjective nature of our intentional relations toward the world, when he claims for instance that "from my window only the tower of the church is visible, but this limitation simultaneously holds out the promise that from elsewhere the whole church could be seen" (104). He especially emphasizes that it is our physical *embodiment* that grounds this *a priori intersubjectivity* and that

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constitutes a primordial ground for perception and action in general.[5] He

describes this as follows:

> It is, therefore, quite true that any perception of a thing, a shape or
>
> a size as real, any perceptual constancy refers back to the positing
>
> of a world and of a system of experience in which my body is
>
> inescapably linked with phenomena. But the system of experience
>
> is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a
>
> certain point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of
>
> my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a
>
> horizon of every perception. (353-354)

And in another place he emphasizes the embodied nature of an *a priori*

intersubjectivity in relation to our perception of space:

> There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom a world
>
> exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This
>
> captive or natural spirit is my body, not that momentary body
>
> which is the instrument of my personal choices and which fastens
>
> upon this or that world, but the system of anonymous 'functions'

---

[5] Heidegger's silence regarding the role of embodiment is often met with criticism and as an argument for the greater relevance of Merleau-Ponty in discussions of embodied and embedded cognition (e.g. van Manen, Thompson, personal communication). Upon my view, however, Heidegger might have countered that Merleau-Ponty's emphasis of embodiment runs the risk of reinstating a Cartesian subject-object dichotomy despite affirmations to the contrary, whence Heidegger's introduction of the concept of Dasein. In fact, the following passage from *Being and Time* can be read as an anticipation of and reply to criticism of this kind: "Being-in, on the other hand, is a state of Dasein's Being; it is an existentiale. So one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal Thing (such as a human body) 'in' an entity which is present-at-hand" (*Being and Time* 79 and 419). In later works Merleau-Ponty avoids this ambiguity by moving toward the notion of "flesh".

which draw every particular focus into a project. Nor does this

blind adherence to the world, this prejudice in favour of being,

occur only at the beginning of my life. It endows every

subsequent perception, of space with its meaning, and it is

resumed at every instance. Space and perception generally

represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the

perceptual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with

the world more ancient than thought. (296)

Thus, for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, not only is *a priori*

intersubjectivity the ground for other forms of intersubjectivity such as empathy,

but this fundamental intersubjectivity is disclosed in our intentional relation to

the world *qua* perceptual objects. And for Merleau-Ponty in particular, the

source for this "prejudice in favour of being" is our physical embodiment.[6]

The problem we run into, however, as Zahavi (*Subjectivity and Selfhood*

154) points out, is that our intuitions regarding intersubjectivity are conflicting.

On the one hand, we agree with Wittgenstein and others that "[w]e do not see

facial contortions and make the *inference* that he is feeling joy, grief, boredom.

We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable

_____

6 It should be clear that Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment is fundamentally different from

that present in some of the current discussions of "embodied cognition" (e.g. Lakoff and

Johnson), despite the fact that these mind-plus-body approaches sometimes appeal to

phenomenology when making their claims.

to give any other description of the features" (§570). On the other, there are times when the thoughts, emotions, and feelings of a person we encounter face-to-face seem completely hidden from and inaccessible to us. Thus, besides the importance of *symmetry* between self and other experiences, discussions of intersubjectivity seem to be incomplete if *asymmetry* is not accounted for. Phenomenologists such as Husserl, Sartre, and Levinas have analyzed this asymmetry by emphasizing the *alterity* of the other in their discussions of intersubjectivity.

2.3.3. Alterity and Asymmetry as Preconditions of Intersubjectivity and
Empathy

When phenomenologists stress *a priori intersubjectivity* and argue that our understanding of other people's expressive behavior is direct and unmediated by inference, they sometimes overemphasize the symmetry between first and third person experience, i.e. between the actual experience and the experience as understood by an observer (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 109). Husserl, Sartre, and Levinas have focused precisely on the critical importance of the *asymmetry* between self and other for a theory of intersubjectivity and empathy. If it weren't for asymmetry, I could not experience the other as other. Rather, it would be an extension of myself. Husserl makes this claim as follows:

> [P]roperly speaking, neither the other Ego himself, nor his
> subjective processes or his appearances themselves, nor anything
> else belonging to his own essence, becomes given in our
> experience originally. If it were, if what belongs to the other's own

essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same. (*Cartesian Meditations* 109)

And he adds:

The character of the existent "other" has its basis in this kind of verifiable accessibility of what is not originally accessible. Whatever can become presented, and evidently verified, *originally* – is something *I* am; or else it belongs to me as peculiarly my own. Whatever, by virtue thereof, is experienced in that founded manner which characterizes a primordially unfulfillable experience – an experience that does not give something itself originally but that consistently verifies something indicated – is "other". (*Cartesian Meditations* 114-115; *original italics*)

Thus, rather than being a flaw in the phenomenological model of intersubjectivity, the difference between my givenness of the other's experience from his or her own experience is what constitutes the *alterity* of the other and is consequently a condition of possibility for *inter*subjectivity and empathy. Recall here that one of the criticisms directed at ToM approaches to intersubjectivity and empathy was precisely this failure to account for alterity.

Sartre and Levinas have taken the notion of alterity to its extreme in their discussions of intersubjectivity. They emphasize the "transcendent, ineffable and

elusive character of the other, and reject[s] any attempt to bridge or downplay the difference between self and other" (Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy" 158). As mentioned earlier, Husserl also stresses alterity and the transcendence of the other in intersubjectivity. Unlike Sartre and Levinas, however, he and Merleau-Ponty take as point of departure the facticity of our experience of (understanding) others. Theirs is an analysis of how intersubjectivity is possible and they argue that the answer lies in the *essential structure of human subjectivity itself.*

> The other can be evident to me because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body in its wake. (Merleau-Ponty 410)

Like Husserl before him, Merleau-Ponty, in describing the conditions of possibility not only of intersubjectivity and empathy but also of perceiving objects, argues for the fundamental role that our physical embodiment plays in our intentional relation to the world. Using the example again of viewing a church through his window, he describes this as follows:

> [I]n order that my window may impose upon me a point of view of the church, it is necessary in the first place that my body should impose upon me one of the world … In other words, I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, walk round them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe: in order to be able to do so, I should need the use of a

second body which itself would be unobservable. When I say that

my body is always perceived by me, these words are not to be

taken in a purely statistical sense, there must be, in the way my

own body presents itself, something which makes its absence or

its variation inconceivable. (104)

Merleau-Ponty is making several distinctions here. First, he undermines

the Cartesian *ego cogitans*, whose permanence and transparency to itself is taken

for granted. If my perception were exhausted in providing me with a "point of

view of the church" from a first person experience only, I could not tell where

my body stops and the world begins. My body is mostly transparent to me in my

dealings in and with the world, as we have seen. Nevertheless my embodied self-

awareness is pervasive and continuous. In perceiving objects in the world, I do

not "observe" my body as I would an object. Moreover, the question Merleau-

Ponty asks here is how it becomes possible for my body to "impose upon me [a

point of view] of the world" at all. If perspective is a relation of two points

towards each other in space it thus requires a *third* point of view to draw this

relation, but which eye, which body draws this relation?

Merleau-Ponty's answer is that our subjectivity is structured in such a

way that it enables us to experience *ipseity and alterity* in self, i.e. our embodied

experience of self inherently incorporates both a first and a third person

perspective. To avoid misunderstanding, the third person perspective on our self

referred to here involves neither projection, simulation, nor pretense. Rather it is

an inherent structural feature of our subjectivity, which is contingent on our physical embodiment.

Drawing on Husserl's discussion of *Inner-* and *Außerleiblichkeit* (lived bodily inwardness and externality of the body; *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II* 337) and his discussion of *double-sensation*, Merleau-Ponty describes what is at stake in this counter-intuitive notion of ipseity and alterity in subjectivity:

> My body, it was said, is recognized by its power to give me 'double sensations': when I touch my right hand with my left, my right hand, as an object, has the strange property of being able to feel too … When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set-up in which both hands can alternate the rôles of 'touching' and being 'touched'. (106)

This experiment is easy to perform on oneself. When I touch my right hand with my left, I can consciously oscillate between my body's intentional relational to the world performing the touch to that of receiving it. Of course, our intentional relation to the world is usually not a consciously willful act. Merleau-Ponty continues as follows:

> What was meant by talking about 'double sensations' is that, in passing from one rôle to the other, I can identify the hand touched as the same one which will in a moment be touching. In other

words, in this bundle of bones and muscles which my right hand

presents my left, I can anticipate for an instant the integument or

incarnation of that other right hand, alive and mobile, which I

thrust toward things in order to explore them. (106)

My body's capability for both proprioception and exteroception is thus

constituted by my ability to change perspective as it were from perceiving to

perceived. As Zahavi points out, "according to Husserl this reversibility shows

the interiority and the exteriority of the body to be different manifestations of the

same" *(Subjectivity and Selfhood* 157).

But what are the implications of this phenomenon for the structure of

subjectivity? It means that I can experience my body as my own but also as

Other. This might seem trivial at first glance, but both Husserl and Merleau-

Ponty argue that this double structure of subjectivity is quite simply the

precondition for any form of perception *per se,* let alone empathy. Drawing on

Husserl, Merleau-Ponty sees this *dynamic* between *ipseity and alterity* as a form

of *reflection*: "[t]he body catches itself from the outside engaged in a cognitive

process; it tries to touch itself while being touched, and initiates 'a kind of

reflection' which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects" (107).

Within the context of our discussion of empathy, the dynamic between

first and third person perspective, individuality and anonymity, as a structural

feature of our subjectivity, is critical. As Zahavi puts it,

One reason I am able to recognize other embodied subjects is that

my own bodily self-experience is characterized by this remarkable

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interplay between *ipseity* and *alterity* … When my left hand

touches my right, or when I perceive another part of my body, I

am experiencing myself in a manner that anticipates both the way

in which an other would experience me and the way in which I

would experience an other. (*Subjectivity and Selfhood* 157)

The notion of *alterity in self* also ties into the argument for *a priori*

intersubjectivity, since the third person perspective of anonymous Others is

already inherent in the structure of my subjectivity. Thus, from the perspective of

phenomenology, the problem to which the *argument from analogy* as well as its

current cousins, the ToM approaches to intersubjectivity, attempt to provide

solutions, namely how access to another is possible, turns out to be a pseudo

problem. In their Cartesianism, these approaches seem to overlook *alterity in self*

as well as *a priori intersubjectivity*, both of which are contingent on our

embodiment and embeddedness. Merleau-Ponty–forty years before the discovery

of mirror resonance systems–describes this as follows:

The observed correlations between my physical behaviour and

that of others, my intentions and my pantomime, may well

provide me with a clue in the methodical attempt to know others

and on occasions when direct perception fails, but they do not

teach me the existence of others. Between consciousness and my

body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine

and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an

internal relation which causes the other to appear as the

completion of the system. The other can be evident to me because

I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity

draws its body in its wake. (410)

2.4. A Phenomenological Understanding of Empathy and Existential

Reading

Now, with these philosophical distinctions in tow, I will attempt to show

how this phenomenological notion of empathy is a first step in my proposed

characterization of existential reading. I will develop this proposal in contrast to

Oatley and Mar's notion that literary reading involves the kind of empathic

simulation that ST posits (Oatley, "A Taxonomy", "Why Fiction"; Oatley and

Mar, "Evolutionary Pre-Adaptation"; Mar and Oatley, "Function of Fiction";

Mar et al., "Bookworms Versus Nerds").

By empathizing with literary characters and the situations they are in,

Oatley and Gholamain argue, we both implicitly (on a neuronal level) and

explicitly (inferentially) simulate and thus experience the emotions of literary

characters and the social situations they are in (269). Consequently, literary

reading allows for "prediction and explanation while revealing the underlying

processes of what is being modeled" (Mar and Oatley 173). The following quote

presents some of the key tenets of Oatley and Mar's model of literary reading as

simulation:

Minds have this potentiality for simulation, for making models of

the world (Craik, 1943). Novels and plays work by guiding the

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simulation process. The core of this simulation is identification

with one or more characters: the central process is that the reader

runs the actions of the character on his own planning processor,

taking on the character's goals, and experiencing emotions as

these plans meet vicissitudes. So according to this theory the

performance of a play or the text of a novel is a simulation just as

a computer program can be a simulation; and in order to work the

simulation must be run. Literary simulations run on minds of

audiences or readers, just as computer simulations run on

computers. (Oatley, "A Taxonomy" 66)

What kind of empathic engagement does Oatley's characterization above

comprise? Let us check this model against our own experience of reading: When

I read a novel or watch a play, do I tend to identify with one or more of the

characters? If it is compelling and as long as I am not reading it from a critical

distance (e.g., analyzing its stylistic features, etc.), yes, I tend to get drawn into

the world of the work and usually identify with the protagonist in some form. Do

I take on this character's goals? Do I vicariously experience his or her plight,

fear, elation, and despair? And are these *my* own emotions rather than mere

cognitive appraisals of the character's emotions? From my reading experiences,

the answer here would be yes as well. Also, do I *pretend* to be in their shoes? Do

I simulate their experience? Here I would argue that, strictly speaking, *most of*

the time this is not the case. To make this point, it helps to remind ourselves of

the fact that in order for an action to count as simulation it has to meet either the

pretense or the instrumental condition or both. Further, as argued earlier, it seems misleading to state that our minds implicitly simulate goals, since subconscious or subpersonal processes do not fulfill either of these conditions.

In reading, just as in our everyday lives, I argue, our empathizing with and understanding of others is *mostly* not a process of drawing inferences based on mental representations in order to bridge the epistemic divide between subject and object. Rather, the empathic engagement during literary reading may disclose an a priori intersubjectivity to which we may be inattentive in our everyday lives of practical activity. That is, rather than encountering others as present-at-hand, as Cartesian psychologists would have it, reading may foreground or make tangible our pervasive mode of encountering and dealing in and with the world, namely readiness-to-hand. Moreover, reflecting on our embodied and embedded dealings in the world in readiness-to-hand, may in turn open onto a reflection on *existence* (Being-in-the-world; *Being and Time* 116-120).

Although Heidegger repeatedly stresses that we should not confound our perception of others with the perception of objects, I believe the following quote will help illustrate the difference between an empathic engagement with a literary character and text as it is conceived within a Cartesian ontology and its phenomenological alternative:

> Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our
> immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. We
> do not represent distant things merely in our mind–as the

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textbooks have it–so that only mental representations of distant things run through our minds and heads as substitutes of distant things. If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking *of* that bridge that *in itself* thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From this spot here, we are there at the bridge[7]–we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness. From right here we may even be much nearer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing. (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 154)

If we apply the philosophical distinctions made in this chapter and what Heidegger suggests in the quote above to the understanding of our empathic engagement with Ivan Ilych, it suddenly becomes conceivable how (and theoretically sound to argue that) a reader might follow Ivan's transition from the *belief in* to an *experience of* his own finitude. In our empathic engagement with Ivan's plight, "we are by no means at some representational content in our

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[7] In the phrase: "From this spot here, we are at the bridge …" Heidegger alludes to the theme surrounding the significance of deictic shifts, which we have tentatively begun to look at in the context of the stylistic device of free indirect discourse (Sopčák, Kuiken, and Miall). These deictic shifts can mark a changed and embodied positionality in "thinking" the other (or in this case the bridge). Free indirect discourse often presents such an embodied positionality by means of deictic shifts. This is a theme that I will not develop further here, but that we will return to in the near future.

consciousness", or pretend to be in his shoes in order to understand the situation and ourselves better. In fact, "we may even be much nearer to" the experience of Ivan's struggle with his own finitude "and to what it makes room for" than when we hear of a similar situation in the midst of our daily activities.

Through our empathic engagement, an a priori intersubjectivity may be disclosed, in which we "understand"/feel that we share with Ivan his mortality. In reading thus, we may be moved beyond the mere belief in our own finitude to the acute experience of it (and of finitude in general). This possibility is a first step in my proposed characterization of existential reading.

But how might literary reading initiate such a transformative process? How may it make experientially accessible the structure of the readiness-to-hand that underlies our dealings with and in the world? And lastly, how may such an awareness through reading open onto a reflection on *existence*? One aspect contributing to the experiential and potentially self-implicating aspect of literary reading seems to be its ability to temporarily make us withdraw our senses from our immediate surroundings and carry us off into another world. The following chapter will discuss this phenomenon and, more specifically, what kind of self-awareness, if any, remains during full empathic engagement.

3. Self and Self-Awareness during Full Empathic Engagement

Haven't we all experienced the situation in which we had to repeat something we said, raise our voice, or stomp our feet to get the attention of our child, partner, or friend immersed in a good book? And haven't we also had someone wave their arms at us, whistle, or call us by our full name when we

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were thus empathically engrossed with a character's experiences? Where are we when we lose touch with our immediate surroundings or, put differently, where is our self-awareness at such times?

Green, Brock, and Kaufman are researchers who have studied this phenomenon of being transported into a literary world at great length. According to their findings, "transportation" is an experience brought about by being absorbed in an activity: "Individuals who are transported are fully concentrating on the story. They often lose track of time or fail to notice events occurring around them because of their focused involvement in the world of the narrative" (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 315).

One of the effects of transportation, Green, Brock, and Kaufman hold, is that it involves a pleasurable experience of escaping the self. Readers who are transported into a literary world "not only leave the real world behind, but they likely leave their worries and public self-consciousness behind as well"[8] which in turn "creates an openness … leading individuals to appreciate truths about themselves and their world (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 317).

But isn't the transported self that has "left the real world behind" at odds with the (self-transparent) Cartesian cognizer or "controlling centre" (Grøn) that forms representations, draws inferences, and *pretends* that characters' experiences are his or her own *in order to* understand self and world better? How easily is the "relief from self-focus" (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 317) and "loss

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[8] Green, Brock, and Kaufman do not mention what happens to private self-consciousness in transportation. If it were to remain, examining how it relates to the phenomenological notion of 'mineness' discussed below might prove worthwhile.

of self-awareness" (318) reconciled with the form of self-awareness that is implicit in claims that transportation also enables readers to "use characters' situations and experiences to understand their own lives" (319) "clarifying his or her mental models of self" (Mar and Oatley, "Function of Fiction" 182)?

This chapter focuses on the loss of self-awareness during full engagement, including empathic engagement, with a literary text. After providing a critique of the Cartesian model of self, according to which such loss-of self-awareness points to the fact that the unity and continuity of a self over time is either an illusion or a narrative construct, I present a Husserlian model according to which the full engagement with the other and a continuation of a certain self-awareness occur simultaneously. Finally, I will show how this phenomenological alternative contributes to my sense of existential reading by providing a characterization of how readers can be fully empathically engaged with, for instance, Ivan and simultaneously fully present to themselves.

3.1. A Cartesian Understanding of Self and Self-Awareness

3.1.1. The Episodic Self and Full Empathic Engagement

Discussions surrounding "the self" present a terminological quagmire. As Galen Strawson points out, in contributions to the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* leading up to 1999 at least 21 different concepts of the self appear. He therefore concludes that the "notion of the self as we have it is much too unclear for us to answer questions like 'Do selves exist?'" (101). He opts for a humbler approach that in his view motivates asking the metaphysical question in the first

place, namely, "What sort of thing is figured in Self-Experience?" (102).

Although this approach might seem much like a phenomenological one, when

contrasting his understanding of self with that of Husserl, important differences

stand out. One of these differences, I will argue, is that the Cartesian principles

implicit in Strawson's (but also Green, Brock, and Kaufman's; Oatley and

Mar's; and Miall's) model of self and self-awareness preclude the possibility that

during full empathic engagement a certain kind of self awareness is lost, while

another, more fundamental, remains.

Strawson's position can roughly be summarized as follows: Yes, such a

thing as a self exists. No, a self is not continuous or persistent, that is, "it does

not persist over longer periods of time" (100). For there to be a self, there needs

to be consciousness. But since, the "basic form of our consciousness [and

consequently our self-experience] is that of a gappy series of eruptions of

consciousness out of non-consciousness" (130), the self we experience as

continuous over time does not exist. However, what does exist are SESMETs,

"Subjects of Experience that are Single Mental Things" (118). What his

SESMETs amount to are the (non-continuous) selves that appear in moments of

conscious self-experience (120, 127-128, 132). According to Strawson, these

subjects of experience are discrete and "concrete objects" (100) and the idea that

a self is "a persisting thing, a thing that continues to exist across hiatuses in

experience" (106) is a mistake. The illusion of continuity we experience is given

merely by the fact that the past is alive "in the form of the present: in so far as it

has shaped the way one is in the present" (110).

3.1.2. The Problem of Non-Continuity over Time of the Cartesian Self

As Arvidson (2000) has pointed out, if our consciousness periodically and completely lost contact with the world as Strawson suggests, there would be no ground for continuity of a self whatsoever. This position obviously poses a serious problem for any claims of self-modification through full empathic engagement with a literary text, since with the loss of self-awareness readers would simultaneously lose the basis for self-reflection. Self-reflection, however, is the precondition for using a character's situation to understand one's own life (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 319) as well as for clarifying one's mental model of self (Mar and Oatley, "Function of Fiction" 182), and to "work through our own negative feelings in a socially acceptable way" (Miall, *Literary Reading* 81).

3.1.3. The Problem of Infinite Regress of Levels of the Cartesian Self

The non-continuity problem above appears in an attempt to avoid another problem the Cartesian model of self runs into, namely the infinite regress of constituting levels. The move toward an "episodic" self that Strawson (109) makes is motivated by the realization that a precondition for a self to be continuous and persistent across time is a time-conscious self that synthesizes the manifold of experiences. This, as we have just seen, is also the precondition for self-reflection and consequently self-modification. However, such self-awareness presupposes the differentiability of self from what is not self, which in turn requires a form of conscious experiencing at another level to bring the

ipseity and *alterity* into relation, and so on *ad infinitum*. As has often been

pointed out (e.g., Zahavi, "Self and Consciousness"), this approach leads to an

infinite regress. Husserl himself commented on this problem as follows:

> Müssen wir also nicht schließen: ein Urprozess, der für sich selbst
>
> nicht als Prozess konstituiert, also seiner selbst bewusst ist, ist
>
> undenkbar? Es muss also jedes Erlebnis bewusst und auch das
>
> Bewusstsein von ihm selbst bewusst sein. Es wird nun alles von
>
> der Aufklärung der Selbstbezogenheit des Erlebnisse erster Stufe
>
> konstituierenden Prozesses abhängen, die ja zunächst so klingt
>
> wie der sich am eigenen Schopf aus dem Sumpf ziehende Herr
>
> von Münchhausen, und die wir doch nicht preisgeben können,
>
> wenn unendliche Regresse vermieden werden sollen. (*Die*
>
> *'Bernauer Manuskripte'* 207)[9]

3.1.4. The "Internal Object Interpretation" of Self

Many philosophers, including influential phenomenologists such as

Schütz and Gadamer–but also Husserl in some of his writings (e.g. *Die*

'Bernauer Manuskripte'; *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*)–came

to the conclusion that the precondition of self-awareness is a "turning inward" in

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[9] No English translation of *Die Bernauer Manuskripte* is as yet available. Here is an awkward attempt at translating the quoted passage: "Must we thus not conclude: a primoridal process that is not constituted to itself as process, i.e. that is not conscious of itself, is unthinkable? Thus, every experience must be conscious, and every awareness thereof must also be conscious of itself. Now everything will depend on the elucidation of the auto-referentiality of the process constituting experiences of the first degree, which initially sound like the Baron Münchhausen lifting himself out of the swamp by the tuft of his hair, but which we must not renounce if infinite regresses are to be avoided."

which explicit reflection "singles out" (i.e., objectifies) an experience (*Erlebnis*) from the constant flow of pre-reflective consciousness/experienc*ing* (*Erleben*). As we have just seen, however, this "internal object interpretation" of self (Zahavi, "Time and Consciousness" 99) turns out to be the source of both the problem of non-continuity and that of the infinite regress of levels.

Interestingly, Husserl recognizes these problems, but sometimes forgets, it seems, his own proposed solutions to it. As Zahavi argues, the recently published *Bernauer Manuskripte* are an example of a retrogression in Husserl's writings to a state of confusion regarding time-consciousness where he had earlier reached clarity. Like Strawson, Husserl here returns to an account of self and consciousness, in which perceptual acts are constituted as objects (*Gegenständlichkeiten*) in time-consciousness. In the *Bernauer Manuskripte*, he writes:

> [E]s soll gezeigt werden, dass die Wahrnehmungen von
> immanenten Daten und so alle Akte vermöge der Wesensstruktur
> des inneren Bewusstseins, das der Urstrom des Erlebens ist,
> konstituiert sein müssen als Gegenständlichkeiten der immanenten
> Zeit und derselben, wie die von ihnen wahr- genommenen Daten,
> und dass eben in dieser Konstitution ihr "innerlich"
> Wahrgenommensein besteht. (108)[10]

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[10] The *Bernau Manuscripts* have not been translated into English yet. Here is an awkward attempt to translate the passage by Husserl above: "What is to be shown, is that the perception of immanent data, and thus all acts, must be constituted by virtue of the essential structure of inner consciousness–which is the primal stream of consciousness–as objects of immanent time and of

The problem of infinite regress appears by arguing that the level of inner-time consciousness constitutes the level of intentional experiences as immanent temporal objects (Zahavi, "Time and Consciousness" 102). Husserl here slides into a reflection theory of consciousness, which reinstates the subject-object dichotomy that is inferential and representational in nature. But what might a theory of consciousness look like in which self-awareness is not reflective object-awareness?

3.2. A Phenomenological Understanding of Self-Awareness

3.2.1. The First-Personal Givenness of Subjective Experience

The alternative to the "internal object interpretation" (Zahavi, "Time and Consciousness" 99) is Husserl's notion that a pre-reflective, non-objectifying givenness of experienc*ing* (*Erleben*) constitutes the most basic and irreducible form of self-awareness and time-consciousness (*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II* 151, 429). Importantly, this pre-reflective form of self-awareness is already in and of itself *meaningful* and "should not be taken as the result of a higher-order representation, reflection, internal monitoring or introspection, but rather be treated as an intrinsic feature of experience" (Zahavi, "Time and Consciousness" 104).

The crux, it seems, lies in our default Cartesianism (see Lewontin), which splits the world into the subjective and the objective. However, self-awareness need not be awareness of *a self*; it can perhaps more compellingly be conceived

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the same [time] as that of the objects of perception, and that their "inner" perception consists precisely in this constitution."

as an awareness of *itself*. And precisely this mineness of my *experiencing* might "identify a certain basic notion of self(hood) with the invariant dimension of first-personal givenness characterizing all of my experiences" (Zahavi, "Time and Consciousness" 116; see Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* 308-317).

And yet, even though the notion of this non-objectifying, basic form of self-awareness brings a halt to the infinite regress that internal object interpretations of self and self-awareness are prone to and secures the continuity of self over time, is this primary self-givenness sufficient to qualify as a *self*? It is not clear how discrete experiences could emerge from an ongoing stream of experiencing, nor how identity across a manifold of such experiences could be explained if self were fully captured by the mineness of experiencing itself. The answer, it seems is that both experienc*ing* (*Erleben*) and the synthesizing of experiences (*Erlebnisse*)–as well as their relation– must be accounted for in a compelling alternative to the internal object interpretation of self.

3.2.2. The Co-Constitution of Experiencing and Experience in Inner-Time Consciousness

The solution proposed by Husserl to the dilemmas presented above, is the continuous co-constitution of experiencing [*Erleben*] and experience [*Erlebnis*] in inner-time consciousness. For Husserl inner-time consciousness always has, aside from the *primal impression* (perception of the immediate present), a *retentive* and a *protentive* element, both of which are non-objectifying aspects of

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the experiencing/experience structure (Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*). Merleau-Ponty describes this as follows:

> Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of retentions, and bites into the future with its protentions. I do not pass through a series of instances of now, the images of which I preserve and which, placed end to end, make a line. (483-484)

Thus, it is this structure of inner-time consciousness (retention-primal impression-protention) in which experiencing and the experiences are continuously co-constituted that allows for a continuous unity of self over time without explicit objectifying awareness/reflection. Is such an understanding of (self-) awareness logical, though? How can I be aware of the ongoing flux of experiencing at the same time as I am aware of its unity in time? Using the perception of tone as an example, Husserl describes this seeming paradox as follows:

> There is one, unique flow of consciousness in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself become constituted at once. As shocking (when not initially even absurd) as it may seem to say the flow of consciousness constitutes its own unity, it is nonetheless the case

that it does. (Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* 84)

Although the level of experiencing (Erleben) is distinguishable from that of experience (Erlebnis), they do not seem separable (*On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* 299-317; *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory* 397-399). A precondition for this "double intentionality" (*On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* 84, 308), and the answer to the seeming paradox Husserl points to in the quote above, it seems, is to account for alterity as a structural feature of our subjectivity. In Husserl's own words:

> Dann hätten wir zu sagen, das konkrete Ich hat in seinem Leben als Bewusstseinsleben beständig einen Kern von Hyle, von Nicht-Ich, aber wesentlich ichzugehörig. Ohne ein Reich der Vorgegebenheiten, ein Reich konstituierter Einheiten, konstituiert als Nicht-Ich, ist kein Ich möglich. (*Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II* 379)[11]

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[11] *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität [On the Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity]* is not available in English. Here is an awkward attempt to translate this passage: "Then we would have to say that the concrete I (ego) has in its life as conscious life a constant nucleus of *Hyle*, of not-I, but which belongs essentially to the I. Without a realm of pregivens, a realm of constituted entitities, which are constituted as not-I, no I is possible."

3.3. A Phenomenological Understanding of Self and Self-Awareness in Full

Empathic Engagement During Literary Reading

Let us once again consult our own experience to get a feel for what is at stake. Do we *at any time* lose the sense that what we are experiencing is *our own* experience, even when we are entirely absorbed in an activity (ready-to-hand) such as being transported into the world of a literary text. When we take "on the character's goals, and experience emotions as these plans meet vicissitudes" (Oatley, "A Taxonomy" 66), isn't there a *mineness* about my emotions? Am *I* not devastated along with Ivan at the inevitability of his impending death? Don't *I* share Septimus Warren Smith's desolation that witnessing the violent death of his friend Evans (and the horrors of war in general) evoked?

The crucial difference here is that even if in reading I am not aware of myself as subject of experience (nor of the world as objects), I am nevertheless aware that what I am experiencing is *my* experience. Even if consciousness of *a* self is "gappy" (Strawson 130), it is this mineness which provides the continuity of my self-givenness over time. Zahavi suggests shifting from the term 'subject' to 'subjectivity', to capture the temporal unfolding of this primary form of self-awareness/givenness:

> [S]elf-awareness is not to be conceived of as an awareness of an isolated worldless self. To be self-aware is not to withdraw to some self-enclosed interiority. It is not to interrupt the experiential interaction with the world in order to turn the gaze inside. On the

contrary, subjectivity is open towards and engaged in the world, and it is in this openness that it reveals itself. (Zahavi, "Self and Consciousness" 64)

To be sure, we *can* in reflection "interrupt the experiential interaction with the world in order to turn the gaze inside" or at other objects outside. Theoretical reflection in the mode of the present-at-hand is precisely such a case, in which we turn into Cartesian cognizers. What I am arguing here with the help of phenomenology, though, is that this form of reflection is derivative and secondary and, more importantly, it does not do justice to the experience of literary reading.

When we read Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and follow Ivan in his continuing disillusionment and anxiety in the face of his own impending death, we might be fully immersed in the world of the text through our empathic engagement with Ivan's despair; so much so that we might lose awareness of the world around us and of our self as subject. However, all this happens against the background of a pervasive and continuous first-personal givenness of the experience itself. Thus, the full empathic engagement with Ivan and a continuation of a first personal self-awareness occur simultaneously.

Of particular interest to my study of existential reading is the possibility that this move away from a Cartesian form of reflection and the simultaneous full empathic engagement might bring the reader "much nearer to that bridge and what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river

crossing" (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 154), to use Heidegger's image metaphorically.

But what might this non-Cartesian form of reflection make room for? And how might it be related to the discussion of literariness? How could literary reading lead to such paradoxically privileged moments of (self-) awareness that they could be termed self-modifying? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the next chapter.

4. Self-Reflection, Self-Modification, and "Radical Reflection" Through Full Empathic Engagement During Literary Reading

Let me briefly outline our starting point for the discussion of this chapter on (self-) reflection, self-modification, and what Merleau-Ponty calls "radical reflection" (280) by recapitulating some of the key points of the theoretical discussion thus far. We have seen that theories of intersubjectivity based on a Cartesian ontology, such as TT and explicit ST, conceive of empathic encounters as mental acts that are representational and inferential in nature. At the heart of these theories lies the assumption that a disembodied subject (mind) must somehow bridge the epistemic gap between itself and the world of present-at-hand objects.

Such views, phenomenologists argue, misconstrue our basic and pervasive form of encountering and dealing in the world (ready-to-hand). According to phenomenology, our Being-in-the-world is essentially structured by an a priori intersubjectivity that is given through our dealings with objects as ready-to-hand equipment (Heidegger), through perception itself (Husserl,

Merleau-Ponty) and through our physical embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, Husserl). The form of intellectually and inferentially empathizing, as posited by Cartesianism, is derivative of this a priori intersubjectivity. We now have a sense of the phenomenological notion that empathy may disclose rather than establish the pervasive intersubjectivity of our Being-in-the-world, and in doing so may provide a privileged moment of reflection on this same Being-in-the world (existence).

We have also seen that the concepts of intersubjectivity and empathy are inseparable from notions of self and self-awareness. Within the Cartesian ontology, self-awareness is awareness of an objectified self and the self as a continuous unity over time must consequently be constructed in conscious moments of self-awareness. However, the fact that our consciousness is "gappy" (Strawson 130) undermines the continuity of such an objectification. Moreover, this model faces the problem of infinite regress of constituting levels. In contrast, we now have a phenomenological understanding of how a self is not constituted in the objectifying reflection (on the present-at-hand) of a disembodied Cartesian subject, but rather in the ongoing co-constitution of experience and experiencing (and that alterity in self is a precondition for this co-constitution).

This Husserlian notion of self allowed us to explain how in full empathic engagement (e.g., in transportation) the loss of awareness of an objectified self may be accompanied by and foreground an experiential sense of self. Contrasting these models of empathy and self consequently allowed us to theoretically distinguish the acknowledgment of or engagement with certain

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beliefs during literary reading from the experience thereof. It is not clear yet, however, what this experiential engagement "makes room for". The focus of this fourth chapter is on the forms of (self-) reflection and self-modification that literary reading may provide.

After providing a critique of Cartesian models of (self-) reflection and self-modification in literary reading, I provide a phenomenological alternative within which the distinction between modifications of beliefs and the modification that is inherent in experiencing becomes understandable as contingent on the form of (self-) reflection at play. Against this background, I then develop how the concept of existential reading may involve a form of ontological reflection that Merleau-Ponty terms "radical reflection" (280).

4.1. Cartesian Models of Self-Reflection and Self-Modification Through Empathic Engagement in Literary Reading

Whatever the character of (self-) reflection and self-modification that literary reading may evoke, it is appealing enough that readers voluntarily and vicariously suffer through the torments of, for instance, Ivan or Septimus Warren Smith. As Miall points out, one of the seeming paradoxes of literary reading is that we "willingly turn to texts containing negative feelings and even appear to find pleasure in them" (*Literary Reading* 80). Ellis (although he qualifies the concept of pleasure) makes a similar claim in his *Curious Emotions*:

> Art can "inspire" us without giving us pleasure in net terms. We
> can sometimes find a uniquely important type of meaning by

enduring or suffering through the misery, torment, and troubling

disquietude of certain works, especially those falling under the

category of "tragedy," … These painful artistic experiences are

not merely an alternative means toward the end of pleasure,

entertainment, or decoration, but offer their own special type of

symbolization-matrix for the exploration of more "existential"

emotions. (171)

Although some psychoanalytical approaches to literary reading see us

turning toward literature for emotion regulation and as a way of managing our

unconscious fantasies (e.g., Holland 280-301), the most popular explanation for

this seeming paradox is that literary reading makes room for a form of self-

modification through (self-) reflection.

4.1.1. Self-Reflection and Self-Modification Based on Cartesian 'Internal Object Interpretations'

Miall's approach, for instance, "focuses on the power of literature for

tuning our everyday schemata and enabling us to rehearse potentially

problematic situations in imagination" (*Literary Reading* 8). He argues that one

of the main reasons we enjoy literary reading may well be that it enables the "re-

experiencing of negative feelings from ordinary life, but within a context in

which they can be developed, contextualized, and brought into relation with

other feelings" (81). Although (self-) reflection and self-modification here have

an experiential quality in their emphasis on feeling, the *as if* (pretence and

instrumental) character of "rehearse" and "re-experiencing…from ordinary life" implicitly move these experiences into the conceptual proximity of simulation.

Oatley ("Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact") explicitly emphasizes the pretence character of literary reading in his proposal that "in the simulations of fiction, personal truths can be explored that allow readers to experience emotions –their own emotions– and understand aspects of them that are obscure, in relation to contexts in which the emotions arise" (101). In a similar vein, but with a focus on the instrumental aspect of reading, Green, Brock, and Kaufman suggest that literary readers "use characters' situations and experiences to understand their own lives" (319), and Mar and Oatley argue that they may "clarif[y] his or her mental models of self" ("Function of Fiction" 182).

The type of (self-) reflection and self-modification these scholars propose, I suggest, is based on a Cartesian ontology and the concomitant internal object interpretation of self, according to which (self-) reflection is a form of objectifying reflection. In Mar and Oatley's as well as Green, Brock, and Kaufman's models this ontological commitment becomes explicit in their drawing on the concept of a narrative self (Dennett; Bruner). From a phenomenological perspective the concept of a narrative self–and all internal object interpretations of self, for that matter–places serious limitations on claims of self-modification through (self-) reflection in literary reading.

4.1.2. The Concept of the Narrative Self and its Limitations

Models of self that do not posit the co-constitution of experience and experiencing in inner-time consciousness seem to require objectifying reflections

if they wish to account for continuity and unity. The currently particularly popular view of a narrative self, such as Dennet's, sees the self as "a center of narrative gravity" (418; see also Bruner), around which we spin a self-narrative about who we think we are, who we wish to be, and how we wish others to see us. This model, which Mar and Oatley and Green, Brock, and Kaufman espouse, might more accurately be characterized as accounts of "personhood" than of self. Gallagher and Zahavi (205) suggest this terminology in order to allow for the distinction between a narrative self that appears in objectified reflection from the embodied, embedded, and experiential self, in relation to which personhood is secondary and derivative.

Our narrative self, or better personhood, precisely takes the self as "a thing merely thought of behind and outside what is immediately experienced" (Scheler, qtd. in Burch 137). It is what appears when I reflectively step outside of the ongoing experiencing/experience, in order to tune my everyday schemata, rehearse problematic situations (Miall, *Literary Reading* 8), explore personal truths (Oatley, "Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact" 101), "use characters' situations and experiences to understand our own lives" (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 319), and to clarify my mental models of self (Mar and Oatley, "Function of Fiction" 182).

Personhood captures as a form of self-narrative how I reflect on my life story, my values and morals, how I have come to be who I am, and where I wish to go. The following lengthy quote by Burch illustrates the crucial distinction

between self and personhood (narrative self) and the concomitant forms of self-modification:

> On those occasions when I do deliberately turn my reflective glance on experiences past, I do not then make them meaningful for the very first time, but restore or alter meanings already implicit in their original sense, though unexplored or unexplorable in the rush of things. The meanings thus recovered may or may not disclose more truly who we are and where we stand. For in our explicit reflection we are as apt to tell ourselves "tales" in order, for example, to salvage our pride or sanity, or to come under the sway of the tales that others tell of us, as to recover more originally and inclusively what has been. Either way, such meanings may then be incorporated back into the immediate intelligibility of lived experience as we come to be guided more or less as a matter of course by the explicit narratives we have come to assume as our own. Nevertheless, before any such reflection and retelling or any such narrative appropriation and redirection, an implicit sense must always already have been constituted in the course of lived experience as a condition of its being lived. (Burch 136)

The implications of this distinction for claims about the potentially "self-modifying" power of literary reading (e.g., Kuiken et al., "Locating Self-Modifying Feelings") as presented above and arguments of the kind that literary

works of art provide "essential sources of insight and illumination" (Nussbaum, "Perception and Revolution" 196; see also Hakemulder) are far reaching. Models built on the assumption that the self is narrative in essence–but any 'internal object interpretations' of self, really–may have no way of supporting the notion that self-modifications through literary reading are qualitatively different from the transient effects of persuasion that, for instance, advertisement or propaganda may evoke. In other words, distinctions of *self*-modifications from modifications of *beliefs regarding self and world* become leveled.

So far, phenomenology has only allowed us to say what internal object interpretations of self, such as the concept of the narrative self, *cannot* account for. What remains to be shown, is how phenomenology might provide an alternative understanding of (self-) reflection that would account for *self*-modifications rather than *beliefs* regarding self and world during literary reading. In what follows, I will develop such a proposal and integrate it into the discussion of how the textual patterning known as foregrounding may elicit (self-) reflection and self-modification. I will begin with a very brief introduction into foregrounding theory.

4.1.3. Foregrounding, Self-Reflection, and Self-Modification

In his article "Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact", Oatley reinterprets Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* as "more aptly captured by the metaphors of simulation, but also of illuminating, clarifying, and drawing attention to" (105). We have already seen in some detail how he likens literary reading to simulation, which may lead to illumination and clarification.

However, the notion that literary reading illuminates in the sense of "drawing attention to" has a history in literary studies. It has been developed in what has become known as theories of defamiliarization and foregrounding (FG). Paul Simpson's text-focused definition of FG reads as follows:

> *Foregrounding* refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes…FG typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism. (Simpson 50)

Simpson's definition above is a rather traditional rendering of defamiliarization theory as developed from Russian Formalism, through Czech Structuralism, to a branch of British stylistics. It does not have much to say about nor much interest in what actually happens when "an aspect of the text is brought to the fore".

More recently, however, some scholars have defined literariness as a function of both stylistic features of literary texts and readers' responses to them. Thus, literariness is neither to be sought exclusively in the text, nor in the reader, but in the reading itself, which in turn is contingent on both text and reader characteristics (e.g. Bortolussi and Dixon 248-254; Miall, *Literary Reading* 17-21; Miall & Kuiken, "What is Literariness" 121-138; van Peer 20). Miall and Kuiken, as well as van Peer, explicitly base their theories on the Russian Formalist and Czech Structuralist tradition, according to which the deviations

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and parallelisms of poetic language make us experience the world from a fresh perspective. Šklovskij famously describes this as follows:

> And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (12)

Findings from numerous empirical studies have supported the claims Šklovskij makes above. Miall and Kuiken ("Foregrounding"), for instance, found that the degree to which a given text (passages) was stylistically foregrounded correlated positively with ratings of strikingness and affect, as well as with reading times. According to Miall, this combination of striking "dehabituation" and prolonged reading, may guide a feeling driven exploration of "emotions or experiences that might have dangerous or unpleasant consequences in the real world" and enable us to "gain insight into their implications so that we know better how to act when similar situations occur in reality" (*Literary Reading* 17).

Moreover, Miall and Kuiken ("Shifting Perspectives") argue that it is precisely the stylistic deviations that initiate a defamiliarization-recontextualization cycle, which in turn evokes the "experience of a shift in understanding: this appears to involve a search for meaning guided by the feeling that foregrounding has evoked" (Miall, *Literary Reading* 145). According to this

model, the defamiliarizing language "draws attention to" (Oatley, "Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact" 105) certain emotions or events that had been obscure and then the "concept or experience that was defamiliarized at the moment of foregrounding becomes re-contextualized." (Miall, *Literary Reading* 145).

Clearly, notions such as Miall's regarding FG and its effects on literary reading are far removed from a disembedded and disembodied brain-in-a-vat decoding external stimuli such as symbols of a literary text. As we have seen, Miall and Kuiken, Oatley and Mar, as well as Green, Brock, and Kaufman develop the emotional and experiential aspects of literary reading; and particularly Miall and Kuiken provide an account of the process of the experience. I will now propose how a phenomenological alternative to the 'internal object interpretation' of self might allow for a form of "self-modification" through (self-) reflection in literary reading to appear on the horizon which goes beyond both the ongoing (automatic) "re-contextualization" of concepts and experiences in our everyday dealings in the world as well as the "re-contextualization" of objectifying reflection on a narrative self in privileged moments of (self-) reflection (e.g., literary reading).

4.2. A Phenomenological Alternative: Foregrounding and "Radical Reflection"

From the perspective of phenomenology, foregrounding in literary texts may potentially initiate a form of reflection that is not objectifying and rather akin to an attunement or what Kuiken has termed a form of listening (54-55).

This attunement is precisely what Merleau-Ponty has in mind when he writes that "radical reflection, the kind that aims at self-comprehension, consists, paradoxically enough, in recovering the unreflective experience of the world" (280). It is a reflection or open attentiveness to what comes to present, to what is actualized in the ongoing flux of the experience/experiencing. In fact, the original Czech term for foregrounding, *'actualisace'* (Mukařovský 19), is much closer to the notion of 'radical reflection' and Heidegger's discussion of "actualization" (Heidegger, *Basic Problems* 99-112) than its translation would have us believe. In the following lengthy quote, Heidegger contrasts the view according to which existence and essence are equated with creation with that according to which they are understood as presence-at-hand. He argues that neither of these is sufficient, since they confound being with actuality or the actual rather than with actualization:

> The two meanings of actuality and the actual, that which acts inwards on the subject or which acts outwards on something else, presuppose the first meaning, which is ontologically prior, that is, actuality understood with reference to actualization and being enacted. That which acts inwards upon the subject must itself already be actual in the first sense of the word, and interconnections of efficacious action are possible only if the actual is extant. It is ontologically incorrect and impossible to interpret actuality and its ontological sense in terms of these two meanings just mentioned. Rather, actuality, as the traditional

concept actualitas implies, must be understood with reference to

actualization…We shall try to shed some light on this obscurity,

to explain the origin of the concepts essentia and existential, and

to show how far the two concepts are derived from an

understanding of being that comprehends beings with respect to

an actualizing or, as we say generally, to a *productive*

comportment of the Dasein. (*Basic Problems* 105)

Gendlin, makes a similar point in his characterization of the "lifting out"
of a felt sense:

Thus feeling must be understood as *implicitly* meaningful, and as

changing when there are steps of "lifting out," steps of explication

or articulation … We don't want to think that the words were *in*

the feeling in the sense that pebbles are *in* a box. ("Befindlichkeit"

51; Gendlin's italics)

As mystifying as this may sound, I think a simple example should bring
this form of reflection a little closer. We might not immediately connect listening
to a piece of music to reflection and perhaps even less to reflection on a present-
at-hand objectified event, emotion, or experience. Nevertheless, I would argue
that literary reading and listening to music are in some aspects similar
experiences (and very different in others, of course).

4.2.1. "Listening" as a Form of Reflection

Take for instance the experience of listening to Bach's aria "*Mache Dich mein Herze rein*" (BWV 244) while mourning the loss of a loved one. There is a way in which the aria resonates with and brings not only my grief, but grief *per se* to expression (see also Miall, "Feeling" 383), that is, it confronts me with my grief, let's me "take it up", and attempt to understand it, by "lifting out" aspects of my experience. I am absorbed by the piece of music, dead to the world around me, and yet acutely aware of my experiential self. I am not reflecting on a past event from a detached, omniscient perspective, but am rather attuned to what comes to presence or is actualized in the ongoing experience.

This listening to the Bach aria is not a passive receptivity, but an enactive one. Phenomenologically speaking, I do not turn backward or inward in order to "clarif[y] … mental models of [my] self" (Mar and Oatley, "Function of Fiction" 182), nor do I "rehearse … problematic situations in imagination" (Miall, *Literary Reading* 8). Rather, in listening, my grief *comes to expression*, or is "actualized" (Heidegger, *Basic Problems* 105; Mukařovský 19). I am not reflecting on some representational content, but rather I am attuned to the unfolding experience of my grief at that moment and gain understanding expressively.

In literary reading something similar may happen, I believe. When absorbed into a truly moving piece, such as *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, aren't we "*in*" the experience itself, that is, are we not lost to the world around us while at

the same time as present as ever to *our* experiencing of the world that comes alive through the narrative?

4.2.2. Attunement to Actualization as a Form of Reflection

The subtle but crucial difference as I see it is the following: If we depart from an 'internal object interpretation' of self and self-awareness, (self-) reflection becomes *reflection on an objectified state or event*. If, on the other hand, we accept that the co-constitution of experience/experiencing is the essence of self and self-awareness, then the possibility of a form of reflection that is an attunement to what is actualized in this experience/experiencing becomes conceivable. Rather than reflecting on an objectified (past) event, I implicate myself and attend to what is *actualized through reflective experiencing*. The character of this reflection is not one of intellectually acknowledging how memories or perceptions *affect me*, but how the experience/experiencing of them is *unfolding for me now*.

This may seem counterintuitive, since we tend to reserve the term 'reflection' for objectifying reflection and assume we must be dealing with representational content that stands in for external events. However, from the viewpoint of phenomenology, this argumentation is a prejudice in favor of an ontology that equates *existence* with *presence-at-hand* (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 67). Heidegger presents an alternative notion of reflection (and in extension of existence) in the 'bridge quote' presented earlier. The following are the final lines of this passage:

From this spot here, we are there at the bridge–we are by no

means at some representational content in our consciousness.

From right here we may even be much nearer to that bridge and to

what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an

indifferent river crossing. (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*

154)

As usual with Heidegger, the meaning of this passage turns on our

understanding of *being*. If we equate being or existence with presence-at-hand,

then something "objective", such as mental representations, must necessarily

stand in for objects and events when these are not (no longer) present-at-hand.

However, in Heidegger's view the term 'existence' should be reserved for the

being of Dasein, which involves a reflective attunement toward actualization

rather than a result of objectifying reflection (*Being and Time* 67; *Basic

Problems* 105).

4.3. Radical Reflection and Existential Reading

What Heidegger describes above is illuminating when applied to literary

reading. When we identify with a character and are transported into the world of

the literary text in expressive reading (Kuiken), we are not necessarily "at some

representational content", but rather are "actualizing" (Heidegger, *Basic

Problems* 105; Mukařovský 19) the meaningful experience. In the reflective and

experiential attunement that literary reading invites "we relate ourselves to" the

character and world in the text in a way that "brings us nearer to" *our experience*

of this world. "[W]hat it makes room for" is a freshly enlivened understanding of our Being-in-the-world. As Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The process of expression, when it is successful, does not merely leave for the reader and the writer himself a kind of reminder, it brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words, establishing it in the writer or the reader as a new sense organ, opening a new field or a new dimension to our experience. (212)

The expressive and experiential quality of this 'radical reflection' is, as mentioned above, a sense of enlivenment and of seeing the world with fresh eyes, perhaps also a fresh understanding of some aspect of self and world that would qualify as a form of self-modification.

In my view, it is precisely in light of "radical reflection" that Šklovskij's earlier quoted dictum about the role of art begins to make sense: "[A]rt exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known" (12). Coincidentally, Heidegger speaks of the "stoniness of the stone" (["*das Steinige des Steines*"]; *Gelassenheit* 36) precisely in terms of ontological, or in Merleau-Ponty's term "radical", reflection. In such ontological reflection, however, the sense of enlivenment might also be accompanied by an acute experience of finitude and vulnerability, as I will attempt to show below.

4.3.1. Radical Reflection and Finitude

The snag of this reflective experiencing, which is not in the mode of present-at-hand but rather that of actualization, is that it opens the door to the experience of 'rich temporality' and thus finitude. Let me try to make this clear by drawing on the famous paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, in which the two engage in a race. Achilles gives the tortoise a head start. Zeno, to whom this paradox is attributed, argues that Achilles will never catch the tortoise, since when he reaches its starting point A the tortoise will have crawled a little further to point B, and when he then reaches B, the tortoise will already be at C, etc. *ad infinitum*. Aristotle described Zeno's paradox as follows: "In a race, the quickest runner can never overtake the slowest, since the pursuer must first reach the point whence the pursued started, so that the slower must always hold a lead" (239b15).

Obviously, the fallacy lies in seeing time as an infinite succession of "nows". But isn't that exactly what we do, when we equate existence with presence-at-hand? Don't we turn time into a string of "nows" when we reflect on objectified moments or events? Heidegger seems to think so, as the following passage illustrates:

> Thus, the "nows" are in a certain manner *co-present-at-hand:* that is, entities are encountered, *and so too* is the "now". Although it is not said explicitly that the "nows" are present-at-hand in the same way as Things, they still get 'seen' ontologically within the horizon of the idea of presence-at-hand. The "nows" *pass away,*

and those which have passed away make up the past. The "nows"

come along, and those which are coming along define the 'future'.

(*Being and Time* 475).

Coming back to Zeno's paradox, we can see that *by positing time as a*

succession of nows in our reflection, death remains either always a step behind

or safely around the next corner, depending on whether we choose to identify

with the tortoise or swift Achilles. Consequently, equating existence with

presence-at-hand, as we do in our default mode of reflection, serves a death-

denying function, which, however, is accompanied by a *"Seinsvergessenheit"*

("oblivion of being"; Farrel Krell 37).

In "radical reflection" (Merleau-Ponty 212), however, we "relate

ourselves to", i.e., reflectively attune ourselves to, what is actualized in our

experience/experiencing and "what it makes room for" (Heidegger *Poetry,*

Language, Thought 154). By moving away from a Cartesian objectifying

reflection to such a "radical reflection" of ontological nature, we are deprived of

the delusion of immortality.

The vulnerability that comes with the existential experience of finitude is

precisely what Tolstoy captures in the character Ivan Ilych. Heidegger describes

this experience as "anxiety" (*Being and Time*). Paradoxically, however, for

Heidegger anxiety is also of the essence of what it means to be human (*Dasein*).

Within it, he holds, we "initiate our own nature" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*

148). As Farrell Krell puts it: "Thinking proceeds–if it is to proceed at all–within

anxiety" (43).

Heidegger elsewhere calls this thinking within anxiety, which has the character of an ontological or 'radical reflection' described above, "dwelling" ["*wohnen*"]. To dwell implies, among other aspects, a form of reflection that is not in the mode of presence-at-hand, but rather a reflective attunement to what is actualized in the experience/experiencing. Heidegger describes the existential plight of mortals (his technical term for humans who reflect ontologically on finitude) as follows:

> The real dwelling plight [*Wohnungsnot*] lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell.* What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered, and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling. (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 159)

4.3.2. Real Readers and Radical Reflection

It seems very unlikely that the type of reading experience which may involve an ontological reflection as described above and which may lead the reader to an experience of her or his own finitude is a commonplace occurrence. That Heidegger may have thought the essence and role of art is precisely to enable such radical reflection does not of course guarantee that readers actually engage literary works in this form. Some may engage precisely in the form of empathy which infers the character's mental states through the kind of

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intellectualized guessing that Zunshine posits. Others may simulate being in the character's shoes and then infer her or his mental state from their own experience. Perhaps some read self-implicatingly and reflect on their personhood (narrative self) in a Cartesian form of objectifying reflection, which may trigger insights and perhaps modifications of beliefs about self and/or world.

Nevertheless, there is also a possibility that some readers move beyond simulation in their empathic engagement with literary characters to an expressive and experiential reading that has the character of the ontological reflection discussed above. But what might this form of 'existential reading' look like in actuality? And what might this form of reading tell us about those texts that seem to elicit it? Is Heidegger's account of the ontological engagement with art exhaustive or might real readers' experiences provide insights that go beyond those based on theoretical reader constructs? All these questions need to be addressed empirically.

The remainder of this dissertation presents a series of empirical studies investigating whether the theoretical distinctions discussed thus far are borne out in the experiences of actual readers. Phenomenological and other scientific methods, (Kuiken, Miall, and Sikora; Kuiken and Miall, "Numerically Aided Phenomenology") are employed to articulate the concept 'existential reading', and to identify distinct profiles of reading experience.

5. An Empirical Study of Existential Reading

5.1. Rationale for Phenomenological Methods

In *Crisis*, Husserl argues that the positive sciences are ill-equipped to investigate questions of existential relevance, due to their tacit objectivism. This objectivism, he holds, imposes a decisive rift between the world as conceived by science and the world of our experience (e.g., 5-7). What has been–in his view irretrievably–lost to the positive sciences is not only their *connection* to the life-world, but also the awareness that this same life-world constitutes the "meaning fundament" (48) of *all* scientific endeavors. Husserl attempts to close this gap by demonstrating that all science begins in the life-world, i.e. with "the one world of experience, common to all" and "object[s] of straightforward experience" (125-126). Phenomenology, rather than dismissing the world of experience as "subjective-relative" and something "to be overcome" in a search for objective "truths-in-themselves" advocates a constant return to the life-world, a continuous revision-towards-precision of constructs through "experiential verification" (126).

Since, I would argue, the concept of the 'existential' to a large degree resists operationalization, the phenomenological turn to the world of experience is crucial, I believe, if a study of existential reading is to advance beyond trite insights. Thus, my aim was to be open to "the spontaneous surge of the lifeworld" (van Manen) and establish "direct and primitive contact with the world" (Merleau-Ponty vii). As esoteric as this may sound, it is in fact not unlike Šklovskij's famous passage regarding the role of art that I will quote part of once

more: "And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known (12).

It may not be immediately evident how aesthetic apprehension may resemble working with readers' responses (in the form of experiential narratives) to literary texts but, I would argue, the critical parallel lies in an openness, receptivity, and willingness to be intrigued, required in both cases. This openness has often been referred to as "wonder" (e.g., Fink 341-383; Heidegger, *Basic Questions* 143-156 and *Being and Time* 214-217; Husserl, *Crisis* 269-299; Merleau-Ponty, xv, xxiv, 228, 249, 344, 469; van Manen). Kingwell describes this notion of wonder as follows:

> Wonder sees the world of everyday as suddenly strange and
> mysterious, obtrusive, standing out. The question has been opened
> up by the momentary experience…Wonder may be transitory
> first-cousin of the transcendental *epoché*, which sets off concerns
> of daily living from the world in its pregivenness and the relation
> of my consciousness to it. Wonder exposes the rather startling fact
> of the horizon of meaning that surrounds me at every point in life.
> (104)

Thus, this openness to let phenomena that are familiar appear as strange, as well as the continuous "experiential verification" (Husserl, *Crisis* 126) by a constant return to the life-world are the perhaps most foundational aspects of the

phenomenological approach taken in these studies. I will now develop these and other aspects of the phenomenological methodology employed.

5.2. Phenomenological Methods

Here is what to my current understanding makes a project phenomenological: the phenomenological reduction (*epoché*), the eidetic reduction, and phenomenological, reflective writing (explication). I will briefly outline what each of these concepts implies below.

5.2.1. The epoché

The phenomenological reduction, or *epoché*, as Husserl developed it in *Ideas I*, involves putting into brackets ("parenthesizing") the "natural attitude." What Husserl calls the "natural attitude" can roughly be summarized as that form of (unquestioning/automatic) taking or seeing of the natural world which takes for granted the world's independent existence and believes that its perceptions of the world are also caused by it. The *epoché* consists in putting "out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being" (*Ideas* 61).

Husserl emphasizes that we should not, however, confuse the *epoché* with the (impossible) tenet of the positive sciences to exclude "all prejudices that cloud the pure objectivity of research." It is not, he continues, "a matter of constituting a science 'free of theories', 'free of metaphysics'." Rather, it

presupposes a modified consciousness, "the consciousness of judgment-excluding" (*Ideas* 61).

Merleau-Ponty, although he rejects aspects of Husserl's *epoché* that he considers idealist, embraces the thrust of it. In the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* he writes:

> The best formulation of the reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of 'wonder' in the face of the world. Reflection … steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical. (xv)

The parallel to Šklovskij's often quoted passage about art making the stone stony again is striking. The *epoché* is best understood in this Šklovskijan spirit as an enlivened, open, and receptive mode of consciousness, which suspends appropriating and theorizing reflection, rather than stripping it of the "subjective-relative" in the name of objectivity.

5.2.2. The Eidetic Reduction

Once the natural attitude is suspended in/through the *epoché*, the eidetic reduction can take hold and reveal the essences of an intentional object. Whereas the *epoché* "parenthesized" the natural attitude, the eidetic reduction now brackets the contingent and accidental objects and acts of consciousness, and

focuses on the essential features of these. This, according to Husserl is done by "free phantasy" (*Ideas* 11; also referred to as "free imaginative variation"). By varying the example or the features of an intentional object, we "eventually come up against something that cannot be varied without destroying that [intentional] object as an instance of its kind. It will be inconceivable that an object of that kind might lack a given feature" (Smith 564). By thus applying the eidetic reduction, we intuit an intentional object's essence.

5.2.3. Exact and Morphological Essences

At this point it becomes important to distinguish exact essences from morphological essences to avoid falling into a naïve essentialism. According to Husserl, exact essences can only be intuited for intentional objects pertaining to the *exact* sciences, such as geometry (*Ideas* 161-164). What characterizes the exact sciences or "familiar eidetic sciences", such as geometry, is that their procedure is *not descriptive*:

> On the contrary, geometry fixes a few kinds of fundamental structures, the ideas of solid, plane, point, angle, and the like, the ones which play the determining role in the 'axioms'. With the help of the axioms, i.e., the primitive eidetic laws, it is then in a position to derive purely deductively *all* the spatial shapes 'existing'. (*Ideas* 163)

For all the other ("natural") sciences, Husserl holds, for which no "unambiguous determination" or "*exact* determination" can be claimed and

which do not operate with *ideal concepts* such as triangles and squares, it is an epistemological fallacy to presuppose "*exactness in the essences themselves which are seized upon*" (*Ideas* 165). Rather than with exact essences, the descriptive sciences deal with *morphological essences*, which are vague, and "fluid" and which are "directly seized upon on the basis of sensuous intuition" (166).

5.2.4. Explication

The concept of reflective writing or "explication" (Husserl, *Experience and Judgment* 103-149) is closely tied to the *epoché*. In fact, it is a writing from out of the phenomenological wonder that characterizes the phenomenological reduction. The form of reflection or "explicative contemplation" (Husserl, *Experience and Judgment* 112) involved in explication pays attention to what Gendlin has characterized as a "felt sense". This felt sense is implicitly meaningful and becomes explicitly so by attending to my experiencing/experience and what comes to presence for me now, i.e., to its actualization (Heidegger, *Basic Problems* 99-112; Mukařovský 19). Gendlin describes Husserl's "elucidation of what is anticipated" (*Experience and Judgment* 124) as a "lifting out" of an implicitly meaningful "felt sense" ("Befindlichkeit" 50-51) and thereby emphasizes the expressive aspect of explication.

5.3. Numerically Aided Phenomenology

Numerically aided phenomenology has the *epoché,* the eidetic reduction, and explication as its foundation. Moreover, it operates precisely on the understanding that phenomenology, or any science which is *descriptive by necessity*, i.e., which cannot presuppose (finding) exact essences, *must* operate on principles that are directed at *morphological essences*. Moreover, the vagueness and fluidity, which Husserl posits for the concepts of descriptive natural science, are amplified for the concepts of the social sciences. Consequently, the eidetic reduction with its concomitant free imaginative variation quickly reaches its limits. Here, at the limits of human imagination, numerically aided phenomenology cedes some of its pattern finding to numeric algorithms. Importantly, however, the numeric algorithms do not replace but rather complement the eidetic reduction.

Husserl's morphological essences have their counterpart in the history of classification in the social sciences, where they are referred to as polythetic classes (Beckner 22). Polythetic classes resist exact essences, in that no member/case of such a class is identical on *all* features/variables. Rather, they allow for classificatory concepts that are fluid and vague (Husserl, *Ideas* 166), by grouping instances/cases by *degree of similarity*. Bailey (7-8) describes this as follows:

> We can define a polythetic class in terms of a set of G of properties $f_1, f_2, \ldots, f_n$ such that:
>
> 1. Each one possesses a large (but unspecified) number of

properties in G

2. Each f in G is possessed by large numbers of these individuals

3. No f in G is possessed by every individual in the aggregate

Since (most) humans' capacity for "seizing" the complex structures of polythetic classes in the social science through free imaginative variation is very limited, numerical algorithms were developed to identify such classes involving morphological essences. In my study of existential reading, following Kuiken and Miall ("Numerically Aided Phenomenology"), cluster analytic algorithms were used to identify classes/groups of reading experiences that were based on degree of similarity.

Numerically aided phenomenology, then, combines the *potential for* the kind of openness, receptivity, and willingness to be genuinely intrigued that is implicit in the phenomenological concept of wonder, with the *potential for* precision of quantitative methods, when classifying experiential narratives. It "brings categories of experience to greater distinctiveness, coherence, and richness through the quantitative systematization of categorical thought" (Kuiken and Miall, "Numerically Aided Phenomenology" 3). Both precision and phenomenological wonder are called for if some of the conceptual boundaries of existential reading are to be made compelling. To pursue my research question in satisfactory detail, then, numerically aided phenomenology seemed the most promising method, since it "(a) allows empirical contradiction of definitional presuppositions; (b) permits concrete comparative examination of experiential

narratives; and (c) facilitates articulation … of different types of experiential narratives" (Sikora, Kuiken, and Miall). Thus, rather than testing hypotheses based on operationalized concepts and constructs, the NAP study of existential reading aims at *articulating* the concept 'existential reading', and at identifying distinct profiles of reading experience.

5.4. Participants

One hundred seventy-eight undergraduate psychology students participated for course credit in the four studies conducted for this dissertation project. One hundred nineteen of these were women (mean age = 19.98 yr), fifty-two were men (mean age = 19.69 yr), and seven did not provide information on their gender. Students were eligible to participate only if they scored above average on the insight orientation scale of the Literary Response Questionnaire (Miall and Kuiken, "Aspects of Literary Response") and on an instrument developed in our laboratory, the Attitudes Toward Poetry questionnaire (Kuiken, personal communication), both administered during mass testing in introductory psychology courses. Students were unaware of this eligibility requirement.

At the beginning of each research session, participants were given an oral briefing, a brief overview of the research tasks, information regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and an indication of the time required for participation (a maximum of two hours). Also, participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time without loss of credit, provided they completed an alternative educational activity.

5.5. Procedures

In each of the four studies, participants were asked to practice the research tasks by reading a practice text once, then a second time, and during the second reading mark a passage that seemed particularly striking or evocative. Then, using a digital audio recorder, they described their experience of that particular passage in their own words, followed by a brief questionnaire. After the researcher (myself) confirmed that the procedures were understood, he distributed the primary text and related research materials. In these materials, participants were asked to:

Read the primary text twice and, during the second reading, mark a passage that they found particularly striking and evocative;

Describe in their own words (into the audio recorder) their experience of this marked passage ("Describe any thoughts, feelings, images, impressions, or memories that were in any way part of your experience");

Describe their experience of the text as a whole in the same manner; and

Complete a series of questionnaires, including the Experiencing Questionnaire (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák), a short empathy questionnaire based on Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the Literary Response Questionnaire (Miall and Kuiken, "Aspects of Literary Response"), and, finally, a short form of the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale (Reynolds).[12]

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[12] The study working with Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* differed from the other studies in that materials were provided in paper rather than online, participants were asked to choose and respond to two rather than one striking or evocative passage, and they were presented with only a subset of the Experiencing Questionnaire (EQ).

5.6. Materials

5.6.1. Literary Texts

Each of the four studies involved a different literary text: (1) Maurice Blanchot's short story *The Instant of My Death*; (2) Primo Levi's poem *The Witch*; (3) Primo Levi's poem *The Black Stars*; and (4) excerpts from Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (the texts can be found in Appendix 1). Fifty-two participants read and responded to *The Instant of My Death*; 37 to *The Witch;* 39 to *The Black Stars*; and 48 to *Mrs Dalloway*.

The reason for working with this selection of texts is primarily my sense that each text might engage some readers in a form of experiential reading and ontological reflection described as existential reading above. Moreover, presenting a variety in terms of genre, epoch, and culture with this selection, allows me more confidently to make claims that go beyond text-specific findings. I will now offer a brief description of each of the four texts

The Instant of My Death. This is a short story based on the author's experience of nearly escaping death by execution from a Nazi firing squad in 1944. Maurice Blanchot describes the horror of the event and the war in general, but also powerfully portrays the detachment that the traumatic events lead to and the paradoxical experience of facing one's own death. This story appears in *Instant of My Death/Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*. The following key passage in the narrative relates the protagonist's experience of his own finitude:

> There remained, however, at the moment when the shooting was
>
> no longer but to come, the feeling of lightness that I would not

know how to translate: freed from life? the infinite opening up?

Neither happiness, nor unhappiness. Nor the absence of fear and

perhaps already the step beyond. I know, I imagine that this

unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of

existence. As if the death outside of him could only henceforth

collide with the death in him. "I am alive. No, you are dead." (7-

9).[13]

Since I had the impression that *The Instant of My Death* was particularly

likely to move readers to engage the text existentially in a form involving the

kind of radical reflection discussed earlier, it became the central text of my

inquiry. This means that the concept of existential reading was articulated and

the classification of different reading profiles developed by applying the

numerically aided phenomenological methods introduced above to commentaries

on Blanchot's text only. Responses to the other texts introduced below were then

classified using the profiles obtained using these Blanchot-based profiles. This

procedure is an attempt to assess the general applicability of the profiles

developed in the Blanchot study.

   The Witch. This poem, the English translation of which appears in

Shema: Collected Poems of Primo Levi, describes a woman modeling from wax

the figure of her lover who has died. After she completes the figure and throws it

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[13] After consulting with French native speakers, I changed the official translation of "*…l'instant de ma mort désormais toujours en instance*" (Blanchot 10) from "... the instant of my death henceforth always in abeyance" (Blanchot 11) to "... the instant of my death henceforth always impending" in the texts presented to participants.

into the fire she is finally able to mourn her loss. The author of this poem, Primo

Levi, was an Italian Auschwitz survivor, who committed suicide more than 40

years after his liberation, perhaps as a delayed consequence of post-traumatic

stress disorder. The following are some of the poem's critical lines:

> … With a patient loving hand
>
> Portrayed the living image
>
> Of the man she carried in her heart.
>
> When she was done, she threw the effigy on the fire …
>
> She felt herself dying from the pain
>
> Because the spell had worked.
>
> Only then could she cry.

In my reading, these lines powerfully capture the pain and self-alienation

that losing a loved one may bring. They also express the move from

acknowledging to experiencing finitude. Although in this case the text does not

deal directly with one's own finitude, it might arguably move readers to an

ontological reflection on finitude through an empathic engagement that reveals

in experience the intersubjective nature of our Being-in-the-world.

The Black Stars. The English translation of this poem appears in the same

collection by Levi as *The Witch*. It is a violently dark and apocalyptic poem that

describes experiencing the universe as violent, indifferent, and meaningless. The

following lines are a selection from the poem:

> … The order from which the cosmos took its name is
>
> dissolved:

The heavenly legions are a tangle of monsters,

The universe, blind and violent and strange, besieges us.

The clear sky is strewn with horrible dead suns,

…All of us, human seed, we live and die for nothing,

And the skies perpetually revolve in vain.

I chose this poem, because of my impression that the form of

hopelessness described by the speaker of this poem might initiate or accompany

for some readers the experience of the finitude and fragility of human

meaningfulness, characteristic of ontological reflection.

Mrs Dalloway (excerpt). Since procedures adopted in this project made it

impossible to gather responses to a complete novel, I chose two excerpts from

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. I will briefly describe each excerpt and what, in

my view, makes it relevant to a study of existential reading. The first excerpt

presents the character Septimus Warren Smith's battle with post-traumatic stress

disorder and eventual suicide. The reader learns of Septimus' return to England

and marriage to an Italian woman, Rezia, and then follows his state of despair as

he is haunted by flashbacks and intrusive memories of witnessing his friend

Evan's death in World War I combat. Just before suffering involuntary

commitment at the hands of Dr. Holmes, Septimus throws himself out of a

window and dies. The following is a selection of this passage:

So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill

yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes. But why should he kill

himself for their sakes? … Besides, now that he was quite alone,

condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone,

there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom

which the attached can never know. Holmes had won of course;

the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes himself

could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world,

this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay,

like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world. (101-102)

My rationale for choosing this passage from *Mrs Dalloway* was that in

my view it presents the experience of alienation from self and world and radical

individuation that may initiate and/or go hand in hand with ontological

reflection. Similar to Blanchot's protagonist, Septimus' experience of his own

finitude is described as a paradoxical simultaneity of violence, horror, and

meaninglessness with "luxury" and "sublimity". Here too, my assumption was

that for some readers empathizing with Septimus' despair and reflection on

finitude would move them toward the experience of their own finitude and

ontological reflection.

In the study materials, a passage appearing toward the end of *Mrs

Dalloway* succeeded the one above. This second passage describes Clarissa

Dalloway preparing and hosting an upper class party. The reader is presented

with Clarissa's stream of consciousness, as it buzzes around petty concerns until

someone at her party mentions the death of a young man (Septimus). This

announcement has a profound effect on Clarissa and she almost compulsively

reflects on death and the meaningfulness/meaninglessness of life. Again, the following passage by way of example:

> A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; … rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. But this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure? … Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. (202-203)

This passage is relevant for a study of existential reading for several reasons, I believe. First, Clarissa, like readers of *Mrs Dalloway*, empathizes with Septimus and his death. That is, we as readers are given a suggestive account of what a self-implicating reflection on Septimus' death may evoke. Second, in my view, this passage presents the shift in Clarissa's consciousness from an objectifying to an ontological reflection.

Each of these four texts, then, deals with existential issues that could potentially move some readers toward the ontological reflection that Merleau-Ponty calls "radical reflection" (280). Now the question becomes not only whether this is the case, but also what the experiences of real readers are actually

like in response to these texts and to what extent they reflect or go beyond the types of empathizing and (self-) reflection discussed earlier.

5.6.2. Questionnaires

In what follows, I will provide a brief description of each of the questionnaires employed in the four studies presented here. The questionnaires can be viewed in their entirety in Appendix 2. All questionnaires, included statements to be rated from 0 = "not at all true" to 4 = "extremely true"), except for the *Demographics Information* and the *Social Desirability Scale* (true-false questions).

Demographic Information. The first questionnaire was a standard demographics questionnaire, which asked for information about gender, age, ethnicity, primary language, and literary training.

Experiencing Questionnaire. A second questionnaire was Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák's Experiencing Questionnaire (EQ). The EQ is an instrument developed over the course of several studies to target some relatively uncommon but theoretically significant reading experiences. Item and scale development for the EQ reflected concepts derived from Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Gendlin, as well as the adaptation of selected items from Hood's mysticism scale and Pekala's Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory; and, lastly, adaptations of items from a scale used to measure moments of self-perceptual depth (Kuiken et al., "Locating Self-Modifying Feelings", "The Influence of Impactful Dreams").

The EQ includes 58 statements. Seventeen 3-item subscales and one 7-item subscale describe readers' experience along nine pairs of dimensions: (1) *mood* (wonder, disquietude); (2) *epistemic tone* (reverence, discord); (3) *noetic intimations* (evocative imagery, inexpressible realizations); (4) *sense of self* (explicit self-awareness, lost self boundaries); (5) *spatio-temporal diffusion* (timelessness, pervasive oneness); (6) *experiential vitality* (distributed liveliness, spiritual enlivenment); (7) *existential attunement* (thrownness, finitude); (8) *non-utilitarian respect* (for nature, for humans); and (9) *self-knowing* (tolerant self-attention, self-perceptual depth). The internal consistencies for seventeen of the eighteen subscales were satisfactory with alpha coefficients ranging from .64 to .88 (median = .78). The alpha coefficient for the *wonder* subscale was .59.

Existential Struggle. I created a six-item scale (Cronbach's α = .85), tentatively entitled *existential struggle*, which additionally targeted existential themes. Two of these items focus explicitly on the contrast of finitude and infinity as well as the paradoxical simultaneity of a felt sense of enlivenment with an acute awareness of one's own finitude.

Empathy Questionnaire. The third questionnaire employed in the four dissertation studies was an empathy questionnaire adapted from Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Three of Davis' four dimensions of dispositional empathy were adapted to measure situational empathy with the protagonist/speaker of each text. The three dimensions measured were: (1) Emotional Concern, which measures the other-oriented affective outcomes, i.e. whether readers respond with compassion and sympathy to distress in others; (2)

Perspective Taking, which assesses whether readers adopt the cognitive point of view of the protagonist/speaker; and (3) Fantasy, which measures whether readers put themselves in the shoes of (i.e. experientially simulate) the feelings and actions of the protagonist/speaker. Three items for each of the three dimensions were created, to which one item assessing the perceived ironical distance of narrator towards protagonist was added. The resulting empathy scale consists of ten items.

Literary Response Questionnaire. The fourth questionnaire was Miall and Kuiken's Literary Response Questionnaire (LRQ, "Aspects of Literary Response"). The LRQ includes 68 statements and measures readers' orientation toward literary texts on seven dimensions: (1) *Insight* is a measure of whether readers report that they regularly gain fresh insights into some aspects of themselves or their world through reading; (2) *Empathy,* which in the LRQ is a dispositional measure of whether readers tend to engage in "projective identification" with characters; (3) *Imagery Vividness* assesses whether readers tend to develop multi-modal sensory imagery in their elaboration of a literary world; (4) *Leisure Escape* describes the assessment of whether readers usually read for pleasure and to to escape everyday responsibilities; (5) *Concern With Author*, as the name suggests, reflects readers' in the author's "perspective, themes, and style, as well as the author's biographical place in a literary or intellectual tradition" (42); (6) *Story-Driven Reading* assesses readers interest in plot and action orientation story-lines; and (7) *Rejecting Literary Values* reflects

to what degree readers' refuse to engage more profoundly in literary reading and consider reading irrelevant and a burden.

Social Desirability Scale. The last questionnaire employed in the four dissertation studies was a short version of the Marlowe-Crown social desirability scale (Reynolds). This 13-item instrument (true-false statements) is a one-dimensional measure of the extent to which participants portray themselves more positively and in conformity to norms than corresponds to reality. It allows the researcher to assess the effects of socially desirable responding on participants' responses to the research materials.

5.7. Methods: A Numerically Aided Phenomenological Study of Readers Responses to Blanchot's The Instant of My Death

To identify and articulate distinct profiles of reading experience related to existential reading, the numerically aided phenomenological (NAP) methods introduced earlier (Kuiken, Schopflocher, and Wild; Kuiken and Miall "Numerically Aided Phenomenology"; Wohl, Kuiken, and Noels; Sikora, Kuiken, and Miall) were applied to study readers' open-ended commentaries on the passages of *The Instant of My Death* that they found evocative or striking and on the text as a whole. As mentioned earlier, NAP methods were applied only to commentaries on Blanchot's short story, because of my sense that it was particularly likely to engage readers existentially and evoke a form of ontological reflection.

Two technical points need mentioning before I describe my employment of and struggle with these methods in detail. First, the two commentaries each

participant provided were treated as a unit; second, due to technical difficulties with the digital recording, ten of the audio recordings were lost, resulting in a total of 168 commentaries (questionnaire data were retained for these participants). I will begin by describing the NAP study conducted on the 52 commentaries responding to Blanchot's text.

As straightforward as the NAP procedures may sound when presented as a general method, as usual, the devil is in the details. The kind of reflection and wonder necessary to conduct phenomenological work of any kind undermines, I believe, any cookbook instructions on how to work. Nevertheless, in the following section, I will present a step-by-step documentation of the particular way I decided to take advantage of the numerically aided phenomenological framework– and stay sane while doing it.

The mention of "staying sane" is only partially facetious, since working with NAP can be truly exhausting. This is partly due to fact that NAP requires a large amount of commentaries (as a rule of thumb, the minimum N is 30-40; Kuiken, personal communication) in comparison to other phenomenological approaches to qualitative analyses (e.g. Giorgi; van Manen) to meet the requirements of the quantitative classification techniques involved. When dealing with such a large number of open-ended experiential narratives in a phenomenological analysis, it not only sometimes but in fact quite regularly becomes impossible to see the forest for the trees. Where and how does one begin to make sense of the commentaries, let alone classify them according to similarities or differences? Which themes or meaning units present in the

commentaries are relevant to my research question and which can I let go? At what level of abstraction do I capture the meanings in the commentaries, if I want to retain descriptive depth without becoming blind to meaningful patterns by focusing on idiosyncrasies?

There are, of course, different ways of dealing with these challenges of working qualitatively. In my case, I realized that in order not to lose sight of the phenomenon in the sheer volume of commentaries, I needed to do some simple "data sorting" alongside the phenomenological work involving the *epoché,* the eidetic reduction, and explication. From my experience and from my understanding of Husserl, the mode of consciousness in "data sorting" is to be distinguished from that of the *epoché* and explication. According to Husserl, phenomenological explication involves the "elucidation of what is anticipated" and requires an active position-taking ("ego-decision", ["*Ich-Entscheidung*"]), whereas simple apprehension and "analytic elucidation" are passive in this respect (*Experience and Judgment* 112-119, 124-127, 271-281). I will draw on Gendlin's simple metaphor of lifting out a felt sense (explication) again to help bring out this difference:

> Thus feeling must be understood as *implicitly* meaningful, and as changing when there are steps of "lifting out," steps of explication or articulation … We don't want to think that the words were *in* the feeling in the sense that pebbles are *in* a box. ("Befindlichkeit" 51; Gendlin's italics)

In my view, then, working with NAP requires both phenomenological elucidation (explication), that is, the "lifting out" of an implicitly felt sense, as well as analytic elucidation, which in my case involved tentatively sorting and "analyzing" the commentaries according to themes that are readily available without active position-taking (i.e., finding the 'pebbles in a box'). Since explicative and analytic elucidation involve different modes of reflection, however, I attempted to keep them separate in the different steps of the analysis.

Finally, working phenomenologically with participants' commentaries confirmed for me what phenomenologists have often stressed, namely that reflection and explication are inseparable (e.g., van Manen). It follows that phenomenological wonder and "thinking-writing" (an awkward translation of Husserl's "*denkend-schreibend*"; *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität I* xviii-xix) are at the heart of my phenomenological work with participants' commentaries.

5.7.1. Step 1: Getting a Feel for the Commentaries[14]

The first step was to carefully read through the 52 Blanchot commentaries in a way that did not blindly impose my preconceptions on them, but rather remained as open and receptive as possible to what the overall mood of each was. As discussed earlier, applying the *epoché* thus is not a matter of excluding prejudices and theory in the name of objectivity. Rather, I attempted to *suspend* appropriating and theorizing reflection and read these commentaries in a mode of consciousness Husserl calls "judgment-excluding" (*Ideas* 61).

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[14] The commentaries I use in this report can be found in their entirety in Appendix 3.

5.7.2. Step 2: Marking Themes

The second step was to go through each commentary, mark each and every potentially explicable theme, and, in a separate document, paraphrase each of these meaning units (Giorgi) in a simple two or three word phrase. As described earlier, this procedure falls under the category of 'finding the pebbles in the box' (passive, analytic elucidation) and should not be confounded with explication. Perhaps Gendlin's distinction between "direct reference" and "recognition" is helpful to draw out the differences between this procedure and explication. In explication, we directly refer to a felt sense and attempt to articulate it (lift it out) by "finding" adequate symbols. In "recognition", on the other hand, the symbols we employ or encounter refer to already articulated (i.e. familiar) meanings (c.f., *Creation of Meaning* 91-111).

While marking and paraphrasing these *potentially* explicable themes, thoughts that seemed intriguing in any form whatsoever were noted in a separate 'Memo' document. That is, if in this non-explicative mode of reading, a theme or passage resonated with me in a form that initiated an explication, these reflections were put aside or followed up in the separate Memo document, in order to keep the "analytic elucidation" (passive; no position-taking or ego decision involved; finding and sorting 'pebbles in the box') separate from the phenomenological explication. Although the marked themes and especially the two to three word paraphrases of these only remain in the background in the following steps of explication, they functioned as landmarks and memory aids

that helped me move through the commentaries more efficiently and get a better grip on them overall.

5.7.3.   Step 3: Comparative Explication

In a third step, the explication begun in Step 1 was carried further. The themes marked and paraphrased in the analytic elucidation in Step 2 were put aside and remained in the background only. Commentaries that in this phenomenological reflection on them seemed to share potentially explicated meanings (not necessarily easily identifiable individual themes) were read globally again, but this time comparatively in pairs or trios. I then comparatively explicated the shared meanings in a reflective writing effort. This was done without yet attempting to separate the shared meanings from each other and the immediate context. Potentially explicated meanings that only appeared in one commentary and that I could thus not explicate comparatively were recorded in a 'Potential Constituents' document for later comparative readings with other commentaries.

5.7.4.   Step 4: Constituent Development

In a fourth step, constituents were developed from the reflective writing. At this point, constituents were disembedded from the contextualized explication by applying the eidetic reduction. Those aspects of the shared meanings that remained more or less "the same" regardless of context were paraphrased in a way that captured as much as possible of the shared meaning while remaining as close as possible to its expression(s) the commentaries.

5.7.5. Step 5: Identifying Further Shared Meanings for Explication

In a fifth step, the Memo document, as well as the documents containing the Marked Themes and Potential Constituents were consulted again to identify other meanings which could potentially be comparatively explicated. An example of developing a constituent in these five steps can be found in Appendix 4.

5.8. Results

5.8.1. Results from the Numerically Aided Phenomenological Study

As described earlier, the first step in NAP, as outlined by Kuiken and colleagues (Kuiken, Schopflocher, and Wild; Kuiken and Miall, "Numerically Aided Phenomenology"; Wohl, Kuiken, and Noels; Sikora, Kuiken, and Miall) is to select a subset of the experiential narratives collected in a study and to identify shared meanings among these commentaries. In the five steps described earlier, the shared meanings are then transformed into *constituents* that capture as much of each shared meaning as possible while remaining as close to participants' original wording as possible. The development of constituents from comparative reading is repeated until all of the commentaries have been considered in the search for constituents.

In a next step, a matrix is created that allows each commentary to be scored on the presence or absence of each of the developed constituents. Only those constituents are retained that occur in three or more (alternatively 10%) of the commentaries. Once all of the commentaries have been scored in this fashion, cluster analytic algorithms are employed on the resulting matrix to group commentaries into clusters according to their profiles of present and absent constituents. Further, a one-way Analysis of Variance on the entire array of constituents as dependent variables and cluster membership as independent variable enables the identification of constituents that differentiate each profile from the others.

The resulting profiles of reading experience have a structure of similarity that, as originally described by Beckner (1959), has the following characteristics: (a) each instance of a category possesses a subset of constituent features from a larger feature array; (b) each constituent feature in that array is an attribute of many instances of the category; and (c) no constituent feature in that array is a feature of every instance of the category (Beckner 22).

In my study of existential reading, NAP methods were only applied to that subset of 52 commentaries that were responses to Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*. The NAP procedures described above resulted in 77 constituents being disembedded and developed. A matrix was then created that allowed each commentary to be scored for the presence "1" or absence "0" of each of these

constituents, resulting in 77 dichotomous variables.[15] The working matrix

contained 52 participants and 77 constituents. Once all of the commentaries were

scored for the presence or absence of each constituent and after removing those

constituents that occurred in less than three commentaries, the final matrix was

52 (participants) x 65 (constituents).

With the help of the software ClustanGraphics (Wishart), the

(dis)similarity between each pair of commentaries was calculated using Squared

Euclidean Distance coefficients. In a further step, cluster analysis (Ward's

method) was performed in order to group the 52 commentaries according to the

(dis)similarity in their profiles of present and absent constituents. Monte Carlo

studies indicate that Ward's method effectively recovers cluster structure with

binary data when cluster sizes are comparable (Hands and Everitt). Also, with

symmetrical binary data, the use of Squared Euclidian Distances (equivalent to a

simple matching coefficient) with Ward's method enables effective recovery of

cluster structure (Finch). The relative magnitude of the gaps between joinings in

the agglomeration schedule indicated the presence of five clearly interpretable

clusters with 19, 9, 10, 8, and 5 members.

The proportion of readers in each cluster expressing a particular

constituent was assessed to identify which constituents differentiated the clusters

from each other. A constituent was considered differentiating if the proportion of

commentaries containing it within a cluster was larger than the proportion in at

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[15] For this project the qualitative data analysis software MaxQDA was employed to facilitate
working with the large set of commentaries and constituents.

least one other cluster. Fisher's LSD test was used descriptively to determine

differentiating clusters (p < .05). It should be emphasized that, since clustering

algorithms maximize between cluster differences, the LSD statistic was used

descriptively here and not in its usual role for testing non-random departures

from group equivalence (Everitt, Landau, and Leese 180). Of the 65 constituents,

34 differentiated clusters according to these criteria. Table 1 summarizes the

results of the resulting matrix (the constituents can be found in their entirety in

Appendix 5).

Table 1: The proportions of cluster members reporting each of the differentiating constituents

Cluster	1	2	3	4	5
Weight	**19**	**9**	**10**	**8**	**5**
1. Self-implicating	0	1	1	1	1
2. Interested/engaged-implicit	0.16	0.56**	0.1	1***	1***
3. Reflection on death/not generative	0.47***	0.11	0.5***	0	0
4. Reflection on death/not self-implicating	0.47***	0.11	0	0	0
5. Reflection on injustice	0.58**	1***	0.4	0.38	0
6. Interpretation to self-implication	0	0.44***	0.2	0.13	0
7. Personal memory/other	0.05	0.56***	0.1	0	0.4***
8. Negative feelings/depressing	0	0.44***	0	0.5***	0
9. I feel for/with	0.32	0.89***	0	0.75***	0.2
10. Indifference towards death	0	0	0.1	0.38***	0
11. Indifference/other	0	0	0.1	0.38***	0
12. Life's meaningfulness disappears	0	0.11	0.1	0.5***	0
13. Negative feelings/hopelessness	0	0.11	0.3	0.5***	0
14. Relate to protagonist's feelings/other	0.05	1	0.4**	0.75***	0.4
15. Paradoxical feelings/other	0	0.11	0	0.38***	0.6***
16. Personal memory/death related	0	0	0	0.38***	0.4***
17. Reflection on death/generative	0.05	0	0.2	0.5***	0.8***
18. Thought-provoking/explicit	0.16	0.44	0	0.63***	0.8***
19. Vulnerability	0	0.11	0.1	0.63***	0.8***
20. What's happening is in the plan	0	0	0	0.13**	0.4***
21. Stranger to myself and world	0	0.44	0.3	0.63***	0.2
22. Resigning to inevitability of death/fate	0	0	0.2**	0	0.8***
23. Powerless before fate	0.05	0	0.4***	0.38***	0.6***
24. Reflection on death/self-implicating	0	0	0.7***	0.88***	0.8***
25. Life worth living/self-implicating	0	0	0.4***	0.38***	0.4***
26. Life and death beyond the realm of justice and meaning	0.05	0	0.1	0	0.6***
27. The edge of nothingness	0	0	0	0.13	0.8***
28. Relate to death as always forthcoming	0.11	0	0.1	0	0.6***
29. Paradoxical feelings/finitude-infinity	0	0	0	0	0.8***
30. Meaning of life	0	0	0.1	0.13	0.6***
31. Inevitability of my death/self-implicating	0	0	0.2	0.13	0.6***
32. Inexpressibility	0	0.22	0	0	0.6***
33. From Sadness/suffering to knowingness	0	0	0.1	0	0.4***
34. Affirmative connection	0	0	0	0	0.8***

*** The largest proportion (or a proportion no smaller than the largest) that also is larger than the proportions in at least two other clusters.
** A proportion smaller than the largest that also is larger than the proportion in at least one other cluster.
* A proportion smaller than the largest that is designated ** and that is larger than at least one other cluster.

Cluster 1 (n = 19): Interpreting Death and Injustice

As can be seen in Table 1, the constituent profile for Cluster 1 is characterized by a comparative lack of engagement with the text (the absence of constituent #2: "The participant seemed interested in and engaged by the text/passage.") and the complete absence of self-implication (the absence of constituent #1: "This passage/text resonates with me/my feelings in a way that implicates me directly."). What distinguishes the readers in this cluster from the others is that its members' reflections revolve around the theme of death in a form that is neither self-implicating (the presence of constituent #4: "Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a way that did not implicate myself.") nor generative (the presence of constituent #3: "Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a familiar way."). That is, they are *interpreting* Blanchot's narrative with a focus on the theme of death. By interpretation I mean here that they are paraphrasing the gist of the text by drawing on meanings already familiar to them surrounding the theme of death, rather than describing their own experience of it. The following is a prototypic example of this reading profile. When providing such examples, I will first present the passage from Blanchot's text that the featured participant considered particularly striking or evocative and chose to comment on, followed by their commentary:

Chosen Passage (P102): "As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. 'I am alive. No, you are dead.'" (Blanchot 9)

This is just a really powerful description of what war is like and it

- I think it kind of describes … it doesn't only kill people

physically, it also destroys them mentally. So that's what I think

about it. I think the passage as a whole is really all about [the]

realization, kind of realizing what death is. Coming to terms with

how you would describe death.

Also, in their interpretation of *The Instant of My Death*, some of the

members of this cluster, such as P174 below, reflect on the theme of injustice

(#5: "This passage/text made me reflect on injustice."):

Chosen Passage (P174): "... he belonged to a noble class. This was war: life for

some, for others, the cruelty of assassination." (Blanchot 7)

Commentary (P174):

This passage makes me feel how unfair everyone is being treated

and the inequality involved with war and how this character

recognizes this fact. And just thinks it's ridiculous that just

because he's part of the noble class his life is spared.

Cluster 2 (n = 9): Compassion for Victims of Injustice

Unlike readers in Cluster 1, the 9 members of Cluster 2 all were

interested and engaged (the presence of constituent #2: "interested/engaged-

implicit"), in particular, in a self-implicating way (the presence of constituent #1:

"self-implicating"), although four of these members only gradually moved from

an interpretive stance toward a self-implicating one (#6: "While reading this passage/text, I moved from an interpretive stance to a self-implicating one."). Cluster 2 readers also reported negative, depressing feelings in response to *The Instant of My Death* (#8: "Reading this passage/text made me feel depressed."). These negative feelings seemed to have a history, since personal memories are a feature of this reading profile (#7: "Reading this passage/text brought up a personal memory from my past (not death related)."). Most prominent, however, was Cluster 2's concern with injustice (#5: "reflection on injustice."). In contrast to members of Cluster 1, however, members of Cluster 2 explicitly empathized with those suffering from injustice (#9: "Reading this passage/text made me feel for/with the protagonist and/or people in his situation."). The following is a prototypical instance of this cluster:

Chosen Passage (P122): "'I am alive. No, you are dead.'" (Blanchot 9)

Commentary (P122):

Now, this passage for me evoked a sense of emptiness because it's the final sentence in the paragraph but it's also kind of a self-realization because although he's still living, he's still dead on the inside and that makes me feel empty and just the fact that he also says neither happiness nor unhappiness it … it's kind of like he's in a state of shock or he doesn't know how to feel at that point because he just feels empty inside. The text as a whole also made me feel quite empty and it brought back memories from Social 30 in high school when I was learning about World War Two and the

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Nazis and the cruelty that they had on everyone that they were

attacking and so in a sense it made me feel sad that I felt helpless

because I can't help these people and in a way it also makes me

angry because of the Nazis' cruelty and - yeah, that's about it.

Although this participant reports feeling "empty" and "sad" (#8: "negative feelings/depressing") in response to Blanchot's story, she is plainly engaged and interested by the text (#2: "interested/engaged-implicit"). Her identification with the protagonist's feelings and experiences are self-implicating (#1: "self-implicating"), as the following passage illustrates:

"… but it's also kind of a self-realization because although he's

still living, he's still dead on the inside and that makes me feel

empty and just the fact that he also says neither happiness nor

unhappiness it … it's kind of like he's in a state of shock or he

doesn't know how to feel at that point because he just feels empty

inside. The text as a whole also made me feel quite empty …".

Moreover, reading this text evokes personal memories for her (#7: "personal memory/other"; i.e., not death related) and not only makes her reflect on injustice (#5: "reflection on injustice"), but also brings out compassion with those who suffer from it (#9: "Reading this passage/text made me feel for/with the protagonist and/or people in his situation."). This form of compassion is neither simulative, that is, these readers are not 'putting themselves in the protagonist's shoes' nor is it the kind of empathy that discloses in experience an

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a priori intersubjectivity. Rather it resembles two of Davis' four dimensions of empathy, namely, 'empathic concern' and 'personal distress'[16]:

> "… it brought back memories from Social 30 in high school when I was learning about World War Two and the Nazis and the cruelty that they had on everyone that they were attacking and so in a sense it made me feel sad that I felt helpless because I can't help these people …".

Cluster 3 (n = 10): Existentialist Echoes

Members in this third cluster resembled those of Cluster 1 in their relative disinterest in Blanchot's text (absence of constituent #2: "interested/engaged-implicit"). They were unlike the first cluster, however, in that they uniformly read in a self-implicating way (#1: "self-implicating"). Their musings on death reflect this self-implicating reading (#24: "Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a way that implicated me personally."), as do the explicit considerations of whether life is worth living (#25: "Reading this passage/text made me reflect in a self-implicating way on whether life is worth living under all circumstances."), although they do not seem to generate new insights regarding death (#3: "reflection on death/not generative"). Although these self-implicating reflections seem to contradict the relative disinterest in the story, the example below will illustrate how these readers touch

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[16] Studies applying Davis' empathy measure (Interpersonal Reactivity Index) have since found that the dimension 'personal distress' does not consistently load on the same factor as the other three dimensions, 'fantasy', 'perspective taking', and 'empathic concern' (c.f., Cliffordson 41).

on what feelings the text evokes for them, without elaborating on their experience of these and the text in general. Their implications are characterized by the *as-if* stance that Simulation Theory of Mind describes.

Unlike clusters 1 and 2, the reading profile of Cluster 3 is further characterized by a feeling of resignation before the inevitability of death (#22: "Reading this passage/text evokes the sense of resigning to one's own finitude/the inevitability of death."), and one of being powerless before fate in general (#23: "Reading this passage/text brings to presence the acute sense of my/our powerlessness before fate."). Lastly, some members in Cluster 3 relate to the protagonist's feelings in general (#14: I can relate to the (not death related) feelings the protagonist is experiencing in this passage/text."), although not to his feeling of death as always forthcoming. Participant 109 is a prototype of this cluster:

Chosen Passage (P109): "As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him." (Blanchot 9)

Commentary (P109):

> I felt like this passage described what I would think of war very accurately because I can imagine that it would be like you knew you were going to die and yet you couldn't stop it from happening so you could already feel that you were dead inside. And personally I haven't had any feelings like this before. But I'm sure that if I were in the war or in a similar situation where I knew I was eventually going to die or there was a large chance I was

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going to die, that this is probably the emotions that I would feel. I thought the text as a whole was very descriptive of emotions rather than just what happened during this time. And that it was very accurate a description of the emotions that the people felt and how a lot of people in the situation would probably feel the way that they felt in here and that a lot more in-depth than a lot of war stories go.

Cluster 4 (n = 8): Existential Resignation

Cluster 4 resembles Cluster 3 in some key constituents, but it also goes beyond it in important themes. Like members of the third cluster, members of Cluster 4 without exception read *The Instant of My Death* and reflected on death in a self-implicating way (#1: "self-implicating" & #24: "reflection on death/self-implicating"). Some of these readers also explicitly and self-implicatingly considered whether life is worth living (#25: "life worth living/self-implicating"). A further parallel is that they related to the protagonist's feelings in general (#14: "relate to protagnist's feelings/other"; i.e., not death related), and not his feeling of death as always forthcoming (#28: "Reading this passage/text, I can relate to the protagonist's feeling of death being always forthcoming."). And lastly, their reading also brought to presence the feeling of being powerless before fate (#23: "powerless before fate").

Importantly, however, Cluster 4 differs from Cluster 3 in that this feeling of powerlessness does not lead to a feeling of resignation before the inevitability of death and fate (#22: "resigning to inevitability of death/fate"). Instead, in

reflecting on death in a way that is generative (#17: "Reading this text/passage made me reflect on death in a way I had not done before."), reading the Blanchot text evoked the sense of not caring about the world or what happens anymore for members of Cluster 4 (#11: "Reading this passage/text evoked a deep sense of not caring about the world or what happens anymore."), and specifically to a feeling of indifference towards death (#10: Reading this passage/text evokes a feeling for me of feeling indifferent towards death."). These feelings of hopelessness (#13: "Reading this passage/text made me feel hopelessness.") and depression (#8: "negative feelings/depressing") become explicit in a sense of life's meaningfulness disappearing (#12: "Reading this passage/text brought to presence a sense that at times the meaningfulness of life disappears.") and in the alienation from self and world (#21: "Reading this passage/text evokes a feeling of being a stranger to myself and in the world."). Cluster 4's reading profile is further marked by a high interest and engagement of all members with the text (#2: "interested/engaged-implicit"), which is made explicit in statements about the thought-provoking qualities of Blanchot's narratives (#18: "thought-provoking/explicit"). What makes these readers further stand out from the clusters discussed so far is the vulnerability (#19: "Reading this passage/text brings to presence a sense of my/our vulnerability.") as well as the paradoxical feelings expressed in their commentaries (#15: "Reading this passage/text evokes the simultaneous presence of paradoxical feelings."). The mood of despair and indifference reported above, for instance, points towards this paradox, as does the felt meaninglessness and the sense of a plan behind what happens (#20:

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"Reading this passage/text a sense comes over you that what is supposed to happen is going to happen, what's happening is in the plan, is for a purpose."). Death related personal memories further emphasize the intensity of engagement and feelings of these readers with the text (#16: "Reading this passage/text brought up a death related personal memory from my past."). And finally, against this background of vulnerability, paradoxical feelings, and despair, the sense of empathy expressed (#9: "I feel for/with") becomes an inclusive empathy. Rather than the thematic 'compassion' apparent in Cluster 2, in which 'feeling *for*' was focal, empathy here reveals a pervasive intersubjectivity in the 'feeling *with*'. The following excerpts from readers' commentaries in this cluster illustrate this form of inclusive empathy:

> P176: … a feeling of like where do you belong I guess ... it doesn't really matter if you live or die in that situation.

> P742: It makes me feel like it is inevitable. And it is their destiny. It reminds me of the conscription that occurred during the war. You had no choice but to be involved.

> P109: When you get the feeling of lightness that kind of just - you don't have a care in the world anymore. Well. It's fairly common for students to be depressed right about this time.

> P724: It kind of reminds me of like why – why like we actually live. And what the point of life is.

> P111: When I read this, I feel - I guess the sense that death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative ...

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The use of the first person plural "we" and "us" but also the inclusive "you" highlights the disclosure of this pervasive intersubjectivity. The following is an example commentary from this cluster:

Chosen Passage (P119): "... at the moment when the shooting was no longer but to come, the feeling of lightness that I would not know how to translate: freed from life? the infinite opening up? Neither happiness, nor unhappiness. Nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I know, I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence. As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. 'I am alive. No, you are dead.'" (Blanchot 7-9)

The reference by number to the constituents below should be read as approximate anchors, since some of these appear more than once or are present throughout the commentary as whole. Also, some constituents, such as the text evoking a sense of vulnerability in the reader apply to the entire commentary. The following is a selection from participant 119's experiential narrative:

Commentary (P119):

> My feelings about this excerpt. {pause} Is {pause} quite close to a state of depression I would assume (#8). When you get the feeling of lightness that kind of just - you don't have a care in the world anymore (#11). […] These feelings out there have to deface something, well - I have to think. I feel the fragments {inaudible 4:50} part of this excerpt. Freed from life, infinite opening up, neither happiness nor unhappiness, nor the absence of fear and

perhaps already the step beyond. I think this first part of it really -

it evokes a strong feeling of closeness I would say to how I would

sometimes feel (#14)[…] In the present day it's - there's not really

much to life 'cause my feelings when you're freed from life (#25),

it's - well, I think I feel a lot more when there isn't really life in

this world. Just the same thing day by day. […] Being neither

happy nor unhappy. When you're just there (#21). With nothing

left to fear. You're already beyond that step. And all you have left

is the death outside and the death inside (#10). And {inaudible

6:47} well, all right. […] Now for - well {pause} I think it ... I get

a feeling of hopelessness (#13). From this text as a whole. What

happens - like the - I guess protagonist. Quotation marks there. Is

not, can't really control his own fate. Like - whether he was going

to live or die was determined not by himself or even by the people

around him but is history (#23). And how often that is

hopelessness is detachment from life (#21). It's {pause} to be

honest, it's close to how - well, I guess I would feel. Right now.

Since - well. Most people I know and myself included, have the

feeling that life isn't really going anywhere (#12). […] To have

the normal stereotypical life and leave nothing really behind

(#30). Different - different than a text of course. Quite opposite

where {inaudible 10:30} only one left. It invokes loneliness. Lack

of free will? {inaudible 10:44} I guess.

Constituent #19 ("Reading this passage/text brings to presence a sense of my/our vulnerability.") is especially apparent in this reader's sense of emotional alienation referred to ("*When you're just there ... the death inside*") as well as the hopelessness, indifference towards death, and perceived meaninglessness of life (e.g., "*there's not really much to life ... when there isn't really life in this world*").

Cluster 5 (n = 5): Existential Affirmation

Since, as their names suggest, there is kinship between clusters 4 and 5, I will present the latter in a comparison to the former. I'll begin with what they have in common. Members in Cluster 5, like those in Cluster 4, uniformly read in a self-implicating form (#1: "self-implicating"), are interested and engaged (#2: "interested/engaged-implicit"), and explicitly comment on the thought provoking (#18: "thought-provoking/explicit") nature of *The Instant of My Death*. Their readings evoke personal memories related to death (#16: "personal memory/death related"), reflections on death in general that are self-implicating (#24: "reflection on death/self-implicating") and generate new insights (#17: "reflection on death/generative"), as well as self-implicating contemplations of whether life is worth living or not (#25: "life worth living/self-implicating"). Like readers in Cluster 4, Cluster 5 members experience a feeling of being powerless before fate (#23: "powerless before fate"), yet also a sense that there is a meaningful order behind fate (#20: "what's happening is in the plan"). In both reading profiles, a sense of vulnerability (#19: "vulnerability") pervades the commentaries as do paradoxical feelings (#15: "paradoxical feelings/other; e.g.,

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P734: "It's the feeling of something beyond yourself that is there and is tangible and yet at the same time is unreachable and hidden" and P744: "Like ecstasy … And then to compare that to being immortal. And then to being dead. It's just, I don't know. Something that I linger on but can't really come to any conclusion about.").

Despite these substantial commonalities, there are nevertheless significant differences. Cluster 5 can be distinguished from Cluster 4 by constituents that are absent in the former and present in the latter, and vice versa. Critically, the move toward resignation is absent, which in Cluster 4 is manifest in the emphasis on depressing feelings (#8: "negative feelings/depressing"), hopelessness (#13: "negative feelings/hopelessness"), the meaningfulness of life disappearing (#12: "life's meaningfulness disappears"), as well as the mood of indifference in general (#11: "indifference/other") and towards death in particular (#10: "indifference towards death"). Also, members in Cluster 5 do not focus on compassion or empathy (#9: "I feel for/with") in their commentaries, and do not relate to the protagonist's feelings in a general way (#14: "relate to protagonist's feelings/other"), but rather restricted to his feeling of death as always forthcoming (#28: "relate to death as always forthcoming").

Conversely, Cluster 5 members share a reading profile in which personal memories that are not death related play a role (#7: "personal memory/other"). They relate to the protagonist's feeling that death is always forthcoming (#28: "relate to death as always forthcoming") and self-implicatingly not only reflect on the inevitability of their own death (#31: "Reading this passage/text brings to

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presence the inevitability of my own death."), but also resign to this fact (#22: "resigning to inevitability of death/fate"). Their reading is further marked by a contemplation on the meaning of life (#30: "Reading this passage/text made me ask what is life, why am I here?"), which rather than moving toward a perceived meaninglessness as in Cluster 4, comes to the realization that life and death are ultimately beyond the realm of justice and meaning (#26: "Reading this passage/text made me realize that life and death are ultimately not questions of justice and meaning.").

Reading Blanchot's text brings members in Cluster 5 to the edge of nothingness (#27: Reading this passage/text brings me to the edge of an abyss, where meaning drops into meaninglessness, the effable into the ineffable, the finite into the infinite."), which is marked by the paradoxically simultaneous apprehension of finitude and infinity (#29: "This passage/text brings about a felt sense that simultaneously captures (the sense of) my own finitude and the infinity of the world of which I form part."), as well as an inexpressibility surrounding this experience (#32: "The experience evoked by this passage is hard to describe/cannot be fully described, only hinted at."). Moreover, whereas members in Cluster 4 seem to move from despair and hopelessness towards indifference and resignation, those of Cluster 5 proceed from a feeling of sadness and suffering toward a "knowingness" (#33: "In reading this passage I moved from a reflection on sadness and/or suffering to a knowingness of something greater than or beyond me and which I am also part of."), and an affirmative connection with life and the world (#34: "This passage/text brings to presence an

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affirmative/life-affirming connection with the world for me."). The following

commentaries are prototypic examples from Cluster 5:

Chosen Passage (P106): "... the instant of my death henceforth always

impending." (Blanchot 11)

Commentary (P106):

> And I did find this quite striking because it's a really - it's a really
>
> different kind of statement, it makes you think about - well, it
>
> made me think about fate and destiny and what has to happen is
>
> going to happen (#18). I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe.
>
> It's - I think it touched on a lot of my own beliefs and that's why I
>
> related to it so much, 'cause I do feel like - kind of what is
>
> supposed to happen is going to happen either way (#23; #22).
>
> Even if you try to prevent it or not, and I think that's what that
>
> passage is or - he's kind of just saying that his death is part of
>
> something greater than or beyond his own control (#1; #31). And I
>
> don't know, it was kind of shocking reading that because I don't
>
> think I've ever thought of death in that way (#17), but I know I
>
> have those beliefs of what's supposed to happen is supposed to
>
> happen, but nobody really thinks about death in that way but that
>
> did open up kind of some different feelings for me (#28). But
>
> that's the best way I can describe it.
>
> I think reading the text as a whole, it brought up a lot of feelings
>
> and thoughts for me. I think the first time I kind of read through it

I didn't REALLY understand what they were getting at until I got

to the end. For the most part. The images that kind of came up

were a little more, they just didn't give me a great feeling when

the ... text starts off talking about the Nazis coming out and

making these people stand outside, I was feeling kind of uneasy.

And the text does deal with quite a heavy subject of how death is

basically somewhat - you can't control how it's going to happen.

And I think some of the thoughts were that it's just beyond your

control, I think - it's not - I think - it's really hard to explain (#32).

I think it kind of opened my eyes to how your - you're kind of not

only an individual in this world, you're part of a larger - you're

just part of a larger some kind of supernatural thing (#29; #34).

And you don't have control over what, over fate and - I think

that's the biggest thing that hit me with this passage (#20). I didn't

really understand parts of it, but I think for the most part I caught

the main idea. And yeah, it was a heavy subject to deal with. I was

left feeling a little - well, kind of in wonderment but also a little

uneasy (#15). But that was my overall idea of an experience of the

text.

In the commentary above, as well as in the one that follows below, the

readers' sense of vulnerability (#19) pervades their commentaries. It is present in

the experience of their finitude, in their sense of being powerless before fate, and

in their intimation of "some kind of supernatural thing" that is beyond

imaginability and expressibility for them. Also, participant P106 above gradually moves from a reflection on suffering and sadness related to death and finitude to this sense of "knowingness" associated with "being part of a larger, some kind of natural thing" (#33), which was experienced as simultaneous feeling of wonder and unease.

Chosen Passage (P734): "I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence." (Blanchot 9)

Commentary (P734):

> When I read this passage I really felt that it struck true in so many ways, I mean humans I think everyone has had times when they've felt an unanalyzable feeling, they felt something that they can't describe and they can't explain (#14). It's interesting how we have those experiences, I remember one time when I was hiking in the Rockies and it was about eight o'clock at night and I was on top of a mountain and just looking out and realizing how alone I was in the wilderness (#7). I mean, it was just me and my brother and he was already asleep and it was just me and nature. And it's a feeling that I can't describe because it just was (#32). And it's an experience that changed who I was and changed what I believed and what I felt. I believe that everyone's has those experiences, these experiences of feelings that transform and reveal things about life to you. They make you look at yourself because - yeah, it's hard to describe, I mean. Feeling of something

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else I guess. It's the feeling of something beyond yourself (#34) that is there and is tangible and yet at the same time is unreachable and hidden (#27; #29). And you sort of grasp for it, you have the feeling and you know it's there and you know it's real and you're reaching. And oftentimes you don't end up grabbing what you're trying to and you don't get to that understanding of what you experienced and what you feel but that process of trying to take hold of that feeling and analyze it changes who you are when you realize that it can't be done.

This text as a whole was really interesting, I mean it brings up a lot of questions about is there an afterlife and what happens after death and why are people afraid of death and I mean humans have this fixation about death, they have this fascination with things that are morbid and with death because death is essentially to humans death is the unknowable (#17; #24). Humans don't know what death brings. Death is a great unknown (#26). […] I mean it's a young man faced with death and he gets to this point in his life where he's faced with death and he knows it's coming but yet he doesn't necessarily know what's on the other side. And so he has these feelings of what is death like. It's over am I already dead. I might as well be because it's going to happen (#22; #23). And it talks about in the text this feeling of ecstasy and the happiness is not being immortal or eternal and compassion for

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suffering of humanity (#15). And these questions are relevant

because I mean it's something that everyone has to face at some

point, whether it's lying on a hospital bed when your heart starts

to fail or whether it's being held up at gunpoint during a war

(#31). And it makes you think. It makes you ask questions, I mean

(#18) – in the last little bit there it talks about how the feeling is

like freed from life, the infinite opening up. And it talks about the

death outside of him and the death in him. Which I found

REALLY interesting. It talks about this I am alive, no you're

dead. And that brings into the question of what is life. Which is

something that all of us ask as well (#30).

In sum, Numerically Aided Phenomenological (NAP) methods enabled

the articulation of five clearly interpretable reading profiles in reader's responses

to Maurice Blanchot's short story *The Instant of My Death*: (1) *Interpreting

Death and Injustice* with nineteen members; (2) *Compassion for Victims of

Injustice* with nine members; (3) *Existentialist Echoes* with ten members; (4)

Existential Resignation with eight members; and (5) *Existential Affirmation* with

five members. Before discussing these distinct reading profiles in light of the

theoretical distinctions made earlier, I will first present the results of three

studies which applied the established category system to readers' responses to

Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, as well as Primo Levi's poems *The Witch* and *The Black

Stars*.

5.8.2. Applying the Established Category System to Other Texts

As mentioned earlier, the above classification of different reading profiles was developed on the basis of responses to *The Instant of My Death* only, since Blanchot's text provides a particularly rich account of an existential experience involving ontological reflection and seemed to have the potential to engage some readers in a form that would evoke a similar experience for them. On the other hand, the other three texts chosen for these studies promised to provide responses that were in some respects similar. Thus, to assess the general applicability of the profiles developed in the Blanchot study, I applied the established category system to readers' commentaries on the two Levi poems and the excerpts from Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (c.f., Kuiken *Dream Types*, for this procedure).

In a first step, I scored each of the commentaries on these texts for the presence or absence of the each of the thirty-four differentiating constituents from the Blanchot study. Then, the attribute profile of each commentary was compared with the attribute profiles established for each of the five Blanchot profiles (clusters). Quantitative classification methods based on a dissimilarity coefficient (Euclidian distance measure) were used to classify readers' commentaries into the five "Blanchot profiles". That is, readers were classified into that group (profile, cluster) whose cluster center their attribute profile was nearest to.

Pearson's Chi-Square test (cluster membership*text) indicated an differential distribution of clusters across all four texts, $\chi^2(12) = 35.99$, p < .001. That is, the five clusters were differentially distributed across the four texts.

Contrasting each individual text's distribution of clusters with the distribution of the other three texts combined, allowed us to clarify which of the clusters were distinctively associated with particular texts. The Pearson's Chi-Square test results suggest that neither Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, nor Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* are significantly different in its cluster distribution from the other three texts. Differences in cluster distribution were marginally significant for Levi's poem *The Witch* ($\chi^2(4) = 9.17$, p < .057) and highly significant for his poem *The Black Stars* ($\chi^2(4) = 24.55$, p < .000). I will mention here that due the small size of Cluster 5 for all texts, Chi-Square's assumption of equal cell sizes was violated. In both cases of significant results, two cells were below the expected value of five.

Comparing cluster distribution of commentaries on *The Witch* with the other three texts combined shows that the proportion of *The Witch* readers who are members of Cluster 2 (*Empathy for Victims of Injustice*, 27.3%) is more than the double of the proportion for the other texts (13.3%), and that the proportion who are members of Cluster 4 (*Existential Resignation*, 3.0%) is considerably less than the proportion for the other texts (14.8%). Comparing cluster distribution of commentaries on *The Black Stars* with all other texts combined, by contrast, we found that the proportion of *Black Stars* readers who are members of Cluster 4 (34.2%) is substantially higher than for the other three

texts combined (6.2%). I will return to these results in my discussion of what my dissertation findings might contribute to the literary discourse around these four texts (section 6.2).

5.8.3. Questionnaire Results

Besides the NAP methods and the content analytic procedure described above, I administered a range of questionnaires that seemed relevant to my topic for further articulation of existential reading and allowed me to examine whether expected convergences might support the developed classification system.

Looking at the responses of all 178 participants (all texts), there were no differences between clusters for gender, age, ethnicity, and whether participants' primary language was English or a language other than English. Also, no significant differences were found between clusters on the *social desirability scale*, indicating that socially desirable responding did not affect participants' responses to the research materials. Moreover, participants' general reading orientation as measured by the *Literary Response Questionnaire* (LRQ) did not differentiate clusters, suggesting that the locus of differentiation is the reading experience itself. Consequently, the *Experiencing Questionnaire* (EQ) seems especially relevant when looking for convergences with reading profiles and to refine the articulation of cluster differences. I will now discuss each cluster in light of the findings from the EQ. The post hoc comparisons for the EQ subscales with significant overall ANOVAs[17] are summarized in Table 2 below.

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[17] One Way ANOVA results for EQ subscales that are significantly different between clusters: disquietude $F_{(4,159)} = 2.98$, $p < .021$; discord $F_{(4,116)} = 2.42$, $p < .053$; thrownness $F_{(4,159)} = 3.24$, $p < .014$; spiritual enlivenment $F_{(4,116)} = 3.48$, $p < .01$; finitude $F_{(4,158)} = 2.78$, $p < .029$;

Table 2: Cluster Differences on the Experiencing Questionnaire Subscale

Cluster	Interpreting Death and Injustice	Compassion for Victims of Injustice	Existentialist Echoes	Existential Resignation	Existential Affirmation
n^{i}	71	26	38	21	8
	Experiencing Questionnaire				
disquietude	1.94[b]	1.74[b]	2.60[a]	1.68[b]	1.38[b]
discord	0.94[b]	0.73[b]	1.41[a]	1.39[a]	0.95[ab]
thrownness	2.04[bc]	1.56[c]	2.66[a]	2.54[ab]	2.88[ab]
finitude	2.32[b]	2.12[b]	3.21[a]	2.72[ab]	2.90[ab]
spiritual enlivenment	0.78[c]	0.83[bc]	0.95[bc]	1.63[a]	1.52[ab]
self-perceptual depth[ii]	1.73[b]	1.97[ab]	2.44[a]	2.17[ab]	2.34[ab]
non-utilitarian respect_nature	1.20[b]	0.89[b]	1.24[b]	2.00[a]	1.52[ab]
	Theoretically Motivated Interactive EQ Subscales				
sublime[ii] disquietude	1.73[b]	1.71[b]	1.77[ab]	1.91[a]	1.81[ab]
sublime[ii] enthrallment	1.46[b]	1.48[b]	1.56[ab]	1.46[b]	1.68[a]
	Other Scales				
Existential Struggle Scale	1.95[b]	1.69[b]	2.78[a]	1.99[b]	2.52[ab]
Empathy Scale	2.23[b]	2.33[b]	3.32[a]	2.44[b]	2.18[b]

[abcd] Means with the same superscript do not differ from each other ($p < .05$).

[i] There is some variation from these n values for the different scales due to missing values.

[ii] The overall F-values for these subscales is only marginally significant.

Cluster 1: Interpreting Death and Injustice

The EQ targets relatively rare but especially impactful reading experiences that are generative and during which shifts in self-understanding may occur. Members in Cluster 1 rate lower than clusters 3, 4, and 5 on most of

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self-perceptual depth $F(4,156) = 4.55$, $p < .068$ (marginally significant); and non-utilitarian respect nature $F(4,116) = 3.125$, $p < .018$.

the EQ subscales reported in Table 2 above. These results are not surprising, given the fact that the experiences assessed especially by subscales such as *discord, thrownness,* and *finitude,* seem opposed to the relative disinterest, lack of self-implication, and the interpretive stance of Cluster 1's members. All three of these scales involve a form of (self-)reflective attunement, which is by definition self-implicating. *Discord*, for instance, as the following item from the subscale illustrates, explicitly asks about the self-reflection on one's experience of discord: "While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed irreversibly ruined". Likewise, the *finitude* subscale targets the *self-reflective experience* of finitude: "After reading this poem, I was especially attentive to the brevity of life and the inevitability of death".

Moreover, the low ratings on the EQ of Cluster 1 members may be a question also of the lack of intensity of their reading experience. EQ item wording may simply be too strong as that they could recognize their experiences in its statements.

Cluster 2: Empathy for Victims of Injustice

The fact that members of Cluster 2 scored significantly lower than all other clusters except Cluster 1 on *thrownness*, *discord,* and *finitude* does not seem surprising in consideration of the reading profile and despite their self-implicative and relatively engaged reading. First, quite simply, their reading does not evoke a reflection on *finitude*.

Second, we saw that readers in this cluster move from an interpretive stance to a self-implicating one. They were depressed at the injustice portrayed

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in the text and showed compassion for those suffering from it. *Thrownness* is the concept of becoming reflectively aware of being thrown into one's own "skin", culture, and fate. Readers in Cluster 2 (and Cluster 1) do not seem to experience this self-reflective, individualizing, and wondrous experience, since their sense of justice and the depressed, compassionate response to injustice operates from out of an *implicit* understanding and the self-evidence of justice. This *pre-understanding* itself and the precarious foundation on which it is built is not revealed to them as it would be in *thrownness*.

And lastly, their compassion for victims of injustice does not have the character of a self-reflective attunement to their own *discordant* experience. That these members concerned with injustice do not score higher than Cluster 1, for instance, on the *non-utilitarian respect for humans* subscale of the EQ is somewhat surprising and requires further investigation, since items such as "After reading this poem, it seemed wrong to treat people like objects," appear to fit their reading profile quite well.

Cluster 3: Existentialist Echoes

Members of Cluster 3 seem to engage existentially with the texts in this study. In their commentaries this is evident in their self-implicating reading, including self-implicating reflections on death and whether life is worth living, a feeling of resignation before the inevitability of death, and a sense of powerlessness before fate. Their responses to the EQ support the notion that their reading is a form of existentialist engagement. For instance, as can be seen in Table 2, they score higher on the *discord*, *thrownness,* and *finitude* subscales

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than members of clusters 1 and 2; higher on self-perceptual depth than Cluster 1; and they report a higher degree of disquietude than all other clusters. Also, members of Cluster 3 score significantly higher on the six-item *Existential Struggle Scale* than all other clusters excepting Cluster 5.[18] This does not seem surprising given the themes that stand out in their commentaries and the fact that they read self-implicatingly. It does, however, raise the question why their comparative disengagement does not seem to affect these questionnaire results more and why the contrast with clusters 4 and 5 seems less than clear. Perhaps, the important distinction between the *belief in* or acknowledgement of the existential themes in the text, characteristic of Cluster 3, and the *experience* of these that characterizes both clusters 4 and 5 eludes the EQ.

A further finding from responses to the EQ that seems compatible with the established classification system is that members of Cluster 3 scored significantly higher on the *Empathy Scale* than members of all other clusters (see Table 2).[19] Two dimensions from Davis' *Interpersonal Reactivity Index* on which our *Empathy Scale* is based assess precisely the simulative experience (*as if* stance) characteristic of Cluster 3's reading profile.

The "echoes" in this cluster's name refers to fact that these readers seem to draw on available existentialist conceptions in their engagement with the existential themes in the text. That is, rather than attending to a felt sense and

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[18] One Way ANOVA results for between-cluster differences on the *Existential Struggle Scale*: $F(4,160) = 3.40$, $p < .011$.

[19] One Way ANOVA results for between-cluster differences on the *Empathy Scale*: $F(4,156) = 4.55$, $p < .002$.

lifting out a fresh understanding of death and their Being-in-the-world, as members in clusters 4 and 5 do, Cluster 3 members seem to turn to familiar loci of existential struggle. As mentioned earlier, their commentaries point to a form of reading that is *simulative*, that is, they engage the protagonist's experiences *as if* they were their own, but not enactively *as their own*. The items of the *Empathy Scale* based on Davis *Interpersonal Reactivity Index* reflect precisely such a simulative understanding of empathy, as the following examples illustrate:

> *Empathy Scale* item 1: To what extent can you imagine what it would be like if you were in the protagonist's situation?

> *Empathy Scale* item 2: To what extent can you imagine the situation that the protagonist is in?

This *Existentialist Echoes* cluster does not seem to experience the sense of a vulnerable self nor of wonder at the familiar, which makes self and world appear uncanny and alien. Perhaps the difficulty of distinguishing the existentialist (Heidegger's "existentiell"; *Being and Time* 32-35) from the existential points to the strength of combining questionnaire measures such as the EQ with qualitative methods, such as NAP, since to a certain extent questionnaires invite reactive responses by providing the "pebbles in a box" and consequently risk falling short of capturing the explicative effort of enactive processes during literary reading such as the lifting out of a felt sense.

Clusters 4 and 5: Existential Resignation and Existential Affirmation

That members of Cluster 4 score higher than those in clusters 1 and 2 on the *discord* subscale of the EQ was to be expected given their self-implicating

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and engaged reading experience and their reported *experience* of hopelessness, despair, alienation, as well as the sensed meaninglessness of life. A similar convergence between EQ and NAP results is provided by the fact that clusters 4 and 5 score higher on the *thrownness* subscale of the EQ than readers in Cluster 2, who seem to lack the reflective attunement toward self-experience characteristic of *thrownness*. Also, Cluster 4's higher *non-utilitarian respect for nature* compared with all other clusters but Cluster 5 is interpretable in light of the expansion of empathy beyond the compassion for an Other to a form of inclusive empathy that discloses the intersubjective nature of our Being-in-the-world, expressed in this cluster's commentaries.

Members of Cluster 4 also score higher on the *spiritual enlivenment* subscale of the EQ than all the other clusters, except Cluster 5. These findings underline the conceptual kinship between Clusters 4 and 5 and supports their shared designation of 'existential', since Cluster 5 is also higher on this subscale than Cluster 1. However, it also suggests that in labeling Cluster 4 *Existential Resignation*, I may for the sake of contrast with Cluster 5 not have given adequate due to the paradoxical character of Cluster 4's reading experience and one-sidedly emphasized the negative aspects in the profile name. However, the sense that there is a plan behind what happens and the expansive empathy found in these readers' commentaries are not as obviously forms of *spiritual enlivenment* as those present in Cluster 5. Members in this *Existential Affirmation* cluster expressed a "knowingness" and an affirmative connection

with life and the world in their commentaries. Their higher ratings (Blanchot only) on the *self-perceptual depth* subscale support these NAP findings.

Moreover, there is further evidence supporting the distinction between the *resignation* of Cluster 4 from the *affirmation* of Cluster 5, as well as their (joint) differentiation from the other three clusters. Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák describe how the EQ subscales have the potential to provide useful indices of apex reading moments, including what David Miall (personal communication) has referred to as a "brush with the sublime." We used the interactive combination (i.e., the cross product) of theoretically motivated EQ subscales to create an index of two types of experiencing, specifically, *sublime enthrallment* (the interactive combination of *wonder, reverence, inexpressible realization,* and *self-perceptual depth*) and *sublime disquietude* (the interactive combination of *disquietude, finitude, inexpressible realization,* and *self-perceptual depth*).

As can be seen in Table 2, members of both Clusters 4 and 5 score higher on *sublime disquietude* than clusters 1 and 2, that is, they are higher on the interactive combination of the *disquietude, finitude, inexpressible realizations,* and *self-perceptual depth* subscales. Moreover, only Cluster 5 differs from all other clusters (except Cluster 3) on *sublime enthrallment.* In convergence with the reading profiles articulated in the NAP study, members of this cluster were higher on the interactive combination of the *wonder, reverence, inexpressible realization,* and *self-perceptual depth* subscales. These results emphasize the ephipanic character of the apex reading moments articulated in clusters 4 and 5,

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while simultaneously supporting the distinction of *existential resignation* from *existential affirmation*.

Lastly, when looking at *EQ* responses for participants reading Blanchot's short story only, readers in Cluster 5 scored significantly higher than each of the other clusters on both the *spiritual enlivenment* and *self-perceptual depth* subscales (all post hoc tests were significant beyond the .007 level and the .043 level respectively).[20] Moreover, One Way Analysis of Variance indicated that members of Cluster 5 in response to Blanchot's *Instant of My Death* only had significantly more *literary training* than members of the other four clusters, $F(4,33) = 3.76$, $p < .013$ (all post hoc tests significant beyond the .02 level). In sum, overall the findings from especially the *EQ* converge well with those from the NAP studies.

6. Discussion:

In closing, I will discuss two issues that help bring together the various threads of my dissertation on existential reading. First, I will address how the empirical findings relate to the theoretical distinctions made in chapters 2 through 4. Did some of the findings perhaps point towards possibilities beyond those anticipated by theory? Second, I will discuss the four texts in light of the theoretical and empirical findings.

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[20] One Way ANOVA indicated that there were significant overall differences between clusters for the *spiritual enlivenment* $F(4,45) = 3.57$, $p < .013$ and *self-perceptual depth* $F(4,45) = 3.87$, $p < .009$ subscales.

6.1. Existential Readers

Heidegger, as we saw earlier, holds that the function of art is to initiate an ontological reflection that unconceals Being (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 84), that "turns our unprotected Being into the Open" (137), and that "puts Being to work in a being" (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 170). Part of this reflection consists in grasping and articulating the ready-to-hand structure of our engagement with and in the world. Ultimately, however, this ontological reflection is an attunement to what is actualized and brings us face to face with our own finitude and finitude in general. According to Heidegger, it may initiate an authentic thinking within anxiety (Farrell Krell 43) and "initiate our own nature" (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 148).

Heidegger, of course, is neither the only reader in the world, nor does he have normative authority on how literature should be read. As we saw, the majority of participants in the four studies reported in this dissertation did not engage in the kind of ontological reflection through reading that Heidegger posits. Nevertheless, some readers at least some of the time did. That is, their experiential narratives (commentaries) reflect an engagement in the form of an ontological interrogation that Merleau-Ponty terms "radical reflection" (280). Upon my view, the relative scarcity of this form of literary engagement should not influence judgments about its literary theoretical relevance. It might also be worth considering that reading in a research setting may distort distributions among profiles, since it may be less conducive than a natural setting to the kind of experiential engagement that existential reading is. What remains to be shown

now is how existential reading, as developed through the empirical studies in this dissertation, relates to the distinctions regarding empathic engagement, self-awareness, and reflection made in the theoretical chapters earlier.

6.1.1. Interpreting Death and Injustice

We have seen that readers in Cluster 1 remain at an interpretative *distance* to the world of the text. The lack of self-implication apparent in their commentaries makes their "empathic" engagement with the protagonists resemble the intellectualized guessing of mental states proposed by TT and Zunshine. Moreover, theirs is a thematic encounter with what is present-at-hand in the texts and there is no indication of a blurring of boundaries between self and other, which may accompany the loss of (objectified) self-awareness in full empathic engagement (e.g., transportation). Reflection thus remains thoroughly Cartesian in the abstract and objectifying consideration of the themes available in the texts.

To avoid misunderstanding it is important to remark here that the fact that these readers are engaging in an objectifying Cartesian reflection does not undermine the critique of Cartesianism. From a phenomenological perspective, as mentioned earlier, entities are intelligible as present-at-hand only against the background of their readiness-to-hand. In other words, the kind of Cartesian reflection that members in Cluster 1 engage in is derivative of an embodied and embedded Being-in-the-World (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 99). Because such reflection is derivative, involving time consuming inferential activity, it creates

the seeming distance, i.e., the Cartesian divide, between these readers and the world of the text.

6.1.2. Compassion for Victims of Injustice

Although readers in Cluster 2 begin their engagement with the text from the same interpretative distance as those in Cluster 1, they gradually move toward a self-implicating reading in which they feel compassion for those suffering from injustice. Moreover, these readers neither pretend to be in the protagonist's situation characteristic of the kind of simulation that ST and Mar and Oatley suggest is the default mode of empathic engagement, nor do they engage in a full empathic engagement that would lead to losing the awareness of an objectified self and their reflection remains objectifying, abstract, and inferential on what is present-at-hand.

6.1.3. Existentialist Echoes

Members of Cluster 3, on the other hand, precisely exhibit the form of empathy posited by Simulation Theory. These simulations remain within the realm of Cartesian reflection, since as was argued earlier, they are interpretative inferences from a third person perspective made *in order to* understand self, other and the situation better. That is, despite the "experiential" input that the simulation provides, these readers remain "at some representational content in [their] consciousness" (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 154).

Whereas in Cluster 2 this Cartesian reflection is focused on injustice and a thematic compassion with those suffering from it, readers in Cluster 3 are particularly concerned with the inevitability of (their own) death and whether life

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is worth living or not. We also saw that members of this *Existentialist Echoes*
reading profile score higher than clusters 1 and 2 on arguably existential *EQ*
subscales such as *discord*, *thrownness, finitude*, and *existential struggle* and that
they score high on the *Empathy Scale*, which records a form of simulative
empathy.

However, their attending to these themes does not have the character of a
"lifting out" of a "felt sense" (Gendlin, "Befindlichkeit" 50-51) or the
attunement to what is actualized in the experience/experiencing. That is, it lacked
the experiential and expressive aspects to count as the kind of radical/ontological
reflection that Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger have in mind. Their reading might
be characterized as existentialist (or "existentiell*"* in Heidegger's distinction of
this form of engagement from an "existential" one; *Being and Time* 32-35) since
it rehearses or acknowledges existential themes without *experiencing* an
ontological turn. In fact, these readers' reflections on death resemble Ivan
Ilyich's shortly after he learns that he will die and before his own mortality will
become pervasive in the structure of his experience.

6.1.4. Existential Resignation

Readers in Cluster 4 also reflect on death and whether life is worth living
in a way that implies their own death and their own life. Rather than rehearsing
these themes from a safe interpretative distance however, their own mortality
and human finitude in general is *experienced* as overwhelming and as
threatening the meaningfulness of human life. These readers are reflectively
attuned to what is actualized in their experiencing/experience. Theirs is a

radical/ontological reflection that is accompanied by the experience of vulnerability, anxiety, hopelessness, and despair in the face of an indifferent universe. They do not merely experience a temporary loss of an objectified sense of self as in full empathic engagement, but experience themselves and the world as strange. Phenomenologists have called this wonder:

> Wonder sees the world of everyday as suddenly strange and mysterious, obtrusive, standing out. The question has been opened up by the momentary experience… (Kingwell 104)

For readers in Cluster 4, however, this experience of the uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*) undermines the meaningfulness of (their) life and engenders hopelessness. Heidegger describes a similar experience in the passage below, I believe:

> Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein's Being-in-the-world face to face with the "nothing" of the world; (*Being and Time* 321)

Paradoxically perhaps, this ontological reflection, despite its character of meaninglessness, hopelessness, and resignation, evokes a form of empathy that goes beyond a thematic face-to-face encounter and actualizes the a priori intersubjectivity along with the readiness-to-hand structure of our dealings in and with the world. These readers are, metaphorically speaking, "at the bridge and what it makes room for" (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*). That is, they

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are *in* the protagonists experience in a way that blurs the boundaries between themselves and the latter. Thus, in my view this is a form of existential reading that is moreover characterized by a move of resignation. The fact that these readers report a higher degree of *spiritual enlivenment* than members of clusters 1, 2, and 3 is a reminder not to overlook the paradoxical character of this cluster's reading experience and existential reading per se. Nevertheless, Cluster 4 is also the only cluster higher on *sublime disquietude* than clusters 1 and 2, which converges with its reading profile articulated in the NAP study.

6.1.5. Existential Affirmation

The reading profile of members in Cluster 5 shares with Cluster 4 the non-Cartesian form of (self-)reflection characteristic of existential reading. Their experiential, enactive, and expressive reading of the protagonist's struggle with death and finitude moves them toward an *experience of their own mortality* and finitude. Like readers of Cluster 4, these readers lift out a felt sense in their reflective attunement to what is actualized. In their reflective explication, which involves personal, death related memories, they gain a fresh and embodied understanding of death and finitude. Death is no longer safely around the next corner as in the present-at-hand conception of time. Rather death becomes a structuring feature/presence of their experience. Much like for Blanchot's protagonist, they have the sense that death is always forthcoming. The ontological reflection they are engaged in replaces a thematic and reflective empathy by the experience of an inherently intersubjective Being-in-the-World. The individualizing and alienating experience of a revealed readiness-to-hand

and the nothingness beneath it evokes in these readers not the resignation of members in Cluster 4, but rather a shift from sadness and suffering to a kind of "knowingness". That is, their radical reflection moves them toward an *existential affirmation*. This reading experience also seems to some extent to converge with an experience of the sublime, particularly with what Kuiken and Miall have termed *sublime enthrallment*. The fact that this cluster is higher on *sublime enthrallment* than all other clusters (except Cluster 3) further highlights the epiphanic character of the *existential affirmation* reading experience.

The fact that the great majority of the members in the *Existential Affirmation* cluster are participants who read Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death* suggests that this text may possess characteristics that are especially conducive to this kind of reading experience. A further indicator in this direction is the fact that when comparing Clusters for Blanchot reponses only, members in Cluster 5 had more literary training than those of the other clusters. This suggests that those with a higher degree of literary training may have developed strategies that allow them to move beyond/through the complexity in Blanchot's short story to an experiential and enactive reading. In the next section, I will discuss the four chosen texts in light of the theoretical and empirical findings presented in this dissertation.

6.2. Existential Texts

Maurice Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, Primo Levi's poems *The Witch*, and *The Black Stars*, and Virginia Woolf's *Mr. Dalloway* are four texts that provide a variety in genre, culture, and to some degree epoch. However, in

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the background of each of these texts lies a war and the injustice, suffering, and threat to human meaningfulness that follows from them. The protagonists of the two narrative texts and the speakers of the two poems are portrayed as vulnerable, alienated from self and world, and as desperately seeking meaningfulness in an indifferent and unjust world. My choice to include these texts came, first, from the impact they had on me and, second, from the sense that they might move some to read existentially.

The Instant of My Death became the central text of my inquiry, since I had the impression that it provided the fullest account of this form of reading that I was looking to articulate. Initially, what I expressed of this felt sense strongly resembled the *Existentialist Echoes* reading profile. Only later, did the theoretical and philosophical discussions surrounding the existential, and especially the results of the numerically aided phenomenological study, bring a richer account of existential reading into view, as a form of experiential and enactive engagement that might lead to the ontological reflection described above.

Conducting the numerically aided phenomenological study on responses to Blanchot's short story, and the content analyses of responses to the other three texts based on the thirty-four constituents gained through the NAP study (i.e., applying the established category system), means that *The Witch, The Black Stars,* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are discussed here through the themes that are salient in *The Instant of My Death*. This restriction becomes especially apparent when looking at Primo Levi's poem *The Witch*.

6.2.1. The Witch – Losing a Loved One

As mentioned earlier, the poem describes a woman modeling a wax figure of her lover who has recently died. By throwing the figure into the fire the woman begins to mourn her loss and faces her pent up suffering. My sense of this text was that it could for some readers initiate a process moving from the reflection on death, finitude, and the inevitability of human suffering, to the experience of their own finitude and ontological reflection. As it turns out, my assumption was an example of projecting an informed reading experience onto participants who responded to *The Witch*. Merely one of the thirty-three first-year psychology students who read the poem engaged it experientially and enactively and moved toward the ontological reflection characteristic of existential reading. Interestingly, without the contextual information (loss of a loved one, most likely during the war), many of its readers interpreted the poem to be about the break-up of a romantic relationship. Many commented on how sad the poem was and that the title contrasted with the poem itself, since the woman in the poem does not appear as a stereotypical witch. The following commentary captures some of these aspects:

> As a whole the poem … it's kind of sad and the title is kind of
> interesting, like The Witch. 'Cause I don't actually think she's a
> witch, I think she's just a regular woman. I don't know, it just -
> kind of reminds me of like when you have to let someone go, like
> she's like molding his face in the wax and then burning it, it's like
> - you just got to like let it go and only then she could cry, it's like

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finally it's over for her and I guess it didn't affect me that much

but it's a sad poem. (P129)

The fact that *The Witch* was mostly read as a break-up story by these young readers points to the importance of not only context information for the type of engagement with the poem, but also perhaps to the influence of extra textual factors, such as age and life experiences, on their interpretative efforts.

6.2.2. The Black Stars – Facing the "Nothing" of the World

The Black Stars, in contrast, clearly affords an existential reading experience to some readers. In fact, it had the highest proportion of existential readers with over 42% of its respondents in clusters 4 and 5. The responses to this poem suggest that it tends to draw readers into engaging its bleak and unsettling imagery, rather than initiating an interpretation of presented circumstances and events, such as *The Witch* engendered. Instead of the seemingly easily recognizable and abstractly interpretable scenario of "getting over someone that you broke up with", which the great majority of participants identified in *The Witch*, *The Black Stars* seems to resist this kind of rehearsed/automatic interpretation due to its defamiliarizing language and imagery. The following lines capture the tone and spirit of the poem:

The order from which the cosmos took its name is dissolved:

The heavenly legions are a tangle of monsters,

The universe, blind and violent and strange, besieges us.

The clear sky is strewn with horrible dead suns,

Dense sediments of crushed atoms:

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Nothing emanates from them but desperate heaviness,

No energy, no messages, no particles, no light;

Light itself falls back, broken by its own weight.

All of us, human seed, we live and die for nothing,

And the skies perpetually revolve in vain.

Almost 80% of the readers in this study implicated themselves into the world of *The Black Stars* in their reading and reflectively attuned themselves to their own experience of it. Almost half followed the speaker's move toward resignation before the perceived hopelessness, strangeness, and meaninglessness of the world. Particularly striking is the vivid description in both the poem and commentaries of experiencing the uncanny and abysmal "nothing" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 321), which threateningly envelops the sphere of human meaningfulness. Thus, in the context of this discussion, *The Black Stars* can be characterized as an existential text, since its defamiliarizing language and unsettling imagery leads many of its readers to engage in an ontological reflection on their own vulnerability and finitude.

Noteworthy also is the fact that *The Black Stars* elicited not only mimetic moves toward resignation from its existential readers. For three of the thirty-nine readers of the poem, it initiated a process through the experience of hopelessness and meaninglessness described above toward the kind of affirmation characteristic of Cluster 5. What this experience might be like and how an engagement with texts such as *The Black Stars* evokes it for some readers will be

made clearer with the help of Heidegger in discussing Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
and Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*.

6.2.3. Mrs Dalloway – Anxious Joy

In the first excerpt from *Mrs Dalloway* presented to participants,
Septimus Warren Smith's experience resembles that described in *The Black
Stars*. The once meaningful life of culturally embedded practical activity now
appears distant, strange, and meaningless. It is perceived as an island surrounded
by an engulfing and meaningless "nothing". Together with the meaningfulness
of culturally embedded practical activity, the sense of community and belonging
disappears. Like the speaker of *The Black Stars,* Septimus Warren Smith is alone
not *in* the world but in *facing* the world, as the following passage illustrates:

> So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill
> yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes. … Besides, now that he was
> quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die
> are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a
> freedom which the attached can never know. Holmes had won of
> course; the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes
> himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the
> world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who
> lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world. (101-102)

Some readers of *Mrs Dalloway* may follow Septimus through his torment
and despair to a state of resignation. However, in Woolf's novel, we are also

presented with Clarissa's self-implicating, empathizing reflection on Septimus'

fate and her attempt to wring meaning from his death. The text allows us to

follow her ontological reflection on her own mortality and on finitude in general:

> A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with
> chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in
> corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was
> defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling
> the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded
> them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There
> was an embrace in death. But this young man who had killed
> himself—had he plunged holding his treasure? "If it were now to
> die, 'twere now to be most happy," she had said to herself once,
> coming down in white.
>
> Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the
> overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands,
> this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there
> was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. (202-203)

Could the "treasure" Clarissa refers to in the passage above be akin to

Heidegger's "freedom towards death" (*Being and Time* 311)? In my view, the

excerpt which describes how Clarissa prepares her party and then learns of

Septimus' death perfectly *explicates* Heidegger's discussion revolving around

'thrownness', 'anxiety', the 'uncanny', and the 'call to conscience', all of which

are closely related to existential reading and ontological reflection. I will

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illustrate this parallel below and begin by quoting a relevant passage from

Heidegger's *Being and Time*:

> In the face of its thrownness Dasein flees to the relief which
>
> comes with the supposed freedom of the they-self. This fleeing
>
> has been described as a fleeing in the face of the uncanniness
>
> which is basically determinative for individualized Being-in-the-
>
> world. Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-
>
> of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which
>
> thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein's Being-in-the-world
>
> face to face with the "nothing" of the world; in the face of this
>
> "nothing", Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost
>
> potentiality-for-Being. *What if this Dasein, which finds itself* [*sich*
>
> *befindet*] *in the very depths of its uncanniness, should be the*
>
> *caller of the call of conscience?* (*Being and Time* 321)

I'll begin with 'anxiety'. Heidegger uses 'anxiety' as the technical term

for the "state-of-mind" of reflecting on (the experience of) one's own finitude. In

the passage from *Mrs Dalloway* quoted above, Clarissa experiences

Heideggerian anxiety through her self-implicating empathizing with Septimus.

According to Heidegger, the ontological reflection on (one's own) finitude is

accompanied by the acute experience of one's 'thrownness' and by a radical

individuation. Clarissa's following train of thought is a powerful description of

the "uncanninness" (the "unhomeliness" of the German "*Unheimlichkeit*" is lost

in this translation) that is revealed in reflecting on one's having been "thrown

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into existence [and of existing] as an entitiy which has to be as it is and as it can be" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 321): "Then … there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity … this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear" (Woolf 202-203).

In Levi's *Black Stars* and the *Mrs Dalloway* passage revolving around Septimus, we already saw what the experience of "Dasein's Being-in-the-world [coming] face to face with the 'nothing' of the world" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 321) might be like. It is the (self-) alienating experience of nothingness and of a world utterly devoid of meaning. According to Heidegger, we usually flee into "the supposed freedom of the they-self" from this individualizing experience, which throws us back onto our "potentiality-for-Being" (*Being and Time* 321). Clarissa Dalloway's experience in the passage above is the perfect example for this move from a fleeing "they-self" lost in "idle talk" to an individuating experience of anxiety through the ontological reflection on finitude. Heidegger asks: "What could be more alien to the "they", lost in the manifold 'world' of its concern, than the Self which has been individualized down to itself in uncanniness and been thrown into the 'nothing'?" (*Being and Time* 321-322).

Moreover, Clarissa hears the Heideggerian "*call of conscience*" "*in the very depths of this uncanniness*" (*Being and Time* 321) accompanying her ontological reflection on finitude, as, for example, the following passage illustrates: "A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies,

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chatter. This he had preserved" (Woolf 202). Thus, *Mrs Dalloway* presents us with Clarissa's experience of moving out of the "oblivion of being" (Farrel Krell 37) and death denial that comes with objectifying reflection and the concomitant positing of *time as a succession of nows* (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 475), to an ontological reflection that simultaneously entails a sense of enlivenment and an acute experience of finitude and vulnerability.

According to Heidegger this ontological reflection on finitude and vulnerability may paradoxically be accompanied by a feeling of joy. He writes: "Along with the sober anxiety which brings us face to face with our individualized ability-to-be, there goes an unshakable joy in this possibility" (358). Dreyfus provides the following gloss on this notion of Heidegger's: "… this vulnerability is a necessary condition of the joy of being a world-discloser, so that, far from *fear* of my inevitable *demise*, Dasein's authentic attunement to the world while disclosing it is anxious joy" (Dreyfus xxxv). And indeed, Woolf portrays Clarissa as paradoxically experiencing vulnerability and "in the depths of her heart an awful fear" (203), alongside joy. The passage below particularly captures the paradoxical affirmation that follows her individualizing and alienating experience of anxiety, as well as the acute experience of rich temporality:

> It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the
> drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to
> bed. She pulled the blind now. The clock began striking. The
> young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the

clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. (Woolf 204)

And, as if to underline the import of ontological reflection in this existential novel, *Mrs Dalloway* closes with the character Peter experiencing the paradoxical simultaneity of terror and joy: "What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?" (Woolf 212).[21]

6.2.4. The Instant of My Death - Being-towards-death

In Maurice Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death* this paradox takes center stage, although Blanchot's narrator is careful to distinguish joy from a kind of elation. The protagonist's experience of awaiting his impending death by execution is described as a partly inexpressible simultaneity of Heideggerian anxiety and ecstasy:

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[21] In my reading, the final two lines of the novel: "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was", are not the (only) answer to these questions Peter puts to himself in silent reflection.

I know— do I know it— that the one at whom the Germans were already aiming, awaiting but the final order, experienced then a feeling of extraordinary lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing happy, however)—sovereign elation? The encounter of death with death? In his place, I will not try to analyze. He was perhaps suddenly invincible. Dead— immortal. Perhaps ecstasy. Rather the feeling of compassion for suffering humanity, the happiness of not being immortal or eternal. Henceforth, he was bound to death by a surreptitious friendship. (5)

In this passage, the narrator emphasizes how the protagonist experiences his impending death and own finitude as alienating from self and world, as well as radically individuating in a Heideggerian sense (i.e. stripped of a pre-ontological, relational self-understanding). This experience resembles that of both the speaker of *The Black Stars* as well as of Septimus Warren Smith. As in these two texts, Blanchot's protagonist perceives the world as inherently and painfully unjust; an injustice before which one is powerless. In a truly Heideggerian spirit, this uncanny experience of finitude becomes a structuring feature of all future experiences:

I know, I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence. As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. "I am alive. No, you are dead." (7-9)

… All that remains is the feeling of lightness that is death itself or,

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to put it more precisely, the instant of my death henceforth always

impending.[22] (11)

The Instant of My Death emphasizes *ekstasis*, the standing outside

oneself, as accompanying the protagonist's experience of finitude, and

tentatively ascribes to it a quality of feeling "freed from life". The narrator also

stresses the inexpressibility surrounding this phenomenon. It consequently

remains ambiguous to what extent the protagonist is henceforth "bound to death

by a surreptitious friendship" (5) because the experience is one of being "freed

from life" (7) or whether this friendship might be read as more *affirmative* than a

fleeing from anxiety.

Regardless of this irresolvable ambiguity, we saw that some *readers* of

The Instant of My Death, as well as *The Black Stars*, moved *beyond* a mimetic

experience of resignation, escape, or ambiguous ecstasy–and *through anxiety*–to

an *existential affirmation*. In Heidegger's discussion of finitude, an "authentic"

response to anxiety is precisely such an affirmative move, which he terms

"anticipatory resoluteness":

> Anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape, fabricated for the
>
> 'overcoming' of death; it is rather that understanding which
>
> follows the call of conscience and which frees for death the
>
> possibility of acquiring *power* over Dasein's *existence* and

---

[22] The translation of Blanchot's "*en instance*" into "in abeyance" in the published version of
Instant of My Death misses the point of death henceforth always being *impending*. "Impending"
is also the English translation of Heidegger's "*bevorstehend*" (*Being and Time* 293; *Sein und Zeit*
250) in characterizing this aspect of experiencing one's own finitude.

basically dispersing all fugitive Self-concealments. Nor does

wanting-to-have-a-conscience, which has been made determinate

as Being-towards-death, signify a kind of seclusion in which one

flees the world; rather, it brings one without Illusions into the

resoluteness of 'taking action'. (*Being and Time* 357-358)

Thus, although these four texts provide differing perspectives on confronting finitude existentially, they have in common *anxiety* as their ground tenor. Blanchot and Woolf's protagonists as well as Levi's speakers are portrayed in their experiences of "remarkably individualizing" anxiety. In my reading, however, as well as in that of some of the participants of the studies described above, these texts beckon their readers to what Husserl calls an "active position-taking" and an "ego-decision" (*Experience and Judgment* 271-281), and may allow "Dasein to stand in the simplicity of its Being-there":

Because anxiety is a remarkably individualizing phenomenon, the

description of it must banish the idle talk, whimsical curiosity, and

tranquilized bustle characteristic of Dasein's everyday modes of

behavior, and allow Dasein to stand in the simplicity of its Being-

there. (Farrell-Krell, *Intimations of Mortality* 155-156)

6.3. Schlusswort – Letting Death Be

If we now return to the initial question that was asked in the introduction and that set the stage for the discussion of existential reading, we can say with some assurance that yes, *some* readers, namely those that share the reading

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profile of clusters 4 and 5, are likely to experience Ivan's anxiety not *as if* it were

their own, but rather *their own anxiety* through empathizing with Ivan. In

empathizing with Ivan in a form that discloses the pervasive and primordial

intersubjectivity of their Being-in-the-world, these readers might follow Ivan

from the *belief in* to the uncanny, alienating, and individualizing *experience of*

their own finitude. Unlike Ivan, whose death is immediately impending, most

readers can flee "from the shadowy presence of [their] finitude into the cheerful

light of [their] everyday preoccupations" (Farrell-Krell 156). As the responses to

Blanchot, Levi, and Woolf have shown, however, some readers likely move even

beyond a mimetic experience of Ivan's paralyzing fear in the face of death to the

explicative and radical reflection on what is actualized in the experience of their

own finitude.

Might this be what Heidegger has in mind when he writes that the "work

of art … puts Being to work in a being" (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 170), since

he is also convinced that "[t]hinking *is*, only insofar as it is thinking-within-

anxiety, determinedly open to anxiety in the face of death" (Farrell-Krell 157)?

And might there be a connection, then, between the fact that most "timeless"

works of literature in our culture are tragic and their capacity to elicit from some

such an existential reading?

We also saw that not only for Heidegger, but also for the few readers of

Cluster 5, in radical reflection anxiety may paradoxically co-occur with joy.

Perhaps, then, our own finitude being "the worm at the core" can be modified

into an existential affirmation in radical reflection. The following passage from

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Kierkegaard is often quoted as a version of "the worm at the core": "Thus it is with all joy, life's supreme and most voluptuous moment of pleasure is attended by death" (43). Might we follow Heidegger, then, in reading this passage not to mean that all joy is tainted by death, but rather that joy and death, as beauty and finitude are inseparably intertwined, that finitude is the soil of joy and beauty?

Perhaps to appreciate this paradoxical fact, we must learn to "let death be". As Farrell-Krell clarifies below, this is fundamentally different than fleeing in the face of our own finitude:

> As I understand it, the crucial problem of Heidegger's
> hermeneutics of Dasein, in which the disclosure of Dasein's
> primordial finitude is to be secured, is to *let death be.* Letting
> *finitude* come to light invokes the problem of *letting –be as such.*
> *Gelassenheit* is precisely that hermeneutical project of achieving a
> mode of thought and language beyond any sort of
> representational, valuative, or manipulative consciousness, all of
> which in their will to power obscure that dimension in which the
> finitude of Dasein plays. (155-156)

Though death might be immense and he might "dare … to weep right in our midst … when we are in the midst of life" (Rilke), we might, with some help from those great authors, who within anxiety wrung meaning from their own finitude, learn to face it with *Gelassenheit*.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Literary Texts

7.1.1. Text 1: Maurice Blanchot's The Instant of My Death

I remember a young man— a man still young— prevented from dying by death itself— and perhaps the error of injustice. The Allies had succeeded in getting a foothold on French soil. The Germans, already vanquished, were struggling in vain with useless ferocity. In a large house (the Chateau, it was called), someone knocked at the door rather timidly. I know that the young man came to open the door to guests who were presumably asking for help. This time, a howl: "Everyone outside." A Nazi lieutenant, in shamefully normal French, made the oldest people exit first, and then two young women. "Outside, outside." This time, he was howling. The young man, however, did not try to flee but advanced slowly, in an almost priestly manner. The lieutenant shook him, showed him the casings, bullets; there had obviously been fighting; the soil was a war soil. The lieutenant choked in a bizarre language. And putting the casings, the bullets, a grenade under the nose of the man already less young (one ages quickly), he distinctly shouted: "This is what you have come to." The Nazi placed his men in a row in order to hit, according to the rules, the human target. The young man said, "At least have my family go inside." So it was: the aunt (ninety-four years old); his mother, younger; his sister and his sister-in-law; a long, slow procession, silent, as if everything had already been done. I know— do I know it— that the one at whom the Germans were already aiming, awaiting

but the final order, experienced then a feeling of extraordinary lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing happy, however)—sovereign elation? The encounter of death with death? In his place, I will not try to analyze. He was perhaps suddenly invincible. Dead— immortal. Perhaps ecstasy. Rather the feeling of compassion for suffering humanity, the happiness of not being immortal or eternal. Henceforth, he was bound to death by a surreptitious friendship. At that instant, an abrupt return to the world, the considerable noise of a nearby battle exploded. Comrades from the maquis wanted to bring help to one they knew to be in danger. The lieutenant moved away to assess the situation. The Germans stayed in order, prepared to remain thus in an immobility that arrested time. Then one of them approached and said in a firm voice, "We're not Germans, Russians," and, with a sort of laugh, "Vlassov army," and made a sign for him to disappear. I think he moved away, still with the feeling of lightness, until he found himself in a distant forest, named the "Bois des bruyeres," where he remained sheltered by trees he knew well. In the dense forest suddenly, after how much time, he rediscovered a sense of the real. Everywhere fires, a continuous succession of fires; all the farms were burning. A little later, he learned that three young men, sons of farmers— truly strangers to all combat, whose only fault was their youth— had been slaughtered. Even the bloated horses, on the road, in the fields, attested to a war that had gone on. In reality, how much time had elapsed? When the lieutenant returned and became aware the young chatelaine had disappeared, why did anger, rage, not prompt him to burn down the Chateau (immobile and majestic)? Because it was the Chateau. On the facade was inscribed, like an

indestructible reminder, the date 1807. Was he cultivated enough to know this was the famous year of Jena, when Napoleon, on his small gray horse, passed under the windows of Hegel, who recognized in him the "spirit of the world," as he wrote to a friend? Lie and truth: for as Hegel wrote to another friend, the French pillaged and ransacked his home. But Hegel knew how to distinguish the empirical and the essential. In that year 1944, the Nazi lieutenant had for the Chateau a respect or consideration that the farms did not arouse. Everything was searched, however. Some money was taken; in a separate room, "the high chamber," the lieutenant found papers and a sort of thick manuscript— which perhaps contained war plans. Finally he left. Everything was burning, except the Chateau. The Seigneurs had been spared. No doubt what then began for the young man was the torment of injustice. No more ecstasy; the feeling that he was only living because, even in the eyes of the Russians, he belonged to a noble class. This was war: life for some, for others, the cruelty of assassination. There remained, however, at the moment when the shooting was no longer but to come, the feeling of lightness that I would not know how to translate: freed from life? the infinite opening up? Neither happiness, nor unhappiness. Nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I know, I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence. As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. "I am alive. No, you are dead."

Later, having returned to Paris, he met Malraux, who said that he had been taken prisoner (without being recognized) and that he had succeeded in escaping, losing a manuscript in the process. "It was only reflections on art, easy to reconstitute, whereas a manuscript would not be." With Paulhan, he made inquiries which could only remain in vain. What does it matter. All that remains is the feeling of lightness that is death itself or, to put it more precisely, the instant of my death henceforth always impending[23].

7.1.2. Text 2: Primo Levi's The Witch

For a long time under the covers

She clasped the wax against her breast

Till it was soft and warm.

Then she got up, and with great pains,

With a patient loving hand

Portrayed the living image

Of the man she carried in her heart.

When she was done, she threw the effigy on the fire

With leaves of oak, grape-vine and olive,

So it would melt.

She felt herself dying from the pain

Because the spell had worked.

Only then could she cry.

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[23] I changed "my death … in abeyance", the printed translation of "*ma mort … en instance* to "my death … impending".

7.1.3. Text 3: Primo Levi's The Black Stars

Let no one sing any more of love and war.

Let men celebrate instead the engineers of the skies,

Stern marvellous messengers of death:

Let their latest pitiless message be repeated.

   The order from which the cosmos took its name is

   dissolved:

   The heavenly legions are a tangle of monsters,

   The universe, blind and violent and strange, besieges us.

   The clear sky is strewn with horrible dead suns,

   Dense sediments of crushed atoms:

   Nothing emanates from them but desperate heaviness,

   No energy, no messages, no particles, no light;

   Light itself falls back, broken by its own weight.

   All of us, human seed, we live and die for nothing,

   And the skies perpetually revolve in vain.

7.1.4. Text 4: Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway (excerpts)

Something was up, Mr. Brewer knew; Mr. Brewer, managing clerk at Sibleys
and Arrowsmiths, auctioneers, valuers, land and estate agents; something was
up, he thought, and, being paternal with his young men, and thinking very highly
of Smith's abilities, and prophesying that he would, in ten or fifteen years,
succeed to the leather arm-chair in the inner room under the skylight with the
deed-boxes round him, "if he keeps his health," said Mr. Brewer, and that was
the danger—he looked weakly; advised football, invited him to supper and was
seeing his way to consider recommending a rise of salary, when something
happened which threw out many of Mr. Brewer's calculations, took away his
ablest young fellows, and eventually, so prying and insidious were the fingers of
the European War, smashed a plaster cast of Ceres, ploughed a hole in the

geranium beds, and utterly ruined the cook's nerves at Mr. Brewer's establishment at Muswell Hill.

Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square. There in the trenches the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other. But when Evans (Rezia who had only seen him once called him "a quiet man," a sturdy red-haired man, undemonstrative in the company of women), when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in tubs, little tables in the open, daughters making hats, and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him—that he could not feel.

For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel. As he opened the door of the room where the Italian girls sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers; they were turning buckram shapes this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissors rapping, girls

laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge. But he could not sit there all night. There were moments of waking in the early morning. The bed was falling; he was falling. Oh for the scissors and the lamplight and the buckram shapes! He asked Lucrezia to marry him, the younger of the two, the gay, the frivolous, with those little artist's fingers that she would hold up and say "It is all in them." Silk, feathers, what not were alive to them. "It is the hat that matters most," she would say, when they walked out together. Every hat that passed, she would examine; and the cloak and the dress and the way the woman held herself. Ill-dressing, over-dressing she stigmatised, not savagely, rather with impatient movements of the hands, like those of a painter who puts from him some obvious well-meant glaring imposture; and then, generously, but always critically, she would welcome a shopgirl who had turned her little bit of stuff gallantly, or praise, wholly, with enthusiastic and professional understanding, a French lady descending from her carriage, in chinchilla, robes, pearls.

"Beautiful!" she would murmur, nudging Septimus, that he might see. But beauty was behind a pane of glass. Even taste (Rezia liked ices, chocolates, sweet things) had no relish to him. He put down his cup on the little marble table. He looked at people outside; happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel. In the tea-shop among the tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear came over him—he could not feel. He could reason; he could read, Dante for example, quite easily ("Septimus, do put down your book," said Rezia, gently shutting the Inferno), he could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then—that he could not feel.

"The English are so silent," Rezia said. She liked it, she said. She respected these Englishmen, and wanted to see London, and the English horses, and the tailor-made suits, and could remember hearing how wonderful the shops were, from an Aunt who had married and lived in Soho.

It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning.

At the office they advanced him to a post of considerable responsibility. They were proud of him; he had won crosses. "You have done your duty; it is up to us—" began Mr. Brewer; and could not finish, so pleasurable was his emotion. They took admirable lodgings off the Tottenham Court Road.

Here he opened Shakespeare once more. That boy's business of the intoxication of language—Antony and Cleopatra—had shrivelled utterly. How Shakespeare loathed humanity—the putting on of clothes, the getting of children, the sordidity of the mouth and the belly! This was now revealed to Septimus; the message hidden in the beauty of words. The secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair. Dante the same. Aeschylus (translated) the same. There Rezia sat at the table trimming hats. She trimmed hats for Mrs. Filmer's friends; she trimmed hats by the hour. She looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned, under water, he thought.

"The English are so serious," she would say, putting her arms round Septimus, her cheek against his.

Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have children. They had been married five years.

They went to the Tower together; to the Victoria and Albert Museum; stood in the crowd to see the King open Parliament. And there were the shops—hat shops, dress shops, shops with leather bags in the window, where she would stand staring. But she must have a boy.

She must have a son like Septimus, she said. But nobody could be like Septimus; so gentle; so serious; so clever. Could she not read Shakespeare too? Was Shakespeare a difficult author? she asked.

One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that.

He watched her snip, shape, as one watches a bird hop, flit in the grass, without daring to move a finger. For the truth is (let her ignore it) that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen. They are plastered over with grimaces. There was Brewer at the office, with his waxed moustache, coral tie-pin, white slip, and pleasurable emotions—all coldness and clamminess within,—his geraniums ruined in the War—his cook's nerves destroyed; or Amelia What'shername, handing round cups of tea punctually at five—a leering, sneering obscene little harpy; and the Toms and Berties in their starched shirt fronts oozing thick drops of vice. They never saw him drawing pictures of them naked at their antics in his notebook. In the street, vans roared past him; brutality blared out on placards; men were trapped in mines; women burnt alive; and once a maimed file of lunatics being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his hopeless woe. And would HE go mad?

At tea Rezia told him that Mrs. Filmer's daughter was expecting a baby. SHE could not grow old and have no children! She was very lonely, she was very unhappy! She cried for the first time since they were married. Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing.

His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit. At last, with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically and with complete consciousness of its insincerity, he dropped his head on his hands. Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in.

Nothing could rouse him. Rezia put him to bed. She sent for a doctor—Mrs. Filmer's Dr. Holmes. Dr. Holmes examined him. There was nothing whatever the matter, said Dr. Holmes. Oh, what a relief! What a kind man, what a good

man! thought Rezia. When he felt like that he went to the Music Hall, said Dr. Holmes. He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime? These old Bloomsbury houses, said Dr. Holmes, tapping the wall, are often full of very fine panelling, which the landlords have the folly to paper over. Only the other day, visiting a patient, Sir Somebody Something in Bedford Square—

So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel. He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation; how he had married his wife without loving her; had lied to her; seduced her; outraged Miss Isabel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death.

Dr. Holmes came again. Large, fresh coloured, handsome, flicking his boots, looking in the glass, he brushed it all aside—headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams—nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said. If Dr. Holmes found himself even half a pound below eleven stone six, he asked his wife for another plate of porridge at breakfast. (Rezia would learn to cook porridge.) But, he continued, health is largely a matter in our own control. Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby. He opened Shakespeare—Antony and Cleopatra; pushed Shakespeare aside. Some hobby, said Dr. Holmes, for did he not owe his own excellent health (and he worked as hard as any man in London) to the fact that he could always switch off from his patients on to old furniture? And what a very pretty comb, if he might say so, Mrs. Warren Smith was wearing!

When the damned fool came again, Septimus refused to see him. Did he indeed? said Dr. Holmes, smiling agreeably. Really he had to give that charming little lady, Mrs. Smith, a friendly push before he could get past her into her husband's bedroom.

"So you're in a funk," he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient's side. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn't she? Didn't that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed? For he had had forty years' experience behind him; and Septimus could take Dr. Holmes's word for it—there was nothing whatever the matter with him. And next time Dr. Holmes came he hoped to find Smith out of bed and not making that charming little lady his wife anxious about him.

Human nature, in short, was on him—the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him. Dr. Holmes came quite regularly every day. Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you. Their only chance was to escape, without letting Holmes know; to Italy—anywhere, anywhere, away from Dr. Holmes.

But Rezia could not understand him. Dr. Holmes was such a kind man. He was so interested in Septimus. He only wanted to help them, he said. He had four little children and he had asked her to tea, she told Septimus.

So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes. But why should he kill himself for their sakes? Food was pleasant; the sun hot; and this killing oneself, how does one set about it, with a table knife, uglily, with floods of blood,—by sucking a gaspipe? He was too weak; he could scarcely raise his hand. Besides, now that he was quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know. Holmes had won of course; the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world.

It was at that moment (Rezia gone shopping) that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him.

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT APPEARS TOWARD THE END OF THE NOVEL, WHEN CLARISSA DALLOWAY'S PARTY IS ABOUT TO END.

There were the Bradshaws, whom she disliked. She must go up to Lady Bradshaw (in grey and silver, balancing like a sea-lion at the edge of its tank, barking for invitations, Duchesses, the typical successful man's wife), she must go up to Lady Bradshaw and say . . .

But Lady Bradshaw anticipated her.

"We are shockingly late, dear Mrs. Dalloway, we hardly dared to come in," she said.

And Sir William, who looked very distinguished, with his grey hair and blue eyes, said yes; they had not been able to resist the temptation. He was talking to Richard about that Bill probably, which they wanted to get through the Commons. Why did the sight of him, talking to Richard, curl her up? He looked what he was, a great doctor. A man absolutely at the head of his profession, very powerful, rather worn. For think what cases came before him—people in the uttermost depths of misery; people on the verge of insanity; husbands and wives. He had to decide questions of appalling difficulty. Yet—what she felt was, one wouldn't like Sir William to see one unhappy. No; not that man.

"How is your son at Eton?" she asked Lady Bradshaw.

He had just missed his eleven, said Lady Bradshaw, because of the mumps. His father minded even more than he did, she thought "being," she said, "nothing but a great boy himself."

Clarissa looked at Sir William, talking to Richard. He did not look like a boy—not in the least like a boy. She had once gone with some one to ask his advice. He had been perfectly right; extremely sensible. But Heavens—what a relief to get out to the street again! There was some poor wretch sobbing, she remembered, in the waiting-room. But she did not know what it was—about Sir William; what exactly she disliked. Only Richard agreed with her, "didn't like his taste, didn't like his smell." But he was extraordinarily able. They were talking about this Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his

voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock. There must be some provision in the Bill.

Sinking her voice, drawing Mrs. Dalloway into the shelter of a common femininity, a common pride in the illustrious qualities of husbands and their sad tendency to overwork, Lady Bradshaw (poor goose—one didn't dislike her) murmured how, "just as we were starting, my husband was called up on the telephone, a very sad case. A young man (that is what Sir William is telling Mr. Dalloway) had killed himself. He had been in the army." Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought.

She went on, into the little room where the Prime Minister had gone with Lady Bruton. Perhaps there was somebody there. But there was nobody. The chairs still kept the impress of the Prime Minister and Lady Bruton, she turned deferentially, he sitting four-square, authoritatively. They had been talking about India. There was nobody. The party's splendour fell to the floor, so strange it was to come in alone in her finery.

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party—the Bradshaws, talked of death. He had killed himself—but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party!

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility

of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.

But this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure? "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy," she had said to herself once, coming down in white.

Or there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose he had had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it—if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that?

Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the Times, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished. But that young man had killed himself.

Somehow it was her disaster—her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success. Lady Bexborough and the rest of it. And once she had walked on the terrace at Bourton.

It was due to Richard; she had never been so happy. Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long. No pleasure could equal, she thought, straightening the chairs, pushing in one book on the shelf, this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living, to find it, with a shock of delight, as the sun rose, as the day sank. Many a time had she gone, at Bourton when they were all talking, to look at the sky; or seen it between

people's shoulders at dinner; seen it in London when she could not sleep. She walked to the window.

It held, foolish as the idea was, something of her own in it, this country sky, this sky above Westminster. She parted the curtains; she looked. Oh, but how surprising!—in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her! She was going to bed. And the sky. It will be a solemn sky, she had thought, it will be a dusky sky, turning away its cheek in beauty. But there it was—ashen pale, raced over quickly by tapering vast clouds. It was new to her. The wind must have risen. She was going to bed, in the room opposite. It was fascinating to watch her, moving about, that old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window. Could she see her? It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed. She pulled the blind now. The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room.

7.2.1. Demographic Information

To begin, please provide the following demographic information. This information can be recorded on the green answer sheet that is attached to this research package. Please provide the information requested by blackening the appropriate circles on that answer sheet.

Your gender: M or F

(Enter this information under the heading marked "SEX")

Your birth date:

   Month (mo.)

   Day

   Year (yr.)

 (Enter this information under the heading marked "BIRTH DATE")

Your primary (general) ethnicity:

   0. **Aboriginal/First Nations**
   1. **African (including Caribbean of African descent)**
   2. **East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino)**
   3. **South Asian (e.g., Pakistani, East Indian, Bangladesh)**
   4. **European (e.g., French, German, Italian)**
   5. **Hispanic/Latin-American (e.g., Chilean, Brazilian, Mexican)**
   6. **Middle Eastern (e.g., Iraqi, Iranian, Egyptian)**
   7. **Euro-North American (including Euro-Canadian)**
   8. **Pacific Islander**
   9. **Other**

(Enter the code number associated with your primary ethnicity under the heading marked "SPECIAL CODES," column K)

Your primary (first) language is:

      0. English
      1. A language other than English

(Enter the code number associated with your primary language under the heading marked "SPECIAL CODES," column L)

Beyond your required first year English course, how many university-level literature courses have you taken?

      0. none, but I am taking first year English now
      1. none, but I have completed first year English
      2. one additional literature (half) course
      3. two additional literature (half) courses
      4. three additional literature (half) courses
      5. four or more literature (half) courses

(Enter the code number associated with the number of completed English courses under the heading marked "SPECIAL CODES," column M)

7.2.2. Experiencing Questionnaire

Please read each of the following statements carefully and, using the scale below, rate the extent to which the statement is true of your experience **while reading this passage**:

> 0 = Not at all true (false)
> 1 = Slightly true
> 2 = Moderately true
> 3 = Quite true
> 4 = Extremely true

TIMELESSNESS
1. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to stand still.
2. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to move slowly.
3. While reading this passage, there was a pause, as though time held its breath.

LOST SELF-BOUNDARIES
4. While reading this passage, my sense of self seemed to spread beyond my physical body.
5. While reading this passage, my sense of self extended into the world around me.
6. While reading this passage, my sense of self lost its clear boundary.

PERVASIVE ONENESS
7. While reading this passage, I felt that everything in the world, including me, was part of the same whole.
8. While reading this passage, I sensed the inseparability of myself and the world.
9. While reading this passage, I felt at one with the world around me

INEXPRESSIBLE REALIZATIONS
10. While reading this passage, I began to understand something that could not be put into words.
11. While reading this passage, I sensed something that I could not find a way to express.
12. While reading this passage, what seemed clear to me also seemed beyond words.

EVOCATIVE IMAGERY
13. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind seemed pregnant with meaning.
14. While reading this passage, I experienced images that I can ponder again and again.

15. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind were extremely evocative.

WONDER

16. While reading this passage, I felt intense delight.
17. While reading this passage, I felt profound wonder.
18. While reading this passage, I felt deeply astonished.

DISQUIETUDE

19. While reading this passage, I felt deep disquietude.
20. While reading this passage, I felt profoundly ill-at-ease.
21. While reading this passage, I felt intensely disturbed.

REVERENCE

22. While reading this passage, I seemed to touch something sacred.
23. While reading this passage, I seemed near to something divine.
24. While reading this passage, I seemed close to something holy.

DISCORD

25. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed deeply discordant.
26. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed irreversibly ruined.
27. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed as dry as dust.

Please read each of the following statements carefully and, using the scale below, rate the extent to which the statement is true of your experience **after reading this poem/story**:

> 0 = Not at all true (false)
> 1 = Slightly true
> 2 = Moderately true
> 3 = Quite true
> 4 = Extremely true

DISTRIBUTED LIVELINESS

28. After reading this poem, I sensed the lively 'presence' of both the animate and inanimate things around me.
29. After reading this poem, I had the sense that everything around me was somehow alive.
30. After reading this poem, even inanimate things seemed responsive to their surroundings.

EXPLICIT SELF-AWARENESS

31. After reading this poem, I was aware of my body, my feelings, and the way I was thinking.

32. After reading this poem, my attention was directed toward my inner life.
33. After reading this poem, I was focused on my own thoughts and feelings.

TOLERANT SELF-ATTENTION
34. After reading this poem, my attention was flexible; each thought, feeling, or sensation just seemed to pass through my awareness.
35. After reading this poem, I felt open and receptive to whatever went through my mind.
36. After reading this poem, I was effortlessly attentive to every perception, thought, or feeling in my stream of consciousness.

THROWNNESS
37. After reading this poem, I was distinctly aware that I am *me*—at this particular time and in this particular place—and no one else.
38. After reading this poem, I was distinctly aware of being *here* without understanding why I am here rather than somewhere else.
39. After reading this poem, I was distinctly aware that I am who I am even though, in different circumstances, I may have become a quite different person.

FINITUDE
40. After reading this poem, I was keenly aware that it is impossible to avoid life's pain.
41. After reading this poem, I was especially attentive to the brevity of life and the inevitability of death.
42. After reading this poem, I was freshly aware that people ultimately face life alone.

SPIRITUAL ENLIVENMENT
43. After reading this poem, I felt refreshed, renewed, and revitalized.
44. After reading this poem, I felt an inner freedom, a sense of liberation from life's tangles and hindrances.
45. After reading this poem, I felt a new sense of my spiritual potential.

SELF-PERCEPTUAL DEPTH
46. After reading this poem, I felt sensitive to aspects of my life that I usually ignore.
47. After reading this poem, I felt like changing the way I live.
48. After reading this poem, my sense of life seemed less superficial.
49. After reading this poem, I considered a view of life that seemed more fully 'real.'
50. After reading this poem, I felt that my understanding of life had been deepened.
51. This poem continued to influence my mood after I finished reading it.
52. This poem reminded me of how my past is still with me.

NON-UTILITARIAN RESPECT: HUMAN
53. After reading this poem, it seemed wrong to treat people like objects.

54. After reading this poem, I was keenly aware of people's inherent dignity.
55. After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for humanity.

NON-UTILITARIAN RESPECT: NATURE

56. After reading this poem, it seemed wrong to use the natural world as merely a means to an end.
57. After reading this poem, I was freshly aware of the intrinsic value of nature.
58. After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for the natural world.

7.2.3. Existential Struggle Scale

1. While reading this passage, I began to ponder the relationship between my existence and eternity.
2. While reading this passage, I began to ponder the meaning of my existence.
3. Reading this passage, I simultaneously felt the immediate sensation of pulsing life and the painful realization of the inevitability of death.
4. While reading this passage, I felt keenly aware that I am sometimes weary of life's struggles.
5. Reading this passage made me feel that my existence is insignificant before the unimaginable eternal.
6. While reading this passage, I began to ponder the meaning of life.

7.2.4. Empathy Scale

1. To what extent can you imagine the situation that the protagonist is in?
2. To what extent do you believe that the narrator/protagonist is sincere or genuine?
3. To what extent do you feel tenderness toward the protagonist?
4. To what extent do you feel sympathy for the protagonist?
5. To what extent can you imagine what it would be like if you were in the protagonist's situation?
6. To what extent do you recognize what the narrator is experiencing as similar to some aspect of your own life?
7. To what extent do you share what the protagonist thinks and feels, after reading these passages?
8. To what extent do you feel moved by the situation that the protagonist is in?
9. To what extent can you understand the situation that the protagonist is in?
10. To what extent can you imagine the situation that the protagonist is in?

7.2.5. Literary Response Questionnaire

Read each statement carefully. Then using the scale below, rate the extent to which the statement is true of you:

> 0 = Not at all true (false)
> 1 = Slightly true
> 2 = Moderately true
> 3 = Quite true
> 4 = Extremely true

On the attached answer sheet, blacken the circle that corresponds to your rating. Please do not mark your answers on this questionnaire.

1. Sometimes a scene from a story is so clear that I know its smell, its touch, its "feel".
2. The type of literature I like best tells an interesting story.
3. Reading literature is a pleasurable way to spend time when I have nothing else to do.
4. I am often intrigued by an author's literary technique.
5. I find that certain literary works help me to understand my more negative feelings.
6. I think people should spend less time talking or writing about literature.
7. Literature enables you to understand people that you'd probably disregard in normal life.
8. In reading I like to focus on what is distinctive about the author's style.
9. I often find my shortcomings explored through characters in literary texts.
10. When I read a literary text, a scene that is only partly described often becomes a whole, vividly present place in my mind.
11. If I want to spend time reading, I don't choose "literary" texts.
12. I find that literature helps me to understand the lives of people that differ from myself.
13. Very often I cannot put down a story until I have finished reading it.
14. When reading a novel my main interest is seeing what happens to the characters.
15. I like to see how a particular author's work relates to other literature of the author's period.
16. Works of literature often seem to make the issues of life more complicated than they actually are.
17. When I find a work of literature I like, I usually try to find out something about the author.
18. Literature often gives special emphasis to those things that make a moral point.

19. When I have spare time my favourite activity is reading a novel.
20. Often when I read literary texts, descriptions of smells suggest colours, descriptions of colours suggest feelings, and so on.
21. I am often so involved in what I am reading that I am no longer aware of myself.
22. Reading literature makes me sensitive to aspects of my life that I usually ignore.
23. In my reading, I learn to recognize more readily certain types of people or events, i.e., I can see these types more clearly after reading about a particular example in a literary text.
24. I sometimes find that reading a literary text makes me feel like changing the way I live.
25. I often find my own motives being explored through characters in literary texts.
26. Reading a story is a wonderful way to relax.
27. One of my primary interests in reading is to learn about the different genres of literature.
28. I actively try to project myself into the role of fictional characters, almost as if I were preparing to act in a play.
29. When reading a novel, what I most want to know is how the story turns out.
30. Reading literature often gives me insights into the nature of people and events in my world.
31. Sometimes I like to curl up with a good book just to enjoy myself.
32. One of my primary interests in reading literature is to learn about the themes and concerns of a given author.
33. I usually hear the tone of speech in a dialogue from a story or novel.
34. While reading I completely forget what time it is.
35. When reading a story, sometimes I can almost feel what it would be like to be there.
36. I can readily visualize the persons and places described in a novel or short story.
37. I like to become so absorbed in the world of the literary text that I forget my everyday concerns.
38. Mainly, I read literature to appreciate the author's understanding of society and culture.
39. Sometimes characters in novels almost become like real people in my life.
40. I often see similarities between events in literature and events in my own life.
41. I don't believe that literature is socially relevant.
42. When reading I usually try to identify an author's distinctive themes.
43. When I read fiction, I often think about myself as one of the people in the story.
44. Reading literary texts from past centuries should be left to literary scholars and historians.
45. I often wish I had more time for reading literature.
46. I find it difficult to read a novel in which nothing much seems to happen.

47. Even if literature were well taught, I think high schools should not devote so much time to it.
48. I sometimes think I could draw a map of the places I have read about in a work of fiction.
49. I like it best when a story has an unexpected ending.
50. The challenge of literature is to comprehend the author's unique view of life.
51. I like to see tension building up in the plot of a story.
52. One of the things I dislike most about being a student of literature is the teacher who tells you what a literary text means.
53. I think the most important part of fiction or drama is plot.
54. Sometimes while reading literature my feelings draw me toward a distinctly unsettling view of life.
55. I often see the places in stories I read as clearly as if I were looking at a picture.
56. Once I've discovered one work by an author I like, I usually try to read all the other works by that author.
57. For me a work of literature is destroyed by trying to analyze it.
58. I think literature is especially interesting when it illuminates facts about the author's life.
59. I prefer to read fiction in which there is plenty of action.
60. After reading a novel or story that I enjoyed, I continue wondering about the characters almost as though they were real people.
61. In literature I sometimes recognize feelings that I have overlooked during my daily life.
62. When I begin to understand a literary text, it's because I've been able to relate it to my own concerns about life.
63. I sometimes have imaginary dialogues with people in fiction.
64. Sometimes I feel like I've almost "become" a character I've read about in fiction.
65. I sometimes wonder whether I have really experienced something or whether I have read about it in a book.
66. I find that reading literature is a great help in taking my mind off my own problems.
67. I disliked English in high school because most of the texts I was asked to read I would not have chosen myself.
68. I often hear dialogue in a novel as though I were listening to an actual conversation.

7.2.6. Social Desirability Scale

> In this section you will find a series of statements a person might use to describe her/his attitudes, opinions, interests, and other characteristics.
>
> Each statement is followed by two choices, True or False. Read the statement
>
> and decide which choice best describes you.
>
> Please answer every statement, even if you are not completely sure of the answer. Read each statement carefully, but don't spend too much time deciding on the answer.

1.	It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.	0 = False	1 = True
2.	I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	0 = False	1 = True
3.	On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.	0 = False	1 = True
4.	There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	0 = False	1 = True
5.	No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	0 = False	1 = True
6.	There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	0 = False	1 = True
7.	I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.	0 = False	1 = True
8.	I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.	0 = False	1 = True
9.	I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	0 = False	1 = True
10.	I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	0 = False	1 = True
11.	There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	0 = False	1 = True
12.	I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.	0 = False	1 = True
13.	I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	0 = False	1 = True

7.3.1. Participant 102:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. 'I am alive. No, you are dead.'"

<u>Commentary</u>: *This is just a really powerful description what war is like and it - I think it kind of describes it doesn't only kill people physically, it also destroys them mentally. So that's what I think about it.*

I think the passage as a whole is really all about realization, kind of realizing what death is. Coming to terms with how you would describe death.

7.3.2. Participant 106:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "... the instant of my death henceforth always impending."

<u>Commentary</u>: And I did find this quite striking because it's a really - it's a really different kind of statement, it makes you think about - well, it made me think about fate and destiny and what has to happen is going to happen. I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe. It's - I think it touched on a lot of my own beliefs and that's why I related to it so much, 'cause I do feel like - kind of what is supposed to happen is going to happen either way. Even if you try to prevent it or not, and I think that's what that passage is or - he's kind of just saying that his death is part of something greater than or beyond his own control. And I don't know, it was kind of shocking reading that because I don't think I've ever thought of death in that way, but I know I have those beliefs of what's supposed to happen is supposed to happen, but nobody really thinks about death in that

way but that did open up kind of some different feelings for me. But that's the best way I can describe it.

I think reading the text as a whole, it brought up a lot of feelings and thoughts for me. I think the first time I kind of read through it I didn't REALLY understand what they were getting at until I got to the end. For the most part. The images that kind of came up were a little more, they just didn't give me a great feeling when the ... text starts off talking about the Nazis coming out and making these people stand outside, I was feeling kind of uneasy. And the text does deal with quite a heavy subject of how death is basically somewhat - you can't control how it's going to happen. And I think some of the thoughts were that it's just beyond your control, I think - it's not - I think - it's really hard to explain. I think it kind of opened my eyes to how your - you're kind of not only an individual in this world, you're part of a larger - you're just part of a larger some kind of supernatural thing. And you don't have control over what, over fate and - I think that's the biggest thing that hit me with this passage. I didn't really understand parts of it, but I think for the most part I caught the main idea. And yeah, it was a heavy subject to deal with. I was left feeling a little - well, kind of in wonderment but also a little uneasy. But that was my overall idea of an experience of the text.

7.3.3. Participant 109:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him."

<u>Commentary</u>: *I felt like this passage described what I would think of war very accurately because I can imagine that it would be like you knew you were going to die and yet you couldn't stop it from happening so you could already that you were dead inside. And personally I haven't had any feelings like this before. But I'm sure that if I were in the war or in a similar situation where I knew I was eventually going to die or there was a large chance I was going to die, that this is probably the emotions that I would feel.*

I thought the text as a whole was very descriptive of emotions rather than just what happened during this time. And that it was very accurate a description of the emotions that the people felt and how a lot of people in the situation would probably feel the way that they felt in here and that a lot more in-depth than a lot of war stories go because it feels very personal to whoever is writing this.

7.3.4. Participant 111:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "... the instant of my death henceforth always impending."

<u>Commentary</u>: *When I read this, I feel - I guess the sense that death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative, it's just sort of - I'm not sure, there's almost an apathy about it. They're discovering there's lightness in this passage. I don't really feel it like that, it's just sort of - there is, I guess there is some sort of freedom in it because there's really nothing you can do about it.*

And the images that it evoked is kind of an image of nothingness, maybe like a plain or something empty.

For the text as a whole, I did like how they brought back the context of age and how he was older already before the experience had really begun. And I thought an image that really stuck with me was the image of them all lining up to shoot him. And - and the scene was more tragic until he began talking about the certain lightness of death that he was almost resigned to it.

7.3.5. Participant 119:

Chosen Passage: "... at the moment when the shooting was no longer but to come, the feeling of lightness that I would not know how to translate: freed from life? the infinite opening up? Neither happiness, nor unhappiness. Nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I know, I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence. As if the death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. 'I am alive. No, you are dead.'"

Commentary: My feelings about this excerpt. {pause} Is {pause} quite close to a state of depression I would assume. When you get the feeling of lightness that kind of just - you don't have a care in the world anymore. Well. It's fairly common for students to be depressed right about this time. What with mid-terms and all that school life stuff. My own personal thoughts is that this is when, well - when you're in a state where you don't really care about the world anymore. These feelings out there have to deface something, well - I have to think. I feel the fragments {inaudible 4:50} part of this excerpt. Freed from life, infinite

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opening up, neither happiness nor unhappiness, nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I think this first part of it really - it evokes a strong feeling of closeness I would say to how I would sometimes deal ad I suppose most people would. You feel that you're freed from life after - well - it really doesn't state {inaudible 5:43} right now. I suppose. {inaudible 5:47} In the present day it's - there's not really much to life 'cause my feelings when you're freed from life, it's - well, I think I feel a lot more when there isn't really life in this world. Just the same thing day by day. And I think this section here really translates it. Translates. Really depicts it well when you're - the intimate opening up. Being neither happy nor unhappy. When you're just there. With nothing left to fear. You're already beyond that step. And all you have left is the death outside and the death inside. And {inaudible 6:47} well, all right. This is about the text as a whole. Good thing I'm not being forced to read the whole thing back out. Since I suppose you don't have much time. Text as a whole. I think it's interesting. Well, as most stories are interesting. It's about a fairly common topic. War. Since most people have such a romantic vision of war. And I guess now that there are typical unromantic vision of war. Now for - well {pause} I think it ... I get a feeling of hopelessness. From this text as a whole. What happens - like the - I guess protagonist. Quotation marks there. Is not, can't really control his own fate. Like - whether he was going to live or die was determined not by himself or even by the people around him but is history. And how often that is hopelessness is detachment from life. It's {pause} to be honest, it's close to how - well, I guess I would feel. Right now. Since - well. Most

people I know and myself included, have the feeling that life isn't really going anywhere. Maybe that's just me making assumptions off what people say and how they act. But at this stage in our life, lots of people still don't know where they're going, so - might be family pressures. Information that you should be in a respectable job; doctor, teacher, lawyer. Or not really a lawyer; doctor, teacher. Who have been - pre-determined almost not quite pre-destined but close, pre-inclined. Leaning towards what is expected of you. To have the normal stereotypical life and leave nothing really behind. Different - different than a text of course. Quite opposite where {inaudible 10:30} only one left. It invokes loneliness. Lack of free will? {inaudible 10:44} I guess.

7.3.6. Participant 122:

Chosen Passage: "'I am alive. No, you are dead.'"

Commentary: Now, this passage for me evoked a sense of emptiness because it's the final sentence in the paragraph but it's also kind of a self-realization because although he's still living, he's still dead on the inside and that makes me feel empty and just the fact that he also says neither happiness nor unhappiness it it's kind of like he's in a state of shock or he doesn't know how to feel at that point because he just feels empty inside.

The text as a whole also made me feel quite empty and it brought back memories from Social 30 in high school when I was learning about World War Two and the Nazis and the cruelty that they had on everyone that they were attacking and so in a sense it made me feel sad that I felt helpless because I can't help these

people and in a way it also makes me angry because of the Nazis' cruelty and - yeah, that's about it.

7.3.7. Participant 174:

Chosen Passage: "... he belonged to a noble class. This was war: life for some, for others, the cruelty of assassination."

Commentary: This passage makes me feel how unfair everyone is being treated and the inequality involved with war and how this character recognizes this fact. And just thinks it's ridiculous that just because he's part of the noble class his life is spared.

The text as a whole, I don't know, parts of it were a bit confusing. Just because I don't know that much about the history. And but I really enjoyed it how the character ran away and was hiding in the forest and I just thought that was like really a marvel and he was trying to make a point and - it was an interesting text.

7.3.8. Participant 176:

Chosen Passage: "... the feeling that he was only living because, even in the eyes of the Russians, he belonged to a noble class."

Commentary: I thought that this one more that he was only allowed to live because he was higher up, like he was rich or I guess he just kind of is higher up in the world than some of the farm boys or any of that that died. Feelings are kind of disgusted I guess that this kind of thing actually happened back in the war and it's just weird I guess. The image would be I guess a feeling of like where do you belong I guess. I get the impression of basically the same thing. Where do you belong. And I don't know, I guess memories would be I wasn't in

a spot of death I guess, but you can feel like left out or like why did that happen. I guess that's about it.

The entire text I found it kind of confusing actually. I wasn't sure who was good and who was bad. And I guess it was just all confusing. But I guess that's what war kind of is. The feelings I got were kind of gross and some of the images, like the slaughtered kids, it's just disgusting I guess. And it kept talking about a feeling of lightness and that like he was kind of immortal at that point. I kind of - it made sense I guess because it doesn't really matter if you live or die in that situation. I don't really know what else to say about that one. Yeah, I guess that's kind of it.

Oh, and I guess the first part - few lines are really weird, like what does it matter if he's still young and if he's prevented from dying by death? That doesn't really make sense. But that's kind of another thing that I felt strangely about.

7.3.9. Participant 724:

Chosen Passage: "All that remains is a feeling of lightness that is death itself or to put it more precisely, the instant of my death henceforth always impending."

Commentary: This passage just describes this man who doesn't really care about living further in life. It seems, he has no fearless of death. And he thinks that dying is probably essential to why we live.

This text as a whole describes pretty much like a perspective on life. I guess in a way. It kind of reminds me of like why – why like we actually live. And what the point of life is.

7.3.10. Participant 734:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence."

<u>Commentary</u>: When I read this passage I really felt that it struck true in so many ways, I mean humans I think everyone has had times when they've felt an unanalyzable feeling, they felt something that they can't describe and they can't explain. It's interesting how we have those experiences, I remember one time when I was hiking in the Rockies and it was about eight o'clock at night and I was on top of a mountain and just looking out and realizing how alone I was in the wilderness. I mean, it was just me and my brother and he was already asleep and it was just me and nature. And it's a feeling that I can't describe because it just was. And it's an experience that changed who I was and changed what I believed and what I felt. I believe that everyone's has those experiences, these experiences of feelings that transform and reveal things about life to you. They make you look at yourself because - yeah, it's hard to describe, I mean. Feeling of something else I guess. It's the feeling of something beyond yourself that is there and is tangible and yet at the same time is unreachable and hidden. And you sort of grasp for it, you have the feeling and you know it's there and you know it's real and you're reaching. And oftentimes you don't end up grabbing what you're trying to and you don't get to that understanding of what you experienced and what you feel but that process of trying to take hold of that feeling and analyze it changes who you are when you realize that it can't be done.

This text as a whole was really interesting, I mean it brings up a lot of questions about is there an afterlife and what happens after death and why are people afraid of death and I mean humans have this fixation about death, they have this fascination with things that are morbid and with death because death is essentially to humans death is the unknowable. Humans don't know what death brings. Death is a great unknown. Even for me as a person of faith, with the belief in heaven and a God and an afterlife, death is still a great unknown because it's something I haven't experienced. And this passage really brings that home. I mean it's a young man faced with death and he gets to this point in his life where he's faced with death and he knows it's coming but yet he doesn't necessarily know what's on the other side. And so he has these feelings of what is death like. It's over am I already dead. I might as well be because it's going to happen. And it talks about in the text this feeling of ecstasy and the happiness is not being immortal or eternal and compassion for suffering of humanity. And these questions are relevant because I mean it's something that everyone has to face at some point, whether it's lying on a hospital bed when your heart starts to fail or whether it's being held up at gunpoint during a war. And it makes you think. It makes you ask questions, I mean - in the last little bit there it talks about how the feeling is like freed from life, the infinite opening up. And it talks about the death outside of him and the death in him. Which I found REALLY interesting. It talks about this I am alive, no you're dead. And that brings into the question of what is life. Which is something that all of us ask as well. These are

questions that this text points to. And it doesn't give answers so much as it asks questions. Which is nice to have.

7.3.11. Participant 742:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "This was war: life for some, for others, the cruelty of assassination."

<u>Commentary</u>: It makes me feel like it is inevitable. And it is their destiny. It reminds me of the conscription that occurred during the war. You had no choice but to be involved.

The whole text felt serene. Like how the individual experience, the text - it was {inaudible 0:13} yet a feelings just like a cloudiness that you don't really know what's going on. And there's images of wandering about the streets not sure what you're doing. What you're a part of. The experience is serene, it doesn't feel real until you're involved in it. You're just walking around seeing all this happening around you but nothing's happening to you.

7.3.12. Participant 744:

<u>Chosen Passage</u>: "I'm alive. No, you are dead."

<u>Commentary</u>: I just had to take this passage because it draws me in. It really reminds me of {inaudible 0:14} cat which I know is a strange connection, but that's - it brings {inaudible 0:17} cat being simultaneously alive and dead into the story and brings up the constitution of living and what is life but first I'll go with the memory of ?? cat. I remember I learned about ?? cat from my boyfriend like four years ago and in high school somebody brought it up and I wasn't even in physics and so the understanding of something that most people wouldn't - a

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momentary elation in knowing something that I wouldn't be expected to since I wasn't a physicist. Knowing quantum physics or something that, you know, something that sticks with me and something that personally grabs me back into the story. But beyond that, it gets me thinking about the entanglement between the physics in life and I know it probably wasn't intended - maybe it was, but how there's something that I'm fascinated with how everything seems to interconnect the entanglement theory which I don't completely even remotely understand but something that still fascinates me. And it brings into this great big circle of how you go from one thing to another to another like the butterfly effect, why does something affect something else. And just what those two sentences bring me in a big loop but makes me think what is life, what constitutes living. And that reminds me of something we're studying in my poetry class. Which is {inaudible 1:56}. And he says that life lived unconsciously so life lived not at all. And so when you bring that back into the story, I think his encounter with death is something that brings him out of the unconscious living and that's something that I find particularly important in my own life is I find myself living unconsciously. A day goes by and I don't remember most of it. And so that's just something that I feel strongly about is having to live life consciously and so I guess that kind of heads home the point of the story. To me anyway. I'm alive, no you are dead. You are dead because you don't live. So.

So as for the story as a whole, the Incident of My Death, it brings up initially it brings up pretty vivid memories I guess of reading books when I was younger.

'Cause I've always had some strange fascination with World War II and it reminds me of a passage in Number the Stars by Lois Lowry that I read when I was - I don't know, like eight. And it just - it brings back so vividly the image that was in that book. Into here and they're not really related but there's a few I think key words that trigger the memory. And so - I guess the - something else that it brings up is my own family. Because just reflecting on World War II and my background, my - all of my family were farmers and so they were all exempt from ever having to serve in the war. And the main character - well I guess not the main character but the key character, he feels upset because he's rejected from death. Because he belongs to a noble class. And when I look at my family, my family was all peasant class and - and think, you know, I think he's kind of privileged to be able to wish he was dead because he's privileged. But my point was that I kind of wish that I had some sort of a nobility to call upon in my past. 'Cause I don't know, just something honourable to be able to look back and say this is what my family does and that's a big theme with a lot of my personal response to things is that my family - is not something that I'm proud of and I wish that something that I could be. One image that I find, well it's not really an image but one line that I find really striking is the middle of the first page - dead, immortal, perhaps ecstasy. I think comparing dead to immortal is something I find extremely profound because when you think about, immortal means unable to die and if you're dead then you can't die so that makes you immortal but immortal is something that everybody seeks. So - then again I have a personal connection to - I don't know. There's a big theme of immortality within some

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people that I know, so I think it's an interesting way to look at things and something that strikes me. And something that I linger on and perhaps ecstasy. Like ecstasy is - I don't know, I guess you would say the epitome of pleasure. Right? And then to compare that to being immortal. And then to being dead. It's just, I don't know. Something that I linger on but can't really come to any conclusion about. So. The whole feeling of the story, I guess it's kind of a let down even though he survives and you would expect that to be something that - something you'd be happy about. But it's not and when you look at like something that affects me is the way that it's written, there's a lot of strange punctuation. A lot of brackets and a lot of dashes and things that wouldn't normally be there. And I know this is just systematic or whatever but to me it puts in a huge feeling of it being haphazard and maybe that's the intention is that when you bring together something as elusive as death and try to define it, it has to be haphazard because it's not something that you can understand completely. And again I'm going to bring up {inaudible name again 4:45} because it's something that ?? life lived unconscious is not lived at all is something that has been I guess plaguing my mind and this is something that the story really caters to is the feeling of making strange and so when the author talks about death as something that is immortal, death is something that is good, which is something that we don't come upon ever, it makes us feel strange because we're not used to seeing death in that light. And so that's - yeah. Just something that changes the way that I see the story and the way that it impacts me is that it's a strange way to see things. And that brings me to another memory which - about four years

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ago, my boyfriend was thinking about committing suicide. And it was something that was extraordinarily hard for me to deal with and something that it's hard for me to come to terms with why he would want to do it. And the justification was that death is better than life. I suppose. And that's a lot of - that's the same idea as the story's trying to get through. I think is that death is immortality and it's this person that seeks the immortality. And so I guess the story brings me to realization that I've never really understood before. And throughout the time that he was talking about it and considering, I had come to accept it I guess? Logic-ed my way into thinking that maybe he was right. And now I can see - I guess more clearly the perspective of death equalling immortality and kind of the juxtaposition of life and death at the same time being the same thing. Which is what the story kind of concludes with is I am alive, no you are dead. {inaudible 7:35} idea of living unconsciously is not living at all, so.

7.4. Appendix 4: Example of Constituent Development

7.4.1. Getting a Feel For the Commentaries (Step 1)

During the first reading of all the commentaries, P111, P119, and P742 were grouped together because of the sense of hopelessness and despair that they share. Their mood also seems to move from this hopelessness to resignation and indifference.

7.4.2. Marking Themes (Step 2)

In the study instructions, participants were asked to read the primary text twice and, during the second reading, mark a passage that they found particularly striking and evocative. They then described in their own words (into the audio recorder) their experience of this marked passage ("Describe any thoughts, feelings, images, impressions, or memories that were in any way part of your experience"). Thereafter, they described their experience of the text as a whole in the same manner. The following is an example of how potentially explicable themes were marked in and extracted from participant 111's commentary on her chosen passage:

Chosen Passage (P111): "... the instant of my death henceforth always impending".

When I read this, I feel - I guess the sense that death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative, it's just sort of - I'm not sure, there's almost an apathy about it. There's … discovering there's lightness in this passage. I don't really feel it like that, it's just sort of - there is, I guess there is

some sort of freedom in it because there's really nothing you can do about it. And the images that it evoked is kind of an image of nothingness, maybe like a plain or something empty.

Marked themes:

Inevitability of death

Apathy/indifference towards (inevitability of) death

Lightness that comes with indifference

Freedom in indifference towards inevitability of death

Images of nothingness/empty plain

Example of Memo entry:

"Paradoxical feeling: hopelessness/freedom, powerless/ lightness? Element of inexpressibility? Resignation?" The intrigue that led me to make this memo entry had to do with the paradox of hopelessness and lightness. How these participants' reading seemed to evoke feelings that were difficult if not impossible to express, because of their paradoxical nature.

7.4.3. Comparative Explication (Step 3)

Since this third step involves the explication of the shared meanings in their contexts and is where the phenomenological work proper begins, I will provide a lengthy excerpt from the explication of commentaries P111, P119, and P742.

Reading Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, brings to presence for participants P111 and P119 the sense that death is inevitable and beyond our control.[24] And this felt understanding of being powerless before the course of events and ones own death seems to be marked by paradoxical feelings of hopelessness on the one hand, and freedom on the other. The hopelessness is not described as anguish, however. Rather it has the quality of apathy and indifference:

P111: "I feel – I guess the sense that death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative, it's just sort of - I'm not sure, there's almost an apathy about it … because there's nothing you can do."

P119: "My feeling about this excerpt … is … quite close to a state of depression… When you get the feeling … [that] you don't have a care in the world anymore. … when you don't really care about the world anymore. … when there isn't really life in this world. Just the same day by day. Being neither

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[24] P119: "My feelings about this excerpt … is … quite close to a state of depression … When you get the feeling of lightness that kind of just – you don't have a care in the world anymore. […] Don't really care about the world anymore. … 'Freed from life, the infinite opening up, neither happiness nor unhappiness, nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond' … You feel that you're freed from life… cause my feelings when you're freed from life, it's – well, … when there isn't really life in this world. The infinite opening up. Being neither happy nor unhappy. When you're just there. With nothing left to fear. You're already beyond that step. And all you have left is the death outside and the death inside. I get a feeling of hopelessness. What happens like – to the protagonist. […] Is not, can't really control his own fate. Like – whether he was going to live or die was determined not by himself of even by the people around him but is history. And how often that is hopelessness, is detachment from life. […] It invokes loneliness. Lack of free will, I guess."

P111: "When I read this, I feel – I guess I get the sense that death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative, its just sort of – I'm not sure, there's almost an apathy about it. They're discovering there's lightness in this passage […] I guess there's some sort of freedom in it because there's really nothing you can do about it.

happy nor unhappy. When you're just there. With nothing left to fear. You're already beyond that step. All you have left is the death outside and the death inside."…

However, despite the sense of liberation that resignation might bring, these participants also comment on the "feeling of hopelessness … that is detachment from life" (P119) and the "image of nothingness, maybe like a plain or something empty" (P111), which their reading of Blanchot's treatment of the inevitability of death and human suffering engenders. These images of an empty plain, of nothingness evoked in P111's reading capture a state of melancholy or depression. P119 is explicit about this proximity: "My feelings about this excerpt {pause} is {pause} quite close to a state of depression I would assume. When you get the feeling of lightness that kind of just – you don't have a care in the world anymore." And participant P742, who also focuses on fate/destiny and on the inevitability of human suffering and death, describes the state that reading the Blanchot text put her into as follows:

> "The whole text felt serene … feelings just like cloudiness that you don't really know what's going on. And there's images of wandering about the streets not sure what you're doing. What you're part of. The experience is serene, it doesn't feel real until you're involved in it. You're just walking around seeing all this happening around you but nothing is happening to you."

Might this apathy and alienation from self and world be the experience of staving off the threat of slipping through the cracks into the abyss of nothingness? Rosemary Dinnage in *The New York Review* writes:

> And behind all the causes, the symptoms of depression, there is a
> basic fear that is so taboo that is has no single name: horror vacui,
> the fear of nothingness. People, I think, fall into two categories,
> either recognizing what this means or being genuinely baffled by
> it. A patient who described her illness in the phrase "as if
> everything were going to stop existing" meant this, and Smith
> then writes that he felt "ghosted," and Solomon in the experience
> he describes of suddenly seeing, at six years old, that the solid
> surface of life had holes in it that you could slip through. (16)

Participant 119 comments that "[h]opelessness is detachment from life". But might this hopelessness be what accompanies the rescue-by-alienation from an endless fall into nothingness such as Solomon describes by quoting from Emily Dickinson's poem *The Inner World*:

> And then a Plank in Reason
> broke,
> And I dropped down, and
> down –
> (qtd. in Solomon 52)

Participant 742's comment "And there's images of wandering about the streets not sure what you're doing. What you're part of", echoes this broken plank. It also points toward a crisis in the "we" as van Manen calls it: "The

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refusal to dwell together is indifference … Indifference is a failure or crisis of the "we" (*Researching Lived Experience* 108).

Themes that were not shared but that intrigued and seemed worth keeping an eye on were recorded in a "Potential Constituents" document. The following is a selection from this document for the P111, P119, and P742. The "[Yes! …]" indicates that this meaning was found to be shared by at least one other commentary and thus explicated further.

"Potential Constituents" Document Example:

P119:

Identification with feelings of protagonist [Yes! P147]

Emotionally freed from dead world

P111:

Striking image: Reading this passage/text, an image stuck with me (of them all lining up to shoot him). [Yes! 163]

Tragic feeling gives way to lightness in death: Reading this passage/text, the feeling of tragedy gave way to a feeling of lightness that came with the protagonist's indifference towards (/resigned to) his own death. [needs to be differentiated from movement of affirmation in P106 and P147! Kierkegaard's movement of resignation?]

P742: all covered I think.

7.4.4. Constituent Development (Step 4)

Now that some of the meaning units were comparatively and contextually disembedded in the explication, the fourth step was developing the actual

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constituents. Drawing on the explication and on the individual commentaries, a constituent was developed which captured as much as possible of the shared meaning of the compared commentaries. The following is an example of this procedure:

Disembedded Constituent:

<u>Indifference towards death</u>: Reading this passage/text evokes for me a feeling of indifference towards death.

Relevant Passages From Commentaries:

<u>P111</u>: "I feel – I guess the sense that <u>death is coming eventually to all of us but it's not particularly negative</u>, it's just sort of – I'm not sure, <u>there's almost an apathy about it</u>. They're discovering there's lightness in this passage. I don't really feel it like that, it's just sort of – I guess there's some sort of freedom in it because there's really nothing you can do about it."

<u>P119</u>: … <u>there's not really much to life 'cause my feelings when you're freed from life</u>, it's - well, I think I feel a lot more when there isn't really life in this world. Just the same thing day by day. And I think this section here really translates it. Translates. Really depicts it well when you're - the infinite opening up. <u>Being neither happy nor unhappy. When you're just there. With nothing left to fear. You're already beyond that step. And all you have left is the death outside and the death inside.</u>

The following are an exemplary set of the constituents that were disembedded in this manner from the explication of P111, P119, P742:

Self-implication: This passage/text resonates with me/my feelings in a way that implicates me directly.

Inevitability of death: Reading this passage/text, I get a sense that death is inevitable.

Resigning to inevitability of death/fate: Reading this passage/text evokes the sense of resigning to ones own finitude/inevitability of death.

Indifference towards death: Reading this passage/text evokes in me a feeling of indifference towards death.

Stranger to myself and world: Reading this passage/text evokes a feeling of being a stranger to myself and in the world.

7.4.5. Identifying Further Shared Meanings for Explication (Step 5)

Consulting the "Potential Constituents" document again for P119, for instance, resulted in the development of further constituents in comparative readings with other commentaries. The potential constituent "identification with protagonist feelings of hopelessness" from P119, for example, was concretized in comparison with P147's "identification with feelings of protagonist that death is always forthcoming" as follows:

Disembedded Constituent:

I can relate to the protagonist's feelings.

Relevant Passages from Commentaries:

P119: "… Freed from life, infinite opening up, neither happiness nor unhappiness, nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I think

this first part of it really - it <u>evokes a strong feeling of closeness I would say to how I would sometimes feel</u> and I suppose most people would.

... Like - whether he was going to live or die was determined not by himself or even by the people around him but is history. And how often that this hopelessness is detachment from life. <u>It's {pause} to be honest, it's close to how - well, I guess I would feel.</u>"

<u>P147</u>: "I found this passage striking because <u>it describes a feeling that I've been able to hint at before</u>, not that I felt fully in my life. But it's the kind of moment that when I see in a movie usually makes me cry. The one that comes to mind is in Titanic when Jack knows that he's going to die. And there becomes sort of a simplicity to life, kind of a basically the feeling of lightness that you don't know how to translate. <u>I think that I've been able to feel some of this before</u> [...] but I do get a sense of compassion, a bit of just <u>a sense that if I'd have been there I'd probably be feeling the same thing at the same time.</u>"

Steps 4-5 were then repeated until something like saturation set in.

7.5. Appendix 5: List of Fully Articulated Distinguishing Constituents

1. <u>Self-implication</u>: This passage/text resonates with me/my feelings in a way that implicates me directly.

2. <u>Interested/engaged – implicit</u>: The participant seemed interested in and engaged by the text/passage.

3. <u>Reflection on death/not generative</u>: Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a familiar way.

4. <u>Reflection on death/not self-implicating</u>: Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a way that did not implicate myself.

5. <u>Reflection on injustice</u>: This passage/text made me reflect on injustice.

6. <u>Interpretation to self-implication</u>: While reading this passage/text, I moved from an interpretive stance to a self-implicating one.

7. <u>Personal memory/other</u>: Reading this passage/text brought up a personal memory from my past (not death related).

8. <u>Negative feelings/depressing</u>: Reading this passage/text made me feel depressed/was depressing.

9. <u>I feel for/with</u>: Reading this passage/text made me feel for/with the protagonist and/or people in his situation.

10. <u>Indifference towards death:</u> Reading this passage/text evokes a feeling for me of feeling indifferent towards death.

11. <u>Indifference/other:</u> Reading this passage/text evoked a deep sense of not caring about the world or what happens anymore.

12. <u>Life's meaningfulness disappears</u>: Reading this passage/text brought to presence a sense that at times the meaningfulness of life disappears.

13. <u>Negative feelings/hopelessness</u>: Reading this passage/text made me feel hopelessness.

14. <u>Relate to protagonist's feelings/other</u>: I can relate to the (not death related) feelings the protagonist is experiencing in this passage/text.

15. <u>Paradoxical feelings/other</u>: Reading this passage/text evokes the simultaneous presence of paradoxical feelings.

16. <u>Personal memory/death related</u>: Reading this passage/text brought up a death related personal memory from my past.

17. <u>Reflection on death/generative</u>: Reading this text/passage made me reflect on death in a way I had not donw before.

18. <u>Thought-provoking/explicit</u>: I found reading this passage/text was very thought-provoking.

19. <u>Vulnerability</u>: Reading this passage/text brings to presence a sense of my/our vulnerability.

20. <u>What's happening is in the plan</u>: Reading this passage/text a sense comes over you that what is supposed to happen is going to happen, what's happening is in the plan, is for a purpose.

21. <u>Stranger to myself and world</u>: Reading this passage/text evokes a feeling of being a stranger to myself and in the world.

22. <u>Resigning to inevitability of death/fate</u>: Reading this passage/text evokes the sense of resigning to ones own finitude/the inevitability of death.

23. <u>Powerless before fate</u>: Reading this passage/text brings to presence the acute sense of my/our powerlessness before fate.

24. <u>Reflection on death/ self-implicating</u>: Reading this passage/text made me reflect on death in a way that implicated me personally.

25. <u>Life worth living/self-implicating</u>: Reading this passage/text made me reflect in a self-implicating way on whether life is worth living under all circumstances.

26. <u>Life and death beyond the realm of justice and meaning</u>: Reading this passage/text made me realize that life and death are ultimately not questions of justice and meaning.

27. <u>The edge of nothingness</u>: Reading this passage/text brings me to the edge of an abyss, where meaning drops into meaninglessness, the effable into the ineffable, the finite into the infinite.

28. <u>Relate to death as always forthcoming</u>: Reading this passage/text, I can relate to the protagonist's feeling of death being always forthcoming.

29. <u>Paradoxical feelings/finitude-infinity</u>: This passage/text brings about a felt sense that simultaneously captures (the sense of) my own finitude and the infinity of the world of which I form part.

30. <u>Meaning of life</u>: Reading this passage/text made me ask what is life, why am I here?

31. <u>Inevitability of my death/self-implicating</u>: Reading this passage/text brings to presence the inevitability of my own death.

32. <u>Inexpressibility</u>: The experience evoked by this passage is hard to describe/cannot be fully described, only hinted at.

33. <u>From sadness/suffering to knowingness</u>: In reading this passage I moved from a reflection on sadness and/or suffering to a knowingness of something greater than or beyond me and which I am also part of.

34. <u>Affirmative connection</u>: This passage/text brings to presence an affirmative/life-affirming connection with the world for me.