University of Alberta

A Bridge from Artificial Places:
An Empirical Phenomenology of Mystical Reading in Rilke and Eliot

by

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for Mom and Dad, who have always believed

Abstract

Exploring whether, and to what extent, the poetry of T.S. Eliot and Rainer Maria Rilke can facilitate mystical poetic experiencing is the purpose of this thesis. In opposition to Reuven Tsur's claim that readers simply *recognize* or *detect* elements that can be identified as mystical, I argue that readers can experience, in powerfully embodied ways, aspects of mysticism such as wonder, reverence, and a dissipation of the boundaries of the self.

In Chapter 1, after defining mysticism, and illustrating the features of Eliot and Rilke's poetry that afford the possibility for mystical experience, I present the empirical methodology employed in this project, and consider the traditional resistance to such methods. Chapter 2 comprises the theoretical heart of the thesis. Here, I discuss aesthetic theories of emotion, and argue for a contemporary, embodied version of expression theory informed by phenomenology. This lays the theoretical groundwork for the elaboration of an experiencing model, which is progressively developed into a model of reading experiencing, and finally a model of mystical poetic experiencing.

Chapter 3 is the empirical centre of the thesis, wherein I present two studies of actual readers. Study One, a large-scale investigation of 20 Rilke and Eliot selections, allows me to uncover seven distinct kinds of reading experience. One of these, Spiritual Enactive Engagement, confirms that a kind of mystical poetic experiencing is indeed possible in poetic encounters with Rilke and Eliot. Study Two is a small-scale, in-depth, interview-based exploration of one Rilke and one Eliot text. It more fully articulates what aspects of the poetic texts, and

what characteristics of the participants, make mystical poetic experiencing possible.

Finally, Chapter 4 is a concluding application of the mystical poetic experiencing model to Rilke and Eliot's poetry. This application is my presentation, or my reading, of the reader commentaries provided in Study Two. I use participant comments to construct a detailed, fully embodied reading of two texts, demonstrating the potential value of such empirical research to literary scholarship more broadly considered.

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Chapter 1: Motivation, Justification, and Grounding

1.1 Motivation

Many instructors who have attempted to teach poetry have been pricked

by the skeptical student questions listed by Frederick Luis Aldama in *Why the*

Humanities Matter: "Why are we reading and analyzing books when no one I

know even reads? Why not get up to speed with the times and analyze something

more relevant, like film? What value does all this have in the bigger scheme of

things, anyway?" (234). Aldama makes the common professorial move of turning

the question back onto his students (never a bad idea), but this leads to

stereotyped replies. His students are not really engaging the question, but instead

offering old slogans used to justify the practice of reading literature in the

contemporary classroom: "Literature helps us think better! It sharpens our critical

vision of the world! It makes us more well rounded! It's fun!" (234). There is an

element of truth in all these claims, I believe, but all of them seem shallow

without the deeper conviction Aldama expresses almost in passing: "I do consider

one fiction to be better than another because *it has a greater power to transform*

us" (261, italics mine). Whether, and to what extent, this claim is right is central

to understanding the value and potential of poetry in the twenty-first century.

For poetry to matter to students, and to society more generally, it has to

matter first to us, to those who teach and study it. Poetry really began to matter to

me in high school, when I first encountered T.S. Eliot. Reading *The Waste Land*

was both baffling and intriguing. The range of allusions, archaic vocabulary, and

fragmented syntax rendered the poem unintelligible in any strict, cognitive sense

of the word; I would have been at a loss to explain what the poem was "about" or to provide a paraphrase of its content. Despite such (typically) modernist difficulties, however, I was profoundly affected by the work. I felt the permeating despair; I was arrested by the light and fire; I was set adrift by the wind and waves both cleansing and crushing. A similar undergraduate experience accompanied my initial encounter with Stephen Mitchell's translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*; for a moment I dissolved into the unfathomably transcendent pure presence of his angels. Moments like these justify poetry for me.

This thesis is my attempt to articulate how the poetry of Rilke and Eliot can prompt the kind of profound, specifically mystical, experience I have known, and how, to modify Aldama's claim somewhat, these poems can have the power to transform us. My first claim in support of this broad thesis is that the phenomenon is not merely idiosyncratic; readers beyond myself experience it as well. My second is that the phenomenon involves a fully embodied approach to reading that the poetry of both Eliot and Rilke facilitates through its thematic and stylistic features. Third, I claim that mystical poetic experiencing affects a reader's sense of self, allowing her to consider the poem, herself, and her life differently. My fourth major claim is that the embodied reading mystical poetic experiencing involves can illuminate the poetry under consideration, not only for the experiencing readers, but also for the wider literary community. This is not to suggest that individual readers necessarily provide academically satisfying, cohesive interpretations, regardless of the force of their poetic experiences.

Rather, their responses *can themselves be read* to cast light on how the poetry in question achieves its profound effects.

Throughout my literary career, I have become increasingly aware that the profundity I am investigating in Eliot and Rilke is not the sort of thing we tend to pursue in the classroom. As instructors, we often give our students these poems, potentially great gifts rich in personal as well as public meanings, and then ask them to interpret them in the monotonous chill of disaffection. Academic interpretation usually consists of the reasoned, post hoc construction of a reading of the text, but always, somewhere just out of sight, there seems to be something more. In "Beyond Interpretation: The Cognitive Significance of Reading," David Miall identifies this "something" as the reader's experience of the text, within which interpretations "form only one corner of a much larger field" (151). I agree that the too-narrow focus on interpretative activity has limited the scope and depth of literary studies. What I mean by "interpretation" here is captured well by Billy Collins' poem "Introduction to Poetry":

> But all they want to do
>
> is tie the poem to a chair with rope
>
> and torture a confession out of it.
>
>
> They begin beating it with a hose
>
> to find out what it really means. (12-16)

This is a way of reading poetry that takes it for a mystery *to be solved*, rather than a mystery to be marveled at, and involved with. Students and instructors like those

described by Collins focus on "extracting" a hidden pre-existing meaning from a text, making explicit what is already implicitly fully present.

Peter Rabinowitz describes the tendency to posit a hidden meaning as the first step of his "Rule of Abstract Displacement" (139): "Good literature is always treated as if it were about something else. That is, whatever a work appears to be about on the surface, you always discover – especially if you are discussing it in a literature class – that its 'real' subject lies in something that's not immediately apparent from the surface" (139). The second step is an act of generalization, in which you assume that literary meaning is of sufficient generality to be worth something to everyone, often in the form of a universal proposition (140). This reduces literary meaning to parables. Such an approach to reading becomes a search that can ignore the specificity of a text, since its signs are used as clues to the "real" meaning resting somewhere beyond it. Many schools of literary theory, in their concern to explain texts, employ specific versions of this rule. Historicism makes texts parables for the socio-historical situation of their composition. Freudianism makes texts parables of the human unconscious. Deconstruction makes texts parables of reading itself.

Another potential problem in literary classroom interpretation is what Chick, Hassel, and Haynie call "textual narcissism" (400), where "the complexity of the text is lost as students conflate what they are reading with their own lives and fail to appreciate the text, the author, the characters, and indeed everything outside of the students themselves" (400). In this case, instead of making an abstract parable out of the text, students make strictly personal parables about

their own lives. Both abstract displacement and textual narcissism limit the text's potential for complexity; in the attempt to cast the text in familiar terms, both approaches evade the text's potential to modify a reader's ways of understanding it, herself, and the world.

Abstract displacement and textual narcissism end up forming a hard horizon for a reading encounter. Each reader comes to any act of reading, indeed any situation, with a horizon through which we come to experience the world. This horizon is shaped by cultural and personal history, certainly, but it is the widest opening we have onto any situation. When we decide to read in terms of a powerful, dominant belief (the text is really a representation of something else), we create a harder, narrower horizon within our general, full horizon of being. As a result, what we can see is more limited than it could be. Further, since we have constructed a hard border within our greater horizon, what we experience in reading becomes less able to "break out" of the frame we have established, and is less likely to touch or modify the greater full horizon of our present being. Literature cannot modify us unless we let it escape the interpretive pens we often cage it in.

The kind of openness I refer to here is touched upon in Gadamer's discussion of the hermeneutic circle:

> Meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Just as we cannot continually misunderstand the use of a word without its affecting the meaning of the whole, so we cannot hold blindly to our own fore-meaning of the thing, if we would understand the meaning of another.

> Of course this does not mean that when we listen to someone or read a
> book we must forget all our fore-meanings concerning the content,
> and all our own ideas. All that is asked is that we remain open to the
> meaning of the other person or of the text. But this openness always
> includes our placing the other meaning in a relation with the whole of
> our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it. (842)

The openness we bring is not a "view from nowhere," free of everything we may bring to our reading. Rather, it is the attempt to remain sensitive to the otherness of the text, inhibiting the natural urge to make it fit our projected fore-meaning (or horizon), rather than allowing it to work upon, and modify us. Husserl's "ἐποχή" (epoché) describes a similar openness, where the experiencer focuses on the phenomenon (in our case, reading), putting "the world between brackets" in order for "the 'sense' of the world" (660) to emerge. This "sense" is the world as it is experienced in the phenomenon, different from the world or text objectively posited, because it includes the experiencer (there is no "sense" of something without an experiencer to sense it). Abstract displacement and textual narcissism prohibit the openness advocated by Gadamer and Husserl. These interpretive moves determine, from the outset, the limits of the text's potential meanings for a reader.

If the language of "openness" sounds somewhat religious, that is no oversight or coincidence. My research traverses the crossroads of modernist poetry and mystical experience among contemporary readers to reveal how, in an age polarized by atheism and religious fundamentalism, where literary skepticism

is the norm, we can hear the call of poetry so profoundly that we rise beyond ourselves to feel something stirring in the long-rejected divinity. I am not advocating or subscribing to a belief in God. I believe in poetry, and want to understand how we experience it most fully.

Our guides through the dark wood of poetic texts and religious experience among contemporary readers, Eliot and Rilke, despite their divergent cultures, languages, styles, and even ignorance of each other's work, manage to conjure an uncannily similar and distinctly "felt sense," Eugene Gendlin's term for "a bodily felt quality" ("Wider Role" 193) that "exceeds logical forms and distinctions" (192). In my experience of reading Rilke and Eliot, even before I "figured out" what the poems meant, and long before I could have provided an interpretation or reading, I got a "wider, at first confusing, murky (. . . . .) sense that we're taught to consider as nothing" (194, ellipses within brackets Gendlin's own typographical innovation), but which was too strong to ignore. Derrida's (1982) notion of "différance" captures something of this "excess" that goes beyond the logical forms and concepts we have for understanding. However, whereas Derrida focuses on the way this surplus destabilizes meanings, Gendlin characterizes it as a fully embodied and felt "part of thinking" that "is not chaos but a greater order" (192). Lyotard's "differend" even more closely resembles Gendlin's characterization:

> In the differend, something "asks" to be put into phrases, and suffers
> from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away.
> This is when the human beings who thought they could use language

as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain

which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the

invention of a new idiom), that they are summoned by language, not

to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable

through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be

phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be

allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist. (13)

For Lyotard, as for Gendlin, the "excess" that arises is inexpressible in the old

forms, concepts, and phrases. Fresh conceptualizations, and modified ways of

understanding must emerge for the excess to be expressed; the excess calls for and

gives guidance to the fresh expression that emerges.

The felt sense is not the entire meaning of the poem, fully articulated and

rationally organized, just waiting to be written out. Rather, it is the embodied

aspect of my experience with a poem as a whole that allows me first to know it,

and to distinguish it from others. Gendlin's example of this kind of knowing

makes it clear:

You are walking on the street and you meet someone who says hello.

You say hello back. You don't remember who it is. But your body

knows who it is. Any moment *who it is* will pop into your head. Then

it doesn't. You scour the world, work, home, neighbors, stores,

colleagues. Perhaps suddenly you know, perhaps not. But you have a

felt sense – a bodily felt quality – in which that person is *implied.* At

that point you may think, "Gee, isn't that interesting. I know that I

don't like this person, but I don't know who it is yet." And when at last

it comes to you who that is, you may be surprised. You say, "Gee, I

didn't know I didn't like this person in this funny way." But while as

yet you didn't, this bodily *implying* knew who it is. ("Wider Role"

193)

My first experiences of Rilke and Eliot, like Gendlin's experience of the person

on the street in the example, were known to me through the bodily felt quality I

had of them, despite my not having clear concepts and a logical understanding of

either. This is the way in which I sensed their connection.

I am not the first to notice a similarly felt sense in reading Eliot and Rilke,

though the literature comparing them directly is surprisingly limited and dated

(e.g. Sheppard; Wood). This is almost shocking when you consider the watershed

year, 1922, when both Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* (not to

mention Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* and Joyce's *Ulysses*) were published. Elsie

Weigand's New Critical treatment is the most relevant comparison, as she at least

points toward how Rilke and Eliot involve readers in temporally suspended

moments from which they can apprehend eternity:

Through this involvement in the process of expression, the reader is

drawn into the emotional and intellectual situation which it is the

purpose of the poet to describe. The meaning of the poem, therefore, is

realized in the reader's reaction. . . . For both of them, the most

significant moments in life are those wherein life, temporal life, is

suspended, and the human being apprehends eternity in his sensation of

space. It is in their articulation of such moments that both men achieve

the highest realizations of their individual poetic genius, and the close

approximation to what Eliot would term the "objective correlative" of

mystic experience. (198-202)

Somehow, Weigand claims, both poets are able to express (rather than describe)

something of what it is like to have a mystical experience. This reader response

approach *avant la lettre* points toward the spirit of what makes these poems feel

so similar, and allows for a turn from the text itself, or the reader herself, to the

phenomenon of mystical experiencing as it emerges during the reading process.

1.2 Justification – Why Mystical Experience for Rilke and Eliot?

The phenomenon of mystical experience receives a significant amount of

attention in European and Anglo-American modernist literature, ranging from the

first decade of the twentieth century to the conclusion of the Second World War.

The mystical current of this period arises with the influential philosophical,

psychological, and theological publications of English and German scholars.

William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Evelyn Underhill's

Mysticism, and Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* all treat mystical experience

as a phenomenon worthy of serious academic inquiry. The literary treatment of

mysticism is similarly linguistically and geographically pervasive: James Joyce,

E.M. Forster, and Franz Kafka immediately spring to mind as major prose authors

whose work, both thematically and formally, explores the mystical. We can see

perhaps the best evidence of mysticism's prominence in modernism in the poetry

of both Eliot and Rilke who wrote in an overlapping period, without marked

mutual influence, in English and German, respectively. Critics have commented

on the importance of mystical tendencies for each poet taken individually (Childs;

Tseng; Jephcott), and there is even, as mentioned above, a limited body of work

comparing the two poets on the basis of this shared interest (Weigand). Clearly,

mystical experience is pivotal both in early twentieth-century modernism and in

Rilke and Eliot specifically.

A quick review of Rilke's and Eliot's lives and corpori reveals a thorough

exploration of mystical experience. Eliot's involvement with spiritualists and

interest in texts about mysticism (like Underhill's *Mysticism*, his copy of which

was thoroughly annotated) is well documented (Childs 9), as is his conversion to

Anglicanism (Raine xiv). His *Ash Wednesday*, even in its title, suggests the

thematic concern with conversion explored in the poem. *Four Quartets* explores

these themes further from the perspective of a devout Anglican and mystic. Even

The Waste Land, written before Eliot's conversion, is a struggle with, and coming

to terms with, faith, and it features some of the most profound mystical moments

in his poetry.

Rilke, though not a conventionally religious individual, is reported (in the

memoir of his friend and benefactor Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, 40)

to have received the first line of his *Duino Elegies* from a voice on the wind in a

moment of mystical inspiration. His dedication of the *Eighth Elegy* to his friend

Rudolf Kassner, an Austrian philosopher concerned with mysticism, is further

evidence that the poet had mystical inclinations. Looking at his work, one sees

even more clearly this concern for the religious. *The Book of Hours* in its title references a devotional practice of medieval monks; *The Sonnets to Orpheus* directly target a Greek god; and the *Duino Elegies* takes angels as a central trope. Exploring mysticism to arrive at a stronger understanding of Rilke's and Eliot's poetry is therefore justified by their lives and work.

This thesis aims, in small measure, to redress the dearth of work comparing these authors' concern with a subject central to both, mysticism. The value of a comparative study is at least fourfold. 1) Although these authors do not share similar worldviews, something about their poetry allows it to be read in comparably mystical ways. Comparison will facilitate deeper understanding of how each poet employs elements of the mystical tradition to achieve similar effects. 2) Exploring how two major modernist poets from different cultural traditions engage mysticism will contribute to better understanding of the mystical tendency in modernist literature generally, perhaps especially in modernist poetry. 3) Exploring whether, then how, each poet's rendering of mysticism can lead readers to mystical poetic experience may reveal something important about mystical experience itself. There is a long tradition linking aesthetic to religious experience (Santayana; Barnstone; Leonard; Stange and Taylor). The potential for both in the works of Rilke and Eliot may substantiate this link, while also affirming their differences and their reciprocal influences. 4) Finally, learning whether, and to what extent, contemporary readers outside the community of literary academics can experience profoundly significant moments with poetry has

the potential to show us what these poets' work, and perhaps even poetry in

general, can still uniquely accomplish – even in the twenty-first century.

1.3 Defining Mysticism

To this point it has sufficed to use the term "mysticism" as though it were

easily understood and unproblematic. Of course, nothing could be further from the

truth. While the goal of the present study is not to define or redefine mysticism, or

to trace its long and varied history, such a controversial phenomenon requires

some explanation, if only to elucidate what it means in the present context. This

"definition" will not be final, or exhaustive, but it will suffice to give us a

common starting point for understanding my use of this term throughout this

thesis.

Although traditional studies resist attempts to define mystical experience,

Charles Heriot-Maitland steps boldly into that forbidden territory, offering a

provisional definition that at least provides a general orientation:

> One of the most life-changing of these altered states is the mystical
>
> experience: a transitory state of consciousness in which an individual
>
> purports to come into immediate contact with the ultimate reality. It
>
> involves the awareness of an abstract, non-physical power which is far
>
> greater than the individual self. When this occurs, the experience is
>
> considerably different from any other as it induces the sense of
>
> another (probably higher) dimension to life, that the everyday world is
>
> not the whole reality. Although they are usually infrequent and rather

fleeting, such experiences often stand out as defining moments in the

lives of those who have them. (302)

Despite its generality, this definition provides a solid overview of the

phenomenon of mystical experience, and will serve here, as it did for Heriot-

Maitland, as a useful beginning.

The next step toward defining mystical experience is guided by James's

The Varieties of Religious Experience. In a chapter titled "Mysticism," he sets out

four characteristics of mystical experience that remain at the centre of academic

inquiry up to the present day: 1) Ineffability; 2) Noetic Quality; 3) Transiency; 4)

Passivity (302). For James, ineffability refers to the extent to which mystical

experience defies expression and eludes description, making it something that

must be experienced directly to be known. By noetic quality, James refers to the

insight and depth of revelation the experience entails – often with lasting effect.

By transiency, James means the fleeting nature of the mystical experience,

suggesting that thirty minutes to about two hours is the maximum duration.

Finally, he notes the feeling of passivity associated with mystical experience.

Trained mystics attempt to court passivity to engage in the mystical, and once the

experience arises, the feeling of agency abates, sometimes replaced by the feeling

that another agent (God, for instance) is in control.

Walter T. Stace's *Mysticism and Philosophy* takes up James's work and

goes further, providing a more detailed taxonomy. Stace first distinguishes

between spontaneous and acquired mystical experience (60-61), marking the

difference between those experiences that are prepared for and striven toward and

those that come unbidden. In my research, I propose that reading certain poetry can sometimes facilitate mystical experience. In the reading context, mystical experience must be considered acquired and prepared for, at least in so far as active and receptive reading allows.

Stace offers a further and widely followed (d'Aquili and Newberg; Hood) distinction:

> The two main types of experience, the extrovertive and the introvertive, have been distinguished by different writers under various names. The latter has been called the "inward way" or the "mysticism of introspection," which is Rudolf Otto's terminology and corresponds to what Miss Underhill calls "introversion." The other may be called "the outward way" or the way of extrospection. The essential difference between them is that the extrovertive experience looks outward through the senses, while the introvertive looks inward into the mind. Both culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity – what Plotinus called the One – with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity. But the extrovertive mystic, using his physical senses, perceives the multiplicity of external material objects – the sea, the sky, the houses, the trees – mystically transfigured so that the One, or the Unity, shines through them. The introvertive mystic, on the contrary, seeks by deliberately shutting off the senses, by obliterating from consciousness the entire multiplicity of sensations, images, and thoughts, to plunge into the depths of his own

ego. There, in that darkness and silence, he alleges that he perceives the One – and is united with it – not as a Unity seen through a multiplicity (as in the extrovertive experience), but as the wholly naked One devoid of any plurality whatever. (61-62)

Stace describes the "end" of both extrovertive and introvertive mysticism as the same: the experience of "ultimate unity." However, the quality of the experience and the path taken to achieve it are different. For the purposes of the present research, Stace's extrovertive experience is most appropriate. Unlike the introvertive type, which involves turning away from the sensible world, the extrovertive type is compatible with attending to a poem and engaging its meanings. This proposal requires one qualification: Rilke and Eliot *describe* both introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences in their work. These types of poetic descriptions may resemble mystical moments for readers, but the facilitation of readers' mystical experience seems necessarily extrovertive. Thus, Stace's description of extrovertive mystical experience is most relevant:

1. The unifying vision, expressed abstractly by the formula "All is One." The One is, in extrovertive mysticism, perceived through the physical senses, in or through the multiplicity of objects.

2. The more concrete apprehension of the One as being an inner subjectivity in all things, described variously as life, or consciousness, or a living Presence. The discovery that nothing is "really" dead.

3. Sense of objectivity or reality.

4. Feeling of blessedness, joy, happiness, satisfaction, etc.

5. Feeling that what is apprehended is holy, or sacred, or divine. This is the quality which gives rise to the interpretation of the experience as being an experience of "God." It is the specifically religious element in the experience. It is closely intertwined with, but not identical with, the previously listed characteristic of blessedness and joy.

6. Paradoxicality.

7. Alleged by mystics to be ineffable, incapable of being described in words, etc. (79)

In empirical studies of mystical experience, Stace's categories have been most influential. It is difficult to find a contemporary researcher who has not developed his or her psychometric instruments, at least indirectly, from this classification. Most importantly, Ralph Hood's pioneering work on the empirical measurement of mystical experience, which is the ground of most contemporary measures, bases its scales explicitly on Stace's conceptual categories, with the exception of paradoxicality. Regarding the latter, Hood states that, "In none of our preliminary work did it effectively discriminate nor do we consider it an essential characteristic of mystical experience" (31). Hood's operationalization of Stace's distinctions in questionnaire form makes his instrument an effective, readily applicable, and easily understood measure of the key features of mystical experience. Hood also recognizes that each aspect of the mystical experience may have different levels of intensity, making his characterization applicable to a wider range of experiences. His scales are described as follows:

1. EGO QUALITY (E): Refers to the experience of a loss of sense of self while consciousness is nevertheless maintained. The loss of self is commonly experienced as an absorption into something greater than the mere empirical ego.

2. UNIFYING QUALITY (U): Refers to the experience of the multiplicity of objects of perception as nevertheless united. Everything is in fact perceived as "One."

3. INNER SUBJECTIVE QUALITY (Is): Refers to the perception of an inner subjectivity to all things, even those usually experienced in purely material forms.

4. TEMPORAL/ SPATIAL QUALITY (T): Refers to the temporal and spatial parameters of the experience. Essentially both time and space are modified with the extreme being one of an experience that is both "timeless" and "spaceless."

5. NOETIC QUALITY (N): Refers to the experience as a source of valid knowledge. Emphasis is on a nonrational, intuitive, insightful experience that is nevertheless recognized as not merely subjective.

6. INEFFABILITY (I): Refers to the impossibility of expressing the experience in conventional language. The experience simply cannot be put into words due to the nature of the experience itself and not to the linguistic capacity of the subject.

7. POSITIVE AFFECT (P): Refers to the positive affective quality of the experience. Typically the experience is of joy or blissful

happiness.

8. RELIGIOUS QUALITY (R): Refers to the intrinsic sacredness of the experience. This includes feelings of mystery, awe, and reverence that may nevertheless be expressed independently of traditional religious language. (31-32)

These aspects of mystical experience form the ground for this investigation. Several of the subscales found in the Experiencing Questionnaire used in this study (presented in Chapter 3, found in Appendix 1, Study One Materials), are adapted from Hood's instrument.

Although the brief portrait I have painted of the study of mystical experience throughout the last 110 years seems straightforward and uncontroversial, this is because I have traced only the line followed by my own work. However, a polarizing debate arose in the 1960s that bears importantly on the present research. Hood implicitly acknowledges this debate in declaring the assumptions of his work:

First, the mystical experience is itself a universal experience that is essentially identical in phenomenological terms despite wide variations in ideological interpretation of the experience. Second, the core categories of mysticism are not all definitionally essential to any particular individual mystical experiences since there are always borderline cases forming what are "family resemblances" based upon fulfillment of only some of these core categories. (30)

The key problematic terms employed here are "universal" and "ideological interpretation." According to Hood, following Stace, all mystical experiences, regardless of cultural or individual differences, are phenomenally the same: it is only after the experience, in their interpretation, that cultural and individual differences emerge. This is known as the essentialist position.

On the other side of this debate, we have the constructivists or contextualists. The leading contextualist has been Steven T. Katz, who sets out to do the work of "disabusing scholars of the preconceived notion that all mystical experience is the same or similar" (65). Katz emphatically states that "There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences" (26). For him, mystics of different traditions have different experiences, and individual mystics within a given tradition have different experiences. Therefore, he argues that there can be no "common core" of "objective" experience to be translated or interpreted later, and no reason for believing that to be the case. For Katz, the ideological aspect of the experience forms it from the ground up, making a universal notion at any level impossible.

What is most troubling about Katz's claims is the refusal to acknowledge the comparative potential between individuals and traditions. To suggest that no two mystical experiences are *the same* is reasonable. In order for an experience to be profoundly meaningful, it must strike one very personally, very intimately, and speak to one's own understanding, imagination, and sense of self. If all mystical experiences were "the same" through and through, their generic character would fail to be personally striking, rendering the experience mundane, and failing to

register as mystical in any sense. By the criterion of strict sameness, *no two experiences qualify*, whether mystical, or simply emotional. A joyous celebration, for example, arises in the face of circumstances specific to an individual's ongoing life, and is expressed in very personal ways, guided by one's culture – there is NO pure, unmediated, joy. My celebration will not be the *same* as yours, in its genesis or its expression. Katz is right, but at a very specific level of comparison.

Although Katz is right in one regard, he seems to take aim at a position that no one, certainly not Hood, wants to occupy. Hood's statement that mystical experiences are "essentially identical in phenomenological terms" can be taken more or less extremely, depending on your interpretation of "essentially identical." There is some subtle qualification here in the word "essentially" that does not rob "identical" of its intended rhetorical force, but which makes it more philosophically flexible. To suggest that any experience is universally phenomenologically identical, at every level, is absurd. In the first place, this is an empirical question that no empirical measure could be fine enough to capture. No matter what criterion is put forward to describe mystical experience, you will find variation in its genesis and expression, *from the ground up*, between any two individuals, let alone cultures. Complete identity is sabotaged by variation at any level of consideration. However, it does not follow that because no experiences are identical, all experience is incomparable. Katz's attempt to disabuse scholars of the notion that all "mystical experience is … similar" is a misguided enterprise. Showing that mystical traditions are not simply reducible to one another is a

worthwhile project, calling scholars to examine more closely the important difference between traditions. In doing so, however, Katz goes too far in the other direction. Mystical experiences arise around the world in forms that are, at the very least, comparable enough to earn the same label. Of course, these experiences are not simply nominally similar: accounts from individuals of different traditions have much in common, something Hood et al. report and validate in cross-cultural studies of mystical experience comparing Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Now we can return to Hood's important qualifier to the identity between mystical experiences he proposes: "essentially." It is clear from this term that Hood does not believe mystical experiences, even at the phenomenological level (before we even get to the ideological level that he admits varies from culture to culture), is identical. Rather, he suggests with "essentially" not only a simple qualifier exchangeable with other common expressions like "basically," "virtually," or the weaker "more or less." His use of "essentially" resonates with "family resemblances" and his claim that "the core categories of mysticism are not all definitionally essential to any particular individual mystical experiences." Although Hood's rhetoric of identity is powerfully presented, his qualifying statements show he is advocating a far more flexible position. He is arguing for an "identity" characterized by "morphological essences" (Husserl, *Crisis*) rather than "exact essences" (Husserl, *Ideas*).

Exact essences identify what Kenneth Bailey terms monothetic classes, defined as "classes containing cases that are all identical on all variables or

dimensions being measured" (7). If any of these variables is not present in a potential member, the potential member does not qualify. Morphological essences, on the other hand, identify what Bailey (following Sneath and Sokal) calls polythetic classes. Kuiken and Miall succinctly provide the three defining characteristics of polythetic classes:

> 1. Each instance of the category has a large but unspecified number of attributes.
>
> 2. Each attribute in that array is an attribute of many instances of the category.
>
> 3. No attribute in that array is an attribute of every instance of the category. (para. 19)

These characteristics align with the way I conceive of mystical experience in this project. There is an array of experiential attributes that arise with mystical experience: take a sense of oneness, self-perceptual depth, timelessness, and reverence as an illustration of these attributes. Some mystical experiences will involve oneness, self-perceptual depth, and timelessness; others will involve oneness, timelessness, and reverence; still others will involve all four. So, while each mystical experience is different, even in terms of these basic designations, there is nonetheless a "family resemblance" that is shared by them all. Individual differences are maintained within a structure of overall similarity. It is in this sense that I consider mystical experiences to be "essentially" similar. The essentiality is morphological, rather than exact.

This conceptualization would likely make Katz unhappy. However, I do take his criticism of reduction very seriously, though I employ it at a certain level of specificity. For instance, the experience of "reverence" is likely to involve Jesus for a Catholic, while a Muslim invokes Muhammad. Clearly, these holy men are different enough, and are embedded (along with the experiencer) in such different traditions that one would revere them in different ways. Indeed, even the same word, say "angels," has a distinctly different character for Christians and Muslims, which would result in a differently experienced reverence in an angelic encounter. At the level of the individual, similar kinds of difference can emerge as well. Brothers raised in the same environment and within the same faith tradition may feel the noetic depth, the profound "truth" of a mystical experience as both different in "content" (the specific truths revealed to each are different), and different in "character" (one brother feels the truth as a joyous mysterious surge of feeling that all is right in the world, while the other feels overpowered and almost destroyed by the profound understanding he has achieved). The experiences involve what both brothers would report as "noetic depth," but this description, while accurate, is simply a shared opening into a more detailed understanding of the individual experiences, rather than a hard identity *all the way down*. So, while Hood is right to say that mystical experiences are *essentially* the same, Katz is correct to suggest that every mystical encounter is differently experienced, from the ground up.

What is needed to make my combination of Hood and Katz's positions clearer is the idea of historicity, developed by Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger, most clearly and succinctly described by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi:

> The past continually serves as the horizon and background of our present experience…. To be human is already to be situated in the world, born (or thrown – as some phenomenologists say) into it without having chosen to be so…. Historicity means not simply that I am located at a certain point in history, but that I carry my history around with me; my past experience has an effect on the way that I understand the world and the people I encounter in the world…. The beginning of my own story has always already been made for me by others and the way the story unfolds is only in part determined by my own choices and decisions. (85-86)

As I "carry around" my history through life, it develops its specific character, constituting my horizon; the way I experience the world in daily life, the choices that arise for me in any situation, depend on this continually developing horizon. This horizon is individual, personal, and at the same time opens from the place I share in the world with others. So, there is a sense in which my experience in any situation will be different from any other; this is where Katz puts undo emphasis. And there is also a sense in which my experience will be comparable to, and sharable by others; this is Hood's focal point. The idea of historicity allows me to integrate both sides of this argument to focus on the phenomenon of mystical experience, without endorsing either Hood's claim that mystical experiences are

phenomenologically identical before they are interpreted ideologically, or Katz's

claim that mystical experiences are not even similar. There is something

important shared across mystical experiences, even though our individual

experiences are not identical at any level.

1.4 Mystical Affordances in Eliot and Rilke

Understanding and classifying mystical experience is crucial to the present

investigation: without such an understanding, it is impossible to know whether,

and to what extent, readers engage in such experiences while reading Eliot and

Rilke. Equally important is an account of which poetic features could enable

readers to engage in mystical moments. To begin most obviously, both poets at

times explicitly describe aspects of mystical experience; however, this would not

be sufficient to facilitate a mystical response in readers. One is unlikely, for

instance, to be mystically enthralled by Stace's disquisition on mystical

experience, even though it most thoroughly and explicitly describes its subject.

Eliot and Rilke instead employ a host of mutually reinforcing stylistic devices to

make their mystical themes *felt*, rather than just abstractly *known*.

I support Reuven Tsur's claim that mysticism involves the attempt to

overcome the split between subject and object (*On the Shore* 121). Eliot and Rilke

employ intense personification and depersonalization to wear away, from both

sides, the usual barrier between self and the external world. The former is used to

create a sense of distributed liveliness or inner subjectivity in the outer world:

"With all its eyes the natural world looks out/ into the Open" (Rilke, *Eighth Elegy*

1-2). The latter, identified by Ming-Yu Tseng, works to dissipate the self into its surroundings: "you are the music/ While the music lasts" (Eliot, "Dry Salvages, V" 211-12).

The effects of personification and depersonalization, as well as many other poetic devices, can be intensified through the handling of abstractions in concrete poetic landscapes (Tsur, *On the Shore* 121). The very title of Tsur's text is a good example. Another is found in Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, I, 7: "the ore from a stone's/ silence" (2-3). The concrete stone, with the expected, equally physical ore within, is given a new, unexpected weight when the "silence" it somehow contains is found to be the true home of the ore. The abstraction "silence" takes on a kind of presence that Tsur calls "supersensuous" (121) by its position in the concrete image the poem creates. A reader's attempt to place the abstraction in the landscape he imagines can result in a further thinning of boundaries between previously clearly demarcated categories of thinking. Once the abstract and concrete are established in a more fluid relation, ideas and things, feelings and facts, and subjects and objects, may lose their rigid distinctiveness, enabling the reader to explore the mystical potentials of the poem.

Paradox represents another device both authors employ to achieve their mystical affects, though its applicability to mystical experience must be justified. Stace follows tradition in including paradoxicality as a feature of mystical experience, but Hood does not, stating that "In none of our preliminary work did it effectively discriminate nor do we consider it an essential characteristic of mystical experience" (31). Fortunately, this disagreement between theoretical and

empirical judgements need not be resolved here – it is not the feeling or experience of paradoxicality that Eliot and Rilke have to achieve. Rather, they use paradox to solicit other poetic effects important to mystical experience. The beginning of Eliot's "Little Gidding, V" provides a double paradox to consider:

> We shall not cease from exploration
>
> And the end of all our exploring
>
> Will be to arrive where we started
>
> And know the place for the first time. (1-4)

The first paradox of the pair is the claim that exploration will not cease, followed by an announcement of what will happen at the end of all exploring. The second is the arrival at the starting place, which will be known for the first time; presumably, since one had already been there at the start, one would already have known it for the first time. Aside from being striking, which is itself an important poetic effect, paradox renders the usual logical way of thinking or solving problems insufficient. It prompts a reconsideration of everyday categories, which is one way to jar a reader into adopting the fresh perspective mystical experience requires and facilitates. The second paradox above is itself a metaphor for adopting a reconfigured outlook: the *place* has not changed, but the *knower* and/or *the way of knowing* has.

Tseng points out an important device for enhancing mystical affect when she introduces "generic sentences," defined as "sentences in which the speaker asserts the truth of the predicate in respect of all possible referents of the subject noun phrase" (73). Both Eliot and Rilke employ this device frequently: "for you

know only/ A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,/ And the dead tree

gives no shelter" (Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead" 21-23); "beauty is nothing/

but the beginning of terror" (Rilke, *First Elegy* 4-5). Generics can create the sense

of an authoritative voice, impersonal and disembodied, making timeless, universal

statements. These can be so completely in contrast to the voice of the speaker that

they can be heard as prophecies emanating from a different source, or even the

voice of God.

       Though God may occasionally be heard in Judeo-Christian tradition, he

cannot be seen or known directly: even uttering his name could destroy the

speaker. This poses a problem for those, like mystics, who describe their

experience as being in the presence of, or at one with, God or the divine. The

experience is so powerful, overwhelmingly blissful, and so far beyond the realm

of normal human life that it is ineffable. Since the deity is unapproachable and

unknowable, and the mystical experience is indescribable, a traditional recourse is

to employ negative language (Tseng 65). Continual negation can most simply

function as a way of indirectly gesturing toward that which cannot be directly

addressed, though it can serve far more complex purposes, as evidenced by these

lines from Eliot:

          Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

          Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

          Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,

          Looking into the heart of light, the silence. ("Burial" 38-41)

This most subtle of examples uses line breaks to highlight the negative language that describes the mystical moment. The final words in lines 38-40, "not," "neither," and "nothing," prepare us for the annihilation of the speaker in the heart of light where the final negation, "silence," ends the scene. Here, in addition to gesturing toward an ineffable encounter, negation is used to enhance the dissipating sense of self and agency of the speaker, a hallmark of mystical experience.

All of these strategies, especially when combined, help to create a space that merges reader and poem by lowering the boundaries between subject and object. If the poet also thematically follows the crisis-surrender-rejuvenation trajectory reported by mystics, he can lead sensitive readers into mystical poetic experiencing.

1.5 Religious Orientation

Although I often employ religious language, I want to make clear from the outset that my investigation does not emanate from, or lead to, a belief in or argument for God, or any putative external force that could be described by that term. This naturalist stance puts me at odds with the approach taken, for example, by Ryan Stark, who insists that

> God completes mystical inferences. God participates, illuminating the
> hearts of those who open themselves to grace through faith. Or, in other
> words, writers and readers who want to enter into numinous arguments
> must shelve the hermeneutics of suspicion. An overly critical stance

actually diminishes the possibility of insight, even if it is well intended,

much like nervous backseat driving, which – though aimed at

producing safety – inevitably works against it. I am not suggesting,

however, that sceptics are at a complete loss when approaching

mystical rhetorical situations. Rather, they simply do not grasp the

metaphysical, enchanted, or occult dimensions of the discourses at

work, because they have closed themselves off to Spirit or – more

commonly – have attempted to transmogrify Spirit into secular

concepts, which distorts spirited language and leads to

mischaracterizations of religious experience. (260)

I support Stark's belief that we must remain open and sensitive to the affordances

provided by a given text if we are to experience what it has to offer. I also agree

that there is a kind of analytical, interpretive way of approaching experience that

can resist, rather than encourage, the unfolding of mystical experience: Auke

Tellegen's instrumental set (a readiness to act in a planned, goal-oriented way)

versus his experiential set (a readiness to dwell with whatever arises) makes a

similar point. Stark's proposal for coming to mystical writing without an

interpretive agenda even more saliently echoes the longstanding aesthetic ideal of

"disinterestedness" best known from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, but also central

to the British aesthetic tradition from Lord Shaftesbury in the early eighteenth

century to the present day (Stolnitz). Such a comparison is especially interesting

for this thesis, since Shaftesbury's central point is a religious one – we should

come to virtue not because of fear of punishment or promise of reward (in hell or

heaven), but rather for its own sake (Stolnitz 132). Stark unknowingly but appropriately revivifies the origins of disinterestedness as central to both aesthetic and religious concerns.

For Stark, while coming to a work of mystical rhetoric in an open "disinterested" way is important, it is not sufficient. He suggests that we must take up the enchanted aspects of the work, and move within its spirited language, a suggestion that I endorse. Where we part company, however, is his claim that the Holy Spirit and Christian belief are needed to make religious experiences happen, in literature or otherwise. There is certainly a degree of nuance and deepened understanding available to the reader whose background includes a religious upbringing and education; knowing the feeling of faith first hand, and having experienced it in the context of a religious tradition, provides access to specific aspects of mystical experience that would otherwise be unavailable. However, his causal argument for the role of the Holy Spirit, taken as literally as he proposes it, is nothing this thesis can support. God has no discernible presence or causal power I can evaluate in my examination. However, as Heriot-Maitland suggests, "it is feasible to be a materialist and an atheist, and still be a mystic" (302). One need not believe one's experience emanates from a supernatural source to fully embody its profound significance.

Instead, I would like to use the concept of the god arising. Bernd Jager, in an essay on Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo," notes that the poem is not simply a description of or reference to a statue that exists, and that the statue is not simply a representation of a god who exists as a being somewhere else. Instead, he

claims, Rilke has created "a poem that would itself become a new domain visited by the reader and the writer and inhabited by the god" (88). The poem, like the torso, as artworks, allows the god to emerge, to become animate and present in a way that asks us to consider our lives. Both poem and statue are evocations that bring us into the being of Apollo, and that bring Apollo into our being.

Although Jager makes no reference to Heidegger, his concept mirrors Heidegger's argument in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Here, Heidegger uses the Greek term *physis* to describe the rising up, the unconcealing, the emerging of the artwork from itself into itself as itself. This *physis* is the revelation of the aspects of the artwork as they are; it is the shining forth that illuminates the work and casts its aspects, including the god, into the light of the relations that make them glow for and with us. Unless we are drawn into its shining, it fails to shine for us, and is not a work of art for us. Heidegger uses the example of the statue of a god within a Greek temple to make his difficult description somewhat more clear:

> The sculpture of the god…is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus *is* the god himself. The same holds for the linguistic work. In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people's saying so that

> now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what
>
> is holy and what unholy…. (168-69)

The artwork, as art, is not a *representation* of some absent "real" figure, time, or place. The artwork, as art, is not concerned with copying and displaying a transcription of an absent entity. The artwork, as art, is the site where that which is being done is actually done. In the statue of the god, the work being done by the work of art is to arouse the god himself for the viewer, who feels the reverence, the splendour, and the presence of the god. Putting this into somewhat more familiar language, it becomes clear that, for Heidegger, the work of art, as art, is not an object that stands before the spectator, who can experience it second-hand after evaluating or judging it. Rather, its very being as art is contingent on its emergence in and one's experience of it. Note that the usual concept of agency in response to art, as something the viewer does with the work, is insufficient here, as is the notion of artwork as stimulus, creating a response in the same manner as a reflex hammer on a knee. There is a sense in which the work must move through an individual, putting his or her agency into abeyance as the new reality between human being and artwork rises up. The "work" in the term "artwork" is performed together by both art and partaker.

The concept of the god arising is the way I understand the possible emergence of mystical experience in this project. When readers are engaged in experiences with a poem where they begin to feel they are in the presence of something holy, this is precisely how I understand Jager's and Heidegger's proposal. It is not that their experience refers to a supernatural being, or that such

a being is actually present, thus "explaining" the felt presence. Indeed, although the examples used here are religious artworks, another of Heidegger's famous examples, Van Gogh's "Peasant Shoes," illustrates that the phenomenon of the "god arising" I seek to explore here can occur with secular, rather than religious, artwork. In the same way as the temple or the torso, the shoes arise in the artwork in a profound and significant way, though without the same specifically religious feeling. Such a profound encounter with an artwork *is* the very presence of its active being, its divine sense, its source and its effects. The readers' sense of self is, for a time, challenged, and their agency feels diminished, as they fall to some degree under the active power of the artwork and what the whole encounter brings.

1.6 Orientation of the Investigation

Two important questions are central to this project: first, I need to establish whether Eliot's and Rilke's secular texts can evoke mystical experience in a way that is more than simply descriptive of mystical experience. Second, if a poem can in this way become a god arising, what are the characteristics of this experience? These questions extend beyond the capacities of a strictly textual reading or interpretation. We need an approach that allows us to see the poem and reader together in the field where the god arises. One aspect of the needed approach is available in the methods of empirical literary study; this will require some elaboration.

The empirical study of literature is an emerging field within literary studies devoted to learning about actual readers. Uri Margolin describes the Empirical Study of Literature (ESL) succinctly as

> the study of the relations between texts and codes and their actual producers and users. Differently put, for ESL literature consists of semiotic objects not in isolation but as produced, mediated, perceived and post processed by human agents who themselves operate in a defined socio-cultural and historical situation. (8)

This description might not, at first glance, seem to differ from what has constituted responsible literary criticism for at least 60 years. Not since the early New Criticism has it been acceptable to ignore the context in the consideration of texts. Indeed, there is a strong sense in which cultural and historical considerations have displaced aesthetic considerations at the centre of literary studies. What makes ESL different is its focus on actual, specific human beings as they engage in literary activities. Rather than, for example, simply describing the purported (theoretical) effects of a given text, an ESL scholar would attempt to describe and measure the actual impact of the text on the specific individuals and groups who engage or interact with it. Instead of constructing an ideal or imagined reader to show how literary language is supposed to affect readers, ESL scholars work to describe the effects literary language has on actual readers.

David Miall ("Empirical Approaches") draws attention to the experimental branch of ESL, where reading situations are carefully designed to examine theoretical proposals derived from literary studies and philosophy, using

experimental techniques from the social sciences, especially psychology. Turning, as an example, to the question of how secular poetry, specifically that of Rilke and Eliot, can call readers to mystical reading experiences, one might look for such reports from historical or contemporary critics. This constitutes an empirical approach, but one that relies on accounts from professional published academics, whose writing and experience are highly informed by the expectations of an established tradition, as well as the very specific requirements of an academic discipline. Another empirical approach, the one I advocate and practice in my own research, is to present non-professional readers with the poetry in question within a structured experimental setting. The study of such readers enables us to get a better grasp of what is at stake during literary reading that has not already been saturated with advanced institutional training. The results of studies involving non-professional readers may tell us more about what happens outside of the literary (and for that matter, social scientific) academy, broadening the range of investigation beyond the narrowly constituted discourse of humanities scholarship.

Non-professional readers are far less likely to be aware of contemporary academic debate, and thus are able to shed light on interesting questions without having adopted a position already inscribed within the terms of academic discourse. Such readers are not somehow "innocent" of all positions and presuppositions; they are inevitably drawn into interpretive communities through their educational institutions. However, their motivations are not those of individuals who are active participants in the debates surrounding the very

questions they have been asked to explore. The experiences of non-professionals do not invalidate or "trump" professional readings. Rather, they serve as another source to be considered, a source that has traditionally been undervalued in literary investigation. Such non-professional readers are more likely to come to profound poetry without the kinds of hermeneutical suspicions and theoretical commitments Stark worried would close readers off to the mystical possibilities of the experience. There is a sense in which non-professional readers are "disinterested," making their experiences with poetry a more straightforward indication of the effects poetry can facilitate. *What they express in their readings provides a description of the lived experience upon which even professional readings rely.* Professional readers tend to look past their embodied feeling experiences with literature, moving immediately into the creation of a logical, coherent interpretation of the text. This leaves out the initial, vital, powerful moment that makes the reading interesting and worthwhile, and that anchors the interpretation that follows.

When literary studies incorporate the experience of empirical readers, the potential arises for enhanced and expanded interdisciplinary dialogue with the social sciences; the grounding of literary studies in lived experience allows it to shed light not only on literature, but also on the human being considered more broadly. Goodblatt and Glicksohn distinguish between weak and strong interdisciplinarity, with special focus on literary studies and psychology. The weak version involves bringing the concepts and methods of one discipline to bear on the other, so that "either literary criticism or cognitive psychology can be

used in the service of the other" (209). This is the most common form of interdisciplinarity in literary studies, where insights from another domain are used to shed light on literary issues. Literary structuralism's adoption of Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological findings and theories is a clear example, as is literary poststructuralism's turn toward Saussure's linguistics.

Cognitive poetics, as envisaged by Reuven Tsur, provides the contemporary example of interdisciplinarity most relevant to my investigation here, though I believe he limits himself unnecessarily to a "weak" version. He proposes that literary scholars take advantage of theories and findings in cognitive science to illuminate literary studies, while suggesting that the reverse, while potentially interesting for cognitive science, is not relevant to the kind of investigation he is concerned with ("Cognitive Poetics" 2). The advantage of this interdisciplinary approach is that it "offers cognitive theories that systematically account for the relationship between the structure of literary texts and their perceived effects" (1). Further, cognitive poetics "emphasizes the particular and nice differences between cognitive processes in general, and their unique exploitation for literary purposes: hence, its generalizations should be wide enough to be applicable to a great variety of literary works of art, while at the same time, they should provide means to make meaningful distinctions between, or within, specific works of literature" (2). By maintaining a strong orientation toward the literary side of the interdisciplinary exchange, Tsur ensures that cognitive poetics is not overwhelmed by the methods and concerns of cognitive science. He allows his method to focus on the kinds of aesthetic distinctions that

literary scholars have traditionally been concerned with, in a way that pays serious attention to the (often overlooked) cognitive aspects of literary reading.

While Tsur's insights are invaluable, setting up the literary groundwork for the present investigation, I seek an expansion into strong interdisciplinarity. This strong version strives "to become a new discipline" wherein both original areas are affected (Goodblatt and Glicksohn 209). More specifically, Goodblatt and Glicksohn propose a strong version of interdisciplinarity in which "literary criticism and cognitive psychology can indeed converge within a joint investigation, thereby serving both disciplines" (209). In a rare coincidence of publication, Goodblatt and Glisksohn's call was answered in the same year they make it, by Bortolussi and Dixon's book *Psychonarratology*; their own description of the aims of the book provide an excellent example of strong interdisciplinarity in Goodblatt and Glicksohn's terms:

> Psychonarratology combines the experimental methods of cognitive psychology with the analysis and insights available from a range of literary studies…. By putting the methods of cognitive psychology at the service of literary processing, we hope to advance our understanding of the cognitive processes involved in the reading of narratives. And by bringing to cognitive psychology the rich comprehension of narrative achieved by literary scholars, we hope that researchers of that discipline will be inspired to extend their experimental approach to more complex narrative issues. (4)

The combination of approaches from very distinct fields, and the applicability of

their results to these different fields, shows that the new discipline is not centered

in any one of the old ones, but exists equally between them, and across them. The

title of the book, of course, *Psychonarratology*, is also the title of the new

discipline Bortolussi and Dixon are developing, making their project as strongly

interdisciplinary as Goodblatt and Glicksohn could ever have hoped for.

My own project attempts this kind of strongly interdisciplinary joint

investigation. By employing an empirical phenomenology, my examination

encircles the field constituted by literary reading, i.e., it bears upon the

traditionally conceived literary and psychological aspects of the encounter without

subsuming one set within the other. Thus, my work may prove useful to scholars

in either discipline, while at the same time constituting a fresh field of

investigation irreducible to either originating discourse. This project is not, strictly

speaking, an example of psychonarratological work, in part because its focus is

poetic – narrative plays a role in poetic experiencing, and there are of course

narrative poems, but neither constitutes the centre of my concern. I follow the

strong interdisciplinary spirit of psychonarratology, and take advantage of

findings from this and other narrative research projects, without prioritizing

narrative as the central aspect of literary experience.

1.7 Methodological Overview

Now that the basic philosophical ground has been established, it is

possible to provide an overview of the methods I have employed to answer the

central questions this project has posed. The heart of this research is a linked set of empirical studies designed to explore the experience of reading selected passages of Rilke and Eliot's poetry, with a special focus on aspects of the experience with potential relevance to mystical experiencing. I conducted two studies. In the first study (Study One), 301 psychology research pool participants read one of twenty poetry selections taken from Rilke and Eliot. During a second reading, readers were asked to mark two passages they found striking or evocative. Then, participants were asked to complete the Experiencing Questionnaire, which addressed their reading experience, as well as a short survey about their religious practices. Cluster analysis (a method for the grouping of readers based on the similarity of their questionnaire responses) of the Experiencing Questionnaire data revealed seven different groups of readers. One of these groups, later known as Spiritual Enactive Engagement, emerged as the kind of reader orientation one would expect to engage in mystical poetic experiencing.

The second study (Study Two) was a more detailed exploration of the Spiritual Enactive Engagement group, as well as the process of mystical poetic experiencing more generally. New readers, 37 in all, participated in a two-part study. Part one engaged readers in the same tasks outlined above in Study One, except that the number of poems was reduced to one from Rilke and one from Eliot. Participants returned about one week later to engage in a semi-structured interview about their experience of the poem. Once the study was complete, participants were divided into groups using their Experiencing Questionnaire data;

these groupings were determined through a profile matching strategy based on the results of Study One. This revealed that four participants fell into the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster, indicating a mystical poetic experience. These interviews were analyzed for themes and patterns of development, to discover whether the process of mystical poetic experiencing was at work, whether it corresponded to models of mystical experience, and whether it suggested additions or modifications of existing models. Two other groups were compared with the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster, one that was most similar and one that was most dissimilar. These comparisons permitted both a coarse- and a fine-grained differentiation of Spiritual Enactive Engagement from other kinds of reading experience.

The studies outlined above, and described in detail in Chapter 3, are nested within a more general research strategy. This strategy moves progressively in stages, each stage grounded in the discoveries of its predecessor. These stages include (1) identifying the phenomenon; (2) locating it in "the wild"; (3) learning its basic structure and distinguishing its near neighbours; (4) richly articulating its key aspects and their interrelations; (5) examining whether and how it continues beyond its originary locus. These stages characterize both short- and long-term research trajectories. The present series of studies moves through all five stages in a preliminary way, but from the perspective of a continuing research program, the current series of studies is foundational, and therefore focused on (1). Subsequent sequences of studies will also proceed through all five stages, but will make different stages focal. The circularity at work here means that I expect every stage

to be implicit in the others. Though the conclusions from (1) form the ground for the investigation of (2), the results of (2) require a revision of how (1) is understood and conceptualized. Of course, this is not a list of content-specific objectives for future research. Such a list necessarily sets ahead of itself conclusions that have not yet been established. I am in a position to imagine the character of the next (and only the next) stage in this research program, because it is impossible to project myself into a research context that does not yet exist, and whose form will not be determined until later.

This phenomenological framework nurtures methodological diversity. My work employs questionnaires, open-ended written narratives, and oral interviews. These research procedures are administered to large groups, small groups, and individuals. Analytic strategies include cluster analysis, analysis of variance, and the study of exemplary cases (Kuiken, "Exemplary Case Design"). The convergence of findings among an array of methods leads to what Kuiken and Miall have termed "evidential coherence" (para. 2), ensuring that results are determined by the phenomenon in question, not the particular approach used to obtain them. Aspects of reading experience invisible to one method may be illuminated by another. Questions arising from my present research may require still other research designs (longitudinal studies, for example) that can provide answers the current between-groups designs cannot. The objective is to allow the phenomenon to suggest the method, avoiding to some extent the perils of allowing the method to dictate the phenomenon.

The reasons for methodological caution in the present research program include not only a general commitment to rigour, but also to the phenomenon in question – the mystical poetic. Like many meaningful encounters, this kind of experience is difficult to study, for the following five reasons: 1) it is felt to be too personal to be communicated or risked; 2) it is so profound that nothing more needs to be said; 3) it is too complex for words; 4) readers may only be somewhat aware of their bodies and felt senses during reading, and 5) poetry can be difficult to understand. These reasons are also a list of problems to overcome in order to make the research design effective. In Chapter 3, I will explicitly return to how the design attempted to overcome these potential pitfalls.

1.8 Addressing the Resistance to Method

One of the main problems facing the kind of experiential investigation I am proposing is the resistance to structured methods posed by departments in the humanities. Questions of method have been unfashionable in literary circles for at least 30 years. John Unsworth supports this contention in his 2005 Lyman Award Lecture "New Methods for Humanities Research," stating that "during the later decades of the twentieth century … the fashion in literary criticism favored paradox, metaphor, and (in spite of the systematic basis of post-structuralism) a fairly high level of idiosyncrasy and the foregrounding of persona over logic," constituting "a low-point for both 'research' and 'method' in the humanities." Derrida seems to embrace just the kind of methodological rock-bottom Unsworth laments; in "Letter to a Japanese Friend" he states that "Deconstruction is not a

method and cannot be transformed into one" (3). If deconstruction, the preeminent literary theoretical enterprise of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, apparently refuses method, it is no wonder students and scholars alike have been puzzled when completing the methods section of theses and grant applications. Unsworth describes humanities research as being, and having been "an activity characterized by the four Rs: reading, writing, reflection, and rustication," four activities that even under the most generous interpretation constitute a vague description of scholarly life, rather than a method for humanities investigation. Further complicating the relationship between practice and method is the common assertion that deconstruction cannot be taught (Tallack 4), meaning that it can neither be explicitly codified nor explained to students. Two platitudes about art have found their way into descriptions of a discipline designed to investigate it.

I believe the characterization of humanities research (or art, for that matter) as unmethodical and unteachable are based on a misunderstanding of poststructuralism coupled with a stubborn insistence on terminological rigidity. Derrida's refusal of method is not a wholesale condemnation of systematicity – in a characteristic move, he defines his term, "method" in its most common sense, a sense he will go on to challenge. He argues that deconstruction is not a method in this "usual sense," where one could specify the automatic operations in advance, and another could pick them up and easily apply them to any text, resulting in a predictable outcome. In other words, deconstruction is not a recipe for reading, and takes such regard of the empirical specificity of each text that it cannot decide in advance what operations will come into play, let alone what outcome will be

achieved. If all this is true, then the popular conception of teaching (as the transfer of information and ways of accumulating information) is also sabotaged: it is impossible to convey explicitly precise instructions to students if such instructions do not exist. The pupil of deconstruction cannot learn her craft in a classroom, like a theoretical physicist can; rather, like an artist, she can only learn it by doing it, by taking part in, among others, all the activities Unsworth lists above – reading, writing, reflection, and rustication.

The problem here is that method and teachability have been taken to be completely denied, when all that has really been refused is a narrow conception of each. Claiming that deconstruction cannot be taught or understood like physics is not the same as claiming that it cannot be taught in any way; the rhetorical move of full denial makes interesting statements into dramatic overstatements, fundamentally misconstruing the distinctions at hand. Gendlin describes how these overstatements function, but also how they can eventually prove fruitful, when he examines Heidegger's claim that "we do not yet think" (*Lectures and Essays* 130). Gendlin makes a distinction between the "already cut" meaning of words that carry along their usual associations, and the "freshly cut" sense that can emerge from the old words when they are opened to new meanings. It is clear, whatever Heidegger says, that we do think, in the usual sense of that word. However, in saying what he does, Heidegger opens up the word "think" to working in a new way (Gendlin, "Dwelling" 142). We are invited to reconsider what "thinking" means, and in reconsidering, we make new sense out of it. The same process, and profit, is in play with the method and teaching negations

discussed above. In fact, Gendlin's example not only illustrates what is potentially at work in Derrida's statement, but it also provides a teachable method at the right level of abstraction to start a fresh discussion of scholarly literary investigation: begin by paying attention to the ways literary texts open words and ideas to freshly hewn senses. Both Derrida and Heidegger employ this poetic method.

The kind of nomological deductive approach Derrida and Gendlin oppose for the humanities is popular in the physical sciences, and has its proponents in the social sciences as well. Contemporary literary study's most notable advocate for this kind of scientific methodology is Jonathan Gottschall, whose appropriately titled *Literature, Science, and a New Humanities* calls for "a massive restructuring of literary analysis and for fundamental changes in how scholars do their work" (75). He identifies "deep, elementary weaknesses in the theories that guide literary investigation, [and] in the methods used to explore and validate hypotheses" (3). For Gottschall, "the ultimate test of a literary paradigm is whether or not it succeeds in making durable contributions to the sum of human understanding" ("Literary Scholars" 187). The scholar working in this hypothetico-deductive manner attempts to formulate rules or laws that causally determine the object under investigation. This is an explanation. A thing is as it is or functions as it does because it is bound by the laws that determine its being and behaviour. If the laws are right, they will allow for accurate prediction of future events. Once the laws are established, it becomes possible, *a priori*, to lay out the sequence of causes and effects for a given phenomenon in their proper order. The process is logical and becomes automatic. Variations in expectations from

hypothesis to outcome must be accounted for by augmenting the law to handle the new situation, or by tracking down the error in the measurement of the empirical phenomenon.

The alternative, however, is not necessarily arbitrariness, intuition, or magic: literary studies is not "only argument and counter-argument" (Gottschall, *Literature* 7), and the incorporation of empirical or scientific methodology is not incompatible with the pursuit of expressive potentials that has guided the discipline from the outset. Instead, I endorse an empirical approach more suited to investigating the realm of human meaning, suggested by Gendlin's insistence on a non-logically-predicative conception of thought. There is a kind of thinking and working where "no theory could have predicted the next steps," but where "in retrospect, it is always possible to construct a logical account of such steps" ("Befindlichkeit" 66). Applied to a research program, this produces a method that declines prediction, but remains coherent. The approach I take in literary investigation must acknowledge that I cannot simply follow a recipe to get the desired results – what results are desired cannot even be specified, since what will arise is dependent on the text(s) in question. My objectives must exist at a different level of specificity, meaning that my method must also not be content-specific. In fact, my objectives must be intimately oriented to the unique text in question, to such an extent that the operation I employ must be responsive to all the text's contours and possibilities, even when they require the invention of new specific techniques. Each text constitutes its own instructions for reading, for making meaning (Widdowson; Thorne). However, this is not an attempt to deny

literary studies any method. On the contrary, it is the first positive directive in a broader approach to literature.

A reader's task is to read: this is not a simple matter of literacy. Reading *The Times* is an operation designed to extract information. Reading "Archaic Torso of Apollo" is an operation in opening new meanings, in paying attention to what calls for thought, in thinking as finding and making (Gendlin, "Dwelling"). I do not come to a text having already decided what it is going to mean, or even with a range of possible options I can choose between once I read it. Embarking on a text is like "listening in the dark" (Don Kuiken, personal correspondence); one does not know what is coming until it happens, literally cannot even see the possibilities or their horizon until they emerge as the text unfolds.

What comes from this kind of encounter is going to depend both on the text and the reader; what I see in two different texts will not be the same, and what two readers see in the same text will differ as well. The text need follow no specific set of rules, and the readers have no algorithm guiding them to a predictable conclusion, even in the face of a "simple" text. This echoes Kant's claim that, to understand an artwork, we cannot "start from distinctly known rules" (186), as we may in some branches of scientific inquiry, but must find them in the work itself. So, it can be fairly said that neither readers nor authors come to texts with an automatic "method" for making meaning. This is as true for any reading encounter as it is for Derrida's deconstructive style. Nonetheless, the idea of method in literary studies is scarcely touched by this claim.

It is no accident that this discussion has been moving fluidly between reading and research. I conceive of the relationship between researchers and data as largely analogous to the relationship between a responsive reader and an expressive poem. In both cases, the investigator comes to what has been provided (the text, the data) in a way that takes care to pay close attention to whatever arises in the encounter, and where personal agency and assumptions are relaxed in order to appreciate it fully. The sense of method in both cases must reflect what is captured in the synonym "approach," both a way of doing something, and explicitly, carefully coming closer. Max van Manen, following Merleau-Ponty, uses the language of "orientation" to describe the appropriate way into an investigation, focusing not on a list of explicit steps for conducting research, but rather on how a researcher positions him or her self to best understand the phenomenon in question. The orientation is expressed eloquently, but too strongly, by Georges Poulet in a discussion of textual encounters: "I deliver myself, bound hand and foot, to the omnipotence of fiction" (43). A better comparison, by far, is Merleau-Ponty's rich description of preparing for sleep:

> I lie down in bed, on my left side, with my knees drawn up; I close my eyes and breathe slowly, putting my plans out of my mind. But the power of my will or consciousness stops there. As the faithful, in the Dionysian mysteries, invoke the god by miming scenes from his life, I call up the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing and posture of the sleeper. The god is actually there when the faithful can no longer distinguish themselves from the part they are playing, when their body

and their consciousness cease to bring in, as an obstacle, their particular

opacity, and when they are totally fused in the myth. There is a moment

when sleep "comes," settling on this imitation of itself which I have

been offering to it, and I succeed in becoming what I was trying to be.

(189-190)

The sense in which agency and preparation present themselves in the experiences

described above is especially noteworthy. I put "my plans out of my mind" but

"the power of my will or consciousness stops there." The goal here is not to

understand from without, but to understand from within, or better, to refuse, for a

time, this distinction altogether. Poulet underlines this point when he reminds us

that "a book is not shut in by its contours…. You are inside it, it is inside you;

there is no longer either outside or inside" (42). Like a Dionysian initiate, or a

reader, a researcher puts the mundane world out of play, leaves behind any

preconceptions about what will be encountered, and attempts to experience

whatever the investigative situation provides as fully and richly as possible. It is

from within this first-person depth of experience that the researcher comes to

understand the meaning of the data, and gains an orientation appropriate for

investigating it further. Stange and Taylor have provided some empirical evidence

for the longstanding belief in the shared phenomenological character of profound

aesthetic and religious experience. In order to understand the meaning of such

ineffable encounters, researchers must approach their studies in a similarly open,

inviting way.

Chapter 2: A Theory of Mystical Poetic Experiencing

2.1 Questioning the Possibility of Mystical Experiencing in Reading

Reuven Tsur's *On the Shore of Nothingness* is a pioneering examination of religious experience in the field of cognitive poetics. Tsur takes advantage of empirical research and contemporary stylistics to understand the experience of mysticism, particularly in the reading of poetry. Central to his efforts is his characterization of the emotional qualities evident in encounters with art. Following Ronald Hepburn's distinction between the *recognition* of a quality, and the *experiencing* of that quality, Tsur asserts that "we do not necessarily *experience* the emotional qualities embodied in a work of art. We rather *recognize* them, although we may *partly* experience them too" (50). Tsur attempts to clarify the distinction between recognizing and experiencing with a detailed example:

> When one says "My Sister is sad" or "That dervish is ecstatic," and "The music is sad" or "ecstatic," he uses the words "sad" or "ecstatic" in two different senses. In the first two sentences he refers to some mental process of a person. In the third sentence he does not refer to a mental process of the sound sequence, nor to a mental process it arouses. One may be perfectly consistent when saying: "That sad piece of music made me happy" or "That piece of ecstatic music induced in me a deep calm." He refers to a perceptual quality generated by the interaction of the particular melodic line, rhythm, harmony and timbre of the music. In other words, he reports that he has detected some structural resemblance between the sound patterns

and emotions. When one says "The poem is sad," one uses the

adjective in the second sense. In this sense "sad" becomes the

aesthetic quality of the music or the poem. (37)

Clearly, this is an argument for a kind of structural iconicity, and it illuminates

important aspects of the aesthetic experience. However, I think it is important to

consider very carefully the difference between art's ability to allow our

"detection" or "recognition" of an emotion, and its power to arouse emotion in us.

Tsur's cited source for his distinction, Hepburn, explores this possibility himself:

We sense an oddness when someone says in a casual, unmoved voice

(but without intending sarcasm), "yes, that was a sublime movement,

wasn't it?" And we could add to the list of such words "awesome,"

"frightening," dreadful," "harrowing," "touching," "exhilarating,"

"hilarious," in most senses: all of which report on the successful

arousal of emotion, not merely on the *detection* of an emotional

quality. (263, italics mine)

What all of these terms have in common is that they express very strong bodily

reactions and a mood that becomes all-consuming. "Mystical," so closely related

to "sublime," would surely be at home on this list, meaning that recognition of

this "quality" might well involve an *arousal* of the feeling. Hepburn's suggestion

goes no further in providing argument or evidence, but I believe he usefully

advises us to consider the possibility that, in the presence of powerful feelings,

recognition and arousal arise hand-in-hand. Whether one could, in earnest,

recognize a movement as "mystical," yet remain unaffected, is an open empirical question.

Equally important, I think, is the necessity of looking at the messy, fleeting, constituent feelings that lead to either the recognition of an emotional quality, or the direct experience of a powerful emotion. For cognition to be truly embodied, the "sadness" of a piece must register in the body, even if countervailing emotional processes seem to quickly displace it in consciousness. This gives rise to what Miall ("Empirical Approaches") has referred to as one of the paradoxes of feeling; finding yourself happy in the face of a sad poem. However, as he notes, this conflict helps generate the distinct emotional quality of literature – the sense of sadness the poem offers remains even during the upsurge of happiness, creating an emotional complex that defies our common ways of conceptualizing feeling, and opens us up to the possibilities offered by the text. Jenefer Robinson describes this simultaneity of emotion in *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*:

> One emotion process can thus transform into another as grief gives way to rage or fear to amusement. Moreover, many of these emotion processes are not easily nameable in terms of folk psychology: they are blends of different named emotions or they are conflicts between one named emotion and another, or they are ambiguous between one emotion label and another. (311)

Both sadness and happiness, anxiety and relief, can be embodied in the experience, and both contribute to the particular quality of the god's emergence.

In order to challenge Tsur's claim that we recognize emotional qualities in art rather than experiencing emotional arousal, it is vital to clarify what an emotional quality is, and how "experience" differs from "recognition" in the aesthetic tradition Tsur follows. Robinson provides a comprehensive review of these key issues, pointing us to Alan Tormey, who defines emotional qualities as "those properties of artworks (or natural objects) whose names also designate intentional states of persons. Thus 'tenderness,' 'sadness,' 'anguish,' and 'nostalgia' may denote states of persons that are intentional, and thus expressible in the fullest and clearest sense" (121). Using music as an example, Tormey suggests that expressive qualities emerge from non-expressive properties like the key, harmonic progression, and rhythm of a piece (128). Extending Tormey's theory to poetry, one might say that the constant use of end-stopped, end-rhymed lines with a very regular, lilting rhythm constitutes an expressive quality of "childlike happiness." For Tormey, expressive qualities adhere in the artwork, and do not require or imply that the quality present in the work be an expression of an emotion experienced or intended by the artist.

Robinson next points us to Peter Kivy, who provides an excellent illustration of Tormey's position on expressive qualities. The Saint Bernard dog, with its prominent drooping jowls, looks sad to us. Of course, the dog is not constantly sad. Kivy argues that art, like the face of the dog, is expressive in so far as it seems similar to expressive human behaviour (*Corded Shell* 56). Kivy later goes even further, suggesting that an expressive quality is also unrelated to the emotional experience of the artistic audience:

>We must separate entirely the claim that music can arouse emotion in us from the claim that music is sometimes sad or angry or fearful: in other words, we must keep apart the claim that music is expressive (of anger, fear, and the like) and the claim that music is arousing in the sense of moving. . . . . A piece of sad music might move us (in part) because it is expressive of sadness, but it does not move us by making us sad. (*Music Alone* 153)

This is an echo of Tsur's claim, separating the recognition of emotional qualities from the experience of the emotion expressed. Expressive qualities for Kivy, as for Tsur, stand apart from both the artist and the audience – the quality expressed need reflect neither an emotion experienced by the author, nor an emotion experienced by the audience. *Recognition*, for Tsur, is the perception of emotional qualities *in the artwork*, while *experience* is the emotional complex *aroused in the audience* of the artwork.

Although Tsur's distinction between recognition and experience has been made clear through the examination of expressive or emotional qualities in the aesthetic tradition, Tsur muddies the waters of his position when he states that we may not only recognize emotional qualities in art, but may *partly* experience them too. For Tsur, experience is direct, involved, and personal. If I am sad, I feel it fully, and my sense of myself is suffused with the sadness that pervades me. It need not be explicitly identified or labelled. If I experience sadness, I simply *am* sad, period, and it colours my whole being. So what could he mean by partial

experience? Such a hedging suggests that Tsur understands not only that audiences experience emotion in encounters with art (even the most adamant critics of expression theory admit this), but also that there is a potentially important *relationship* between the expressive qualities of the artwork and the emotions aroused in the audience's experience. Tsur does not make this relationship focal; despite his interest in the responses of readers, he prefers instead to focus on the more objectifiable emotional or expressive qualities of a text. The experiences of readers are valuable for his theory only in as far as they lead to the identification of expressive qualities in texts. These qualities are constituted by the relationship between formal textual causes and perceived effects, which is precisely what Tsur's cognitive poetics seeks to identify. Establishing such regularities (especially if the establishing investigations employ actual readers) can provide a useful ground or anchor for literary criticism. However, it stops short of plumbing the profundity that, potentially, arises in encounters with art. Thus, although Tsur deals with mystical aspects of literature, he limits himself to a theoretical position that prevents him from exploring their rich, powerful possibilities in readers' experiences.

A more experientially-centred approach is suggested by Robinson, who succinctly captures what is at stake for a reader in the face of a poem, in this case, Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," which "gets readers to feel what it is like to be melancholy in the precise way expressed by the poem" (292). Robinson, like me, is interested in poetry that "articulates and clarifies what it is like to go through the emotion process" (274) being explored in the poem. Such poetry allows

readers to feel the articulated emotion in its specificity – not just as a generally "sad" or "melancholy" feeling, but as a feeling of the "sad" kind that is specific to the situation of the poem. A reader's involved participation in the emotional articulation that *is* the poem may lead to an *experience* of that emotion, not simply *recognition* of the emotion expressed. When Tsur calls this kind of experience "partial," he seems to be trying to maintain a distinction between emotions arising in life situations (I am sad my dog died), and in encounters with art (I am sad while reading this poem where a dog dies). While I question the importance of the distinction between "experience" and "partial experience" (after all, it is possible to feel more deeply and intensely while reading *Old Yeller* than when undergoing the death of my own dog), the distinction is not vitally connected to my primary concerns.

What is most interesting to me is the capacity of artistic experience to cross ontological boundaries, so that it affects my life powerfully, in a way that goes beyond the immediate experience of the artwork. This kind of involvement requires individuals to engage in *their own articulation* using the forms provided by the artwork, an articulation that brings aspects of the sense of self into play. In these cases, not only does the artwork *affect me* (so that I feel its particular sadness), but in articulating the very particular, specific sense it has for me, I come know myself anew, and perhaps differently. Through such a process, both the artwork and my sense of myself are constituted differently than they had been, through the "crossing" (Gendlin, "Thinking Beyond Patterns") between them that the encounter enables.

The process of mutual reconstitution between artwork and audience goes beyond what we have been calling the "experience" or "partial experience" of an artwork. The kind of encounter under consideration here is better designated by Dilthey's term *Erlebnis*, often translated as "experiencing." Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák describe experiencing as "more than mere sentience or passing awareness; rather, it is a moment of being fully and reflectively present during a self- and object-reconstituting departure from everyday thinking." Experiencing, in this sense, is not simply "coping" with everyday life or merely "responding" in a way that is reflexive or automatic. Instead, experiencing is here considered a mindful, embodied encounter with an object (or other, or artwork) that moves both self and object into a dynamic, mutually constituting relationship. How this relationship manages to shape self and artwork in mystical poetic encounters is a key question this chapter works to address.

2.2 Developing a Theory and Model of Mystical Poetic Experiencing

The development and empirical examination of a theory regarding the temporal structure and unfolding character of mystical poetic experiencing in reading Rilke and Eliot is one of the primary goals of this project. The theory is grounded in the phenomenologically oriented account of experiencing rooted in Gendlin (*Experiencing*), and adapted by Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák; it is developed through the model of reading experiencing presented by Miall and Kuiken; and it is extended into a more specific theory of mystical poetic

experiencing through the synthesis and modification of diverse, contemporary models of mystical experience, represented by Heriot-Maitland, d'Aquili and Newberg, Batson and Ventis, and McNamara. The discussion follows a cumulative trajectory from greatest generality to greatest specificity; it first establishes a groundwork in a generic conception of experiencing, then sets out the aspects of literary reading that facilitate the experiencing process, and finally describes how mystical poetic experiencing arises within the experiencing process.

2.2.1 A Model of Experiencing

It is clear from the outset that the general process of experiencing will be the ground upon which any specific theory of experiencing rests. Adapting Eugene Gendlin's four-phase model of experiencing, Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák lay out a model that captures the key aspects of experiencing of interest in the present study:

> By our account, experiencing emerges from participation in a situation according to historically grounded preconceptions. From within that historicity, experiencing (1) begins with the emergence of an inexpressible felt sense of the situation that embodies something "more" than can be grasped through those preconceptions (Phase One); (2) moves toward a form of reflective explication of this felt sense that captures and holds it in working memory (Phase Two); (3) engages felt-sense themes across discontinuous . . . events in a manner

that transforms categorial and self understanding (Phase Three); and

(4) culminates in extension of those freshly expressed categorial and

self understandings within and beyond the [situation] (Phase Four).

(8-9)

Experiencing is rooted in what phenomenologists call historicity: we always

already are situated in the world, and everything we experience arises from the

ground of this situatedness. It is not as though we can ever stand in a place outside

of our situatedness where we are finally free of our encumbering "subjectivity."

Nothing would appear for us at all without our historical and personal horizon.

Merleau-Ponty explains: "Consciousness projects itself into a physical world and

has a body, as it projects itself into a cultural world and has its habits: because it

cannot be consciousness without playing upon significances given either in the

absolute past of nature or in its own personal past" (158). The horizon established

by general history and personal history is the place from which the world appears

to us, and the precondition for our being in the world, indeed, for the world even

to appear. This is where experiencing starts, within the historically constituted

horizon within which we are all always already at the beginning of any

experiencing.

Phase One introduces the important term "felt sense," which is Gendlin's

way of talking about what forms the core of experiencing. In his words, "Besides

the logical dimension and the operational dimension of knowledge, there is also a

directly felt . . . dimension" (*Experiencing* 1). This dimension is a holistic, bodily

known feeling, a sense of something that arises in a very rich, complex, direct and

immediate way. Consider, for instance, what emerges for you when you consider your home. Whatever specific images or ideas arise, there is a sense of "home" or "your home" that goes beyond all the specific descriptions. A particular sense of comfort, resting, safety, perhaps even a kind of warmth or direction may emerge in your experiencing. Of course, all of this, and more, arises at once, in a vague but very full felt sense of home. This felt sense is not simply a list of properties and feelings that accompany your idea of home. It is a complex, whole sense that, when it arrives, is unmistakably your felt sense of your home. Compare this, for instance, to what emerges when you think about a house you have not liked. The whole felt sense is different. Perhaps you feel your nose wrinkling, your stomach tightening, your whole mood turning toward the negative. All of these are implicit in your felt sense of the disliked house. They are not propositions attached to the concept or memory: they arise from the complexity of the unmistakable sense, and mark different expressions of it.

During Phase One, the felt sense that arises is at first inexpressible. In the previous example of "home," the familiarity of the felt sense made easily and quickly expressible the aspects of it that arose. However, in the departure from everyday thinking that experiencing constitutes, the felt sense of the novel situation cannot be familiar. This means that an individual's historically constituted horizon cannot initially give her a grasp of this new sense; the felt sense is a present, real, and complex whole, which will require a new way of knowing to understand. This reminds us of Gendlin's distinction between "already cut" meaning and the "freshly-hewn" sense ("Dwelling" 142) described in the

first chapter. In dealing with the familiar, we bring our already cut concepts and words to describe and express what we find. In experiencing the unfamiliar, these already cut concepts are insufficient. Because we need concepts for expression and articulation, the vague felt sense of the new cannot be expressed until freshly hewn concepts are developed. This leaves us with a sense that "something more" is present in the felt sense that we cannot yet grasp. There is potential, but, for now, this potential is ungraspable.

Phase Two involves the development of freshly hewn understandings that reveal what was implicit in the felt complexity of the original whole vague felt sense. It is important to note that what is implicit in the initial felt sense is not a fully articulated whole, already neatly formed, that can be seen as soon as it is attended to. This mirrors Gendlin's claim that "we can recognize from the start that experience is not given in already-formed units that cognition could simply observe, represent, or approximate" ("How Philosophy Cannot" 6). Rather, "When symbolized meanings occur in interaction with experiencing, they change. And when one employs symbols to attend to a felt meaning, it changes" (*Experiencing* 8), which means that "the process of expression brings the meaning into being or makes it effective, and does not merely translate it" (Merleau-Ponty 213). Whatever is implicit in the initial felt sense comes to be articulated and grasped only through expression. The expressive acts this entails change the felt sense of the situation, and in so doing, change the understanding of self and object within the situation.

In the early articulation that takes place in the experiencing process, direct reference to a felt sense can lead to the emergence of a "handle" (Gendlin, *Focusing*), or a symbol that effectively captures, resonates with, and modulates the felt sense to which it refers. This handle serves as a relatively stable symbolic unit that allows the experiencer to get an initial "grasp" or "grip" on the felt sense. Such a grip allows the felt sense, which would otherwise ephemerally dissipate in working memory, to retain its meaning and structure over time, making it potentially available as the "same" felt sense in the future. The handle is by no means a complete explication or exhaustive symbolization of the felt sense. Rather, it is (as the very metaphor of "handle" suggests) an effective way of holding onto the felt sense – there remains something missing, something left to be done, something "more" (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák) that the handle implies.

Once a felt sense is established in Phases One and Two, it is possible for this felt sense to emerge later, when a similar felt sense arises. The two similar but distinct felt senses can resonate, creating what Theodor Wolpers has called a felt-sense-theme (*befindichkeitsmotif*, 35), characterizing Phase Three. The felt-sense-theme is not simply a noticed similarity between events (like my being at the zoo now, and my remembering being at the zoo two months ago). Rather, it is a felt similarity between the whole of a situation, and my sense of a previous one. This may occur between two events with the same setting (as in the preceding zoo example), but it can also arise in situations that share no common setting or activities. For instance, while I am lying in bed sick with the flu, the felt sense I

have of "trapped weakness" may spark the emergence of the felt sense I had while watching an ageing, listless panther in his cage at the zoo. These felt senses are not the same, but there is a resonance between them that draws the discontinuous events together, creating a felt-sense theme that is different from both, and open to further resonance and development in the face of future events. Gendlin uses the idea of crossing ("Thinking Beyond Patterns") to describe the way these two (or more) felt senses resonate with and modulate each other, even though each may relate to experiences emanating from very different ontological categories (i.e. an old panther, a sick man), leading to their mutual transformation. In a developing felt-sense-theme, a previous, similar felt sense guides my experience of the present one. At the same time, the present felt sense illuminates different aspects of the previous one, potentially changing both, and creating a felt-sense-theme that resonates between them.

The crossing of the felt senses, where each is cast in a new light by the other, may give rise to a feeling that the "something more" of the felt-sense-theme is freshly uncovered (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák). This fresh realization is no longer simply a resonance, but marks a reverberation between the original felt senses, where something emerges that is more than either taken alone. This reflects what Gendlin ("How Philosophy Cannot") calls a felt shift, a qualitative change in which the sensed similarity between the original felt senses changes, resulting in their seeming the same *in a different way* than before. For example, in the preceding caged panther – sick man illustration, the initial resonance between the two felt senses as "trapped weakness" may give way to a fresh realization

when the two are crossed. Something of the helplessness of my current bedridden situation, juxtaposed with the utter isolation of the panther in his weakness, may modulate my sense of both situations, resulting in a felt shift where the "hopeless loneliness" of our plights rises up. Now, I see the similarity of the felt senses, but in a different (though not incompatible) way from before.

The implications of such a felt shift are important to the experiencing process. One aspect of the felt shift that will be of particular relevance to mystical poetic experiencing are what Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák describe as "concurrent vulnerabilities," which are threefold: 1) subjectivity as isolation; 2) absence as loss; 3) loss of enduring self identity. The first of these arises from the subjective "for-me-ness" of the felt sense and the related possibility that this sense may remain beyond expression to others, emphasising a sense of isolation and raising the dread spectre of solipsism. The second arises in the move toward the felt shift, when a previous conceptualization or symbolization (i.e., "trapped weakness") no longer suffices, leaving the feeling that there is not yet, and may never be, an explication of the fresh "something more" that arises. This sense of loss is a silence imposed by the "death" of previously available conceptualizations or symbolizations. These troubling, disquieting vulnerabilities are augmented by a third: the crossings of felt senses across ontological boundaries, leading to a felt shift, underline the vulnerability of the experiencer's own subjectivity. In coming to "lose" previous conceptualizations in their crossings with others, an experiencer can further "lose" the sense of stable self-identity that such previously held preconceptions bolstered. My very *way of thinking and making meaning* is

called into question when the conceptual foundations I have traditionally

employed are disturbed or transformed. Such a challenge to the stability of my

ongoing agentive efficacy can leave me with the sense that "I" am no longer

separately or personally "in control" of what arises in experiencing, nor even

experiencing in the *way* that I have traditionally understood as distinctly mine.

The usual boundaries of my self become more fluid, opening me to a fusion with

the other (say, that panther) that can take on a previously unimagined sense of

agency in my experiencing.

The vulnerabilities leave a person's sense of self more open to, because

intimately involved in, the fresh understandings provided by the felt shift. These

fresh understandings are thus powerfully, personally, and meaningfully

experienced because they constitute a direction for the vulnerable sense of self to

take in further understanding. This fresh direction facilitates Phase Four, where

the freshly hewn concepts (forms, symbols) constitute novel, open categories

available for further understanding. This understanding carries forward, further

developing the dynamic, evolving felt sense. Just as there is a carrying forward of

a felt sense from Phase One through to Phase Four, so too is there a carrying

forward from Phase Four into new considerations, of both the object (or other, or

artwork) in question, of other related objects, and even into the person's life more

widely considered. A freshly expressed way of seeing or understanding in a

situation opens up possibilities in that situation; and since any situation is also

entwined in a whole unfolding life, implicating and modulating my very sense of

self, what arises and develops in experiencing can be carried forward into life beyond the initial experiencing encounter.

2.2.2 Literary Affordances for Experiencing

Experiencing during literary reading arises with the three-phase process described by Miall and Kuiken, wherein 1) The reader encounters textual features that are foregrounded; 2) The reader is "struck" by the features, resulting in defamiliarization, rendering the usual and automatic ways of understanding insufficient; 3) The reader's usual ways of understanding are modulated, or freshly reconfigured, to handle what has become newly unfamiliar. Most simply: Foregrounding → Defamiliarization → Refamiliarization. This process is engaged repeatedly throughout a reader's experiencing, making each instantiation of it a more local, rapidly unfolding aspect of the whole reading experiencing process.

By foregrounding, Miall and Kuiken are referring to figuratively enriched aspects of texts that readers find striking, especially those that present local ontological crossings. An excellent example comes from Rilke's *First Duino Elegy*, in Mitchell's translation, where "a wind full of infinite space/ gnaws at our faces" (14). Personification crosses the spatially unbounded, inanimate, impersonal wind with the physically definite, living, intimate threat of a feeding mouth. The strikingness of the image is further augmented by the internal rhyme (space-faces) that draws together the disparate halves of the personification on still another (phonetic) level. It is important to note that *foregrounding* as I

employ it here does not refer simply to objective textual features, as Jakobson first

conceived the term (Erlich). Elements only emerge into the foreground for a

reader because of the assumptions, or givens, that her personal and reading

horizons constitute. What gains the foreground for one reader will not necessarily

do so for another, although since each reader's horizon is shaped by aspects of life

shared by other readers (language, culture, and so on), many will find similar

passages foregrounded in a given work (see Chapter Three for examples of this

similarity).

Defamiliarization is another term borrowed from the Russian Formalists

and revivified here. Shklovsky saw it as the very purpose of art, and his

formulation is perhaps the most widely known: "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). Defamiliarization is the "making strange" that

happens when we see something outside our usual ways of knowing it.

Shklovsky's "knowing" is the historically sedimented, everyday, already-cut way

we deal with objects. The stone I see as I walk through the forest does not usually

linger long in my attention; it is a predictable part of the landscape sitting there in

its familiar context. Seeing a large stone placed on a delicate pedestal, on the

other hand, lends emphasis to the stone's weight and roughness, generating a

more sensuous, embodied experience of aspects of the stone I implicitly know,

but do not often consider (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák). This unusual,

embodied way of experiencing the stone moves toward Shklovsky's "perceiving,"

but remains within our conventional understanding of typically stony features. Placing the stone in an ontologically crossed figure, on the other hand, enables it to be defamiliarized in the powerfully striking way required by the experiencing process. Imagine referring to the stone of Sisyphus as "that panting, guilty rock." Rather than simply moving us to recognize, in an embodied way, aspects of the stone that usually remain implicit, this description may move us to perceive the stone anew, since the usual categories it occupies are insufficient to understand it here. The stone, the very model of inorganic, emotionless, ridged insensibility (i.e., "heart of stone," "stone faced," "rock solid," "stone cold") is now breathing, tired, active, and feeling. Our usual ways of considering stones are displaced, challenged, by the way the poetic figure invites us to encounter it. Such a category clash can be striking, generating a felt sense in the reader that, while promising, is as yet inexpressible. This is defamiliarization.

The third phase, refamiliarization, develops the generative potential that emerges from defamiliarization. The sense of "something more" that began as a vague but captivating promise attunes the reader to similar, resonant felt senses that can arise from memory as expressions of the currently defamiliarized felt sense. This attunement can also make readers more sensitive to affectively similar passages in the text, marking subsequent (and even previously read) passages as further expressions of the defamiliarized felt sense. Each further expression, whether generated from memory or from the text, keeps the felt sense active, and gives the reader a stronger, closer grasp of it; this bringing closer moves the felt sense into a more intimate, freshly-known, newly categorized realm. This is the

process of refamiliarization, which displaces the initial defamiliarizing effect of foregrounding (Miall and Kuiken). The newly familiar sense can then provide a direction to guide (and be itself modulated by) the next instantiation of the foregrounding – defamiliarization – refamiliarization process. Such guidance is a vital aspect of the overall experiencing process in literary reading.

To see the role of the foregrounding – defamiliarization – refamiliarization process within the general process of experiencing during reading, an example will be useful. The following excerpt is taken from Rilke's *First Duino Elegy*:

> Oh and night: there is night, when a wind full of infinite space
>
> gnaws at our faces. Whom would it not remain for – that longed-after,
>
> mildly disillusioning presence, which the solitary heart
>
> so painfully meets. Is it any less difficult for lovers?
>
> But they keep on using each other to hide their own fate.
>
> Don't you know *yet*? Fling the emptiness out of your arms
>
> into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds
>
> will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying. (14-21)

A reader is struck by the figuratively enriched, foregrounded passage, "a wind full of infinite space/ gnaws at our faces" (14); the ontological crossing of the inanimate, unbounded, indifferent wind with the animate, physically definite, threatening gnawing in the personified figure disturbs the reader's habitual preconceptions. This disturbance initiates Phase One of the experiencing process, where a felt sense of something "more" arises that exceeds the habitually understood categories of either "wind" or "gnaws." Those once familiar

categories have been defamiliarized by their figurative crossing, and though a bodily felt sense of their unexpected sameness emerges, the nature of this sameness remains largely inexpressible.

The felt sense that emerges in Phase One through defamiliarization may last for only a few seconds, comparable to the time it takes a reader to find herself in a new mood (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák). The striking sense of something "more" that remains beyond expression in Phase One may prompt a kind of reflection that holds it in working memory, initiating Phase Two. This kind of reflection is a sensitivity to potential expressions of the felt sense, attuning the reader to resonances in the text as she reads further. The "mildly disillusioning presence" (16) that occurs very shortly after the gnawing wind may, on its own, have been unremarkable, neither striking nor evocative. However, because of the sensitivity to resonance prompted by the felt sense generated through defamiliarization of the earlier foregrounded figure (gnawing wind), "mildly disillusioning presence" becomes a potential expression of the emerging felt sense. The vague formlessness of "mildly disillusioning" contrasts with the physically distinct "presence," resonating with the reader's felt sense generated when the formless "wind" clashed with the physically distinct "gnaws" in the earlier personification. Such further expressions of the felt sense give it a more distinct character, involving it more definitely in the reader's developing understanding of the poem; she is able to grasp the felt sense more closely through these expressions, perhaps even giving her a handle for it that will allow the felt sense to remain intact (and in-tact) beyond its immediate emergence in the

foregrounded passage. The something "more" that was felt but inexpressible in Phase One is fleshed out through subsequent resonant expression in Phase Two, giving the reader an increasingly powerful sense of the freshly forming category – in this case, a "breathing emptiness." As the reader finds expression for the felt sense, she also comes to embody it more fully; the felt sense, after all, is a *bodily* felt sense, and the success of subsequent expressions of it depends on the way that particular expression touches, captures, and modulates that bodily felt sense. Such a relationship between a bodily felt sense and its expression is the gauge of resonance in literary reading. As a felt sense becomes increasingly embodied through further expression, the category that freshly develops to describe it (i.e., "breathing emptiness") gives a clearer articulation of what was previously the inexpressible something "more," displacing the initial striking defamiliarization with the closely known intimacy of refamiliarization. What was made strikingly unfamiliar becomes known again, but in a new way.

As one cycle of the foregrounding – defamiliarization – refamiliarization process concludes, the newly familiar felt sense it helps to develop remains accessible; this makes it available for consideration later in the reading experience, as a potential source of resonance with another felt sense (itself developed through a subsequent cycle of the foregrounding- defamiliarization- refamiliarization process). The more distant passage is not simply a potential expression and development of the initial felt sense. Rather, it constitutes its own, individual felt sense that is perceived to be resonant with the felt sense developed previously. Returning to Rilke for an example, we can consider the highly

figuratively enriched, foregrounded passage, "Fling the emptiness out of your arms into the spaces we breathe" (20). This passage features the kinds of ontological crossings effective in initiating the foregrounding-defamiliarization-refamiliarization process; the abstract emptiness is crossed with the concrete gesture of flinging, and further crossed with the concrete presence implied by its taking up space, notably a very intimate, personal space where it could even, perhaps, be inhaled. As the felt sense of this passage develops, a reader might come to characterize it as "releasing thick despair." The feel of this sense, with its enlivening of emptiness, and its exhale-inhale potential, may well resound with the earlier felt sense of "breathing emptiness," and call it back to presence. The previous felt sense is unified and durable enough to return when a resonant one develops. When it returns, however, it is not insulated and immutable. Instead, the potential exists for a crossing of the two felt senses, and the development of a felt sense theme, characteristic of Phase Three of the experiencing process. Each felt sense reverberates with the other, leaving both changed, but also part of a newly forming category, in this case, perhaps "hope-devouring breath." Such a theme itself becomes potentially available as reading continues, and is subject to further modulation in the face of felt senses that develop in response to foregrounded passages. In this cyclical way, the foregrounding-defamiliarization-refamiliarization process is continuously central to the first three Phases of reading experiencing.

2.2.3 The Mystical Potentials of Reading Experiencing

The structure of reading experiencing shares a common trajectory with that of mystical experiencing. In each of its phases, the reading experiencing process creates the right kind of openings, in the right temporal order, to facilitate the development of mystical feeling. This not only makes the models describing each compatible, but also goes some way toward explaining how the former can result in a reading-generated version of the latter. By describing the four-stage model of mystical experiencing used in this project, and then detailing how it functions within reading experiencing, I will show how mystical feeling can arise in textual encounters. When this feeling arises in an intense, meaningful way during reading, a specific type of reading experiencing – mystical poetic experiencing – emerges

i. A Model of Mystical Experiencing

Mystical experiencing can be described according to the following four-stage model, which is a synthesis of compatible models proposed by Heriot-Maitland, Batson and Ventis, d'Aquili and Newberg, and McNamara:

    1. Crisis – Breakdown

    2. Abated Agency – Self Surrender

    3. Restructuring – New Vision – Unity

    4. Consolidation – New Life

The first stage of mystical experiencing entails a significant challenge to an individual's sense of self, leading to what Heriot-Maitland refers to as a "construct system breakdown." Heriot-Maitland employs George Kelly's concept

of personal constructs, which are interconnected structures of world knowledge and belief, and their implications for action in the world. A system of these constructs is tantamount to a person's very way of knowing. When the construct system breaks down, a person's sense of self is compromised, for the sense of self depends on stable categories and ways of knowing. D'Aquili and Newberg's name for this phase, "ego breakdown," underlines its consequences for a person's unified sense of self, while Batson and Ventis's description of the breakdown as an "existential crisis" points to the profundity of this breakdown, and its implications for people's very sense of who they are, and what meaning life holds.

An important aspect of the initial breakdown or crisis in stage one is what McNamara describes as an inhibited sense of agency or volition. An experiencer whose stable sense of ego, identity, meaning, and self has been disrupted is no longer an agent in the same way he was before the breakdown, and feels volitional control diminishing in that moment. If such a loss of volitional control intensifies as the experience continues, the result could be self-surrender (Batson and Ventis), the second stage of the mystical experience. When an individual engages in personal existential questioning, she is considering, and casting doubt on, the very way she has come to understand her own existence. Such fundamental doubt demands an attempt at resolution, and when faced with such a feeling of "falling apart," despair or surrender are very real possibilities. Heriot-Maitland's description of this stage of mystical experiencing as a temporary suspension of constructs makes the abatement of active cognitive processes focal. The experiencer moves from actively trying to understand the as-yet inexpressible

existential crisis to a position in which he recognizes the insufficiency of his previous understanding, and gives himself up to whatever the situation offers, allowing it to "take over" active, volitional control.

The third stage of mystical experiencing involves the felt resolution of the initial breakdown through the creative, generative space opened by the self surrender of stage two. In stage three, Heriot-Maitland's construct restructuring takes place, where the personal construct system, first broken down, and then suspended, is rebuilt in a freshly reconfigured way, now capable of giving meaning to self and life. Batson and Ventis's term new vision describes better the overall feeling of this restructuring. At this point in the mystical experiencing process, the individual feels the coming together of what had been previously disconnected, a grand insight gained through a new way of seeing life. D'Aquili and Newberg's unbounded, unitary state arises with the new vision, forming a central aspect of mystical experiencing. The feeling of oneness or unity accompanies the flood of new connections and realizations, creating a fluid sense of development, and allowing for more significant and more frequent crossings between insights of the present situation and the dynamic sense of self that emerges. The experiencer feels guided by, connected to, and at one with all the elements of the present situation, and potentially even the world as a whole.

Finally, in stage four of mystical experiencing, the insight and new vision of stage three are consolidated and taken forward into the life of the individual, creating the feeling of new life (Batson and Ventis). The feeling individuals have of a fresh perspective and a new way of understanding themselves and the world

after the experience is one of the central aspects of mystical experiencing. It is as though, in the moment of new vision, mystical experiencers feel they have glimpsed a reality more fully "real" and "true" than daily life. Though the truths so gleaned are difficult to express in language, they are nonetheless felt to be enduring and important, as well as accessible, in some measure, *as feeling*. This feeling can be powerful enough to prompt individuals to change they way they live through a re-prioritization of what matters most in life.

Although the model of mystical experiencing just presented and the model of reading experiencing described in the previous section are obviously parallel, it is not immediately obvious how reading could lead to mystical experiencing. Even in the most involving reading moments, could a reader really undergo an existential crisis or ego breakdown, leading to an experience of self surrender, and an unbounded unitary state? This is an empirical question that will be addressed in Chapter 3, but provisionally, the answer is yes. Tsur's distinction between "experience" and "partial experience" is valid here, though in a different way than he intends. Readers may only rarely engage in reading that leads to a mystical experience of comparable intensity to that described in the model above; however, the structure of reading experiencing does allow for the same kind of self-challenging, concept restructuring, unifying, new vision. The intensity of such reading may not equal the power of a full-blown mystical experience (what Tsur might call a full or direct mystical experience), but its experiential structure and existential outcomes result in an event (what Tsur might call a partial mystical experience) that falls within the spectrum of mystical possibilities, and is felt to be

so by those who experience it. In what follows, I show how the reading and mystical experiencing models combine in mystical poetic experiencing.

ii. Mystical Affordances in Reading

Phase One of the reading experiencing process is initiated by the defamiliarizing effect of foregrounding, especially foregrounded passages that present ontological crossings (animate – inanimate). In defamiliarization, a reader's habitual preconceptions are felt to be insufficient to encompass or express the felt sense of "something more" that arises from the passage, even though a persistent sense of the "sameness" of the crossed figures remains, making the whole seem somehow related and meaningful, rather than arbitrarily or randomly unrelated. The disturbance to habitual ways of knowing indicated by defamiliarization is the first challenge to a reader's construct system; the familiar ways of knowing and categories of thinking are tested and found wanting, which loosens a reader's sedimented, stable, perspective. This parallels and can initiate the first stage of mystical experiencing: breakdown – crisis. Initially, a single instance of defamiliarization will not likely constitute a "breakdown," but it can begin to erode the construct system and destabilize the reader's habitual perspective. Through multiple instances of defamiliarization, a reader's stable perspective is exposed to further challenge, potentially resulting in a significant weakening, and perhaps even to the *thematization* of the insufficient understanding. Two types of foregrounding detailed in Chapter One's discussion of mystical poetic devices, paradox and continual negation, are especially adept at achieving this thematization. In paradox, traditionally opposed categories are

unified, requiring a reader to recognize the insufficiency of her habitual ways of knowing in order to understand the new unity. In continual negation, a reader is explicitly told, repeatedly, that the understanding she has just gained is inadequate, prompting her to thematize such inadequacies. A reader's habitual ways and categories of understanding may be challenged so powerfully through these methods that she begins to consider the following as a theme of her reading: "the poem is meaningful, but my usual understanding is too limited to grasp it." This indicates a crisis or breakdown in the immediate understanding of the poem, at the very least. But perhaps more importantly, it moves the reader's consideration away from the world of the poem alone, objectively considered from a stable external perspective (her own), and into a consideration of the poem *as* a consideration of themselves and their ways and categories of knowing.

Phase Two begins when the brief but striking defamiliarized sense of "something more" that remains beyond expression in Phase One prompts a kind of reflection that holds it in working memory. Such reflection is a sensitivity to potential expressions of that felt sense. As expressions of the initial felt sense are found in the text and in memory during reading, the felt sense, initially so inexpressible, becomes increasingly distinct and graspable. Because the felt sense is a *bodily* one, its intensification and elucidation through expression brings it into more intimate, personal contact with the reader. In other words, what it is for a felt sense to become "fleshed out" for a reader is for it to be more powerfully *embodied* by the reader. That growing felt sense becomes a greater part of the reader's experience, and as such, suffuses a reader's sense of herself in the

situation. In this way, what was initially strange but felt to be potentially

meaningful becomes increasingly close and familiar. A reader's sense of herself

in the reading situation expands to include the new way of understanding, or the

new category, that expression of the felt sense has developed. A feeling of

refamiliarization is the result.

The mystical potentials of Phase Two are, predictably, parallel to those

found in the second stage of mystical experiencing: Abated Agency – Self

Surrender. In order for the initial felt sense to prompt reflective attention to

potential expressions of it during reading, a reader must be guided by that felt

sense, rather than their own (insufficient) habitual ways and categories of

understanding. A reader cannot determine, for instance, which textual passages

and personal memories will serve as expressions of the felt sense, and is not in

control of what emerges as the reading process continues. The range of further

expression in reading relies to some extent on the text, which reveals elements

and images in combinations about which the reader has no say. What emerges for

a reader in memory, because it emerges in relation to what the text provides

(about which the reader has no say), also cannot be solely guided by the reader.

As a result, the reader's previously challenged sense of self finds itself rendered

even less effectual, taken over or displaced to some extent by the agency of the

poem. Such a loss of agency can be troubling – however, because the guidance

the poem provides often enables the initial defamiliarized felt sense to grow

increasingly familiar, the agency of the poem can merge with the reader's sense of

her own volition in the reading situation. By surrendering agency, a reader

enables the poem's guidance, and in so doing, allows fresh ways of understanding and fresh categories to arise.

Several of the mystical poetic devices employed by Rilke and Eliot enhance a reader's sense of a poem's agency, making these poets especially effective facilitators of mystical experience. The use of generic sentences to create an authoritative, prophetic and godlike voice makes it easier to follow the guidance the poem provides. Personification adds to a reader's sense of the animacy of the poem, while depersonalization dissipates a reader's sense of his own agentive power. Finally, by imbuing concrete situations with abstract concepts, Rilke and Eliot create "supersensuous presences" that enable the reader to even more easily sense the poem as its own, subjective presence. All of these poetic methods facilitate a reader's preliminary willingness to be led by the poem. This lays the groundwork for the more profound, intensely self-implicating loss of agency that arises in Phase Three.

Phase Three of reading experiencing involves the crossing of felt senses arising from relatively distant instances of foregrounding. Each felt sense, separately established, becomes itself an available expression for others. When one felt sense resonates with another, a felt sense theme (*befindichkeitsmotif)* can emerge. Here, both felt senses, each of which is the result of an ongoing process of expression, themselves become crossed figures. What arises is a felt shift, a bodily sensed reverberation between the initial felt senses that leaves them both changed, known together, but in a new way. What is important about each sense is now the freshly known "something more" that arises from their crossing. Each is

known differently than it was before, and a new category develops to accommodate the fresh understanding that arises.

The felt shift of Phase Three is the most fertile ground in the reading experiencing process for mystical potentials. If the stability of the reader's perspective is challenged by defamiliariation, it is doubly threatened by the reverberation between one felt sense and another. After all, each felt sense has served as a guide to the expressive possibilities in the text and in the reader's own memory. Each has, through progressive expression, become familiar, more intimately known, and increasingly agentive. When two such felt senses resonate, a powerful sense of their importance and personal meaning arises. However, as in the case of crossed figures in foregrounding, what this shared meaning is may be, at first, inexpressible. This introduces the first of the three concurrent vulnerabilities of experiencing, subjectivity as isolation, the sense that the subjective nature of the very personally felt but as yet inexpressible (to oneself or others) felt sense may remain beyond expression, beyond sharing. The sense of self can be profoundly disturbed by such an isolating, expressive failure – the potential for existential "crisis" or "breakdown" begins to seem even more possible here. The difference between this breakdown, and the initial thematization of inadequate understanding prompted by foregrounding (paradox, continual negation) of Phase One, is the difference between the destruction of impersonally and personally developed understandings. In Phase One, habitual understandings are challenged; one has likely employed them without much explicit consideration. Thematizing the limitations of such concepts prompts a

more personal and explicit reconsideration of them, developed in Phase Two. The breakdown or crisis in Phase Three is more personally and powerfully disturbing, because it challenges the fresh, detailed, personal understandings that have been developing throughout Phase Two. As the felt shift of Phase Three comes on, the second vulnerability, absence as loss, may emerge. Neither of the previous felt senses, which themselves resulted from fresh conceptualizations, is sufficient to explicate the "something more" that arises in their crossing. The "death" of previously agentive, guiding concepts leaves a reader, for the moment, alone in a highly diminished (because stripped of its guides) sense of self. The minimal self that remains in the reading situation is left even more open to being "taken over" by the reading situation. The third vulnerability, loss of enduring self identity, can result from, and augment, the sense of death or loss generated by the second vulnerability. When my very ways of thinking and making meaning are rendered ineffectual in such a profound way as they are in the move toward the felt shift, it leaves me to doubt my very *way* of understanding. When the ways of understanding I have adopted as distinctly my own have proved insufficient, its prompt the extension of my usual boundaries of self into a more fluid relationship with the text. Such an open, abated, surrendered sense of self fulfills the second stage of mystical experiencing.

Once the felt shift has been made, however, and the felt-sense-theme begins to be fleshed out by resonant expression, the potential exists for "new vision," the third stage of the mystical experiencing process. The at-first disturbing reverberation of the felt shift develops into a powerfully fresh way of

reading and understanding the text, as well as whatever has arisen from the reader's own mnemonic resources. Such a shift not only affects further reading, but retroactively casts what has already been read in a new light, potentially creating a sense of timelessness in the experience of the poem. The new understanding that emerges from the felt shift can also therefore create a powerful sense of immediate unity across disparate sections of the poem, and can bring the reader, who is being guided by the felt sense generated in the shift, into closer contact with the poem as a whole, creating a strong sense of unity with it, and a sense of animacy in each of its parts. The pervasive sense of unity with the poem and the liveliness of its parts may be experienced by the reader as an exhilarating, spiritually significant revelation brought on by a new way of seeing. Such new vision would seem to have arisen unbidden, and may extend, briefly, to the reader's immediate surroundings and aspects of their lives that have emerged and become involved through memory during the course of reading. Such an extension beyond the immediate confines of the poem makes possible the fourth phase of the experience.

Phase Four of the reading experiencing process and the fourth stage of mystical experiencing echo a similar concern with what happens after the initial experience concludes. The new understanding that emerges is available to guide further considerations in the life of the experiencer more generally. The potential impact of mystical poetic experiencing on a person's life as a whole will certainly vary based on the intensity of the experience and that person's individual sensitivity to such experiences. Such an experience creates an opening to further

development of an importantly, freshly meaningful felt sense, but requires further development through subsequent expression to have a lasting impact.

2.2.4 A Model of Mystical Poetic Experiencing

Now that we have thoroughly explored the experiencing process, shown how it could emerge during reading, and described where in this complex reading experiencing process mystical experience could arise, it is possible to state more succinctly the model of mystical poetic experiencing proposed in this project:

1. Foregrounding, especially ontological crossing, paradox, and continual negation, challenges a reader's habitual preconceptions, leading to a defamiliarized sense of an inexpressible "something more." The reader's stable perspective is challenged, loosening her agentive control.

2. What is meaningful in the as-yet inexpressible felt sense sensitizes the reader to potential expressions of it in the text and in memory. Resonant passages and memories begin to intensify and clarify the felt sense, allowing it to be held in memory, making it available later in the reading process. The developing felt sense, rather than solely the reader's habitual preconceptions, helps to guide the process of expression and subsequent refamiliarization. A reader's sense of agency is thus abated, and her sense of self becomes increasingly suffused with the growing, bodily-felt sense of the poem. Mystical poetic devices such as the use of generic sentences, personification, depersonalization, and the creation of supersensuous presences, enhance the agency-shifting effects of this phase.

3. As further foregrounding-defamiliarization-refamiliarization cycles occur,

developing felt senses cross. When such senses resonate, their crossing can

create a reverberation between them that initiates a felt sense theme. This

theme is different from, but not incompatible with, both previous felt

senses. As the crossing moves through the reverberation that will develop

into the felt shift, three concurrent vulnerabilities (subjectivity as isolation,

absence as loss, loss of enduring self identity) arise. These vulnerabilities

present the greatest challenge to the reader's sense of self, prompting

existential concern. The vulnerable reader's highly abated sense of agency

is increasingly open to the guidance of the felt sense theme that emerges as

a result of the felt shift. As the felt sense theme develops, it casts a new

light on subsequent and even previous aspects of the reading experience,

drawing them, and the reader, further into the felt sense theme. As a result,

many aspects of the poem gain a sense of agency. The sequential order of

events in the reading process and their spatial separations grow less

important as connections are made irrespective of these boundaries. The

feeling of unity, of having "everything come together," can be experienced

as a spiritually significant revelation brought about by an agency not the

reader's own. The exhilaration of this insight can make it powerful enough

to encompass aspects of the reader's life beyond the immediate reading

experience.

4. The felt sense theme initiated by the felt shift, because it was spiritually

significant and personally involving, remains available for further

reflection and expression after the immediate reading experience ends. Further resonant expressions of the theme through life events (and other reading) have the potential to keep the theme alive long after its emergence in the poem. Subsequent reflection on the felt sense theme can provide a fresh perspective on previous life events, making the mystical poetic experience even more central to an individual's ongoing understanding of the meaning of their lives in the world.

Although the reading experiencing process can facilitate mystical poetic experiencing in the way outlined above, there are additional experiential elements and outcomes beyond the affordances provided by reading experiencing generally conceived, and the specifically mystical poetics of Rilke and Eliot, that are necessary to make the experience a mystical one. Experiences of profound disquietude, existential despair, and great beauty can all emerge from the affordances provided by the reading experiencing process. All of these experiences share important aspects of mystical reading experience, making it necessary to distinguish them. In the following chapter, I begin to make these distinctions in a presentation of an empirical study of readers of Rilke and Eliot. This study was designed to investigate the claims made by the theory presented above, and to further articulate aspects of the richness of mystical poetic experiencing that a model, though detailed and representative, cannot accomplish alone.

Chapter 3: An Empirical Investigation of Mystical Poetic Experiencing in

Rilke and Eliot

3.1 Study One

Study One, featuring 301 participants (205 females, 90 males, 6 unspecified) earning course credit, was designed to elucidate what mystical poetic experience looked like in the reading of Rainer Maria Rilke and T.S. Eliot (1 – identifying the phenomenon); whether and how it arose among unspecialized readers (2 – locating it in the wild); and how its structure resembled and differed from its near experiential kin (3 – learning its basic structure and distinguishing its near neighbours). Participants, all drawn from the Psychology Department's research pool, were made eligible for the study on the basis of their responses to the Attitudes Toward Poetry questionnaire (see Appendix 1, Study One Materials), an instrument designed by our research group to assess the extent to which individuals enjoy, and engage in, the reading of poetry. Only individuals scoring above the median were eligible; this screening was done to exclude those students least interested in poetry, in whom the profound poetic experiences under investigation were thought to be unlikely to occur.

3.1.1 Text Selection

Ten selections were chosen for each author (see Appendix 1, Study One Materials, for a complete list of excerpts); Eliot's came from *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, while Rilke's selections were taken from *New Poems*, *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, *The Duino Elegies*, and his uncollected late works. These texts were

chosen as the sources for the excerpts because they comprise the core of each author's poetic career, and also because they provide selections that run along a continuum of religious concern. Rilke's *Book of Hours* and Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, both major works, are so clearly religious (specifically, Christian) that they could almost qualify as devotional texts, following Carlos Eire's broad definition, as "any text that could be viewed or used as a means of stirring religious fervour or of shaping the faith of its readers" (85). Since the aim of this research is to study mystical poetic experiencing with secular modernist poetry, these explicitly religious works were excluded. The less explicitly religious the "content" of the poems in question, the more remarkable it will be to find mystical experiencing in their readers. Further, it requires looking beyond "content" or an implied religious setting and theme, to discover what about these texts and readers allows for mystical poetic experiencing. Aspects of mystical experiencing arising for readers presented with the biblical story of Paul of Tarsus's conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26), for instance, could be accounted for simply by the events of the narrative. That text describes a great, enveloping light, the voice of God, and a profound personal conversion. Further, it is a central story in Christian lore, making it familiar and potentially more moving for readers familiar with this tradition. By presenting texts that are not specifically "about" well-known religious events, and that are not explicitly religiously oriented, I hoped to reveal other, poetic factors that also facilitated mystical experiences. This does not mean, however, that religious elements (like the presence of an Angel, for instance) do not appear in the selections. Rather, the selected poetry does not have a religious

focus, and does not coordinate its religious elements in a manner conventionally employed by any religious tradition (like the conversion story mentioned above).

Text selection was further designed to present a diverse array of features that could factor into the reading experience. By varying the selected texts along the following dimensions, I hoped to avoid effects arising mainly from them: 1) Length. The longest selection was 112 lines, the shortest 10 lines. 2) Completeness. Selections comprise whole poems, whole sections of longer poems, and excerpts from sections. 3) Religious and Mystical Imagery. Though none of the selections is devotional, the level of religious imagery varies. God, angels, and saints are mentioned throughout the selections from the *Elegies*, but not at all in several of the shorter Rilke selections, and seldom in Eliot. Moments that could even be interpreted as explicitly mystical ones arise in several of Eliot's works, and few of Rilke's.

Finally, all Rilke texts were presented in translation. Rilke has been blessed and cursed with many translators (see Gass for a detailed discussion of 14 translations of *The Duino Elegies* alone), and it was tempting to choose a different translator for each selection. However, the translators often differ so widely that the selections would not have retained a coherent voice and style. Eliot's voice would have come through in all his selections, allowing for comparison while ensuring that the results of the study referred to the work of a single consciousness, poetically considered. Rilke so differently translated between selections would not have met this criterion; certainly Rilke would have been present in them all, but the results of the study would not speak so powerfully

about a particular poetic consciousness. So, for nine of the ten Rilke selections, I chose Stephen Mitchell's translations from *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. The recommendation of Mitchell's translation by Robert Hass, American poet and scholar, is perhaps the most powerful: "Here, finally, was a Rilke in English that would last for many generations" (xi). Despite the number of Rilke translations that have arisen since, Hass's pronouncement has been taken very seriously. Most North American students born after the publication of Mitchell's translation have come to know Rilke through Mitchell, making his work a clear choice for inclusion in a study conducted with students born primarily in the 1990s. I find its contemporary American diction appropriate, since the participants in the study were university-aged students with a wide range of academic backgrounds. In short, I found Mitchell's work to be highly accessible, while maintaining Rilke's thematic structures.

I chose two exceptions to Mitchell's Rilke. The first is a single sentence, part of line 7, from the *First Duino Elegy*. The German reads "Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich." Mitchell's translation, "Every angel is terrifying," is literally good and poetically sufficient, but it misses the emphasis and gravity present in Rilke's halting construction. This vital line, the end of the first stanza of the Elegies and part of one of the most memorable openings in modern German verse, requires the high number of strong stresses Rilke gives it. This is harder in the English version of "Ein jeder," which is literally "Every," or redundantly "Each and every," neither of which encourages the stresses and solemn pauses of the German. Albert Earnest Flemming's translation captures the weight of the

German best, employing a clear but non-idiomatic English alternative: "Each single angel is terrifying." This is the version I chose for the line.

The second exception to Mitchell's Rilke is one complete selection, also a complete poem, "Death Experience" from *New Poems*. This contemporary, unpublished translation by Cliff Crego was introduced to test whether a very different version of Rilke would be experienced in a significantly different way. Crego's syntax mirrors the German in a transliterative way in places, keeping compound adjectival constructions in positions not seen in English: "your far away,/ removed out of our performance existence" (15-16) is the best example. This formal and semantic eccentricity contrasts well with Mitchell's contemporary American idiom, making Crego a good choice for a contrasting case.

3.1.2 Procedure

Participants, in groups of 20 or fewer, were individually randomly assigned one of twenty selections from Rilke or Eliot, and were asked to read them as they normally would, taking their time, feeling free to return to reread any section they liked. Next, they read the poem again, with the same instructions, but this time they marked two passages they found especially striking or evocative. After this marking, participants completed the Experiencing Questionnaire (EQ), an instrument developed in our research group (Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák) to assess several aspects of the experiencing process as conceived by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Gendlin. In addition to items developed specifically for the

EQ, some were adapted from Hood's mysticism scale, Pekala's Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory, and a frequently used measure of self-perceptual depth (Kuiken et al., "Self Modifying;" "Impactful Dreams"). Altogether the EQ consists of 58 statements that can be rated from 1 "not at all true" to 5 "extremely true." Twenty-seven items (nine 3-item miniscales) comprise the "individual passage" section of the questionnaire; participants rated these items twice, once in response to the first marked passage, and a second time in response to the second marked passage. Thirty-one items (eight 3-item and one 7-item miniscales) of the Experiencing Questionnaire apply to the poem as a whole; participants rated these only once in response to the entire poem. (Each of these two subsets of items was randomly ordered.) The questionnaire is designed to describe readers' experiences along nine dimensions, each of which identifies a pair of questionnaire miniscales, as outlined in Table 3.1 below (see also Appendix 1: Study One Materials, for all questionnaire items):

Table 3.1 Experiencing Questionnaire Dimensions, Miniscales, and Example Items

Dimension	Miniscale	Example Item
mood	wonder	While reading this passage, I felt profound wonder.
	disquietude	While reading this passage, I felt deep disquietude.
epistemic tone	reverence	While reading this passage, I seemed to touch something sacred.
	discord	While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed deeply discordant.
noetic intimations	evocative imagery	While reading this passage, the images that came to mind were extremely evocative.
	inexpressible realizations	While reading this passage, I sensed something that I could not find a way to express.
spatio-	timelessness	While reading this passage, for a moment time

temporal diffusion	timelessness	seemed to stand still.
	pervasive oneness	While reading this passage, I felt at one with the world around me.
sense of self	lost self boundaries	While reading this passage, my sense of self lost its clear boundary.
	explicit self-awareness	After reading this poem, I was focused on my own thoughts and feelings.
experiential vitality	distributed liveliness	After reading this poem, I had the sense that everything around me was somehow alive.
	spiritual enlivenment	After reading this poem, I felt refreshed, renewed, and revitalized.
existential attunement	thrownness	After reading this poem, I was distinctly aware of being *here* without understanding why I am here rather than somewhere else.
	finitude	After reading this poem, I was freshly aware that people ultimately face life alone.
non-utiliarian respect	for nature	After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for the natural world.
	for humans	After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for humanity.
self-knowing	tolerant self-attention	After reading this poem, I felt open and receptive to whatever went through my mind.
	self-perceptual depth	After reading this poem, I felt like changing the way I live.

The subscales of the EQ generally showed good to very good internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.91 to 0.55 (median 0.79).

Based on the mysticism scholarship presented in previous chapters, I expected several of these dimensions to be relevant to mystical experience, and several of the items to be unrelated, but their inclusion prevented me from limiting, *a priori,* what the mystical poetic might look like, and allowed for the emergence of other kinds of related experience. This approach is comparable to Pekala's attempt to develop a phenomenology of consciousness inventory, based on a large number of subscales (or miniscales) that may relate differently in different contexts. That is, different profiles of these miniscales were expected to

be evident in response to different texts, during different reading conditions, among different groups of readers, and so on. Finally, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding their religious beliefs and practices. This questionnaire was presented at the end of the study to ensure it did not prompt participants to consider their reading in a religious context. The questionnaire asked which religious tradition, if any, the participants followed, and provided eight statements about their level of religious and spiritual engagement and belief. Participants could respond to these questions using a five-point scale ranging from "not at all true" to "extremely true."

3.1.3 Results

Chosen Passage Frequencies

An important first step in the qualitative examination of the responses was determining the centres of experiential gravity in the poetry presented. These centres represent the sections of the poem that the participants as a whole found most striking, thus forming the most important textual aspects of their experience. Instead of choosing which passages or selections participants might find important and interesting based on *a priori* measures (like foregrounding analysis) or critical commentary, I decided to use the participant-selected passages themselves as the best measure of each selection's most crucial moments.

To this end, I counted the number of times participants selected particular passages from each poem. For each poem, either 15 or 16 respondents chose 2 passages, of any length, that he or she found most striking and evocative. If a

participant chose any part of a line for either of these two selections, the entire

line was included in the tally. Overlap of lines within a given participant's

selections (where a participant chose, for instance, line one and the first part of

line two as his or her first passage, and the end of line two with line three for his

or her second passage) were not counted twice: although in such rare cases, the

line was doubly important to that participant's understanding, I wanted to ensure

the counts represented the *number* of participants who selected a given line. This

allows some conclusions to be drawn about passage selection frequency that

would not be possible if any participant's selection was doubly counted (for

instance, it quickly allows for the creation of percentage selection, i.e. what

percentage of participants chose a given line?) An illustration of the results for an

excerpt from Rilke's *First Duino Elegy*, which was also featured in Study Two, is

presented below:

Table 3.2 Study One: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt [1] from the *First*

Duino Elegy (N=16)

Times Chosen	Poetic Line	Line #
1111	Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels'	1
1111	hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me	2
111	suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed	3
11111111111	in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing	4
111111111	but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure,	5
111	and we are so awed because it serenely disdains	6
11111	to annihilate us. Each single angel is terrifying.	7
	And so I hold myself back and swallow the call-note	8
1	of my dark sobbing. Ah, whom can we ever turn to	9
111	in our need? Not angels, not humans,	10
111	and already the knowing animals are aware	11
111	that we are not really at home in	12
11111	our interpreted world. Perhaps there remains for us	13
1	some tree on a hillside, which every day we can take	14
	into our vision; there remains for us yesterday's street	15

1	and the loyalty of a habit so much at ease	16
	when it stayed with us that it moved in and never left.	17
11	Oh and night: there is night, when a wind full of infinite space	18
11	gnaws at our faces. Whom would it not remain for – that longed-after,	19
1	mildly disillusioning presence, which the solitary heart	20
111	so painfully meets. Is it any less difficult for lovers?	21
111111	But they keep on using each other to hide their own fate.	22
111111	Don't you know yet? Fling the emptiness out of your arms	23
11111	into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds	24
111	will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.	25

The table above (thanks to Dan Mantei of our research group for the table format)
provides easy access to the specific poetic lines that participants chose most often,
while the chart below makes the poem's centres of gravity clearly visible by
displaying the number of times a given 3-line section was chosen:

Table 3.3 Study One: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt [1] from the *First
Duino Elegy* per 3-line segment (N=16)
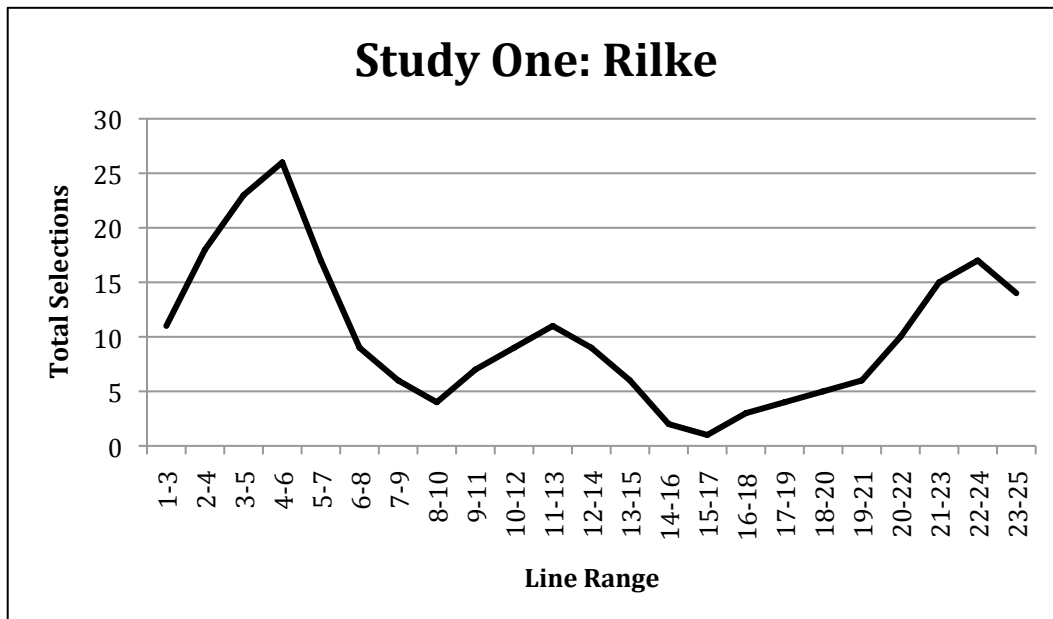
A quick glance reveals the poem's centres of gravity, in their poetic contexts. Line
4 is especially important, followed closely by line 5, indicating that participants

were especially sensitive to the apparent paradox of beauty as terror. Lines 22-24 form another important centre, echoing the concern for beauty and terror above with a similarly counterintuitive hiding of fate (rather than fulfillment of it, as in popular notions of "destiny") by the lover.

Equally informative are the passages participants *did not* choose. Lines 14-17, featuring the solitary tree on a hillside, an important natural symbol of contemplative tranquility. A short but witty description of memory and the persistence of habit personified (or zoomorphed, as a stray dog or cat), were scarcely chosen at all. It is clear that these aspects of the poem did not speak to the readers as powerfully as the frequently chosen lines. The table above, in short, provides a starting place for investigation that takes little for granted, and meets the participants in question where they stand. This has obvious pedagogical benefits: knowing where student readers enter poems most readily is tremendously helpful in leading them to an involved understanding of poetry more generally. For the purposes of this study, knowing which lines are most frequently chosen gives access to which poetic passages are most involved in participants' responses. Knowing what specific aspects of the poem participants find evocative provides a structure for understanding the relationship between the poem and their questionnaire responses. Also interesting is the degree of overlap present: the fact that more than 73% of participants chose line 4, while not one chose line 17, gives the lie to Jonathan Culler's (in)famous description of individual reader's performances as "doubtless idiosyncratic" (258). At the level of perceived striking evocation, at least, readers show a degree of similarity in

their selections, rather than the arbitrariness predicted by Culler. Clearly, the

poetic experience of these readers is focused through a common core in important

areas, or centres of gravity, of the text. The significance of these frequencies will

be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

Another excerpt, this one from Eliot, further supports the results obtained

from the first:

Table 3.4 Study One: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from "The Burial

of the Dead" (N=16)

Times Chosen	Poetic Line	Line #
1	What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow	1
11	Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,	2
1	You cannot say, or guess, for you know only	3
111	A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,	4
1111	And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,	5
11	And the dry stone no sound of water. Only	6
	There is shadow under this red rock,	7
1	(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),	8
11	And I will show you something different from either	9
111	Your shadow at morning striding behind you	10
1111	Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;	11
11111	I will show you fear in a handful of dust.	12
1	Frisch weht der Wind	13
	Der Heimat zu.	14
	Mein Irisch Kind,	15
	Wo weilest du?	16
	'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;	17
	'They called me the hyacinth girl.'	18
1	– Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,	19
111	Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not	20
1111111	Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither	21
11111111	Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,	22
11111	Looking into the heart of light, the silence.	23
	Od' und leer das Meer.	24

Table 3.5 Study One: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from "The Burial

of the Dead" per 3-line segment (N=16)

Study One: Eliot

Total Selections vs *Line Range*
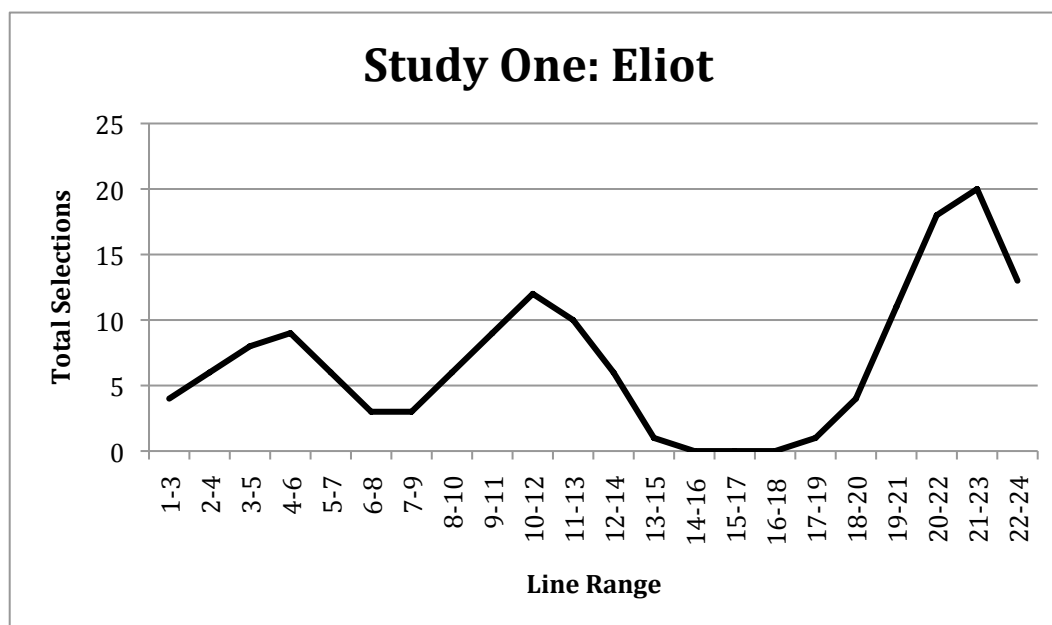
Again, although so many of the lines in this excerpt are memorable and striking,

in this context, there were clear participant preferences. The excerpt was regarded

by participants as having two clear centres – there is a gradual building from the

bracketed invitation to come under the red rock in line 8 to the culmination of this

invitation in a handful of dust in line 12. Similarly, after the appearance of the

hyacinth girl in line 18, there is a gradual building to a culmination with line 22's

powerful annihilation of self, and a resounding denouement of stillness in the

silent heart of light in line 23.

The unselected lines and sections were noteworthy, and at times

unexpected, for this excerpt as well. The shadow under the red rock, for instance,

a lynchpin of the critical commentary on the poem, is infrequently selected by the

participants. The first appearance of the hyacinth girl, so strange and unexpected,

is seldom chosen. The German sections, potentially striking simply for their

intrusive foreignness, also remain beneath the level of primary concern for these participants.

Experiencing Questionnaire

The quantitative heart of Study One involved the analyses of the Experiencing Questionnaire. Rather than calculating the averages of the miniscale scores and comparing authors or texts, the goal here was to develop a taxonomy of reading experiences. To identify various types of response, cluster analysis, developed by Tryon, was employed. The goal of clustering is "to separate a finite, unlabeled data set into a finite and discrete set of 'natural,' hidden data structures" (Rui and Wunsch 2). These "data structures" (clusters, or groups) are created to maximize similarity between a single cluster's members, while maximizing differences between members of different clusters (2). This form of analysis is especially conducive to a phenomenological approach, since it imposes no *a priori* structure on the data. The emergent clusters represent groups of respondents whose response profiles (based on their Experiencing Questionnaire selections), share a similar structure. That is, their scores on the various miniscales are generally comparable in intensity.

The (dis)similarity between each pair of questionnaire responses was assessed using Squared Euclidean Distance coefficients. Then, cluster analysis (Ward's method) was used to group commentaries according to the (dis)similarity in their profiles of questionnaire scores. The relative magnitude of the gaps between joinings in the agglomeration schedule indicated the presence of 7 clearly interpretable clusters with 27, 49, 43, 29, 38, 50, and 65 members.

Cluster Descriptions

The average score of each miniscale across clusters was compared to identify the miniscales that differentiated each cluster from the others. A miniscale was regarded as differentiating if it proved significantly different between clusters at the $p < 0.05$ level, using Fisher's LSD test as a guideline, since it takes into account both mean differences and variability. 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). The following table shows the average score for each miniscale for each cluster. Differing superscripts indicate means that differ from corresponding means in other clusters at the 0.05 level. Doubled superscripts ("AB"), indicate that the mean does not differ sufficiently from the means indicated ("A" and "B"), but is significantly different from the others ("C," "D", and so on). Finally, superscripts are ordered alphabetically: "A" represents the highest differentiable mean, "B" the next highest, and so on.

Table 3.6 Significant Differences between Mean Experiencing

Questionnaire Miniscale Scores by Cluster

Mini Scale	Cluster #						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Passage 1	**(n=27)**	**(n=49)**	**(n=43)**	**(n=29)**	**(n=38)**	**(n=50)**	**(n=65)**
Timelessness	2.73^A	2.23^B	1.27^C	2.26^B	0.83^D	1.42^C	0.48^E
Lost Self Bounds	2.42^A	1.75^B	1.00^C	0.83^C	0.25^D	0.76^C	0.08^D
Oneness	2.54^A	1.73^B	1.20^C	0.94^{CD}	0.48^E	0.88^D	0.22^E
Inexpressibility	2.98^A	2.07^B	1.53^D	2.05^{BC}	0.61^E	1.73^{CD}	0.38^E
Evocative	3.09^A	2.46^{BC}	2.15^C	2.62^B	1.32^E	1.79^D	1.13^E
Wonder	2.47^A	1.66^B	1.36^C	1.90^B	0.67^D	1.27^C	0.46^D

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disquietude	1.69 ^{A}	1.39^{AB}	1.12^{BC}	0.60 ^{D}	0.88^{CD}	0.79 ^{D}	0.25 ^{E}
Reverence	2.23 ^{A}	1.45 ^{B}	0.91^{CD}	1.08 ^{C}	0.34 ^{E}	0.65 ^{D}	0.18 ^{E}
Discord	1.49 ^{A}	1.33 ^{A}	0.81 ^{B}	0.59 ^{B}	0.69 ^{B}	0.75 ^{B}	0.23 ^{C}

Passage 2	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Timelessness	3.20 ^{A}	2.10 ^{B}	1.11 ^{C}	2.82 ^{A}	0.62 ^{D}	1.23 ^{C}	0.33 ^{D}
Lost Self Bounds	2.80 ^{A}	1.85 ^{B}	0.74 ^{D}	1.21 ^{C}	0.24 ^{E}	0.64 ^{D}	0.10 ^{E}
Oneness	2.96 ^{A}	2.01 ^{B}	1.14 ^{C}	1.21 ^{C}	0.34 ^{E}	0.82 ^{D}	0.27 ^{E}
Inexpressibility	3.15 ^{A}	2.49 ^{B}	1.50 ^{C}	2.71 ^{B}	0.79 ^{D}	1.65 ^{C}	0.41 ^{E}
Evocative	3.28 ^{A}	2.78 ^{B}	2.05 ^{C}	2.98^{AB}	1.50 ^{D}	2.17 ^{C}	0.88 ^{E}
Wonder	3.02 ^{A}	2.02 ^{B}	1.31 ^{C}	2.29 ^{B}	0.69 ^{D}	1.42 ^{C}	0.42 ^{E}
Disquietude	1.06^{BC}	1.82 ^{A}	0.97^{BC}	0.86^{BC}	1.16 ^{B}	0.73 ^{C}	0.25 ^{D}
Reverence	3.09 ^{A}	1.62 ^{B}	0.75 ^{C}	1.60 ^{B}	0.35^{DE}	0.59^{CD}	0.18 ^{E}
Discord	1.12 ^{B}	1.73 ^{A}	0.60 ^{C}	0.70 ^{C}	0.52 ^{C}	0.62 ^{C}	0.16 ^{D}

Whole Poem	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Distributed Liveliness	2.75 ^{A}	1.33 ^{B}	1.02 ^{C}	0.50 ^{D}	0.46 ^{D}	0.62 ^{D}	0.09 ^{E}
Self Awareness	3.22 ^{A}	2.57 ^{B}	2.45 ^{B}	2.34 ^{B}	1.54 ^{C}	1.35 ^{C}	0.59 ^{D}
Tolerant Self-Attention	2.95 ^{A}	2.18 ^{B}	1.89 ^{C}	1.87 ^{C}	1.14 ^{D}	1.09 ^{D}	0.26 ^{E}
Thrownness	2.69 ^{A}	2.46^{AB}	2.17 ^{B}	1.51 ^{C}	1.18^{CD}	1.05 ^{D}	0.30 ^{E}
Finitude	2.47 ^{A}	2.71 ^{A}	1.98 ^{B}	1.30 ^{C}	1.62^{BC}	1.31 ^{C}	0.57 ^{D}
Spirit Enlivenment	2.86 ^{A}	1.58 ^{B}	1.07 ^{C}	1.20 ^{C}	0.43 ^{E}	0.75 ^{D}	0.10 ^{F}
Self-Perceptual Depth	2.79 ^{A}	2.29 ^{B}	1.66 ^{C}	1.70 ^{C}	1.01 ^{D}	0.97 ^{D}	0.33 ^{E}
Non-Utilitatian Human	2.30 ^{A}	2.13 ^{A}	1.63 ^{B}	0.71 ^{C}	0.81 ^{C}	0.97 ^{C}	0.33 ^{D}
Non-Utilitatian Nature	2.51 ^{A}	2.06 ^{B}	1.92 ^{B}	0.90 ^{C}	0.95 ^{C}	0.69 ^{C}	0.17 ^{D}

Means with the same superscript do not differ from each other (p<.05)

Having revealed seven discrete groups of responses (there being no overlap in cluster membership), it becomes possible to investigate more closely what characterizes each group, and to begin describing, conceptualizing, and interpreting what the scores for each group mean. Beyond significant miniscale

differences between clusters, it also becomes possible to compare scores within a given cluster, to examine patterns of response change over time (Passage 1 vs Passage 2), and relative magnitudes of responses, which further flesh out the character of a given cluster.

Cluster One: Spiritual Enactive Engagement (≈ 9% of participants): This cluster had the highest values in almost every category, indicated by the "A" superscript designation throughout. These readers were engaged with an intensity unrivalled by other groups, and seemed to grow even further attuned as the reading process continued – values are uniformly higher for each miniscale in the Passage 2 responses, compared to the values for Passage 1. The notable exceptions to this increase are the "negative" miniscales of Disquietude and Discord, both of which decreased from Passage 1 to Passage 2. Disquietude and Discord are high (note the "A" superscripts in table 3.6) in the Passage 1 ratings; by the Passage 2 ratings, the Disquietude and Discord scores for this cluster are significantly different from, and lower than, the Disquietude and Discord scores for other clusters (note the "BC" and "B" superscripts). This suggests a building experience wherein much of the initial Disquietude and Discord was alleviated by the increasing intensity of the positive.

The experience was considered personally meaningful by this cluster, evidenced by high scores for the poem-as-a-whole ratings, which are especially concerned with self-awareness and meaningful self-implication. Inexpressibility, potentially understandable by participants as "confusion" or "incomprehensibility," did not follow the same pattern as Disquietude and

Discord, as "negative" values. This suggests that Inexpressibility is here considered a positive quality, and has little to do with mere confusion or failure to understand.

Such an understanding of Inexpressibility corresponds with this cluster's most powerfully defining aspects. Although this cluster had high scores overall, the magnitude of difference between this cluster and others is notable on three miniscales: Lost Self Boundaries (especially for Passage 2), Distributed Liveliness, and Spiritual Enlivenment. Whereas, for the other clusters, these miniscales represent the lowest overall positive values, for Cluster One these miniscales are comparable to others in their intensity. In context, then, these miniscales stand out, becoming central to the overall character of this cluster in comparison to others. When we consider that Lost Self Boundaries, Distributed Liveliness, and Spiritual Enlivenment are central aspects of mystical experience, it makes sense to consider Inexpressibility for this cluster in a similar way – the experience is intense and profound enough to make verbal or logical expression of it difficult. The spiritual element may also shed light on the diminishing Discord and Disquietude in this cluster – initial discomfort, or trepidation in the face of disquieting feelings, is diminished because of a growing sense of spiritual, physical, openness and energy. The negative elements take their place within a more powerful structure of personally meaningful connection.

Cluster Two: Secular Enactive Engagement (≈ 16% of participants): This cluster resembles Cluster One in that readers generally reported scores well above average for the group as a whole, but scores are generally more muted than

in Cluster One. As in Cluster One, we see an increase in almost all categories.

Most interestingly, the values for Disquietude and Discord increase between

passages, indicating that while this group also seemed to be undergoing an

intensifying process, it did not alleviate their sense of discomfort or trepidation.

For this cluster, Disquietude and Discord are not the lowest miniscales, indicating

that they play a more central role in this group. This may be related to the fact that

their scores for Distributed Liveliness, Spiritual Enlivenment, and Lost Self

Boundaries (as well as Reverence and Wonder) were somewhat lower ("B"

superscripts) compared to their scores on other miniscales (Disquietude, Discord,

Finitude, and Non-Utilitarian Respect for Humans, all of which feature "A"

superscripts). Perhaps their intensifying experience was more troubling because

the level of spiritual intensity in this cluster was lower than in Cluster One, and

therefore did not make the disquieting, existentially disturbing element of the

experience less "threatening." Scores were very high for many poem-as-a-whole

categories, and higher even than Cluster One for Finitude. This indicates that

while the spiritual element was not so central to this cluster as it was to Cluster

One, self-implicating meaning remained vitally important. Such a high Finitude

score might also be related to the increasing Disquietude and Discord scores;

pondering one's own weaknesses, troubles, and even death, for example, is likely

to be highly unsettling.

Cluster Three: Subjective Engagement (≈ 14% of participants): We see

a marked departure from Clusters One and Two here, in that the scores are

generally lower, and that there is a uniform, generally slight decrease between the

scores for the first and second passages. Scores are very low for Lost Self

Boundaries, Oneness, and Reverence, as we saw in Cluster Two. This may be

related to the poem-as-a-whole categories, where we see especially low values for

Distributed Liveliness and Spiritual Enlivenment, as we did in Cluster Two. Other

values in the poem-as-a-whole categories are particularly high, especially Self

Awareness. This experience appears to be characterized by a sensitivity to

foregrounding (evidenced by the very high scores in the Evocative categories);

this leads the readers to consider their lives, though not in a way that really

regards spirituality, or which takes them more deeply into the poem. The specific

passages seem to matter less than the poem as a whole, and the effects seem more

global than localized – the sense of an intensifying experience is not present as it

was in the first two clusters, which might help to explain why Discord and

Disquietude do not increase in the face of low spirituality scores. Overall, this

cluster seems to have used the poem as a springboard into self-consideration,

without a strong sense of union with the poem, or anything beyond themselves.

Cluster Four: Objective Engagement (≈ 10% of participants): Here, we

have a resumption of the intensification of experience between passages, as every

miniscale increases notably between the first and second passages. Scores are

very high for the Evocative categories, indicating a strong attunement to

foregrounding. Lost Self Boundaries, Oneness, Disquietude and Discord are

scored quite low, which again relates to the very low score for Distributed

Liveliness. Scores for Timelessness and Inexpressibility are high, while Wonder,

Reverence, and Spiritual Enlivenment are relatively neutral. Self Awareness is

remarkably high, while the other poem-as-a-whole categories are relatively neutral. This might indicate a turn toward self-examination, as a result of attunement to foregrounding, with some spiritual influence. The (muted) presence of spirituality may account for the intensifying of the experience, but in this case, while the readers have become more self aware, the meaningfulness of this "look inside" is limited. It seems more aesthetically than spiritually guided.

Cluster Five: Muted Subjective Engagement (≈ 13% of participants): While being lower overall once again, Cluster Five maintains the pattern of relatively high scores on the Evocative miniscales. The scores are highly similar between the first and second passages, with no evident pattern. Again, scores are especially low for Lost Self Boundaries, Oneness, Wonder, and Reverence, which are accompanied by similarly low Distributed Liveliness and Spiritual Enlivenment scores. However, the other poem-as-a-whole miniscales are relatively high, especially Self Awareness and Finitude. This cluster seems to have been drawn, in a muted way, to consider their own fates, without any spiritual sense – this lack of spiritual feeling might be related to the process not shifting in intensity between passage one and two, though it did not limit the potential for self-reflection.

Cluster Six: Muted Objective Engagement (≈ 17% of participants): Though higher throughout the individual-passage categories overall, this cluster is lower than Cluster Five in the poem-as-a-whole categories, indicating participants were generally more affected by particular passages, but that this did not translate well into self-consideration. Scores are markedly highest in the Evocative and

Inexpressibility categories, perhaps indicating that the foregrounding of the work brought on a feeling of inexpressibility – however, this did not prompt them to explore themselves for the answers.

Cluster Seven: Disengagement (≈ 22% of participants): Cluster Seven is uniformly lowest in every category. There is no noticeable pattern of change between the marked passages. Despite this, we see, once more, that the Evocative categories are the highest by a significant amount, indicating that these participants were more attuned to their feeling for foregrounding in the work than to their other feelings. Lost Self Boundaries, Oneness, and Reverence are very low even for this cluster, which aligns once again with very low scores for Distributed Liveliness and Spiritual Enlivenment. This cluster seemed little attuned to the poetry, and their reported (absence of) feeling bears this out.

Although all seven clusters may be of interest to those with differing research agendas, three in particular stood out as especially important to the study at hand. To begin at the end, as it were, Cluster Seven: Disengagement, is of interest as a negative pole. Readers in this cluster did not have interesting experiences with the texts they read, and since they comprise approximately 22% of all participants, their numbers make them noteworthy; if this is generally the most common kind of response, literature instructors would do well to recognize this, and take steps to avoid it.

Cluster Two: Secular Enactive Engagement, comprises a highly engaged group, self-implicating, and oriented toward the disquieting, unsettling aspects of

the text and themselves. Their focus is on the existential aspects of their lives and their reading, rather then on the spiritual dimensions of their experience.

Finally, Cluster One: Spiritual Enactive Engagement, forms a highly engaged group, for whom the negative aspects of the text and their lives, while present, do not rise to dominance: spiritual elements, a high degree of self-boundary loss and an experienced liveliness in the world outside themselves makes for an intense, yet peaceful textual encounter. Each of the clusters listed above describes a reader's reported orientation in the experiencing of a particular text. Spiritual Enactive Engagement represents a reader's orientation toward a particular kind of reading experience, while mystical poetic experiencing is a very specific, individual process that takes place during the reading of a specific text. Participants falling into the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster are especially interesting for developing an understanding of mystical poetic experiencing, because these readers have an orientation toward the kind of spiritual reading that is most compatible with mystical poetic experiencing. That is why this cluster will become the focus of Study Two.

Cluster Relationships with Other Variables:

Relationships between cluster membership and various potentially significant variables were analyzed using the chi-square statistic, but without significant findings. No relationship was discovered between cluster membership and author, cluster membership and text, or cluster membership and religious affiliation, i.e. none of these variables was found to be associated with

membership in a given cluster. The author and text findings were not entirely
surprising, because the authors and poems had been chosen initially on the basis
of perceived similarity in experiential quality and potential. One surprising
finding was that the lone Rilke selection translated by Crego also failed to
produce differences in cluster membership. This fact, and the general lack of
significant differentiation between texts, was at least partially explained in
comparative work with later studies using the same instrument (see Kuiken,
Campbell, and Sopčák). It was found that the Experiencing Questionnaire is
capable of making distinctions between texts, but that these distinctions are found
in comparisons between literary and non-literary texts, and rely on the interactive
combination (i.e. the cross product) of theoretically motivated Experiencing
Miniscales. One such combination has been termed sublime enthrallment,
combining wonder, reverence, inexpressible realizations, and self-perceptual
depth. Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák found that the overall difference between
texts was statistically significant for sublime enthrallment. Of particular relevance
to the present research, the Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák study included four
poems from the present study, and found that, compared to non-literary texts,
sublime enthrallment was significantly greater for the excerpt from Rilke's *First
Dunio Elegy* (excerpt 1 in the study presented in this chapter) and for an excerpt
from *Little Gidding* (excerpt 20 in the study presented in this chapter).

The results obtained in this study and Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopčák show
that the clusters described by the Experiencing Questionnaire indicate how
readers are attuned to their reading in a specific situation. Taken as a whole, the

Experiencing Questionnaire does not identify differences between texts. However, the sublime enthrallment measure does identify moments that emerge in the reading of some texts to a greater extent than others. Sublime enthrallment is not a synonym for mystical reading experiencing (it does not take into account spiritual enlivenment, or loss of self boundaries, for instance), but it does incorporate several of the components of such an experience, making it an interestingly comparable phenomenon. Sublime enthrallment seems to measure an experience that, in the presence of other elements, closely resembles the mystical as it has been defined throughout this thesis. Clearly, future exploration of this phenomenon is in order.

3.2 Study Two

3.2.1 Procedure

Study Two was a 37-participant (15 Male, 22 Female), two-session combined quantitative-qualitative exploration. Since Study One addressed the first three stages of the research strategy (1 – identifying the phenomenon; 2 – locating it in the wild; and 3 – learning its basic structure and distinguishing its near neighbours), Study Two was designed to address the final two stages: (4) richly articulating the phenomenon's key aspects and their interrelations, remaining open to a modified understanding; and, to a lesser extent, (5) examining whether and how it continues beyond its originary locus. Thirty-two of the 37 participants were drawn from the psychology research pool, as they had been in Study One, and were given two research participation credits. Because of the high number of

Disengaged cluster participants in Study One, I employed a more stringent

Attitudes Toward Poetry filter cutoff when possible (mass testing data were

available only for 14 participants). Students scoring in the top quartile (the quarter

expressing the greatest interest in poetry) in mass testing were eligible for the

study. Participants 418-437 were also drawn from the Psychology research pool;

as no Attitudes Toward Poetry data was available, the study was posted with the

restriction that interested students should enjoy poetry. The final three

participants, 415-417, were solicited from senior undergraduate and graduate

classes in literature. These participants received no credit for participation, but did

receive a modest remuneration of $15 upon completion of the study to subsidize

any costs incurred due to participation. These participants did not complete the

Attitudes Toward Poetry questionnaire, but their interest in poetry was assumed

because they were senior students in literary studies, and they had volunteered for

the project without being required to do so for course credit. Further, these

participants were informed at the time of contact, when they arrived for the study

(see Appendix 2, Study Two Materials), that their participation or discontinuation

of participation would have no effect on their standing in any class, or at the

university as a whole. In week one, new participants repeated all the procedures of

Study One, except that only two of the original 20 poetry selections were used. In

week two, spaced 5-8 days after the initial session, the same participants returned

for semi-structured, one-on one interviews, exploring, and in some sense

revivifying, their experience of the poem the week before.

3.2.2 Text Selection

Because this study was on a much smaller scale than the first, and because the study went further to explore individual differences, I wanted to ensure that there were as few initial differences (variables) as possible to facilitate comparison. The texts I chose for this study were the two whose passage-selection results I presented above: Excerpt 1 from Rilke's *First Duino Elegy* (see Appendix 1, Study One Materials, Text 1) and an excerpt from "The Burial of the Dead" section of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (see Appendix 1, Study One Materials, Text 11). These selections were not random. In choosing those texts, I wanted to ensure that I had one each from Rilke and Eliot, since this project is an exploration and comparison of their work. I wanted the selections to be as similar as possible with regard to presentation, meaning that they should at least be of similar length (Rilke = 25 lines, Eliot = 24). I also wanted selections that would be long enough to be multi-faceted, but short enough to provide a tightly coordinated relationship between the selection's centres of gravity: these selections fit that criterion, being in the shorter middle range of text lengths in the study.

Finally, it was important that the chosen poems possess strong centres of gravity, as measured by chosen passage frequency ratings (See Tables 3.2 and 3.3 above). Further, because Rilke's and Eliot's poetry is complex and image intensive, involving a powerful resonance between aspects of any given poem, I wanted two poems that had more than one centre of gravity, despite their relatively short length. Both chosen selections have two clear gravitational centres, one of which, at its apex line, was chosen by at least half the participants,

the other by at least a third. Finally, it was important that these centres thematically involve an experience where the self is challenged: this challenge to integration of the self, I have been arguing, is an important aspect of mystical poetic experiencing. In both poems, both gravitational centres present such a challenge. In the Rilke selection, the first centre involves the potential annihilation of the speaker by the touch of the angel; the second features the obscuring of self by the lover, and throwing out the resultant emptiness. For the Eliot selection, the first centre involves the unstable shadow of the speaker, and the terrible threat implied to that shifting self in the handful of dust; the second is a moment in the heart of light, where nothing is known between life and death.

3.2.3 The Interview Structure and Rationale

The closer we move to the phenomenon, from the basic quantitative structuring of questionnaires, to the intimacy of the interview, the more careful the methods must be to avoid destroying the delicate phenomenon. While cluster analysis can provide a structure that can be useful in understanding the thick grain of a phenomenon, a far finer grain is available in an interview, but this fineness is accompanied by a fragility that any attempt to examine it can jeopardize. The interview was designed to be sensitive to this fragility

In week two, participants returned for individual interviews, structured as follows:

1. I asked, "have you thought about the poem in any way since leaving here last week," followed by "Do you recall anything from your reading last week? A mood, a reaction you had? A particular aspect of the poem that stood out, or seemed important?"

These questions were designed to assess whether, and to what extent, the participants had "taken the poem with them" after leaving the first session; was the poem still there, coming up in their daily lives? The second question was an attempt to have participants remember what it was like to read the poem, to move back into it, as it was for them then. Sometimes, reading carries beyond the initial encounter with the text. Both questions were also a gauge of the importance and intensity of the previous week's reading.

2. I gave participants the poem marked in week one, and asked them to re-engage with their previous readings, noting the lines they had chosen, in order to refamilliarize themselves with the poem and their encounter with it.

3. I suggested that the participant imagine what it would be like to perform the poem: "I'd like you to imagine that you are about to read this poem aloud in a room where you are all alone – where no one can hear or see you. Take a moment to imagine what you would be like as you are getting ready to read, just before you begin to read aloud. As you get ready, are you standing or sitting? If you are standing, what is that like? Can you describe your posture, your body position? What is your sense of your body as you are reading? If you are sitting, what is that like? Are you

leaning forward or backward, or to the right or left, and how does that feel

bodily? Take a moment to imagine this, and when you are ready, describe

how you would look and feel as you are getting ready to read this passage

aloud."

This exercise was designed to move the participants into the poem, and to move

the poem into their present space. Asking participants to imagine reading the

poem aloud was an attempt to extend their involvement. Their whole self, in their

gestures, postures, and voice, is invited into the expression of the poem (Gendlin,

Focusing).

4. Participants were then told to consider the first passage they marked in

last week's reading: "What sense do you get from this passage? How does

this passage strike you? Does a feeling emerge, or a mood?"

At this point of the interview, I asked the participants to consider the text more

explicitly and specifically. There was something about the passages marked the

week before that was captivating. I wanted participants to regain the sense they

had of this, and to take it into their present experience.

5. I asked about the same of the second marked passage.

Questioning participants about the passages in order was an attempt to evaluate

them in the context created by their participation the week before. The meaning

for them of the second selection was cast in the light of the first, which is what

this design accomplishes (compared to, for instance, asking about the selections in

a randomized order, or a different order for every participant, in order to discover

something about each selection on its own).

6. Finally, participants were invited to "think back to a time in your life when these feelings, the sense you get from the poem, was with you. What was this like? Can you describe it?" After their response, I concluded with the following: "Does the poem have anything to say about that experience? How does it position you in relation to it? How is it different?"

Just as consideration of the participant-selected passages was a move more explicitly into the poem, from the previously established context of experiential embodiment, this question turns the participants more explicitly toward their own lives. The question does not ask about memory (just as Question 1 did not ask whether participants remembered the text from last week); instead, the question prompts the participant to consider when the sense of the poem was for them. This kind of question was an attempt to help participants avoid linking objects or events from the poem to objects and events from their past. Rather than a kind of association, where the poem is a springboard (once used, left behind) into a life event, I wanted them to use their whole sense of the poem as an entry into their lives, keeping life and poem simultaneously present, and mutually informing.

We are now in a position to address the five difficulties posed by mystical poetic experience that were outlined in Chapter 1: 1) it is felt to be too personal to be communicated or risked; 2) it is so profound that nothing more needs to be said; 3) it is too complex for words; 4) readers may only be somewhat aware of their bodies and felt senses during reading; and 5) poetry can be difficult to

understand. The design of this part of the study was an attempt to overcome these obstacles, by employing the following five principles consistently:

1) Open a safe space for exploration and expressive failure. Encouraging participants to move slowly, at their own pace, eliminates some of the anxiety associated with a "get the task done" mentality characteristic of, for instance, literature exams. Also useful here is an insistence, during the briefing and at points throughout the interview, that there are no wrong responses, and that the things they are trying to describe can be complex and hard to express.

2) Take one aspect at a time. Describing a complex, thick sense or feeling can be stultifying, even overwhelming. Asking about and then pursuing one aspect of an experience is often far simpler. The interview facilitates one-aspect-at–a-time consideration by pursuing in-depth a line of participant-generated description, asking for detail and clarification, without pushing on to other lines of inquiry. Of course, every aspect of the reading experience is present in all the rest – it is not as though by focusing on a single aspect of the experience, participants are able to wipe themselves clean of all the others. This would actually be detrimental to their, and our, understanding of the reading experience. Rather, the focus on a single aspect of the experience in light of all the others both makes it more explicit, and tells us something about the entire complex.

3) Require explicit agency. Reading is popularly considered a passive activity, like television watching, where "consumption" is the dominant metaphor. However, this kind of belief can

prevent engagement with a text. To capture something of the profound kind of experiencing under investigation here, it is important to invite the participants to "get into" the texts in question. One way of doing this is asking the participants to underline physically passages they find striking and evocative. This requires them to consult themselves to determine what most stood out. They physically do something with the poem, reach into it, and make it their own. Also, it allows for the focusing on key pieces in the overall reading experience – the experience of a single passage, chosen because it was most powerful, is easier to describe than the entire poem.

4) Involve the body.

It is important to note that reading is not located in a brain cut off from the rest of a person. Asking participants to tell us what they are thinking about can be a self-defeating gesture. After the question, they are thinking about what they are thinking about, which can quickly lead to an unfortunate, confusing loop of meta-reflection (i.e. "I'm thinking about trying to explain what I'm thinking about the poem"). We expect our thoughts to be explicable and expressible. When they are not, silence and discomfort arise. Instead of asking participants what is in their heads right now, it is sometimes easier to ask them about what is in their bodies. This distinction is somewhat artificial, of course, since everything they are feeling is also in some way "in their heads," but by helping them move away from the cranial prison of introspection, it is possible to help make them aware of a bodily felt sense of something to which they would not have attended with the "thinking" kind of question.

5) Bring life in.

Poems can be very difficult to grasp firmly, and anxiety about being unable to "figure them out" is potentially paralyzing. One way readers sometimes naturally bridge the understanding gap is through relation to personal experience. Asking participants to refer to their own experience explicitly is a way to help them past this problem, and another way to involve them in the poem. A powerful caution is warranted here: there is an important difference between asking the participants to compare specific events in their lives to specific events in a poem, and asking them to relate their felt sense of a poem to a time in their lives when that same felt sense was with them. In the former, you are inviting a comparison of details that may or may not bear directly on their experience of the poem. A poem, say Rilke's "Panther," explicitly deals with an animal in a zoo. Asking participants for a comparison of specific events in their lives would likely lead to recounting their zoo visits, and would limit the range of discussion to such specific circumstances. The latter kind of question, asking about a shared felt sense, could also allow for participants to recount their zoo experiences, but it makes their felt sense focal. They might have experienced the sense of futility and isolation arising from the poem in an entirely different kind of situation and in a more powerful and relevant way than any zoo experience they might have undergone. By focusing on the sense, rather than the scene, the participant's life can enter the discussion in a more direct, meaningful way.

3.2.4 Results

After the study was completed, a profile matching strategy was employed to determine in which of the seven Study One clusters each of the Study Two participants belonged. I then identified the participants closest to their cluster centres as exemplary, and examined those interviews to get a richer sense of the kind of conversation that characterized each experience. Finally, I examined more specifically all the interviews for each member of the clusters I found most relevant to the kind of profound reading I was interested in, and noted recurrent meaning expressions to better flesh out their overlap and divergence, both from each other, and from what was anticipated by the quantitative data. This methodological diversity combined with significant between-study overlap allowed for confirmation of previous results at the same time triangulation was at work providing "evidential coherence" (Miall and Kuiken), ensuring that the blind spots of one study were illuminated, and not deepened, by the next.

A profile matching strategy was employed to determine to which clusters, established in Study One, the Study Two participants belonged. The number of participants matched to the three clusters of primary interest were as follows: Spiritual Enactive Engagement: 4; Secular Enactive Engagement: 9; Disengagement: 3. Though the size of the group was much smaller (37 in total, about 8.4% of the total involved in Study One), the percentages of participants in each cluster for Study Two were noticeably different, except for Spiritual Enactive Engagement, which remained about consistent (near 11%, compared to about 9% in Study One). Secular Enactive Engagement numbers increased from 16% in Study One to about 24% in Study Two. The largest difference occurred

with the Disengagement cluster, which plummeted from about 22% of the total in Study One to about 8% in Study Two.

The increase in the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster might have been due to the solicitation of participants more interested in, and therefore familiar with, poetry: this suggests that an important aspect of Secular Enactive Engagement is detailed interpretive involvement with the poem, in a way that involves the participants in a process of textual and self-critical encounter, keeping a strong emphasis on the potentially negative self-challenging aspects of the experience. The decrease in Disengaged participants was hoped for and hypothesized in the design of the second study: it seems that changing the criterion for participation in the study from a score above the median in the Attitudes Toward Poetry questionnaire, to a score in the top quartile, significantly reduced the number of participants who were not engaged with the poetry. Simply insisting that participants have an enjoyment of poetry also seems to have been effective, as there were no differences observed between participants who completed the Attitudes Toward Poetry questionnaire, and those who did not. Finally, the consistent percentages noted between studies for the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster indicate a certain stability in this kind of experience: raising the bar for Attitudes Toward Poetry, and inviting participants from advanced literature classes (none of whom appear in the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster), had no effect. This suggests, at least preliminarily, that Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants in Study One were likely already in

the top quartile of the Attitudes Toward Poetry scores, and that literary training

was not a major factor for the kind of experience reported.

Cluster Characteristics

Close examination of the transcripts revealed important patterns of

difference between the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster, and the other

clusters of interest (Secular Enactive Engagement and Disengagement). Although

the focus of this qualitative analysis was the Spiritual Enactive Engagement

Cluster, considerations of the other two (the most and least similar clusters)

helped to identify what was most characteristic of this cluster's style.

Comparisons to the Disengagement cluster provided a coarser-grained overview,

while comparisons to the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster provided a finer

grained differentiation.

Aspects of Spiritual Enactive Engagement

In all of the examples that follow, the letter ("P" or "I" indicates the

speaker, either Participant or Interviewer). The number (e.g. 414) indicates the

code number by which the participant was known throughout the study. Odd

numbers (e.g. 435) indicate the participant read the Eliot selection, while even

numbers (e.g. 414) indicate the participant read the Rilke selection. "M" or "F"

designates the participant's gender, while the bracketed term (i.e. Spiritual

Enactive Engagement) provides the participant's cluster membership, based on

the Experiencing Questionnaire profile obtained in the first study session held a

week before the interview. Finally, all examples have been edited for grammar and clarity (See Appendix 2, Study Two, Transcript Examples, for examples of complete, unedited transcripts).

1: Dwelling with troubling feelings in a safe space the poem provides

As expected from the Experiencing Questionnaire cluster profile in Study One, Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants uniformly indicated a happiness, peacefulness, and calm. Only two members of the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster reported anything similar, and none of the Disengaged participants did. Examples from the interview transcripts were telling:

414M (Spiritual Enactive Engagement)

> P: When I read the poem I felt first like angels . . . and the creatures that I imagined, special things. I think I was kind of relaxed a little bit. . . .The first passage that I had chosen had been scary, and I felt that more intensely. But after that, it changed . . . So it was a little bit more peaceful. Relaxing. Yeah, it's two stages, really.

We know from Study One that participants in this cluster did experience some Discord and Disquietude, but that these troubling feelings diminished as the reading continued. Here, the participant explicitly presents this progression, moving from something "scary" to something more "peaceful" or "relaxing." Even in the presence of troubling, scary, intense feelings, these participants seem to be in a safe place. They are not overwhelmed by their negative considerations.

435F (Spiritual Enactive Engagement)

P: When I feel lonely I just want to read something really sad or really

the same as my feeling. Then I will . . . come back to life. So I think

that's the way the poem is; when people feel lonely and read this

poem, it gives a fresh start. It feels a lot like sunshine. Like that. And

just, I can't really describe it, like you will smile at the world and say

oh, that's another day. . . . You feel that you are reborn.

This participant explicitly talks about the poem as a reset, or rebirth – even though

she had discussed such things as her grandfather's dementia and the end of a

serious relationship earlier, she is able to see the experience in a positive light.

She is able to dwell in the poem, experiencing its negative aspects, as well as her

own, without being subsumed by them. She emerges from a troubled

consideration into a fresh new sense of her life, like a new day dawning after

darkness.

The feeling of "rebirth," or moving from heightened anxiety and

disquietude to calm and happiness is the result of some key aspects of mystical

poetic experiencing. The initial disquietude accompanies the challenge the poem

poses to readers' sense of self, opening them into existential considerations, and

uniting them more closely with the poem. Readers, challenged and opened to

what the poem provides, are able to merge with it, allowing it to answer the

challenges and questions that it has posed, endowing the poem with agency, and

diminishing the readers' volition. As the sense of self expands into the new

categorical understandings made available by the poem, a feeling of the resolution

of the initial conflicts and questions arises, leading to feelings of happiness, joy, release, and calm, diminishing the initial anxiety and disquiet.

This motion from being troubled or frightened into being peaceful, relaxed, and rejuvenated is contrasted by participants in the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster. These participants did not emerge from their troubling considerations of the poem and their own lives into a positive, fresh understanding, but tended to dwell in the negative, and to address issues in their own lives that were still troubling and painful. Commenting on a failed relationship, this participant says the following:

406M (Secular Enactive Engagement)

> P: Just saying, I'm just looking back now, so it's not that bad. But it's there, and it's just as it was more or less.

This sounds like the expression of a wound that has never closed. The participant acknowledges his temporal distance from the event by acknowledging that, here and now, he is "just looking back." This distance has made the loss easier to deal with, in a way, so that it is not as painful in this setting as it was at the time. However, this is no escape, moving past, or rebirth. As he reads the poem and considers his sense of loss, he finds it still there, present in his current experience of the poem, and finds that it is unchanged. There has been no carrying forward of his experience into a larger structure that may make sense of it, or allow him to see it as part of a possible overall life trajectory. It is still just there, almost as it was. The initial sense of anxiety or disquietude is not diminished, but instead is intensified. This reader is coming close to the poem, and his sense of self is

challenged or questioned by what emerges in it for him; however, unlike the Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants, the emerging sense of unity with the poem cannot reach the same level, and the sense of personal agency cannot be abated to the same extent, because of the sense that what is arising cannot be safely explored and fully experienced. Such a powerful sense of threat that remains, and grows even more intense throughout the reading experience, seems to indicate against mystical poetic experiencing.

It is important to note that participants in the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster did not simply experience the poetry as light, uplifting, or energizing. There is a strong involvement with the same kinds of disturbing poem elements and life experiences that are present in other clusters, notably Secular Enactive Engagement. The key difference is that Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants encounter these troubling aspects of their experience from a place of openness and "letting go" or "release" that participants in other clusters are not able to muster. The depth of their engagement with such negative aspects is powerful enough that they do not merely note, or recognize them in their lives, or in the poetry, while simply putting them aside or dismissing them in favour of more positive considerations – they report feeling, in the moment of responding, and while reading the poetry, the fear or sadness they discuss. This disturbing feeling opens Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants into themselves, into their personal experiences and lives as a whole. The difference between these participants and Secular Enactive Engagement participants is the character of this opening. In Secular Enactive Engagement, participants open into a particular

troubling experience in the poem, and in their own lives, and remain focused on it, leave it unresolved and not integrated into a wider life perspective. It remains an abscess usually safely sealed from the sense of self, an unresolved problem, until thrust into presence by the poem. For Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants, the unsettling experiences they address are integrated into a wider perspective on their lives, and life in general. The sense of self has been challenged, but this challenge has resulted in a modulation, a development of fresh ways of thinking and feeling that results in an experience with the poem that welcomes the vulnerability it requires: mystical poetic experiencing is the process that creates the reported experiential differences between Spiritual Enactive Engagement and Secular Enactive Engagement.

2. Taking forward a strong sense of the previous week's reading

Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants all had a strong sense of the poem from the previous week. This was also true for five of the Secular Enactive Engagement participants, and, as might be expected, for none of the Disengaged participants. Again, it is important to note that this has little to do with memory of specific details of the poem. Rather, it indicates the ability and willingness to take forward the sense of the poetic experience. To show this in the participants' own words, I present some examples:

414M (Spiritual Enactive Engagement)

> P: I don't have a clear sense about religious issues because I'm not a
>
> religious person. I guess what I have is – something like ghosts or
>
> angels of humans – just buzzing around your head. And – it's hard to

describe. I chose those two passages not because I understand them,

but because there are some words that relate to the – the god-power of

those creatures. But I thought I should choose them.

The kind of memory he describes is complex and thick, present but difficult to articulate. He comes up with a phrase that kind of fits – the godpower of those creatures – giving him a "handle" in Eugene Gendlin's (*Focusing*) terminology – it describes his grasp on the felt sense he is grappling with, and that allows him to return to it and touch on it again through the interview. He does not mention remembering specific lines or events from the poem, but rather, important aspects of his experience of it. It was involving and intense enough that he is able to recapture it, without even being shown the poem again.

434M (Spiritual Enactive Engagement)

P: The poem conveyed a sense of human emotional bonding. Like

when he was saying it was like an angel grasped another person in his

arms, talking about beauty and – I actually forget how the rest of it

goes but it just seemed like I could identify with emotions that I think

of, but not consciously and not even really in words.

This participant goes even further in explicitly expressing his difficulty finding words for his experience of last week. He recalls little of the detail of the poem, but has a strong sense of emotional bonding, most clearly symbolized by the gesture of the angel clasping a person close. The gesture, not simply a static image (e.g. the angel) is what is captivating. The ineffability reported here is of the kind outlined in the proposed model of mystical poetic experiencing; there is a

strong felt sense that can be captured to some extent by a gesture, but that is difficult to capture in words. This difficulty is not the result of confusion or poor concentration on the reading. Rather, the complex intensity of the felt sense of the poem, while being sensed as immediately present and available to consider, is initially overwhelming to a reader's logical ordering and categorizing abilities. This failure of existing categorical understandings is central to mystical poetic experiencing.

Compare the kind of carrying forward shown in Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants above to a parallel response from a Disengaged participant:

413M (Disengagement)

> P: I guess it was talking about religion, but I'm not really into religion, so – yeah. I guess that probably sticks out the most.
>
> I: And anything specific about that?
>
> P: Umm. Not really, no. No.

Even with some prompting, this participant had nothing more to say. He had remembered a vague theme, religion, but no sense of what this was for him during his reading. His sense of last week is gone, indicating both a lack of personal involvement, and a lack of intensity in the experience. His failure to articulate the felt sense of the poem is not due to inexpressibility, but rather to disinterest and distance – very little is present to articulate, as opposed to the Spiritual Enactive Engagement or Secular Enactive Engagement participants who have, in a sense, *too much* to easily articulate.

3. Circling through dynamic resonating metaphors to describe a felt sense

All Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants circled through dynamic resonating metaphors to describe difficult felt senses. The process involved beginning with a sense of the poem, usually captured in a metaphorical phrase (i.e. the "god-power of those creatures"). Then, in attempting to describe another aspect of the poem, or of their experience, they would use a new metaphorical phrase, sometimes with explicit comparison to the first (this is the circling), that captured a similar (it resonated with the earlier phrase) but slightly different aspect of the experience. This process continued through multiple iterations, describing a developing sense of the poem through its parts (a dynamic, unfolding understanding). The process involved in this circling is a key component of mystical poetic experiencing. Some examples show this progression:

414M (Spiritual Enactive Engagement)

(The participant is here commenting on where he imagines he would be performing the poem. His first metaphoric phrase, quoted above, is the "god-power "of those creatures.)

> P: Well, I think it's basically a room like this, but it's really a dark
> one. And – when I read the poem, I sit before the computer. So there's
> just the light of the computer. There's no other light in the room. And
> there's something – something unknown sitting somewhere in the
> room with me. And when I look back, I see nothing.
>
> I: And how does that feel for you?
>
> P: A little bit scary.

I: How scary?

P: Not that scary. Because when I read the poem the door is open. If I closed the door, I think it would be more scary. I think the door is not completely closed, like there is an opening.

The sense of the god-power of the creatures, like ghosts or angels, he mentions at the beginning of his interview has developed as he further considers different aspects of the poem. Here, the darkness and light, the ghosts and the angels, arise again, accompanied by his feeling of there being something mysterious and unknown in the room with him. Everything remains vague: he cannot clearly see these beings, even in his imagination, for when he looks back, the presence he feels is gone. But this is more developed, and fleshed out, than his first description. The initial feelings of fear and mystery in the imagined space he occupies with the poem, combined with his sense that there is another agent present, shows how this reader is moving through a gradually intensifying process of mystical poetic experiencing.

Further, his description of the room could stand as a metaphor for how Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants were able to make the poem the safe place for personal exploration of troubling feelings that characterizes mystical poetic experiencing. In imagining performing the poem, he feels himself completely inside it, and the sense he has of it fills up the space in which he is doing his reading performance. However, as he explains, he is not trapped or stuck within it – the door remains ajar. He is choosing to dwell in the world the poem creates, and in the feelings that come up for him, no matter how scary, in

part at least because he knows there is some escape – the door is ajar. So, while mystical poetic experiencing features a progression from greater disquietude to greater calm and happiness, this participant illustrates that both senses are present to some degree throughout the entire process. Even at the beginning, where disquietude is highest, there is still some sense that this place of exploration is safe, evidenced by the partially opened door metaphor used by this participant.

He continues later in the interview:

> P: Have you ever been in a dark aisle, and just by yourself and you feel that someone is standing behind you? That's pretty much that feeling. . . . It is not trying to harm you, but it's pretty scary I think.

He has now moved the setting of his sense into a new space, a dark aisle. There is a greater sense of narrow confines, being restricted, but at the same time, an extension of the space in front of and behind him. There is still some presence behind him, a seemingly more human presence, but he does not confirm this time whether he turns to see it. It is clear that his sense of agency is melding with the sense of agency that arises for him from the poem; the "same" agentive presence he noted before now resembles him more closely (it is more human), and is not felt to be as separate from him (it is not something he even tries to turn around to look at, as if he could catch a glimpse of something external, as he did in the instance illustrated above). His unity with the poem grows more powerful in his mystical poetic experiencing, and his sense of self and his sense of the poem are growing more and more similar. The light is now gone, but the sense of threat

remains low, perhaps even diminished. It is scary, as it was before, but he does not feel as though the presence is going to hurt him. This sense develops further:

> P: It's like a small village. With heavy fog. You can't see very far. There are several trees. And it's very overcast. Really dark. And – you can feel there's sort of like shadows in the fog, but you don't really know. . . . You feel that that's the source of shadows.

Each of these metaphors touches on something that remains stable, though there is an unfolding development as he moves through different aspects of his understanding. He is working out this sense as he works through the poem, and each is facilitating the other. Here, the scene has moved further away from the comfort of his reading room at home, but back into a village he lived in when he was younger; the increasing distance from a protected feeling of safety indoors is also an increasingly open space, less confining and potentially entrapping. At the same time, although the scene is more open and potentially dangerous, it is set in a place of his childhood, most familiar. His sense of self has been challenged and now opened to such an extent that the boundaries between temporally distant senses of himself are softened; his crossing of ontological boundaries in this union with the poem has enabled him to cross other kinds of ontological boundaries as well, between different senses of himself. This crossing is achieved through the intensity of the union with the poem, which in turn has allowed the poem such agency that the reader can take on the vulnerability of a child, willing and eager to be guided. This is an excellent, specific example of how the increasing sense of unity involved in mystical poetic experiencing can lead to diminished agency, and

a vulnerability that permits the experience to lead the open reader to fresh

understandings of himself, both within the situation of reading, and beyond.

When asked what his sense was as he finished the poem, he described his

initial sense of fear, in its intensity, but comments that as he continued, and finally

finished the poem, he felt far more relaxed and peaceful (quoted above). Then,

consulting the final lines of the selection ("Fling the emptiness out of your arms/

into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds/ will feel the expanded air with more

passionate flying") he describes his developing sense further:

> P: I thought I was flying through this window. . . . It's a pretty holy
>
> thing I think. . . . It seems like my body has become lighter. And I'm
>
> flying out of the window. . . . My head is like a room that is
>
> completely white. And it's a very large space. Have you ever seen the
>
> movie – you must have seen that movie, *The Matrix*? (I: Yes.) Yeah.
>
> When Neo is reloading the matrix, there's white space. It's pretty
>
> much like that.

Although the direct embodiment of the bird's flight the participant takes on is an

interesting response to that line in the poem, the sense he describes is firmly

rooted in his previous metaphoric scenes. The gradually opening sense he

described in previous scenes (the dark room, the dark aisle, the foggy village) now

completes a certain trajectory – he describes his mind as bright white, a large

room, like when Neo reloads the matrix in the film. He does not move into

consideration of the film, away from the poem. Instead, he brings a sense and

image that he has carried forward from the film into his experience with the poem

in order to flesh it out more fully (compare the modernist tendency to use allusion in a similar way). This scene from the film is especially powerful: in it, the entire world (an artificial reality lived by the mass of humanity) is reset. In that moment, the screen is just pure, bright white, and there is only silence. It is relatively quick, the breath between one life and the next, but all the more profound for its ephemerality. There are no more boundaries in this metaphor, and no more darkness, completing the move from darkness and confinement to light and freedom. This freedom is fully expressed in the participant's flight, out the window of the room. He is simultaneously in his present space of the interview (the room), the space of his reading of the poem the previous week (the same room), the space of the poem (the birds and flung emptiness), and the space of his own imagining (his "head" like a bright room). He freely crosses these ontological boundaries by the end of the poem, indicating an embodied involvement of the highest kind. The sense of fear he had been experiencing from the shadows, the ghosts and angels, has largely dissipated: by the end, he has taken on something of their god-power in flight, and been rejuvenated by the flung emptiness in so doing. He has completed the progression from disquietude to release characteristic of mystical poetic experiencing.

Some Secular Enactive Engagement participants also enter into the kind of circling through dynamic resonating metaphors to describe a felt sense, but many take an alternate approach – the concern with explicit interpretation is far more alive in that cluster, often resulting in a far less connected path through possibilities, as in the following example:

437F (Secular Enactive Engagement)

(She responds after being asked to say something about her sense of the first

passage she marked: "A heap of broken images where the sun beats/ And the dead

tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,/ And the dry stone no sound of water.")

> P: In that scene? Maybe helpless, maybe. You have to, maybe you
>
> have to find a way to make things happen. . . . Maybe sad. Or like
>
> there's nothing you can do about it. Maybe it takes time to repair or
>
> some sort of thing. Or it's nature – that's the thing so you can't change
>
> it or something. So you accept what is there maybe. Relax.

After reporting a weak sense of the previous week's reading (commenting only on

a "sad mood"), this participant has little to carry forward into the interview. She

reports a sense of helplessness, of needing to make something happen, of sadness

that cannot be helped, that will take time to repair. This is all coherent, though the

constant use of the word "maybe" indicates that she is not really endorsing any of

these options. It is as though she is considering this scene for the first time, and

describing its attributes in a logically associative way. She ends this section by

coming up with a "solution" that will account thematically for the feelings that

have been presented: nature, that which is unchangeable, that which must be

accepted because it cannot be changed. She ends by making a thematic statement,

finding a possible "moral" (still provisional because of the uncertainty of

"maybe") for the scene in the form of advice – "relax." This kind of problem-

solving approach to the poem continues throughout the interview. In response to a

question about her second chosen passage: "Your arms full and your hair wet. I

could not/ Speak and my eyes failed. I was neither/ Living nor dead and I knew nothing," she has posited two participants in the scene, and describes their relationship as follows:

> P: Maybe the other person does have hope. But she is all dead and hopeless, so maybe they are two totally different people. In a different lifetime I guess. So it's like a contrast, between those. Maybe that person is what she wants to become.

Again, we see a developing interpretation of the scene, without the anchor of a felt sense to consult or return to. She suggests there could be two people, one hopeful and one hopeless. She then suggests the hopeful figure is aspirational for the hopeless one, perhaps. It is clear that she is most interested in attempting to figure out the poem, and how its situations logically fit together. She is not involving herself in the experience, but keeping it at arm's length to analyze.

When this participant is specifically asked to turn toward life, she does, but in largely the same manner as she had been interpreting the poem:

> P: Well maybe sometimes you get into an argument with somebody. So you just don't want to argue anymore, so maybe at that time, in that single moment you would be like "I don't care anymore." So maybe, something like that.

The participant has adduced this scenario as a parallel to the numbness she described earlier, concerning the hyacinth girl. She is making the attempt to think of a situation where one could be numb, but it remains general, something that could happen, that happens to people, rather than a specific time when she has

experienced this. She makes a link from the poem to life, but to life in general, rather than her own.

Defying Expectations from Disengagement

Coming to understand mystical poetic experiencing through Spiritual Enactive Engagement, and vice versa, has been the primary goal of this study, and comparison to Secular Enactive Engagement has allowed me to shed some light on its key aspects. However, what I have referred to as the third cluster of interest, Disengagement, has something to show us about moving disengaged or resistant readers into a more receptive attitude, so they may begin reading in a more engaged, personally involving way. This has obvious pedagogical benefits, which by itself makes its inclusion worthwhile, but it also speaks to the effectiveness of the methods employed to enhance, intensify, and invite readers into a more profound textual encounter.

While working through the cluster exemplar for Disengagement (the participant closest to the cluster centre, the best example of Disengagement provided by the study), I noticed a marked transition, perhaps even a transformation, taking place as the interview progressed. She begins, predictably, in resistance and distaste for the poem. She has no real sense of it from the previous week, and claims that the Experiencing Questionnaire measures did not fit her reading, because they asked for too great an experience, which the poem never delivered. In her own words:

429F (Disengagement)

P: Well, I knew I had an interview so I was trying to figure out how I felt about the poem and stuff and the more I thought about it the more I – I was kind of apathetic about it. Because it didn't – the questions that were asked like how did the poem affect you and everything, did it give you an awe-inspiring moment, it was like no, not really. It was just a poem I read and like whatever.

She is as articulate about her reasons for disliking the poem as she is about her skepticism for the task:

P: I like poems that have structure. And that have rhymes, and to me that one was so hard to read. And I didn't like the way that it just had one word at the end and started a different verse, and it just didn't flow in my mind. And when it doesn't flow then it doesn't captivate me.

It is difficult to imagine a response more disengaged than this one. Not only has she not become involved with the poem, she has explicitly stated that she was neither involved nor captivated. She is both disengaged and explicitly explaining her disengagement. By the time we get to the first passage she selected ("I will show you fear in a handful of dust"), however, she has something to work with:

P: In the movie *Swing Kids*. There's this part where the guy has to bring a box to this woman and he's a German soldier and he brings a box to this woman's house. And every single time that he did the woman would cry. And she'd be bawling and hysterical. So finally one day he goes and he opens it up. He kept bringing all these boxes,

he opened the parcel and what he finds inside is, I think the word,

Verräter, meaning traitor? And the ashes and the ring inside. So that

was all the traitors, burnt.

This participant, like the Spiritual Enactive Engagement participant above who

referenced *The Matrix*, brings in a profound scene from a film to describe her

sense of the poem. Whereas in her initial reading a week before the image of a

handful of dust was not highly meaningful, it has become so during the more

intense consideration the interview invites. However, unlike the Spiritual Enactive

Engagement participant, she begins to engage the film, rather than the poem:

P: It's – like right now my heart, it kind of feels heavier. And it's just

– I find it so sick that someone could do that? And you feel for these

women that actually had to go through that. And it's disturbing. And

sad.

Turning to the second passage she selected ("And the dead tree gives no shelter,

the cricket no relief"), this participant finds herself taking the sense she developed

in considering the film into the poem:

P: You see it in your mind like a tree that has no leaves, it has no sap

running through it, it's completely dead, it has no life and it can't give

you any shelter and the cricket's no relief, like whenever you sit by a

pond and you can hear the crickets and the frogs and everything, that

gives you a sense of just calmness and sereneness, and if you don't

have that then it's like you're restless and you're just – wanting to do

something. You can't calm down. . . .It's kind of like you can hear the

pounding. In your brain. And that's all you hear. And you're thinking

so fast, you're trying to figure out everything and yet nothing calms

you down. It's just like a restlessness and anxiety that just

overwhelms you. And you can't calm down. And nothing makes you

feel calm and nothing makes you feel happy.

The participant has identified a central tension in the scene: the ruined potential

for peace and serenity. These natural elements are commonly associated with

contemplation, much like the lone tree that Rilke uses in its standard way in the

First Elegy: "Perhaps there remains for us/ some tree on a hillside, which every

day we can take/ into our vision" (13-15). The serene, still pool appropriate to

such an oasis is suggested through the insistent absence of water, rendering these

lines a dark, despairing parody of the mystic's or contemplative's natural retreat.

Faced with this, and carrying forward the sadness, shock, and despair of the scene

from *Swing Kids*, this participant begins the process of circling through dynamic

resonating metaphors (described above as characteristic of the Spiritual Enactive

Engagement cluster), and in so doing, is launched into the poem in a way that is

personally involving. As she expresses the anxiety and breathlessness of the

scene, she begins speaking more quickly, feeling personally implicated,

understanding and embodying, expressing the tone of the poem.

Finally, in the turn-toward-life section of the interview, she is somewhere

she never expected to be:

I: You talked about the scene here and where you put yourself when you imagined it. In someone else's shoes. Could you describe the scene for me when you've been there in your own shoes?

P: {pause} I think I'm going to cry. For me when it's in my own shoes is a lot of the depression. So you're looking for that shelter. To try and not be depressed? Because that depression feeling, it's so consuming and you try to be happy and you can't. And that could be like representative of the dead tree. Because you feel so dead inside and you just – you can't get over it and nothing makes you feel happy. . . and it doesn't matter how many things you buy or how many great people are surrounding you, you just feel so empty and dead. Because you can't get happy. Sorry. [crying]

Once she is explicitly invited to move from a third-person to a first-person perspective, the poem surprises her – she finds herself implicated in a way that she had not thought possible during last week's reading. Though she has powerfully brought her own experience to bear on the poem, she has stopped moving away from it (as she did initially when she introduced the scene from *Swing Kids*), and returns to it even in the expression of her greatest emotion: the figure of the tree, central to this passage, is explicitly addressed, and its symbolic value powerfully comes to the fore.

In a sense, she had not been reading at all last week. She could not "get into" the poem, and it did not "get into" her. Through the guided process of the interview, she was able to really read this poem for the first time. The turn toward

life seemed to surprise and open up the other Disengaged participants as well. It is as though, unlike the other groups, the possibility had not occurred to them that they could be implicated in the poem, and they are just recognizing this for the first time when it is suggested to them in the interview. This participant's tears arise, in part, from that sense of surprise; she did not expect to be taken in, let alone overwhelmed by the poem, and so was entirely unprepared for the effect it may have on her. She grew unexpectedly vulnerable as the interview progressed, and was not aware of this till she was overcome with emotion. It posed a challenge to her sense of self, but, unlike participants in the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster, and very like participants in the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster, what arose in the challenge was something painful left "just as it was, more or less," and its exposure was powerfully felt.

3.3 Discussion

The decision to employ quantitative measures before qualitative analysis requires some explanation. The usual research role for qualitative and quantitative methods is described by Van Peer et al., who state that "Qualitative methods are to be used whenever one is confronted with a field or topic that has hardly been investigated and where few theories or hypotheses exist" (59). When theories and hypotheses abound, quantitative methods are most fitting, though "qualitative approaches may be employed in such a situation to explore hidden or unknown aspects of the topic further" (59). Qualitative methods "tend to be more appropriate to generate insights and hypotheses," whereas "quantitative methods

are generally more geared toward testing existing theories or hypotheses" (59). It is clear that the role of qualitative research is often a preliminary one, leading to the generation of theories and hypotheses that will be confirmed and elaborated through quantitative analysis. The real payoff, according to this kind of research orientation, is quantitatively specifiable, highly generalizable results. Magliano and Graesser outline their three-pronged approach to studying inference generation in literary texts, providing a good example of the usual qualitative-quantitative direction:

> The three-pronged method coordinates verbal protocols, theories of text comprehension, and behavioral measures. Verbal protocols are used to empirically uncover potential inferences. The theories provide a principled foundation for making predictions regarding the types of inferences that are comprehension generated versus those types that are not comprehension generated. Finally, behavioral measures provide rigorous methods for assessing empirically whether a particular class of inferences is generated online. (207)

The first prong involves the qualitative process of identifying inferences from verbal protocols provided by participants. The second applies theory to organize the provided inferences, and the third puts the theory to the test through rigorous, quantitative methods. The qualitative work comes first, giving the theory something basic to work on, leading to the ultimate goal of quantitatively testable measures. This is not the trajectory of my research program, though such outcomes are not unwelcome, where warranted.

Van Peer et al. grant that "qualitative methods are more dependent on actual real life experience than quantitative methods. They demand skills that are more difficult to acquire through the study of a [text]book. You need more training 'in the field,' more background knowledge, more life experience, highly developed social and verbal skills, and so forth" (59). In short, you have to know more to conduct qualitative research successfully. But if this is true, it means that the qualitative → quantitative trajectory has things backwards, beginning with the more difficult, challenging work, and ending with conclusions drawn from less demanding, less real-life-connected research. Whatever is most interesting in literary reading, like the potential for profound experience, is only going to be fleshed out by research that remains as near to the lived experience as possible, and that draws its conclusions from this close, involved investigation.

To this end, the role of quantitative methods in my research, while central, occupies the preliminary ground. Instead of using quantification to refine my well-worked-over data, I employ it from the outset to make gross, but useful distinctions in the experiences reported by readers. Early quantification is ideal for identifying broad categories of experience, and pointing out the most obviously distinguishing features of these categories. For Study One, cluster analysis provided a rapid and effective categorization of experiences, allowing the data provided to dictate the number of groups formed and their common characteristics. This had the benefit of revealing the most statistically stable categories available from the questionnaire data, creating relationships between items within groups that would have been difficult to discern otherwise. Taken as

a whole (considering the reports of all 301 participants), correlations between many items are not particularly high, nor statistically significant. Reverence, for example, is not significantly correlated with Lost Self Boundaries. However, once the clusters have been formed, this relationship between Reverence and Lost Self Boundaries, where it emerges, is revealed as a key to understanding one interesting way of experiencing the poems in question. The identification of these group-specific relationships allowed the research program to progress more rapidly, focusing on the most salient aspects of the relevant experiences, and exploring these more deeply through richer qualitative methods. The quantitative allows for an initial narrowing of the field of investigation, in a way that is far more efficient than qualitative methods would allow. The quantitative, specializing in sweeping organization, takes advantage of the power of numeric ordering, at the correct level of abstraction at the outset of research. Then, throughout the research program, quantitative analysis is paired with the qualitative to buttress the results of each.

To see where this empirical work has taken us, let us recall for a moment the five stages of this project, considering them as requirements of the research: (1) identifying the phenomenon; (2) locating it in "the wild"; (3) learning its basic structure and distinguishing its near neighbours; (4) richly articulating its key aspects and their interrelations; (5) examining whether and how it continues beyond its originary locus. In order to identify the phenomenon, mystical poetic experiencing, a questionnaire designed to assess theoretically relevant elements of profound reading experience, the Experiencing Questionnaire, was developed and

deployed in Study One. This questionnaire was broad enough to allow for kinds of experience that were not expected to relate to the mystical poetic, but specific enough that it could capture all of the basic aspects of this phenomenon. Cluster analysis allowed us to find a "natural" group of participants, known as Spiritual Enactive Engagement, whose ratings coincided with and more fully described the phenomenon in question, fulfilling requirement (1). The appearance of such a group also confirmed, at least preliminarily, that such an experience actually occurred during reading Rilke and Eliot, fulfilling requirement (2). The cluster profiles generated from the analysis showed the aspects of the experience that distinguished it from both very similar and highly dissimilar kinds of experience, fulfilling requirement (3).

Study Two confirmed the results of Study One with regard to Spiritual Enactive Engagement, and revealed three processes that are central to mystical poetic experiencing:

1: Dwelling with troubling feelings in the safe space the poem provides.

2. Taking forward a strong sense of the previous week's reading.

3. Circling through dynamic resonating metaphors to describe a felt sense. Such specific detail helped to fulfill requirement (4). Item 2 above, and the two-part, one-week structure of Study Two, went some way toward fulfilling requirement (5), although in a limited fashion, since the number of readings and the time between them was limited. Further, the identification of these processes showed how aspects of the proposed mystical poetic experiencing model work, in a more detailed and specific way than I had previously been able to state. These

processes are at work in the overall progression of mystical poetic experiencing from more negative to more positive; in the intensification of the experiencing through growing unity and diminished agency; and in the power of the developing felt sense to enable boundary crossings both within and beyond the experiencing with the text.

Looking back to some of the theoretical considerations that motivated this research, it is clear that rich evidence has been provided to support the theory of mystical poetic experiencing that has been advanced. A central, motivating question was whether, and to what extent, readers experienced the mystical in the reading of Rilke and Eliot. This challenge and addition to Reuven Tsur's claims that readers "recognize" or "detect" elements of mystical feeling in poetic texts, but do not experience them directly, and intensely, was a key concern of this empirical research. The first evidence provided for the actual, intense experiencing of mystical feeling were the ratings provided by Spiritual Enactive Engagement participants in Study One. The questions the instrument employs ask about experience directly, e.g. "While reading this passage, I felt at one with the world around me," "After reading this poem, I had the sense that everything around me was somehow alive." Participants were not asked about the poem itself, or its features, and were not asked whether they could identify, describe, or recognize certain experiences in the poetry. They were asked how they felt, and what their sense was, while reading given passages and after having read the poem. Certainly, many participants reported feeling and sensing none of these things, but the question was not whether readers typically had such feelings while

reading, but whether this kind of direct experience occurred. The presence of the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster provides clear evidence that it does.

It is possible to argue that, although the Experiencing Questionnaire asks for directly experienced feeling, participants took the instructions as asking for identification or recognition of such feeling in the poetry, and responded accordingly. This potential ambiguity is where the interview section of Study Two becomes vital. Here, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate and expand their understanding of their experience, making clear in what sense they had experienced the feelings they had reported in their reading of the previous week. Here, as before, many participants took a third-person, reporting perspective on the poetry – they described what they thought the poem was about, and what sorts of feelings they believed they found in the poem, and in its characters. However, participants in the Spiritual Enactive Engagement cluster especially, the Secular Enactive Engagement cluster to a large extent, and even one previously Disengaged participant made it clear that they, themselves, felt the fear, tranquility, sadness, and anxiety of the poetry. These feelings were often relived, intensified, and carried forward during the interview, resulting in emotional experiences that were not simply about the poetry, or meta-feelings about the experience of reading, but directly felt moments of direct, present, bodily experienced feeling in the present moment, in engagement with the poetry.

Such immediate intensity answers, in part, the question marking the second part of the challenge to Tsur: To what extent do readers actually engage in mystical experience during reading? The answer, evidenced by the data, is to a

great extent, though for a limited number of readers, somewhere in the range of about 10% of the total number who read the selection of Rilke and Eliot explored in the study. Looking at the key aspects of mystical experience previously explored, namely, a feeling of profound spiritual significance, a sense of losing the boundaries of the self, a feeling of reverence, timelessness, wonder, self-perceptual depth, connection to the greater world, inexpressibility, and so on, participants in the Spiritual Enactive Engagement Cluster rated these aspects of their experience highly. This intensity was confirmed during the interview, indicating that the extent to which these participants engaged in mystical poetic experiencing was high. The limitation to this extent, and an important one, is that some kinds of mystical experience, perhaps the most powerful, take the experiencer out of time, out of present conscious awareness, into a moment of powerful encounter with God, the natural world, or all of humanity. It may be the case that the very act of engaged reading precludes this kind of experience: indeed, experiencers of such extreme mystical encounters would necessarily need to stop reading, stop focusing, and become rapt in the transcendent wonder of the moment, oblivious to their surroundings. Since no participant reported this kind of intensity, this study offers no evidence that such a towering experience can occur in the reading of the Rilke and Eliot selections offered.

Finally, the experience of the exemplar for the Disengaged cluster, participant 429, reveals the potential for an exercise based on the theory of mystical poetic experiencing presented here, to be a powerful means of helping students to connect with the poetry they are presented with. This is the case for

poetry like Rilke's and Eliot's, at least, that has been shown to provide the potential for such impactful self-involvement. In her first reading session, undertaken with no mediation, this participant was not engaged, as evidenced by her scores on the Experiencing Questionnaire and confirmed at the beginning of the interview. However, throughout the course of the interview, she gradually found a way to make the poem her own, to engage it, and to allow it to captivate her. The interview's adherence to the following five principles helped to create a reading space open and inviting enough that this participant was able to engage the poetry:

1) Open a safe space for exploration and expressive failure.

2) Take one aspect at a time.

3) Require explicit agency.

4) Involve the body.

5) Bring life in.

It is certain that methods based on these principles are not "fool proof" ways to engage readers – there are two participants in the Disengagement category whose experiences did not have the transformational character we observed with participant 429. However, it has been show that it is at least possible to effect such a transformation in reading experience by employing methods similar to those described in the interview study, and following the principles outlined above.

Of course, much remains to be said about the surprising potential of the readers featured in this study. In the following chapter, I conclude this project by returning more explicitly to the Rilke and Eliot selections featured in Study Two,

reading them in light of the theory of mystical poetic experiencing being

developed here, with the help of insightful, meaningful moments provided by the

readers from Study Two.

Chapter 4: Reading the Readers

In this thesis, I have been laying out a theory of mystical poetic experiencing by articulating the experiences of readers in their encounters with the poetry of Rilke and Eliot. The concept of experiencing at work in this articulation strives to keep both sides of the encounter – the poem and the reader – together, refusing the too-often-taken-for-granted distinction between the "subject" of the experiencing and its "object." Experiencing is what happens with both in the presence of the other; experiencing is what gets cut out of our understanding when we posit either as a self-sufficient entity, and then ask about what properties of the other "cause" the changes we see in the entity. However, the encounter certainly has multiple aspects from which we can launch our investigations. In the previous chapter, the vantage point of the investigation centered on the readers. The poetry of Rilke and Eliot, while always present and vital, arose primarily through, and provided access to, the perspective of these readers.

My goal in the present chapter is to move the focal point of the investigation onto the poetry, namely, onto the selections of Rilke and Eliot involved in both studies previously reported: the selection from "The Burial of the Dead" and the selection from the *First Duino Elegy*. This entails embarking on a more traditional close reading of these selections, showing how their comparable poetic structures and centres of gravity work to invite readers into the kind of mystical poetic experiencing explored in the course of this project. The reason I have called this focal shift *more* traditional is that, rather than conducting the

proposed close reading through the traditional interpretive community of Rilke and Eliot scholarship, I have instead centered the reading on the commentaries provided by Study Two readers. In this way, though the focus of the presentation shifts, the inextricably important *experiencing* at stake in this project is not sacrificed to an attempt at an objectified presentation of the poems under consideration (recalling Miall's criticism of interpretation previously discussed). In what follows, I have taken into consideration the comments of all 36 readers who engaged the poetry in the interview section of Study Two, and quote extensively from many of them. While it is true that only about 10% of readers fell into the Spiritual Enactive Engagement group, this simply means that these readers more than all the others displayed an experiential constellation that, as a whole, expressed the mystical poetic. Most of the other readers expressed individual aspects of that whole, complex experiencing, meaning that their commentaries can also be of value in outlining what it is about the poetry of Rilke and Eliot that invites mystical poetic experiencing. The reading presented here does not aim to be exhaustive – there is such richness in the commentaries that each could generate its own chapter. Instead, I have followed the readings that shed the most light on the comparable aspects of both poems central to mystical poetic experiencing.

What is perhaps the greatest value in closely considering the experiences of the readers in the readings that follow is their ability to understand the poems through their bodily felt senses. This kind of understanding is often neglected, or simply assumed, when scholars engage in interpretive activity. Here, the readers

do not just *notice* poetic devices, and comment on the potential effects: they *embody* the effects as they *experience* the devices at work. In order to understand a paradox, scholars tend to display a logical problem-solving approach, geared toward a thoroughly rational derivation of its meaning through contextual linguistic reference. For example, we can consider the paradoxical phrase "love is hate." The phrase is paradoxical on its face, because the two terms in play are standard antonyms. One way to understand this paradox is to consider more closely which properties love and hate share – both are highly intense attitudes toward another person. This intensity is accompanied by an instability, a high-energy positioning along the valenced continuum of a shared dimension. The instability inherent in each, accompanied by its intensity, means that motion along the continuum is rapid and sudden, making balance unlikely. Thus, the greatest love often leads, quickly, to the greatest hate, since both are found in the presence of the other at whom they are directed. This is validated by common experience, where the passionate lovers next door are heard swearing as often as lovemaking. None of this explanation of the paradox is wrong; however, it misses something vital. Before working out the logical relations between the terms, readers often just get a sense that the paradox says more than it appears to on the surface, and feel that the paradox says something true, speaks to them. The paradox becomes evident, and then comes to some resolution *through their bodily felt sense* of it in the situation. The paradox is resolved, felt, understood in a way, before, and even in the absence of, the logical reconstruction of the paradox and its resolution. Poetry has the ability to make us feel its truth, even before we logically

understand it, and it is this truth, felt in the body, that moves us first to understand. This vital poetic process is central to the reading that follows.

A final note: all participants' comments appearing below are followed by citations of their participant code numbers from Study Two, to allow their individual voices to emerge more clearly, and to allow the interested reader of this chapter to follow where a single participant moves throughout the reading. When a single reader is cited within a sentence multiple, consecutive times, only the final quotation will be followed by the citation. Quotations have been edited for grammar and clarity, and conversational qualifiers (like, sort of, kind of, you know) have been removed unless they were judged to be significant in a particular context. The readers who received the most attention in the previous chapter, 414 and 429, will appear below only sparingly; their powerful voices have been heard already.

4.1 Reading Eliot

The frequency table detailing the passages chosen by readers engaging the excerpt from Eliot's "The Burial of the Dead" remains remarkably consistent between readers in Study Two and those in Study One. Compare the frequencies of chosen passages for Study Two (presented below) to those for Study One (cf. Table 3.4):

Table 4.1 Study Two: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from "The Burial

of the Dead" (N=19)

Times Chosen	Poetic Line	Line #
111	What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow	1
1111	Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,	2
11	You cannot say, or guess, for you know only	3
111	A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,	4
111111	And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,	5
11111	And the dry stone no sound of water. Only	6
11	There is shadow under this red rock,	7
11	(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),	8
1	And I will show you something different from either	9
111	Your shadow at morning striding behind you	10
111	Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;	11
1111111111	I will show you fear in a handful of dust.	12
	Frisch weht der Wind	13
	Der Heimat zu.	14
	Mein Irisch Kind,	15
	Wo weilest du?	16
1	'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;	17
1	'They called me the hyacinth girl.'	18
11	– Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,	19
1111111	Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not	20
1111111111	Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither	21
11111111111	Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,	22
11111	Looking into the heart of light, the silence.	23
	Od' und leer das Meer.	24

Table 4.2 Study Two: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from "The Burial

of the Dead" per 3-line segment (N=19)

Study Two: Eliot
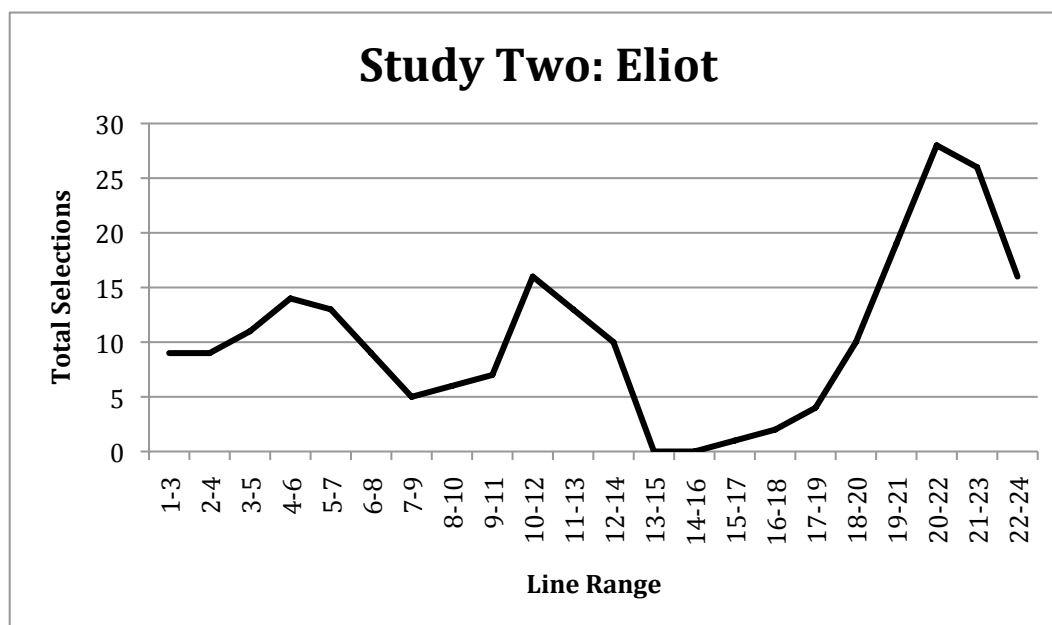
Two clear centres of gravity emerge once again, and in the same places. The first

appears in the frightening handful of dust, the second at the moment of greatest

disorientation in the remembered encounter with the hyacinth girl. These sections

provide an orientation to the poem as a whole for the readers, and are central to

their experiencing.

These centres of gravity also work to create the structure, "divided in three

parts" (415) of the selection. These sections comprise the lines leading to the

German section, then the German section, and then the lines that follow. The first

section is characterized as a "desert wasteland kind of area," where the speaker

"had to crawl under rocks to save himself from the oppressive heat," as well as

"an actual literal burial" (415). The German section takes on the character of a

very different kind of desert, a land so foreign it is almost devoid of meaning,

because the language is something "I don't know anything about," but that also has the sense of something you are "not supposed to know" (415). The final section is "very sad," like "remembering something from the past" (415) that is "not going to end well" (421), but that nevertheless remains "a full moment," a "moment full of wonder" before "it all just went to shit" (433). The three-part structure roughly involves moving through the negative, into the neutral, and onto the potentially more positive; this corresponds to the basic valence structure of mystical poetic experiencing.

Turning to the opening section, we can see its character developing immediately from the title, "The Burial of the Dead," described as "creepy" and "gruesome" (401). In this dark light, the poem becomes "a graveyard," and the landscape it describes full of "dead trees and tombstones" coloured "black, grey, and brown" (427). The poem presents no gravestones explicitly, of course, but the sense this participant has motivates an interesting reading of the scene. Imagining a churchyard, the unnamed tree takes on the character of the sacred and foreboding yew, or the weeping "willow tree that's dead" (429). Even the cricket becomes a pest, that just "keeps going, . . . bugging" (413) the speaker and reader alike. The red rock, already so symbolically rich, becomes a grave marker. The clutching roots make their presence known to the dead beneath, as we imagine "someone in the ground in the roots of trees" (431), giving the roots that clutch a garish target. The implied corpse becomes a target for empathic identification, making the entire ceremony, and the threat of the clutching roots, powerfully vivid. The dead sense identified here carries forward into one's experiencing of

the scene, creating a feeling of "not really having any significance of any sort," where one's "sense of self or mind" becomes "empty and hollow" (411).

The threat to, and development of the sense of self explicitly stated above is central to mystical poetic experiencing. The poem's questioning start and explicit engagement with death invites readers not only into the poem, but also into a consideration of themselves, and even their own mortality. The sense of unity between reader and poem begins to arise even in the early lines, evidenced by the perceived personal threat experienced through identification with the corpse. This threat through unity with the poem is even more explicitly characterized by another reader, who describes her sense of the poem as "one of confusion and one of uncertainty and one of unexpectedness. It's also an invasion. You know, the roots that are clutching and branches growing, it feels to me immediately like vines going into me. And digging down into dark little places" (417). The tendrils of the poem have reached into her, pried their way into her dark places to explore them, opening them up for her own exploration, consideration, and expression. Despite this sense of invasion, she remarks that it "doesn't turn me off, I want it to go on," because "I'm all for invasion if it's fruitful" (417). In a fascinating allegory of reading, this reader identifies the potential for new life amidst the chaos and waste of the poem, expressing a central tension in the verse, as well as articulating the way this poem can arise with and within us, leading us to fresh expressions and understandings that go beyond our previous conceptualizations. "Fruitful invasion" is a vital aspect of mystical poetic experiencing.

The "fruitful invasion" of the poem poses a threat or challenge to the sense of self that can enable an abatement in the reader's agency, vital if the reader is to grow even more closely united with the poem. An abatement of agency can arise with the feeling that agency has spread into non-animate aspects of the situation; this is precisely what happens in the image the following reader has of the dead tree:

> I have a picture. Like a tree, but it is yellow, the leaves are yellow and it is an old tree, and there is a girl near the tree. But, I don't know why, I feel the poem is describing the feeling of the tree. And it can't help the girl, and the girl is also very – not a very happy girl. It's a sad girl and the tree cannot help her. So it feels like it cannot control things, and the tree feels that "I cannot help you." (435)

The tree, which has been described as threatening and menacing by many readers, is here transformed into a benevolent but helpless being who, like the posited corpse, and perhaps the hyacinth girl later in the poem, is another victim of the chaos and drought. This reader has been able to "feel her way into" the poem to such an extent that her sense of it, and the sense she has of her own feeling toward it, are fused in her expression of the tree's being.

The potential for good, perhaps because of the obvious and overwhelming negative horror of the grave scene, sometimes emerges from the rocky landscape with less positive results. In imagining performing the poem, one reader pictures "sitting on grass" with "trees and a river" nearby, before later suggesting "the creek, that's not really relevant to this poem" (413). However, the sense of a more

positive scene emerging from the graveyard before it becomes horrifying is far from irrelevant. The relationship between these senses is explicitly outlined by another reader: "whenever you sit by a pond and you can hear the crickets and the frogs and everything, that gives you a sense of just calmness and sereneness, and if you don't have that then it's like you're restless and you just – wanting to do something. You can't calm down" (429). Both of these readers have felt the positive potential for the landscape Eliot conjures, but it comes through only as something that is missing, a lack or absence. All the elements of tranquil, familiar, meditative scenes are potentially present, but are immediately negated. The day is sunny, but the sun beats down; there is a tree for shade, but it is dead and provides no shelter; the crickets, potentially soothing, become a monotonous annoyance; most subtly, the stream or river suggested by the rest of the scene has become the dry stones of an empty riverbed, and the sound of water running through it is only an implied memory. The implied idyllic scene makes the presented one seem even more terrible by comparison, and sets up a heightened emotional contrast. Being in a spiritual desert is all the more tormenting when you are imagining and remembering an oasis.

The sense of discomfort, fear, and threat of the landscape is made even more explicit when readers consider the speaker of the first section of the poem, especially in the presence of the gravity created by "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." The "creepy old decrepit hand" (423) reaches out, even out of the confines of the poem, a clear warning or threat to "you," the reader. Although the threat is cast in the future tense, as the outcome of daring to accept the

invitation to come under the shadow of the red rock, it makes itself highly present in the experience of the poem, suggesting that simply to read on is to accept the invitation. The image becomes an hourglass-like warning of passing time and life, where the dust is "slowly pouring out of a hand" (423), or a more direct assault, wherein "you just get an image of someone with a handful of dust throwing it in your face. And then you just – disintegrate along with that dust," with the feeling that you will also suffer "hardships beyond death" (415). The poem invites us ever closer, through directly addressing us, asking us to enter it, to see ourselves in it, to further develop a sense of unity and intimacy despite the horror we find within.

Although the German section was meaningless for most, for some it added an element of mystery and terror to the images created in the opening section. For one reader, who was "totally not ok" with the handful of dust, the German lines act as "a pounding noise afterwards. To really accompany that" (433). The idea of German, in the abstract, as a harsh language no doubt owes some of its power to the primary exposure many students have to the German language: Hitler's ranting speeches in fictional and documentary film. One Jewish student made this leap from the German even more explicitly, imagining "cremation and – Germany and Hitler and – that was fear in a handful of dust. For me" (403). Her vision of the hand is explicit and revolting: "that's the soldier holding cremated parts and letting it just fall. As a threat. To other Jews," (403), and, by extension, to her. Of course, *The Waste Land* was written prior to the holocaust, making this reader's interpretation anachronistic. However, her *expression* is not, because, although the

poem was written in a world without the holocaust, it is now here *for* a world that knows it. The poem has become an extraordinary expression of an event that its author could not have considered in its conception.

The final section of the poem moves into a more traditionally mystical situation, where the speaker recalls a self-annihilating encounter in the heart of light. Some readers were sensitive to the positive aspects of this experience, to the extent that "the image in itself just makes me happy" (421), recognizing that "it was a big moment, it was something he could think back on and it was quite evocative for him" (433). It is further described as one of those "perfect moments where you thought everything was so awesome" (433), marking the "height of his human experience" (415). The feeling of joy that arises for readers in this poetic encounter aligns it with the important positive aspect of mystical poetic experiencing; at the same time, the complexity and darkness that characterize the opening of the poem is also constantly present. Readers were sensitive to the remembered quality of this experience, and in light of the "graveyard" nature of the first section, saw the moment in the heart of light as "a heartbreaking memory" (421) that has now turned to the "dust" (433) that was so compellingly horrific in the haunted hand.

Despite the negative overtones working through the final section of the poem, a strange emotional neutrality emerges. This neutrality arises during the negations, the negative language of lines 20-23, each of which ends prematurely with an appropriately negating word: not, neither, nothing, silence. Here, it is as if "everything gets sucked out, it's suspended in time, you kind of lose your grasp

and it's – you're frozen almost" (433). The reader moves fluidly between "it" and

"you," extending the "it" describing the moment to the "you" participating in it,

expressing the crossing of the boundaries between poem, self, and world. This

boundary crossing arises within the suspension of time, which merges and freezes

both scene and actor together, making the situation ungraspable, all of which

corresponds to key aspects of mystical experiencing. Thinking back to Stace's

distinction between introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences outlined in

the first chapter, it becomes clear that the poem describes the former, where the

senses go dark, the world disappears, and the experiencer finds unity within.

Although the introvertive mystical experience has not been the focus of

the theory of mystical poetic experiencing explored in this project, the poetic

presentation of such an introvertive experience can invite readers to productive

expressions of the extrovertive variety. In imagining himself in the introvertive

scene, one reader has the feeling that "I just didn't even exist, I was neither living

nor dead, I didn't even see myself in this picture, it was just darkness, there was

nothing" (407). The absence or abeyance of the speaker's sense of self has

crossed from the poem into the reader through his expression of his sense of the

scene. His own sense of self is not "annihilated" during his reading, as it is for the

speaker, but something of this absence appears in the felt sense of the reader.

The crossings between situation, poem and reader are most eloquently

expressed by a reader for whom fusion is built into the structure of his complex

but brief description: "If I were to put it in words it would just be like this poem,

the idea of the poem, but not even the words reverberating, so there's that silence

but it's that thought just resting in a void of space. Like there's no body to bring it there. That it's just there" (415). We have seen the importance of circling through dynamic, resonating metaphors in the development of expressive reconceptualizations in mystical poetic experiencing, both in the previous chapter and the readings offered above. This reader offers us an especially powerful example, because he uses *his experiencing of the poem itself* as the metaphor for his description of his felt sense of it. The speaker of the poem describes himself in a silent void, without sound or comprehension; the reader compares this to the poem, with the words no longer reverberating, falling silent, leaving only the idea of the poem resting in a void. The silenced words of the poem metaphorically describe the senses and body of the speaker, while the spirit, soul, or mind of the speaker is linked to the poem's "idea" or "thought," its own spirit, soul, or mind. The reader is so thoroughly merged with the poem that it has become the very way he expresses his sense of it. Although this reader was not a member of the Spiritual Enactive Engagement group, his expression of the poem's mystical experience illuminates a vital aspect of mystical poetic experiencing.
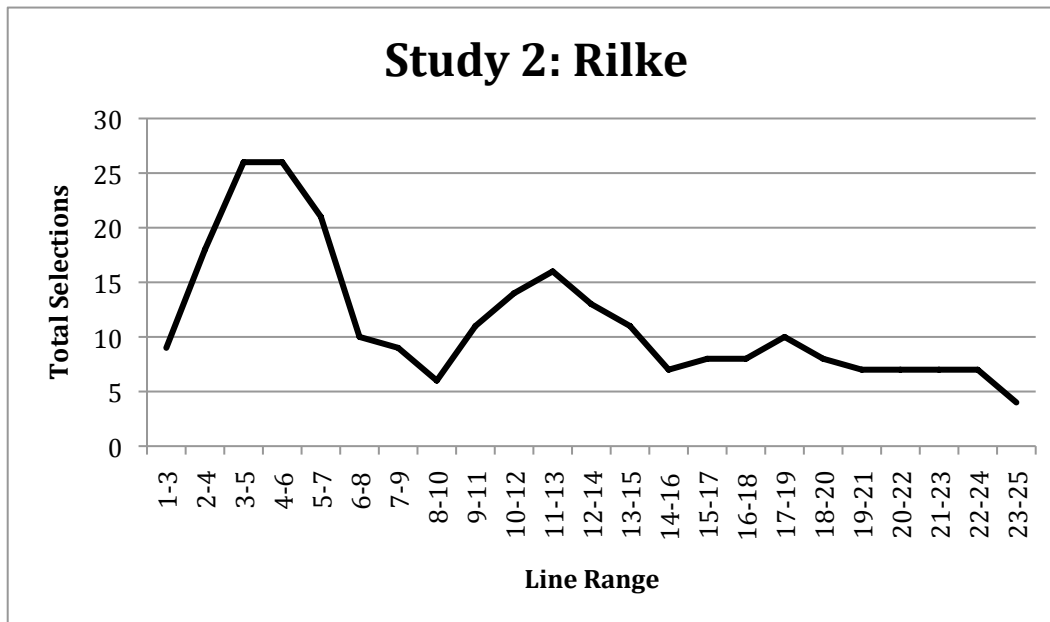
4.2 Reading Rilke

For the Study Two readers of the Rilke selection, as for those of Eliot, the table displaying the frequency of chosen passages is highly comparable to Study One (cf. Table 3.2):

Table 4.3 Study Two: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from the *First*

Duino Elegy (N=18)

Times Chosen	Poetic Line	Line #
11	Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels'	1
1111	hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me	2
111	suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed	3
111111111111	in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing	4
11111111111	but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure,	5
111	and we are so awed because it serenely disdains	6
1111111	to annihilate us. Each single angel is terrifying.	7
	And so I hold myself back and swallow the call-note	8
11	of my dark sobbing. Ah, whom can we ever turn to	9
1111	in our need? Not angels, not humans,	10
11111	and already the knowing animals are aware	11
11111	that we are not really at home in	12
111111	our interpreted world. Perhaps there remains for us	13
11	some tree on a hillside, which every day we can take	14
111	into our vision; there remains for us yesterday's street	15
11	and the loyalty of a habit so much at ease	16
111	when it stayed with us that it moved in and never left.	17
111	Oh and night: there is night, when a wind full of infinite space	18
1111	gnaws at our faces. Whom would it not remain for – that longed-after,	19
1	mildly disillusioning presence, which the solitary heart	20
11	so painfully meets. Is it any less difficult for lovers?	21
1111	But they keep on using each other to hide their own fate.	22
1	Don't you know yet? Fling the emptiness out of your arms	23
11	into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds	24
1	will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.	25

Table 4.4 Study Two: Chosen Passage Frequencies for Excerpt from the *First Duino Elegy* per 3-line segment (N=18)

Study 2: Rilke

Chart showing Total Selections vs Line Range. Y-axis labeled "Total Selections" from 0 to 30. X-axis labeled "Line Range" with segments 1-3 through 23-25. The line starts around 9 at 1-3, peaks at 26 around 3-5 and 4-6, drops to ~10 at 6-8, dips to 6 at 8-10, rises to 16 at 11-13, declines with a small peak of 10 at 17-19, then falls to 4 at 23-25.

Here, as before, the domination of lines 4-5 is powerful, with line 7 also remaining highly impactful. The paradox of terrible beauty, and its complementary development in the figure of terrifying angels, becomes the primary centre of gravity of the poem, drawing readers into its orbit. One important difference between the readers of this study, and those of Study One, is that these readers were less likely to choose lines 23-24, which represented a secondary centre of gravity in the earlier study. However, in their commentaries, readers of this study engaged the flung emptiness and passionate flying very frequently, indicating that, while they did not initially find those lines and images particularly striking and evocative, as they drew closer to the poem during the interview, that section began to resonate more powerfully.

Unlike the Eliot selection, this selection did not register as having an easily defined structure. This makes sense, considering that readers largely tended

to ignore the lines written in German in that poem; there is no corresponding "dead space" in the Rilke selection. However, there is nonetheless an orienting sense of moving from the negative to the positive, from a tension to a resolution, that is important to mystical poetic experiencing. We have already heard this from reader 414, who describes his journey through the poem according to that structure: "The first passage that I had chosen had been scary, and I felt that more intensely. But after that, it changed. . . . So it was a little bit more peaceful. Relaxing. Yeah, it's two stages, really" (414). The later lines are described as "relaxing, and it's a totally different feeling from the first part," because "I went from darkness around me and lonely and sad to suddenly relaxing and happy and enjoying" (422). The mystical poetic direction from darkness to light emerges in this selection even more so than it did for the Eliot; the initial threat Rilke offers is mitigated by its beauty to some extent, which resonates with the "release" he offers at the end. Eliot's poem foregrounds the threat, which resonates with the darker aspects of the mystical experience he describes.

As Eliot did, Rilke opens with a powerful question that invites readers immediately into the poem. Rilke's question is less cryptic, however, and readers were able to work with it more easily and directly, quickly picking up its significance for them and the poem as a whole: "the whole question, the whole point of the poem is – who would hear you if you're asking for help, or is there someone greater" (404). This desperate question opens the poem into existential considerations, rendering "the whole atmosphere profound – there's this profoundness there because I guess that's a question that everybody asks that

nobody really knows for sure" (404). The general thrust of Rilke's opening

question prepares readers to consider some of the most important things in human

life, both on a more abstract level ("a question that everybody asks"), and a more

personal one ("who would hear *you* if *you're* asking for help"), making the

atmosphere from the outset one where profundity can arise; the bridge to the

mystical poetic is in place.

The poem moves into more intimate territory quickly with the imagined,

potential embrace of the angel. Although the embrace is phrased in a hypothetical

or conditional manner ("*if* one of them pressed me"), readers feel it as present and

real. This softening of the boundaries between ontological and linguistic realms

compares well with readers' responses to Eliot's "handful of dust," which, while

phrased conditionally, nonetheless emerged into presence and immediacy,

something in the "here and now" of the poem. Gestures, like the Angel's embrace,

or Eliot's clutching roots, seem to resonate bodily with the readers, prompting

engaged expressions with the poem. One reader reports reading too quickly the

first time, and believing the angel was stabbing rather than embracing the speaker,

but does not "regret underlining it now because it still works" (408). She

describes the sense she has of how the "stabbing-hug" works for her, using a

dream she has had as a metaphorical expression: "I've had dreams where I'll be

getting chased by a serial killer. But later on, somehow I'll be hugging him. It's so

weird. So I'm hugging him, I'm terrified, but he's like 'oh it's all right'" (408).

Although her too-quick reading led to what may be considered a simple error,

there is a sense in which the "accident" revealed, was the result of, and became an

expression of, a tension at work for her in the poem. The angel of the poem is a

kind of killer – the embrace consumes the speaker. Yet the angel, like the serial

killer of the dream, is simultaneously a source of comfort. The language of the

poem invites this comparison. What I have been calling the "embrace" is

described in terms of a sudden pressing against the heart that is highly intimate,

but also unexpected and overwhelming in its power. Perhaps what is revealed in

the comparison between the Angel's embrace and the serial killer's hug is the

danger of such powerful intimacy; both killer and angel are dominating agents

with the power to control, to take your very life intimately into their hands, to do

as they would, for better or worse. A different reader also feels the speaker is

"frail in comparison" to the angel, imagining him "in the fetal position, . . . too

weak as a person to take action on their own," hoping for "a higher power to

intervene," to "please take over my life" (436). Clearly, this is a challenge to the

reader's sense of agency, an opening into the abated volition that facilitates

mystical poetic experiencing.

  The sense of overwhelming threat and comfort reaches its peak in the

paradoxes of beauty as terror, and terrifying angels. The paradox "dumfounded,"

one reader, who had "never thought of it that way;" it made him "review the way

that [he] saw beauty" (418). The defamiliarizing effect of the paradox, in the

context of the profundity established in the opening question, creates a sense of

the paradox's "truth," and allows readers to "feel" the contradiction as somehow

"right" in the body:

It's very truthful, like when you see something extremely beautiful or moving, it makes you – it doesn't make you feel terrified, but the way your body reacts is really similar to the way of being scared or frightened, like your heart starts beating faster and your palms start to sweat and you start to breathe a little bit faster too, so – it almost makes you think that if there is something so beautiful, like an angel, would you actually be terrified of it? … You look at the way your body reacts and the way you view them and the way you respond to them, they're very similar. And you could say an angel was terrifying. (402)

The usual ways the readers have of considering truth, beauty, terror, and angels, are insufficient to understand the paradox that is considered still somehow meaningful and important in the context of the profundity of the existential questioning established early in the poem. Different ways of understanding arise in the bodily felt sense of the paradox in the situation of the poem, leading to the emergence of freshly developed categories for understanding. The readers' sense of themselves in the poem develops and expands, which constitutes a key aspect of mystical poetic experiencing.

The challenge and tension of the earlier section of the poem abates as it continues, leading to more peaceful images, perhaps best exemplified by the tree on a hillside. Thinking back to Eliot, we can recall the power of the tree to evoke a scene, both the "actual" scene of the poem (in that case, something comparable to a graveyard in drought), and an "implied" scene that goes further, and in a very

differently valenced direction (the peaceful, picnic-appropriate, lush landscape). A similar potential is at work in Rilke, where the image of a single tree on a hillside evokes an entire, tranquil scene: "It reminds me of what I used to do when I was young. I used to draw pictures when I was young. And usually what I'd draw is just a house. Some trees, some hillsides, and a river. So it kind of reminds me of that and I would usually draw a picture of me too in the picture" (422). As we saw in the previous chapter with reader 414, this reader is drawn back into his childhood through this image, has even drawn himself literally into it. He remembered, from his reading of the week before, a scene just like this in the poem, complete with a running river, even though the poem makes no mention of a river. However, this is not simply a "mistake" of reading; the tree anchors a place in the poem that is free, soothing, and removed from the anxiety of the earlier lines, forming a tranquil place from which to consider the fresh sense of understanding that has emerged from wrestling with the paradox (and angel!) earlier in the poem. Another reader finds herself painting a similar picture:

> It reminds me of when I was little. And it's much happier…
> familiar…. When I was little I used to listen to meditative tapes to fall
> asleep…. Part of some of the tapes is to imagine that you're in a
> happy place…. I always pictured that I was under a tree on a little
> mound next to a brook. And there's flowers…. So that's kind of like
> an ideal place? Which I think is what he's talking about. With the tree
> on the hillside. Like oh this is all so terrible but maybe there's this

wonderful place…. For me, is not a real place, it's always been

somewhere imaginary. But it's a good place still. (436)

Whereas Eliot conjures the peaceful scene only implicitly, through its negation,

Rilke allows the tree to stand on its hillside, healthy and alive. By doing so, he

invites readers further into the poem, allowing it, and them, to cross the readers'

sense of themselves with their sense of the poem. The tree on a hillside reaches

out far more subtly, and gently, than Eliot's clutching roots, opening up a

childhood experience, uniting the poem and reader powerfully. The sense of

abated agency carried forward from the earlier encounter with the dominating

angel allows the readers to move into a more childlike sense of themselves, where

control is relaxed, and they are willing to follow the lead of the poem, wherever it

takes them. The sense of unity with the poem at this point is at its peak.

From the quiet tranquility of the tree, the reader, now feeling safer, and

vulnerable, is turned toward another, more foreboding kind of quietness in the

face-gnawing night full of infinite space. This scene is described as a kind of

"dreaming at night," where "thoughts that pervade or intrude, the positive and

negative thoughts, intrude on our consciousness" (434). It is clear that agency is in

abeyance; the reader imagines being unconscious (sleeping and dreaming), and

the thoughts that arise, both good and bad, are somehow intruding, an idea that

resonates with the aggressive domination of the angel, but with far less intensity.

The vulnerable reader is made "more aware of everything around you" in the

"unimaginable, . . . almost overwhelming" (426) openness the infinite space

creates. There is a sense in which "it throws you back for a second," asking you to

realize "you're just so small and everything is so much bigger" (426). The sense of self is further diminished here; readers feel their own significance waning as they consider their place as part of the whole world, uniting them not only with the poem, but with everything. Despite the negative potential of "gnawing," however, this dark infinity is not generally terrifying, in part because "you can just be at ease and be at one with the darkness" (428). The infinite space is not simply "outside": it is within, as well, making you a part of it, giving you space for "just letting go of everything" (428). This place of unity, where whatever comes up, even troubling thoughts and memories, is somehow "ok," is the orienting ground for mystical poetic experiencing.

The place of "letting go" or "release" established in the unity with infinite night is made active in the closing lines of the poem, where the speaker flings the emptiness in which the birds, perhaps, fly more passionately. This powerful gesture "strikes true" because "letting it go and letting it out of your body is amazing" (420). We all have "this passion that we need to let go of, but then it will in turn reward us with more passion, I think, because we've let go of all this hurt or frustration and then that leaves room for more passion in our bodies" (420). The "passion" that we need to let go of is the stifling kind, the empty but intense worry, anxiety, or loneliness that can be so consuming in daily life. When we let this go, "it washes away" (428), leaving you "happy, and released….The air is clear, you can breathe it," in a place with "a little bit of sunshine" where "you can see far" (424). Unlike the feeling of boundless "freezing" we found in the introvertive mystical experience presented in Eliot, what we find here is a

dynamic, productive departure from boundaries that enlivens and intensifies everything in the speaker's field, turning him outward, rather than inward, culminating an extrovertive mystical experience, and inviting readers to share in the joy of release.

4.3 Implications and Further Directions

Now that the investigation has drawn to a close, it is possible to provide some stronger answers to the questions raised by Aldama's students, posed at the beginning of the thesis: "Why are we reading and analyzing books when no one I know even reads? Why not get up to speed with the times and analyze something more relevant, like film? What value does all this have in the bigger scheme of things, anyway?" (234). Poetry, at least of the kind presented in this study, can provide us with a bridge from artificial places, can allow the god to emerge for us, and in us, allowing us to consider ourselves, and the world, freshly, more vigorously, with a sense of newfound truth. The selections from Eliot and Rilke examined here allow readers to step outside the boundaries that constitute daily life, and to expand themselves in the kind of expression that is seldom undertaken as we move within our day-to-day existence.

There are perhaps several ways individuals can cross into the "real" that comprises the freshly felt truth of such deep engagement; it is possible that both film and prose works may also serve as potential bridges, engaging different but compatible experiencing processes leading to comparable outcomes. This project has focused on, and provided evidence for, one powerful pathway to the mystical,

combining the profundity of poetry and the sacredness of spirituality in mystical poetic experiencing. It is possible for readers engage intensely and intimately with poetry, in a way that does not simply, as Tsur suggests, *detect* or *recognize* powerful feeling, but instead involves them deeply in the *experiencing* of these feelings, feelings that can lead to important insights not just into the poem, but into life. And this is not as rare as he, and even I, might have supposed. Although only about 10% of readers "naturally" fell into a structure of reading that we termed Spiritual Enactive Engagement, exhibiting the hallmarks of mystical poetic experiencing, even those readers who did not engage in mystical poetic experiencing, as we saw in the previous chapter, could be drawn into significant and immersing feeling experiences that go far beyond the identification of qualities in a text. Given the right poem, and the right space (like that provided in the interview setting), even the most disengaged readers can find themselves drawn into places they had not previously imagined they would enter.

Although in this study I have refused to separate readers from texts in experiencing, by shifting the focus onto the poems in question, we were also able to learn something specifically about Eliot and Rilke through the selections readers so closely examined during their interviews. Both authors do not rely simply on the presentation of "mystical moments" to evoke comparable experiences in their readers. This would, at best, only lead to the detection of such an experience among those who had never known it, and recognition among those who had. Instead, both authors deploy a poetic structure and strategy that challenges, disarms, invites, and makes vulnerable readers' sense of control and

agency, allowing the sense of the self to open, and expand, uniting with the poetry and feeling its situations from within it, as it reaches out to, and into, them. By allowing the current of the poem to carry them, readers gain a growing sense of the mystical poetic, and are able to carry this sense back into their readings and re-readings. As they are drawn into more intimate unity with the poem, aspects of the poetry that had previously had no impact begin to resonate with them, suddenly making sense first in the body, and later in their freshly expressed understanding. Eliot and Rilke present their images in such a way that readers can first, perhaps, only fasten themselves to a single powerful centre of gravity, the handful of dust, or the terrible, beautiful angels. However, these images are so profound, so striking and compelling, that the readers are sent forward with a sense of inexpressible truth. This felt sense guides them through the rest of the poem, where each image, every phrase, becomes another way for readers to express their initially inexpressible felt sense. Each section begins to glow more brightly as the others becomes illuminated, reflecting their light and intensifying it, leading, in mystical poetic experiencing, to the god's emergence.

This project has not simply led its readers forward with fresh understandings; I have found myself having to reconsider my practice of research and teaching. Regarding the former, it has become clear that this investigation has simply begun to uncover the richness of mystical poetic experiencing, and has opened the door, somewhat, to a more fine-grained understanding of poetic experiencing more generally. Each reader's interview constitutes a case study length investigation, each of which would have something to teach us about poetic

experiencing, and about the kinds of reading experiences that were suggested in the cluster analysis of Study One. However, such detailed case studies fall outside the scope of this project. Even in regard to mystical poetic experiencing, the range of texts and authors explored, while confirming the potential of Eliot and Rilke to enable such experiencing, could be extended to other works by these authors, other modernist poets, poets from diverse cultures and times, even prose works, and other media like film. The readers in this project, as well, while nicely representative of the typical Canadian university student (making the findings useful for literature instructors), do no tell us how mystical poetic experiencing may develop with age, or across cultures, new conditions to which the methods outlined here could be easily adapted. Finally, though this thesis has gone some way toward understanding how mystical poetic experiencing crosses into the lives of readers, the limited time provided for readers between visits cannot give us a long view of the impact of the reading. Future research could examine more distant expanses of time, repeated readings, and the various kinds of lasting resonance reported.

The way I teach poetry has also needed reconceptualization as a result of the insights gained in this project. I have always believed that there was something beyond the kind of interpretation we generally conducted in literary classrooms, something deeply meaningful that prompted me, in the first place, to make poetry focal in my life. The sense of that "something" is what prompted this study, but now I am in a position to articulate this previously ineffable aspect of poetic experiencing, both to myself, and to my students. My orientation, as well,

has become unmoored from the kind of new critical close reading and cultural interpretation I had previously practiced. My new anchor is the students' experiencing. We begin where they are drawn first and most powerfully, and explore their sense of that aspect of the poem. This guides them, through the body, forward into the rest, until the whole begins to resonate in all its facets. It is only from within this dynamic process that I begin to introduce the "mechanics" of poetic form, and its jargon, both of which become tools for articulating expression, rather than goals in and of themselves.

Even my own reading has shifted, and in a similar way. I am tempted, have always been tempted, to move into a poem like a conqueror, quickly making connections, noticing linguistic and stylistic patterns, putting names and labels on every rhetorical device and relating their functions to each other, and to the broader thematic issues of the work. From here, I would follow with the theoretical exposition I though most appropriate to the poem, and account for each in terms of the other, always aware that the fit would never be perfect, noting how every such structure breaks itself down upon the closest examination. As I moved through this project, I began to notice that, during the conquest, I would most often become a symbol manipulating function, rather than a human being, *this* human being, deeply engaging a poem. This is where I try to begin now, and though all the rest comes eventually, such an orientation grounds me more solidly in the poem, and myself, making what follows more personally meaningful, and more coherently rich.

For me, what I have discovered in this project has significantly reoriented my approach not only to literature, but to life. Perhaps it can become something you take with you as well, in your own way; in the end, this is the value of the conversation.

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Appendix 1: Study One Materials

Oral Briefing

My name is Paul Campbell, and I am a researcher in the Department of Psychology. I am here to offer you the opportunity to participate in a research project concerning individual differences and reading experience. By participating, you can earn a single research participation credit.

In this study you will read a poem. Then, you will be asked to read the poem again, this time selecting two passages, of any length, that you find striking or evocative. After marking the text, you will complete four questionnaires: one for each marked passage, one for the text as a whole, and a shorter one concerning not the poem, but aspects of your personal experience. Altogether, this study should take 50-60 minutes to complete.

As you complete these materials, we would like you to keep in mind that we are interested in your beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and experiences – whatever they may be. We are not going to judge your responses in any way. Because we are interested in your personal reactions, describing them may be emotionally involving. Therefore, we are taking several steps to ensure that you feel comfortable about participating.

First, your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate, or, at any time during the study, you may decide to withdraw, in either case without penalty. That is, you will still receive one credit for research participation through an alternate assignment that we will provide. Completion of this alternate assignment will take approximately the same amount of time as would participation in this session. The alternate assignment will involve examining the research materials, reading the accompanying debriefing, and answering a series of questions in short essay form. To receive research participation credit, this assignment must be completed before you leave this session. Also, even after today's session, you may choose to withdraw your permission to use the information you have provided, any time in the next three months. If you reach this decision, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken. At your request, he will immediately destroy all of the information you provided during this session.

Second, all the information you provide will be strictly confidential. Only Dr. David Miall, Dr. Don Kuiken, and the immediate members of their research team will have access to the responses you provide. Also, the results of this study may be presented at scholarly conferences or published in professional journals, but only in the form of group trends. Any report of this research will be in a form that precludes identification of yourself or any persons to whom you may refer during participation.

Third, all the information you provide in your questionnaire responses will remain anonymous. You will be given an arbitrary code number so that your responses on each task can be coordinated with your responses on the other tasks. However, the coded records of your responses on these tasks will NOT contain any identifying information (e.g., names or student ID numbers). Only the consent form, which I will ask you to sign in just a moment, will contain identifying information and your arbitrary code number, and this form will be securely stored in a location within Don Kuiken's laboratory that is completely separate from the location in which your responses will be stored. So, if you decide later to withdraw your permission for research use of the information provided during today's session, you can contact Dr. Kuiken, who is solely able to delete from the records the information you provided during this session.

Given these guidelines, I hope you are willing to participate. Do you have any questions?

If you are willing to participate, please confirm that for our records by reading and then signing the consent form found at the front of your research materials. This form reviews the procedures and precautions that I just mentioned and then asks for your consent to use the information you provide for research purposes.

OK, you may begin.

Participant Consent Form: *Individual Experiences of Poetry*

Objectives. You are invited to participate in a research study entitled ***Individual Experiences of Poetry*** that is being conducted by Paul Campbell, (doctoral student in Comparative Literature), Dr. David Miall (Department of English and Film Studies) and Dr. Don Kuiken (Department of Psychology). We are interested in your experience of reading a poem. The purpose of this research is to understand how readers respond while reading poetry.

Participation. Your participation involves reading a poem, marking passages you find striking or evocative, and completing questionnaires about your responses to each of the two passages, the poem as a whole, and your own beliefs and experiences. Participation in this study will take about 50 minutes to complete.

Voluntariness. If you choose to participate in this study, you will earn one research participation credit. However, your decision to participate is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate, or, at any time during the study, you may decide to withdraw, in either case without penalty. That is, you will still receive full credit for research participation through an alternate assignment that we will provide. Completion of this alternate assignment will take approximately the same amount of time as would participation in this study. The alternate assignment involves examining the research materials, reading the accompanying debriefing, and answering a series of questions in short essay form. To receive research participation credit, this assignment must be completed before you leave this session.

Also, even after today's session, you may choose to withdraw your permission to use the information you have provided, any time within the next three months. If you reach this decision, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken (whose address and phone number are listed below). At your request, he will immediately destroy all of the information you provided during this session.

Your decision not to participate, to withdraw during participation, or to withdraw permission to use the information you provide will not affect your academic standing or access to services at the University of Alberta.

Confidentiality. The information gathered during your participation in this study will remain confidential. Only Dr. David Miall, Dr. Don Kuiken, and the immediate members of their research team will have access to the responses you provide. Also, the results of this study may be presented at scholarly conferences or published in professional journals, but only in the form of group trends. Any report of this research will be in a form that precludes identification of yourself or any persons to whom you may refer during participation.

Anonymity. The information you provide also will remain anonymous. You will be given an arbitrary code number so that your responses on each task can be

coordinated with your responses on the other tasks. However, the coded records of your responses on these tasks will NOT contain any identifying information (e.g., names or student ID numbers). Only this consent form will contain identifying information and your arbitrary code number, and this form will be securely stored in a location within Don Kuiken's laboratory that is completely separate from the location in which your responses will be stored. So, if you decide later to withdraw your permission for research use of the information provided during today's session, you can contact Dr. Kuiken, who is solely able to delete from the records the information you provided during this session. Please note that the consent forms and data records will be kept for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

Benefits and risks. This research can potentially contribute to our understanding of individual experience in reading poetry. There are no foreseeable risks to this study, but if any risks should arise, the researcher will inform you and all other participants immediately. If you should experience any adverse effects, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken immediately.

Contact information. Also, if you have any questions or comments on this study, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken at the number or address below. Or, if you would like clarification of your rights as a research participant, please contact the representative of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Dr. C. Donald Heth, at the address below.

Dr. Don Kuiken	**Dr.C. Donald Heth, Member**
Department of Psychology	Arts, Science, and Law
University of Alberta	Research Ethics Board
Edmonton, AB T6G 2E9	Department of Psychology
(780) 492-8760	University of Alberta
dkuiken@ualberta.ca	dheth@ualberta.ca

Signatures. Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understood the nature and purpose of this study. Your signature indicates your willingness to participate in this study and allows your responses to be used for research purposes.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher Signature   Date

INSTRUCTIONS [as they were presented to participants, using one example text]

In this study, we would like you to describe your experience of a poem. On the following page, you will find a poem entitled "Archaic Torso of Apollo" by Rainer Maria Rilke. Please read the entire poem as you normally would, from beginning to end. As you read, take time to linger and reflect; give the poem a chance to affect you.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO READ THE POEM, PROCEED TO THE NEXT PAGE

Archaic Torso of Apollo

We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Rainer Maria Rilke

PLEASE PROCEED TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

Now we would like you to read the poem a second time, but this time with emphasis on selected passages. As you read the poem again, please **select two passages** – anywhere in the poem – **that you find especially striking or evocative**. (Each selected passage can be a few words or an entire line, whatever portion of the text you find striking or evocative.) **In pencil, underline those two passages**. As before, take time to linger and reflect; give the poem, especially the passages you select, a chance to affect you. After your second reading, answer the questions on the pages that follow.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO READ THE POEM AGAIN, PROCEED TO
THE NEXT PAGE

Archaic Torso of Apollo

We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Rainer Maria Rilke

AFTER READING THE POEM A SECOND TIME, PROCEED TO THE NEXT
PAGE
Experiencing Questionnaire [Passage 1]

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 the first passage you have chosen.** Feel free to turn back and consult the poem as often as you like.

0 = Not at all true (false)
1 = Slightly true
2 = Moderately true
3 = Quite true
4 = Extremely true

1. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to stand still.
2. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed deeply discordant.
3. While reading this passage, I felt that everything in the world, including me, was part of the same whole.
4. While reading this passage, my sense of self lost its clear boundary.
5. While reading this passage, I felt deeply astonished.
6. While reading this passage, I felt at one with the world around me
7. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind were extremely evocative.
8. While reading this passage, I felt intense delight.
9. While reading this passage, I seemed to touch something sacred.
10. While reading this passage, there was a pause, as though time held its breath.
11. While reading this passage, my sense of self seemed to spread beyond my physical body
12. While reading this passage, I felt intensely disturbed.
13. While reading this passage, I seemed close to something holy.
14. While reading this passage, what seemed clear to me also seemed beyond words.
15. While reading this passage, I felt profoundly ill-at-ease.
16. While reading this passage, I began to understand something that could not be put into words.
17. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind seemed pregnant with meaning.
18. While reading this passage, I seemed near to something divine.
19. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed as dry as dust.
20. While reading this passage, I sensed something that I could not find a way to express.
21. While reading this passage, I sensed the inseparability of myself and the world.
22. While reading this passage, I felt deep disquietude.
23. While reading this passage, my sense of self extended into the world around me.

24. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed irreversibly ruined.

25. While reading this passage, I experienced images that I can ponder again and again.

26. While reading this passage, I felt profound wonder.

27. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to move slowly.

Experiencing Questionnaire [Passage 2]

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 the second passage you have chosen.** Feel free to turn back and consult the poem as often as you like.

0 = Not at all true (false)
1 = Slightly true
2 = Moderately true
3 = Quite true
4 = Extremely true

28. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to stand still.
29. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed deeply discordant.
30. While reading this passage, I felt that everything in the world, including me, was part of the same whole.
31. While reading this passage, my sense of self lost its clear boundary.
32. While reading this passage, I felt deeply astonished.
33. While reading this passage, I felt at one with the world around me
34. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind were extremely evocative.
35. While reading this passage, I felt intense delight.
36. While reading this passage, I seemed to touch something sacred.
37. While reading this passage, there was a pause, as though time held its breath.
38. While reading this passage, my sense of self seemed to spread beyond my physical body
39. While reading this passage, I felt intensely disturbed.
40. While reading this passage, I seemed close to something holy.
41. While reading this passage, what seemed clear to me also seemed beyond words.
42. While reading this passage, I felt profoundly ill-at-ease.
43. While reading this passage, I began to understand something that could not be put into words.
44. While reading this passage, the images that came to mind seemed pregnant with meaning.
45. While reading this passage, I seemed near to something divine.
46. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed as dry as dust.
47. While reading this passage, I sensed something that I could not find a way to express.
48. While reading this passage, I sensed the inseparability of myself and the world.
49. While reading this passage, I felt deep disquietude.

50. While reading this passage, my sense of self extended into the world around me.

51. While reading this passage, something in my experience seemed irreversibly ruined.

52. While reading this passage, I experienced images that I can ponder again and again.

53. While reading this passage, I felt profound wonder.

54. While reading this passage, for a moment time seemed to move slowly.

Experiencing Questionnaire [Whole Poem]

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 poem as a whole**. Feel free to turn back and consult the poem as often as you like.

> 0 = Not at all true (false)
> 1 = Slightly true
> 2 = Moderately true
> 3 = Quite true
> 4 = Extremely true

55. After reading this poem, I felt sensitive to aspects of my life that I usually ignore.
56. After reading this poem, my sense of life seemed less superficial.
57. After reading this poem, I felt that my understanding of life had been deepened.
58. After reading this poem, I felt a new sense of my spiritual potential.
59. After reading this poem, I had the sense that everything around me was somehow alive.
60. After reading this poem, I was distinctly aware of being *here* without understanding why I am here rather than somewhere else.
61. After reading this poem, I was focused on my own thoughts and feelings.
62. After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for humanity.
63. After reading this poem, I felt an inner freedom, a sense of liberation from life's tangles and hindrances.
64. After reading this poem, I felt deep respect for the natural world.
65. After reading this poem, I felt like changing the way I live.
66. After reading this poem, even inanimate things seemed responsive to their surroundings.
67. After reading this poem, I was freshly aware that people ultimately face life alone.
68. After reading this poem, I felt refreshed, renewed, and revitalized.
69. After reading this poem, I felt open and receptive to whatever went through my mind.
70. This poem continued to influence my mood after I finished reading it.
71. After reading this poem, I considered a view of life that seemed more fully 'real.'
72. After reading this poem, I was keenly aware that it is impossible to avoid life's pain.
73. After reading this poem, I was freshly aware of the intrinsic value of nature.
74. After reading this poem, my attention was flexible; each thought, feeling, or sensation just seemed to pass through my awareness.
75. After reading this poem, it seemed wrong to treat people like objects.

76. After reading this poem, I sensed the lively 'presence' of both the animate and inanimate things around me.

77. After reading this poem, I was aware of my body, my feelings, and the way I was thinking.

78. After reading this poem, my attention was directed toward my inner life.

79. After reading this poem, I was effortlessly attentive to every perception, thought, or feeling in my stream of consciousness.

80. This poem reminded me of how my past is still with me.

81. 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.

82. After reading this poem, it seemed wrong to use the natural world as merely a means to an end.

83. After reading this poem, I was keenly aware of people's inherent dignity.

84. 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.

85. After reading this poem, I was especially attentive to the brevity of life and the inevitability of death.

Religious Orientation 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 lived experiences and beliefs**. Feel free to turn back and consult the poem as often as you like.

0 = Not at all true (false)
1 = Slightly true
2 = Moderately true
3 = Quite true
4 = Extremely true

86. I believe in a god, or gods, or some power greater than myself to which I own my existence.
87. I am a religious person.
88. I attend some form of organized worship regularly.
89. I only believe in what is scientifically verifiable.
90. Prayer is an important part of my life.
91. I am a spiritual person.
92. Many spiritual and religious perspectives can be correct.
93. I seek answers and guidance through spirituality or religion.

Religious Affiliation

94. Which of the following descriptions fits you most closely? (fill in the corresponding number)
    0. Muslim
    1. Jew
    2. Hindu
    3. Christian
    4. Agnostic
    5. Atheist
    6. Pagan
    7. Buddhist
    8. Sikh
    9. Other (please provide a brief description)

_____

_____

Texts: 20 in total

[1]
Excerpt [1] from the first *Duino Elegy*

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels'
hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me
suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed
in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing
but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure,
and we are so awed because it serenely disdains
to annihilate us. Each single angel is terrifying.
   And so I hold myself back and swallow the call-note
of my dark sobbing. Ah, whom can we ever turn to
in our need? Not angels, not humans,
and already the knowing animals are aware
that we are not really at home in
our interpreted world. Perhaps there remains for us
some tree on a hillside, which every day we can take
into our vision; there remains for us yesterday's street
and the loyalty of a habit so much at ease
when it stayed with us that it moved in and never left.
   Oh and night: there is night, when a wind full of infinite space
gnaws at our faces. Whom would it not remain for – that longed-after,
mildly disillusioning presence, which the solitary heart
so painfully meets. Is it any less difficult for lovers?
But they keep on using each other to hide their own fate.
   Don't you know *yet*? Fling the emptiness out of your arms
into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds
will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[2]
Excerpt [2] from the first *Duino Elegy*

Voices. Voices. Listen, my heart, as only
saints have listened: until the gigantic call lifted them
off the ground; yet they kept on, impossibly,
kneeling and didn't notice at all:
so complete was their listening. Not that you could endure
God's voice – far from it. But listen to the voice of the wind
and the ceaseless message that forms itself out of silence.
It is murmuring toward you now from those who died young.
Didn't their fate, whenever you stepped into a church
in Naples or Rome, quietly come to address you?
Or high up, some eulogy entrusted you with a mission,
as, last year, on the plaque in Santa Maria Formosa.
What they want of me is that I gently remove the appearance
of injustice about their death – which at times
slightly hinders their souls from proceeding onward.

Of course, it is strange to inhabit the earth no longer,
to give up customs one barely had time to learn,
not to see roses and other promising Things
in terms of a human future; no longer to be
what one was in infinitely anxious hands; to leave
even one's own first name behind, forgetting it
as easily as a child abandons a broken toy.
Strange to no longer desire one's desires. Strange
to see meanings that clung together once, floating away
in every direction. And being dead is hard work and full of retrieval before one
can gradually feel a trace of eternity. – Though the living are wrong to believe
in the too-sharp distinctions which they themselves have created.
Angels (they say) don't know whether it is the living
they are moving among, or the dead. The eternal torrent
whirls all ages along in it, through both realms
forever, and their voices are drowned out in its thunderous roar.

In the end, those who were carried off early no longer need us:
they are weaned from earth's sorrows and joys, as gently as children
outgrow the soft breasts of their mothers. But we, who do need
such great mysteries, we for whom grief is so often
the source of our spirit's growth – : could we exist without *them*?
Is the legend meaningless that tells how, in the lament for Linus,
the daring first notes of song pierced through the barren numbness;
and then in the startled space which a youth as lovely as a god
had suddenly left forever, the Void felt for the first time

that harmony which now enraptures and comforts and helps us.
Rainer Maria Rilke

[3]
Excerpt from the second *Duino Elegy*

Every angel is terrifying. And yet, alas,
I invoke you, almost deadly birds of the soul,
knowing about you. Where are the days of Tobias,
when one of you, veiling his radiance, stood at the front door,
slightly disguised for the journey, no longer appalling;
(a young man like the one who curiously peeked through the window).
But if the archangel now, perilous, from behind the stars
took even one step down toward us: our own heart, beating
higher and higher, would beat us to death. Who *are* you?

Early successes, Creation's pampered favorites,
mountain-ranges, peaks growing red in the dawn
of all Beginning, – pollen of the flowering godhead,
joints of pure light, corridors, stairways, thrones,
space formed from essence, shields made of ecstasy, storms
of emotion whirled into rapture, and suddenly, alone:
mirrors, which scoop up the beauty that has streamed from their face
and gather it back, into themselves, entire.

But we, when moved by deep feeling, evaporate; we
breathe ourselves out and away; from moment to moment
our emotion grows fainter, like a perfume. Though someone may tell us:
"Yes, you've entered my bloodstream, the room, the whole springtime
is filled with you . . ." – what does it matter? he can't contain us,
we vanish inside him and around him. And those who are beautiful,
oh who can retain them? Appearance ceaselessly rises
in their face, and is gone. Like dew from the morning grass,
what is ours floats into the air, like steam from a dish
of hot food. O smile, where are you going? O upturned glance:
new warm receding wave on the sea of the heart . . .
alas, but that is what we *are*. Does the infinite space
we dissolve into, taste of us then? Do the angels really
reabsorb only the radiance that streamed out from themselves, or
sometimes, as if by an oversight, is there a trace
of our essence in it as well? Are we mixed in with their
features even as slightly as that vague look
in the faces of pregnant women? They do not notice it
(how could they notice) in their swirling return to themselves.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[4]
Excerpt from the fourth *Duino Elegy*

    Who has not sat, afraid, before his heart's
Curtain? It rose: the scenery of farewell.
Easy to recognize. The well-known garden,
Which swayed a little. Then the dancer came.
Not *him*. Enough! However lightly he moves,
he's costumed, made up – an ordinary man
who hurries home and walks in through the kitchen.
    I won't endure these half-filled human masks;
better, the puppet. It at least is full.
I'll put up with the stuffed skin, the wire, the face
that is nothing but appearance. Here. I'm waiting.
Even if the lights go out; even if someone
tells me "That's all"; even if emptiness
floats toward me in a gray draft from the stage;
even if not one of my silent ancestors
stays seated with me, not one woman, not
the boy with the immovable brown eye –
I'll sit here anyway. One can always watch.
Am I not right? You, to whom life tasted
so bitter after you took a sip of mine,
the first, gritty infusion of my will,
Father – who, as I grew up, kept on tasting
and, troubled by the aftertaste of so
strange a future, searched my unfocused gaze –
you who, so often since you died, have trembled
for my well-being, within my deepest hope,
relinquishing that calmness which the dead
feel as their very essence, countless realms
of equanimity, for my scrap of life –
tell me, am I not right? And you, dear women
who must have loved me for my small beginning
of love toward you, which I always turned away from
because the space in your features grew, changed,
even while I loved it, into cosmic space,
where you no longer were – : am I not right
to feel as if I *must* stay seated, must
wait before the puppet stage, or, rather,
gaze at it so intensely that at last,
to balance my gaze, an angel has to come and
make the stuffed skins startle into life.
Angel and puppet: a real play, finally.
Then what we separate by our very presence
can come together. And only then, the whole

cycle of transformation will arise,
out of our own life-seasons. Above, beyond us,
the angel plays. If no one else, the dying
must notice how unreal, how full of pretense,
is all that we accomplish here, where nothing
is allowed to be itself. Oh hours of childhood,
when behind each shape more than the past appeared
and what streamed out before us was not the future.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[5]
The Eighth *Duino Elegy*

With all its eyes the natural world looks out
into the Open. Only *our* eyes are turned
backward, and surround plant, animal, child
like traps, as they emerge into their freedom.
We know what is really out there only from
the animal's gaze; for we take the very young
child and force it around, so that it sees
objects – not the Open, which is so
deep in animal's faces. Free from death.
We, only, can see death; the free animal
Has its decline in back of it, forever,
and God in front, and when it moves, it moves
already in eternity, like a fountain.
   Never, for a single day, do *we* have
before us that pure space into which flowers
endlessly open. Always there is World
and never Nowhere without the No: that pure
unseparated element which one breathes
without desire and endlessly *knows*. A child
may wander there for hours, through the timeless
stillness, may get lost in it and be
shaken back. Or someone dies and *is* it.
For, nearing death, one doesn't see death; but stares
beyond, perhaps with and animal's vast gaze.
Lovers, if the beloved were not there
blocking the view, are close to it, and marvel…
As if by some mistake, it opens for them
behind each other…But neither can move past
the other, and it changes back into World.
Forever turned toward objects, we see in them
the mere reflection of the realm of freedom,
which we have dimmed. Or when some animal
mutely, serenely, looks us through and through.
That is what fate means: to be opposite,
to be opposite and nothing else, forever.
If the animal moving toward us so securely
In a different direction had our kind of
consciousness – , it would wrench us around and drag us
along its path. But it feels its life as boundless,
unfathomable, and without regard
to its own condition: pure, like its outward gaze.
And where we see the future, it sees all time
and itself within all time, forever healed.

Yet in the alert, warm animal there lies
the pain and burden of an enormous sadness.
For it too feels the presence of what often
overwhelms us: a memory, as if
the element we keep pressing toward was once
more intimate, more true, and our communion
infinitely tender. Here all is distance;
there it was breath. After that first home,
the second seems ambiguous and drafty.
    Oh bliss of the *tiny* creature which remains
forever inside the womb that was its shelter;
joy of the gnat which, still *within*, leaps up
even at its marriage: for everything is womb.
And look at the half-assurance of the bird,
which knows both inner and outer, from its source,
as if it were the soul of an Etruscan,
flown out of a dead man received inside a space,
but with his reclining image as the lid.
And how bewildered is any womb-born creature
that has to fly. As if terrified and fleeing
from itself, it zigzags through the air, the way
a crack runs through a teacup. So the bat
quivers across the porcelain of evening.

And we: spectators, always, everywhere,
turned toward the world of objects, never outward.
It fills us. We arrange it. It breaks down.
We rearrange it, then break down ourselves.
Who has twisted us around like this, so that
no matter what we do, we are in the posture
of someone going away? Just as, upon
the farthest hill, which shows him his whole valley
one last time, he turns, stops, lingers – ,
so we live here, forever taking leave.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[6]
Archaic Torso of Apollo

We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[7]
Death Experience

We know nothing of this going away, that
shares nothing with us. We have no reason,
whether astonishment and love or hate,
to display Death, whom a fantastic mask

of tragic lament astonishingly disfigures.
Now the world is still full of roles which we play
as long as we make sure, that, like it or not,
Death plays, too, although he does not please us.

But when you left, a strip of reality broke
upon the stage through the very opening
through which you vanished: Green, true green,
true sunshine, true forest.

We continue our play. Picking up gestures
now and then, and anxiously reciting
that which was difficult to learn; but your far away,
removed out of our performance existence,

sometimes overcomes us, as an awareness
descending upon us of this very reality,
so that for a while we play Life
rapturously, not thinking of any applause.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[8]
Love Song

How can I keep my soul in me, so that it doesn't touch your soul?
How can I raise it high enough, past you, to other things?
I would like to shelter it, among remote lost objects,
in some dark and silent place that doesn't resonate
when your depths resound.
Yet everything that touches us, me and you,
takes us together like a violin's bow,
which draws one voice out of two separate strings.
Upon what instrument are we two spanned?
And what musician holds us in his hand?
Oh sweetest song.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[9]
From *The Sonnets to Orpheus* (I, 7)

Praising is what matters! He was summoned for that,
and came to us like the ore from a stone's
silence. His mortal heart presses out
a deathless, inexhaustible wine.

Whenever he feels the god's paradigm grip
his throat, the voice does not die in his mouth.
All becomes vineyard, all becomes grape,
ripened on the hills of his sensuous South.

Neither decay in the sepulchre of kings
nor any shadow that has fallen from the gods
can ever detract from his glorious praising.

For he is a herald who is with us always,
holding far into the doors of the dead
a bowl with ripe fruit worthy of praise.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[10]
Imaginary Career

At first a childhood, limitless and free
of any goals. Ah sweet unconsciousness.
Then sudden terror, schoolrooms, slavery,
the plunge into temptation and deep loss.

Defiance. The child bent becomes the bender,
inflicts on others what he once went through.
Loved, feared, rescuer, wrestler, victor,
he takes his vengeance, blow by blow.

And now in vast, cold, empty space, alone.
Yet hidden deep within the grown-up heart,
a longing for the first world, the ancient one…

Then, from His place of ambush, God leapt out.

Rainer Maria Rilke

[11]
Excerpt from "The Burial of the Dead"

    What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
          Frisch weht der Wind
          Der Heimat zu.
          Mein Irisch Kind,
          Wo weilest du?
'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
'They called me the hyacinth girl.'
 – Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed' und leer das Meer.

                  T.S. Eliot

[12]
Death By Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
                        A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
                        Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

T.S. Eliot

[13]
What the Thunder Said

    After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and place and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

    Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
                   If there were water
  And no rock
  If there were rock
  And also water
  And water
  A spring
  A pool among the rock
  If there were the sound of water only
  Not the cicada
  And dry grass singing
  But sound of water over a rock
  Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
  Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
  But there is no water

    Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
 – But who is that on the other side of you?

    What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

    A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

    In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

    Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
D A
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms
DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

                    I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon – O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
                Shantih shantih shantih

                  T.S. Eliot

[14]
Excerpt from "Burnt Norton, I"

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.
                          But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.
                    Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

T.S. Eliot

[15]
Excerpt from "Burnt Norton, II"

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror.
Yet the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.
                    Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.
To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.

T.S. Eliot

[16]
Burnt Norton, V

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

    The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.
Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,
Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always –
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.

T.S. Eliot

[17]
Excerpt from "East Coker, III"

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away –
Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;
Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing –
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth.

T.S. Eliot

[18]
Excerpt [2] from "East Coker, III"

                    You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
   You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
   You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
   You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
   You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

T.S. Eliot

[19]
Excerpt from "The Dry Salvages, V"

Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint –
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled,
Where action were otherwise movement
Of that which is only moved
And has in it no source of movement –
Driven by daemonic, chthonic
Powers. And right action is freedom
From past and future also.
For most of us, this is the aim
Never here to be realised;
Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;
We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil.

T.S. Eliot

[20]
Excerpt from "Little Gidding, V"

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always –
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

T.S. Eliot

Attitudes Toward Poetry Questionnaire

Read each statement below carefully, and click on the circle that corresponds to your rating.

1. I read poetry as often as I can.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

2. All kinds of poetry interest me.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

3. I like reading poetry.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

4. I don't understand how anyone enjoys reading poetry.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

5. I enjoy poetry that is difficult to grasp.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

6. There is no poetry that interests me.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

7. I never actively seek out poetry.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

8. I think poetry is intellectually stimulating.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

9. I think poetry is boring.

   not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

10. I seek out poetry that interests me.
    not at all true   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   extremely true

Appendix 2: Study Two

6.1 Week Two Materials

Note: The tasks for week one of Study Two are identical for those described in Study One, above.

<div align="center">Oral Briefing</div>

As you might remember from last week, my name is Paul Campbell, and I am a researcher in the department of psychology. I am here to offer you the opportunity to participate in a research project concerning individual differences and reading experience. By participating, in today's session, you can earn your second research participation credit for this study.

In today's session, I will be recording our interview about your experience of reading the poem last week, in addition to asking you to read it once again. My questions will concern your reading experience, as well as some related aspects of your everyday life. Altogether, this study should take 50-60 minutes to complete.

As you engage in this interview, we would like you to keep in mind that we are interested in your beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and experiences – whatever they may be. We are not going to judge your responses in any way. Because we are interested in your personal reactions, describing them may be emotionally involving. Therefore, we are taking several steps to ensure that you feel comfortable about participating.

First, your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate, or, at any time during the study, you may decide to withdraw, in either case without penalty. That is, you will still receive your second research participation credit for today's session by completing an alternate assignment that we will provide. Completion of this alternate assignment will take approximately the same amount of time as would participation in this session. The alternate assignment will involve reading an article on a topic closely related to the study, and answering two short essay questions. To receive research participation credit, this assignment must be completed before you leave this session. Also, even after today's session, you may choose to withdraw your permission to use the information you have provided, any time in the next three months. If you reach this decision, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken. At your request, he will immediately destroy all of the information you provided during this session.

Second, all the information you provide will be strictly confidential. Only myself, Dr. David Miall, Dr. Don Kuiken, and the immediate members of their research team will have access to the responses you provide. Also, the results of this study may be presented at scholarly conferences or published in professional journals, but only in the form of group trends. Any report of this research will be

in a form that precludes identification of yourself or any persons to whom you may refer during participation.

Third, all the information you provide in your questionnaire responses will remain anonymous. You will be given an arbitrary code number so that your responses on each task can be coordinated with your responses on the other tasks. However, the coded records of your responses on these tasks will NOT contain any identifying information (e.g., names or student ID numbers). Only the consent form, which I will ask you to sign in just a moment, will contain identifying information and your arbitrary code number, and this form will be securely stored in a location within Don Kuiken's laboratory that is completely separate from the location in which your responses will be stored. So, if you decide later to withdraw your permission for research use of the information provided during today's session, you can contact Dr. Kuiken, who is solely able to delete from the records the information you provided during this session.

Given these guidelines, I hope you are willing to participate. Do you have any questions?

If you are willing to participate, please confirm that for our records by reading and then signing this consent form [present participant with Consent Form 2]. This form reviews the procedures and precautions that I just mentioned and then asks for your consent to use the information you provide for research purposes.

OK, you may begin.

Participant Consent Form 2: *Individual Experiences of Poetry*

Objectives. You are invited to participate in the second part of a research study entitled ***Individual Experiences of Poetry*** that is being conducted by Paul Campbell, (doctoral student in Comparative Literature), Dr. David Miall (Department of English and Film Studies) and Dr. Don Kuiken (Department of Psychology). We are interested in your experience of reading a poem. The purpose of this research is to understand how readers respond while reading poetry.

Participation. Your participation in today's session involves engaging in an interview about your experience of reading the poem last week, as well as reading the poem once again. The questions will concern your reading experience, as well as some related aspects of your everyday life. The interview will be recorded. Participation in this part of the study will take about 50-60 minutes to complete.

Voluntariness. If you choose to participate in this part of the study, you will earn a second research participation credit. However, your decision to participate is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate, or, at any time during the study, you may decide to withdraw, in either case without penalty. That is, you will still receive full credit for research participation through an alternate assignment that we will provide. Completion of this alternate assignment will take approximately the same amount of time as would participation in this session. The alternate assignment will involve reading an article on a topic closely related to the study, and answering two short essay questions. To receive research participation credit, this assignment must be completed before you leave this session.

Also, even after today's session, you may choose to withdraw your permission to use the information you have provided, any time within the next three months. If you reach this decision, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken (whose address and phone number are listed below). At your request, he will immediately destroy all of the information you provided during this session.

Your decision not to participate, to withdraw during participation, or to withdraw permission to use the information you provide will not affect your academic standing or access to services at the University of Alberta.

Confidentiality. The information gathered during your participation in this study will remain confidential. Only Paul Campbell, Dr. David Miall, Dr. Don Kuiken, and the immediate members of their research team will have access to the responses you provide. Also, the results of this study may be presented at scholarly conferences or published in professional journals, but only in the form of group trends. Any report of this research will be in a form that precludes identification of yourself or any persons to whom you may refer during participation.

Anonymity. The information you provide also will remain anonymous. You will be given an arbitrary code number so that your responses on each task can be coordinated with your responses on the other tasks. However, the coded records of your responses on these tasks will NOT contain any identifying information (e.g., names or student ID numbers). Only this consent form will contain identifying information and your arbitrary code number, and this form will be securely stored in a location within Don Kuiken's laboratory that is completely separate from the location in which your responses will be stored. So, if you decide later to withdraw your permission for research use of the information provided during today's session, you can contact Dr. Kuiken, who is solely able to delete from the records the information you provided during this session. Please note that the consent forms and data records will be kept for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

Benefits and risks. This research can potentially contribute to our understanding of individual experience in reading poetry. There are no foreseeable risks to this study, but if any risks should arise, the researcher will inform you and all other participants immediately. If you should experience any adverse effects, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken immediately.

Contact information. Also, if you have any questions or comments on this study, please contact Dr. Don Kuiken at the number or address below. Or, if you would like clarification of your rights as a research participant, please contact the representative of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Christina Gagne, at the address below.

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Signatures. Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understood the nature and purpose of this study. Your signature indicates your willingness to participate in this study and allows your responses to be used for research purposes.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher Signature   Date

Interview Schedule

1. Welcome, Introduction, Oral Briefing, Consent

2. Life of the poem during the week.

  • Have you thought about the poem in any way since leaving here last
    week? [if no, continue to 3. If yes, pursue details: what was the context for
    this thinking about the poem, or being reminded of it?]

3. Memory of the poem [likely unnecessary if 2 is answered yes, with some
detail]

  • Do you recall anything from your reading last week? A mood, a reaction
    you had? A particular aspect of the poem that stood out, or seemed
    important?

4. Brief relaxation preparation [if 2 or 3 has already opened the right space for
them to engage the poem again, this can be omitted]

  • Make yourself as comfortable in your seat as possible – relax, feeling the
    cares and concerns of the day melt away as you breathe. Close your eyes,
    and let your mind release its thoughts, noting only the texture of your
    breathing as it washes in and out. Let whatever comes to mind fade into
    the background, and come back to your breathing.

5. Present with copy of poem marked from last day.

  • Now, read the poem to yourself slowly, leisurely, remaining open to
    whatever it has to say. Feel free to return to any word, phrase, or section
    that you like. Let me know when you've finished.

6. Specific Passages and Imagined Performance

- Now, I'll ask you to consider the first passage you marked in last week's reading. Take a moment to look it over. I'd like you to imagine that you are about to read this poem aloud in a room where you are all alone – where no one can hear or see you. Take a moment to imagine what you would be like as you are getting ready to read, just before you begin to read aloud. As you get ready, are you standing or sitting? If you are standing, what is that like? Can you describe your posture, your body position? What is your sense of your body as you are reading? If you are sitting, what is that like? Are you leaning forward or backward, or to the right or left, and how does that feel bodily? Take a moment to imagine this, and when you are ready, describe how you would look and feel as you are getting ready to read this passage aloud.

Passage-Focused Questions

- What sense do you get from this passage?

- How does this passage strike you? Does a feeling emerge, or a mood?

- Do you get a sense that the poem is taking you somewhere? How is it positioning you, moving you? Where is it asking you to go?

- Does a scene or image emerge? What sense do you get from it? Can you describe the way it arises?

8. Passage Focused Questions II

- Go through the same process with the second marked passage.

9. Turn Toward Life

- Now, think back to a time in your life when these feelings, the sense you get from the poem, was with you. What was this like? Can you describe it?

- Does the poem have anything to say about that experience? How does it position you in relation to it? How is it different?

10. Speaker

- Imagine, for a moment, the speaker of this poem. Can you describe what this person is like?

- What mood must this person have been feeling for *this* poem to have come from it?

- What experience could have prompted *this* poem?

11. Opportunity for questions, general comments, etc. Thanks for participating, oral debriefing, give copy of debriefing, ask to sign release form.

6.2 Transcript Examples

Unedited Transcription of 414_M2_2009_04_04.mp3 (Participant 414)

I = Interviewer
P = participant

I: For this study you're going to be participant 414. It's useful to have this on the record. So that's on the tape for us. I wonder, last week you read a poem here, it was actually a week ago today I think that you read it. Over the last week, have you thought about the poem at all?

P: Yeah, I do. I do. And most professionally – but more about religious things. That'll be too. I'm not a religious person, but I am effected. By religious. My father believed in Buddhism. And I – there are some church in China, in my hometown, it's a very small city but yeah, you have so many churches in there and in China it's - [inaudible] I think. And I grew up there and I do feel that something I have always relate to the religious thing. Something that goes, something like angels. It's complex.

I: When you're thinking back to your reading last week and when you thought about the poem again during this week, what about the poem specifically were you thinking of?

P: Specifically more about the Christian thing. The western goes angels but less about the Buddhism. I remember some of the movies I saw before. Something like Constantines.

I: So did it remind you of those or you were thinking about those things too.

P: Yeah. I think about those things.

I: Okay. You were talking about sort of the religious themes or thoughts that you were having over the week. Was there any particular time or were there any particular times when you were thinking about the poem?

P: I was thinking about the poem mostly at night. Just right before sleep. And I was trying to type the name of the poem on internet. I look for it. I also type the name of the movie that I saw before. And search that here.

I: And when you were thinking of this poem and you were thinking of some of these religious things, you were thinking about this film. Was there any particular

sense of the poem that you got. What was the sense of it, so you thought about it through religious things but what was it saying to you about that?

P: In fact, I don't have a clear sense about the religious because [inaudible] I'm not a religious person. I guess what that – something like ghosts or angels of humans – just buzzing around your head. And – it's hard to describe. And I chose those two passages not because I understand them, because there are some words that relate to the – the god-power of those creatures. But I think I should choose them.

I: Okay. You said that you're not a very religious person usually. (P: No.) But you said that you're affected by religious things. (P: Yeah.) In what way did you find yourself being affected by this poem and the religious things in the poem?

P: Well. Hmm. {pause} In what way. {pause} I'm thinking about that. Because if you're completely not a religious person, you would stop thinking about that. Often. But since we have Buddhism in my family, and I already saw the Buddhist and I have some friends being Christian. So I always talk about those religious things with my friends. It is real, it is not real. And – hmm. So I think it's my daily life, it affects me. And when I read a poem it read – just reminds me to think about that more.

I: Okay. At this point, what I want to do is ask you to read the poem again, so I have a copy here that you can read. So I just want you to relax. Take a deep breath, and just take your time and take as long as you like to read over the poem. You can return to any parts of it you like. I'm just going to sit here and look at some notes, so take as much time as you need and when you're finished reading, and you want to talk about the poem again, just let me know.

{pause}

P: Okay.

I: You can hold onto that now. And you can refer to it whenever you like throughout our conversation. And that's for you to use. Now that you've read the poem again, I want you to imagine what it would be like as you're getting ready to read the poem out loud. I'm not going to ask you to do this, but imagine that you're about to read the poem out loud in a room by yourself where no one can see or hear you. Okay. And I want you to think about, take a moment and imagine what you would be like as you're getting ready to read. Just before you begin to read aloud. As you get ready, are you standing, are you sitting? What is it like? Can you describe your posture, your body position. Take a moment to imagine it, and when you're ready, describe how you'd look and how you'd feel as you're getting ready to read the poem out loud.

{pause}

P: So if I've got to read this poem aloud in a room, just myself, I think I'm going to be sitting a – big table. Just like this. [inaudible] table. So there's no chair at all. Just what's here. And the room is – completely white and bright. [inaudible] It's a pretty [inaudible] feeling.

I: And you said you could hear sounds?

P: The sounds just I read with them.

I: Oh, I see, so you can hear almost like an echo. (P: Yeah, echo.) Oh, okay, so it's very empty. (P: Yeah, it's empty.) Okay. And are you standing, are you sitting? (P: Sitting.) Sitting down? And what's your posture like?

P: It's very – kind of like a formal posture.

I: Okay. And are you relaxed or are you sort of [inaudible] or tense?

P: A little tense I think. Yeah.

I: As you're delivering, what volume or tone do you imagine yourself using?

P: I think it's a very high volume and it's a very formal voice. And it's like the people in the church do that, so.

I: Okay. So sort of loud and very formally done. (P: Yeah.) Okay. And are you holding onto the paper? Or are you moving your hands, how are you – are you stationary, are you moving?

P: I think I'm going to hold something. I imagine that. But it's not a paper, it's like a very formal old piece of paper from the Bible. Something like that.

I: Okay. Now that we've sort of imagined that scene, and you're reading and the poem, I want to focus on the first passage that you've underlined there. And can I just look for a second to see what passage that is? There it is. Not angels, not humans and already the knowing animals are aware that we are not really at home in our interpreted world. How does that passage strike you?

P: I guess firstly it's not angels, it is not humans. I don't – what would it be. So that's something that strike me. And make me to imagine all the things that I've been through. All the creatures that I saw in the movie. And got really – kind of reminds me of like watching a scary movie. The animal things that you haven't saw before and hiding somewhere in the corner of the room. And yeah, that's about really that strike me.

I: Okay. Do you get a picture in your mind of that scene? And could you describe that.

P: Well. I think it's basically a room like this, but it's really a dark one. And – when I write poem, I sit before the – this computer. So it's just like the – like a computer. I guess no other lights in the room. And you have something – something unknown sitting somewhere in the room with me. And when I look back, I see nothing. That's all.

I: And how does that feel for you?

P: A little bit scary.

I: How scary?

P: Not that scary. Because when I read the poem the room is pretty – like the door is open. If I close the door I think it's going to be more scary. I think the door is not very closed. Just like there are some empty space.

I: So if the door's a little open, you feel less scared, you feel a little better.

P: Yeah. Less scared.

I: But it's completely closed.

P: [inaudible] And light also is like my mood.

I: Okay, so if the light's on it's a little better.

P: Yeah, it's a little better.

I: If the light's off, that's a problem.

P: Yeah.

I: When they say here – if I can just see that again for a second – not angels, not humans and already the knowing animals are aware that we are not really at home in our interpreted world. So you talked about when it says not angels and not humans, right. And then you talked about and then you said then what, then what is it if it's not the angels or humans. What sorts of things do you imagine if it's not angels and it's not humans, and what is it?

P: It's something like a demon. Or something like a spiritual thing. Something that you cannot touch but you can feel that they exist.

I: Okay. And are these things good or bad? Or neither.

P: Neither. They're neutral. They don't mean to harm you. They just exist.

I: And can you know them or can you see them?

P: No. I can feel them but I can't see them. There are no specific shape for them.

I: And you said you can't see them but you can feel them. (P: Yeah.) Now, what is that feeling like?

P: Have you ever been in a dark aisle, and just by yourself and you feel that someone is standing behind you? That's pretty much that feeling. That I had been to.

I: So the feeling of somebody … looking at you. In the dark. Sort of maybe standing in front of you.

P: Yeah. [inaudible]

I: Okay. And that's sort of the sense you get from here. (P: Yeah.) And how is that stare? So you feel it and then what?

P: Actually it's a peaceful stare. It is not trying to harm you, but it's pretty scary I think.

I: Okay. So you don't feel like you're going to get hurt. You don't feel like it intends you any harm. But just knowing it's there is a little scary.

P: [inaudible]

I: Okay. So you don't know what it is. (P: Yeah.) Okay. Let's move to the second passage that you've underlined here. Whom would it not remain for that longed after mildly disillusioning presence which the solitary heart so painfully meets.

P: I chose this second passage mainly because of the three words here. Mild, disillusioning, presence. I think the word is a bit – gives me a sense of feeling that the word is contradicting with each other. And – disillusioning presence, this word struck me first but I don't know why.

I: Okay. So disillusioning presence, right? You felt like there's a you said a kind of contradiction there? (P: Yeah.) Can you describe that for me or can you talk about how that feels, what sense do you get here?

P: Disillusioning [inaudible] presence. It's like the thing that I talked about before in the first passage. This is spiritual, you can feel it and you know it's here. But it's not here. It's like this feeling. Of contradiction.

I: I get it. So it's a presence, but … (P: It's not present.) I get it. I get it. Okay. And do you get an idea or an image of this passage?

P: Yeah. I do.

I: What is that?

P: It's like a small village. With very [inaudible]– how can I say that?

I: Fog?

P: Fog, yeah.

I: So a small village with heavy fog? (P: Yeah.) Okay.

P: You can't see very far from the side. And uh – there are several trees. And it's very overcast. Really dark. And that's pretty much about that. You can't see actually the things [inaudible]

I: Say that again?

P: You can't see things right before your eye. Because that's full.

I: I see. So sort of a small village, a very thick fog. You can only see what's right in front of you but not any farther than that.

P: Yeah. And – you can feel that that's source of shadows. In the fog but you don't know that. What's that.

I: Are you alone when you're imagining this?

P: Oh. Alone.

I: Okay. So there's no one else around except that you feel …

P: Some sort of [inaudible]

I: Okay. I think this is a good time to move from the passages now. You've described a really good sense of the poem for you. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt the same sense that you get from the poem?

P: Uh yeah, I do. But not in recent years. When I was in high school. Because my high school is really far from the city. It's like in a countryside? And it gives me more about the image that I imagine right now. So – it especially at night. So being alone at night on countryside outside my school. I'm walking in my school at this place so it's very – it's very scary I think.

I: Okay. Could you tell me more about that?

P: In my school there's a statue. It's a [inaudible] university educational people. So and that statue gives me negative feelings actually. Mainly because I've been through a very scary scene at night but also alone. And there are – there is fog. Heavy fog when I was there. And the school has some sort of strong lights. At night. But just one or two. And it makes – makes that environment like a scary movie. And I think that relates to this second passage that I've chosen. When I imagined that scene.

I: Okay. And you talked about having a very sort of scary thing happen. Is that the thing? That you're describing for me now?

P: Yeah. It's not a very scary thing, it's just the atmosphere is really scary. I just ran through the whole campus and to my dorm suite.

I: Right. That scariness that you're talking about or that sort of atmosphere, is that the same as the atmosphere that's in this poem?

P: It's a little bit different. Because this poem is less scary. And that scene that I described for you is completely a scary atmosphere. But this one is not. This one is a little bit peaceful I think.

I: Tell me more about that peacefulness that you get from here.

P: When I read the poem I felt first like angels, like – and the creature that I imagined, the special things. I think I'm kind of relaxed a little bit. Where the first passage that I chosen has been scary. I feel that more intense. But after that, it changes. Especially I read this disillusioning presence. And I think I'm sort of focused on that – on reading on the contradictory. On it. So it's a little bit more peaceful. Relaxing. Yeah, it's two stage. Really.

I: Okay. And when you're finished the poem, where are you then? So what is it like then when th poem's over.

P: When the poem's over? I think I was affected by the [inaudible]. Its really direct. Effect. On me.

I: And what was that effect?

P: I think I was flying through this window.

I: Okay. So you sort of thought about that.

P: Yeah, I sort of thought about that.

I: And what did that feel like?

P: It's a pretty holy thing I think.

I: Okay. Could you talk more about that?

P: I think it's just like the voice, really light. And you have … how do you say that. You have learned in your head. So you – you think of thoughts are – gone a little bit? Just emptiness in your head.

I: Okay. So let's see. {pause} Is your mind blank?

P: Uhh. Sort of like that.

I: So are there - say that again. Say again what you're describing. I'm trying to understand it well.

P: It seems like my body is become lighter. And I'm flying out of the window. And my head – how do you describe that. There are some empty spaces in my mind. Some sort of brighter scenes. brighter background arise my mind. That's pretty much about the feeling I [inaudible]

I: Okay. Are these brighter spaces in your mind, are they positive, are they negative.

P: I think it is positive.

I: Okay. And what's your sense of those spaces in your mind?

P: A sense or – what kind of sense is it a feeling …?

I: Sure. Or these brighter spaces, what are they I guess. Can you describe them?

P: It's just a space. It's like a – it's like a room that is completely white. And it's a very large space. Have you ever seen the movie – you must see that movie. The Matrix. (I: Yes.) Yeah. When Neo is reloading the Matrix, there are – white spaces. (I: Yes.) Yeah. I think it's pretty much like that.

I: Okay, I get it. So very, it's just very white. (P: Yeah.) Very bright. (P: Yeah, bright.) I get it. Okay. I'm going to ask you now to think about the person who is

saying this poem. So the speaker of the poem, the person who's saying it. Do you get any sense of that person?

P: Not exactly. I get it mainly from my own [inaudible]. I'm reading this poem alone. Not other people reading this to me.

I: So instead of imagining someone writing or reading the poem, you are …

P: First person. I was in first person. Reading the poem.

I: So you're the person who's delivering this poem, who's giving it, who's doing it. (P: Yeah.) Okay. {pause} Is there or do you get a sense of an experience that would have resulted in this poem. So is there an experience that happened or could happen that would cause someone to make this poem.

P: No. I don't think I ever thought about that before. So if you ask me I think there is sort of a – I think that I can't imagine. So but I'm not, I was not imagining that when I read the poem. So- can you repeat the question again?

I: Yeah. Is there an experience that you could go through or someone could go through that would result in this poem, that would make this poem possible. That would cause them to or you to someone to write this poem.

P: No. I imagine a different thing. When you ask me that question, I imagine a person sit right beside in the table I just described to you. I read the poem on this side, that person sit on that side. That's the person who write the poem. That's the very quick flash of imagine. Just poom, gone.

I: Okay. So that's it. (P: Yeah, that's it.) Okay.

Unedited Transcription of 429_M2_2009_08_01.mp3 (Participant 429)

I = Interviewer
P = participant

I: So as I mentioned, for our purposes this week you will be participant 429. For the sake of anonymity and confidentiality. As unfortunate as that is. So last week you read a poem and you completed the tasks that were associated with that. I wonder if during the intervening week you found yourself thinking back to the poem at all.

P: Yeah, I did.

I: Okay. Tell me about that.

P: Well, I knew I had an interview so I was trying to figure out how I felt about the poem and stuff and the more I thought about it the more I - like I was kind of apathetic about it. Because it didn't - like the questions that were asked like how did the poem affect you and everything, did it give you an awe inspiring moment it was like no, not really. It was just a poem I read and like whatever. Type of thing.

I: Okay. When did you find yourself thinking back to the poem?

P: Just like randomly in the week. When I'm on the bus and I had nothing to do started thinking about stuff. So.

I: So during down times.

P: Yeah, down times.

I: Okay. Right after you read the poem last week or even as you were reading it if you can remember that, can you describe the general impression you got of it.

P: I didn't like it.

I: Okay. Could you tell me about that?

P: I like poems that have structure. And that have rhymes and stuff and to me that one was so hard to read. And I didn't like the way that it just like had one word at the end and started like a different verse and stuff and it just didn't flow in my mind. And when it doesn't flow then it doesn't captivate me.

I: Okay. So, structurally you found the poem very . . .

P: Yeah, I didn't like the structure, like I - I like like a set way of reading something. And if it doesn't, if it kind of doesn't flow and it doesn't have that structure of like rhyme here, rhyme there, at the end or just like - then it doesn't stick with me. And I don't care about it.

I: Okay. At this point I'm going to give you a copy of the poem and I'm going to give you the copy of the poem that you had from last week. Oh, and you chose four passages last week. And ideally you would have chosen two passages last week, so you've chosen double the passages that most participants choose for this. So as you're reading this, just give it a read and if you could just look at the passages that you've chosen and pick two that for you are sort of ranked one and two or the most silent for you, and just put a one and two beside them. I would appreciate that. So at this point, just read it over to yourself, take your time, you can return to any piece that you want as often as you want. And when you're finished doing that and when you sort of mark those passages, just let me know. And I'll give you that to write on as well so that you can do that.

{pause}

I: Ready?

P: Yeah.

I: So now that you've had a chance to read the poem again, I'm going to ask you to imagine what it would be like to read this poem aloud in a room where there's no one there to see or hear you. I'm not going to ask you to do this because that would be strange. But imagine yourself in a room where no one can see or hear you and you're getting ready to read this poem aloud. What would you be like as you're getting ready to read. For instance, are you standing, are you sitting, are you moving around, are you laying down. What's your sense of motion, are you using your hands or not. So take a moment just to think about that, what that would be like and then describe that for me.

P: I'd probably be like pacing kind of in a circle up and down. Just holding the paper. Kind of like in the - kind of having a bounce in my step?

I: Okay. What would the pace be like as far as the pacing is concerned?

P: It'd be kind of - it'd be slower. It wouldn't be like extremely fast and it wouldn't be like a restless pace, it'd be very leisurely and just walking. Just like you have no care in the world.

I: Okay. And what's that sort of bounce in your step.

P: Bringing me kind of - kinda - I don't know how to describe it because like I just do it whenever I'm bored you kind of just like kind of rock on your toes. And then you come back.

I: So kind of a forward back?

P: Kind of like an up and down.

I: Okay. And what does that signify?

P: Kinda like me being silly. And me just - like I do it when I have too much to think about. And I just do it to kind of like a fidget. Except with your feet, not your hands.

I: Okay. And that fidget serves to?

P: Kinda like to calm me down. And I have something to do. Instead of having like my mind going a hundred kilometers an hour.

I: Okay. When you imagine the volume that you're using for this, do you imagine it being loud, soft?

P: It's soft. I'm not a very loud person, so if I'm by myself it's never overly loud.

I: Do you imagine a change of volume or a consistent one when you're going through this.

P: A change in volume. I would definitely lower my voice more when I'm reading the passage in German or words that I don't exactly know how to pronounce.

I: Okay. Because?

P: Because - because I don't like making mistakes. And when you're unsure of something your voice gets slower and it gets lower. And like even though you're alone you kind of feel a little judged by how you're reading and your voice always goes really lower when you're finished talking.

I: Okay. At this point, let's turn to the first passage that you selected. And I'm just going to borrow that. I will show you fear in a handful of dust. What's your sense of that passage?

P: I just thought it was interesting 'cause I could actually see it in my mind. And I don't really know what it means. But like the way I saw dust was kind of like

ashes. And a lot of people have the fear of death. And that's kind of what I thought of. Just being like handed all these ashes. It'd be like you . . .

I: Could you describe that scene for me in more detail, the one that comes up for you there.

P: The one that comes up for me? In the movie Swing Kids. There's this part where the guy has to bring a box to this woman and he's a German soldier and everything and he brings a box to this woman's house. And every single time that he did the woman would cry. And she'd be bawling and hysterical and stuff. So finally one day he goes and he opens up, like he kept bringing all these boxes, he opened the parcel and what he finds inside is I think the word *Verräter* traitor? And the ashes and the ring inside. So that was all the traitors, like burnt. And they put their ashes inside and they gave them to their wives. So that's the thing that comes up in my mind.

I: That's powerful.

P: Yeah. So that's why I was like fear and dust and that just, it just came to me and that was what I saw. That's what I see every time.

I: What's that like?

P: It's - like right now like my heart it's kind of like it feels heavier. And it's just - like I find it so sick that someone could do that? And you feel for these women that actually had to go through that. And it's disturbing. And sad.

I: Is there fear in it?

P: If it happened to me, I think there'd be a lot of fear. Because like just ever thinking that there's someone so sadistic out there that could do that to someone, that's scary. Like you'd like to see the world in rose coloured glasses but it's not like that. And I think that's scary for a lot of people and it's scary for me. You never want to have that type of fear. Or those feelings of - like I don't know. You never want to lose someone.

I: Do you get a sense of the hand that's sort of holding the dust here?

P: No.

I: Okay. So no sense of the person or hand?

P: No. It's more just like a general idea. It's not - like I don't see - it's funny 'cause I don't see a bad guy and I don't see a good guy. It's just the idea behind it, that's all I can see.

I: Okay. Let's move into the second passage that you marked there. And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief. What's your sense of that line?

P: That one was like the dead tree gives no shelter, like obviously you see it in your mind like a tree that has no leaves, it has no sap running through it, it's completely dead, it has no life and it can't give you any shelter and the cricket's no relief, like whenever you sit by a pond and you can hear the crickets and the frogs and everything, that gives you a sense of just calmness and sereneness and if you don't have that then it's like you're restless and you just - wanting to do something. You can't calm down.

I: Okay. Is there anything else in that restlessness?

P: [inaudible]

I: So imagine for a moment that you're in the scene. So there's a kind of restlessness that's there, there's the completely lifeless tree, the non-relieving crickets. What's it like to be there?

P: It's - kind of like you can - it's kind of like you can hear the pounding. In your brain. And that's all you hear. And you're thinking so fast, you're trying to figure out everything and yet nothing calms you down. It's just like a restlessness and anxiety that just overwhelms you. And you can't calm down. And - like, nothing makes you feel calm and nothing makes you feel happy.

I: When you're imagining that scene, where are you?

P: I'm at home. Back in my hometown. In my back yard there's a forest in my back yard and there's a small pond. And you can always hear the crickets and there's a willlow tree that's dead but it's like still a very pretty tree. And - now that I think about it, it would have been a beautiful tree if it was actually alive. And it sucks that it isn't. But it's still - it's still something that holds like good memories of my childhood. Being there. So for me that would be a restful place but the way I imagined it after reading that, it wasn't. It was - I wouldn't - I didn't put myself in my shoes, I put myself in somebody else's shoes who doesn't have shelter. And who has more worries than I do.

I: What's this sort of worry that is pounding in your head there?

P: Hmm, it's kind of like a worry of where am I going, what's my purpose in life, like if I can't find shelter then like how can I even find out what I'm supposed to be doing. Type of thing.

I: What would this shelter be sheltering you from if there were shelter here?

P: {pause} Like if you think - form like all the elements and stuff and then all the psychological stuff like depression and anxiety and all those things that - like make you feel depressed and sad.

I: You talked about sort of the scene here and where you put yourself when you imagined it. In someone else's shoes. Could you describe the scene for me when you've been there in your own shoes?

P: {pause} I think I'm going to cry. For me when it's in my own shoes is a lot of the depression. So you're looking for that shelter. To try and not be depressed? Because that depression feeling, it's so consuming and you try to be happy and you can't. And that could be like representative of the dead tree. Because you feel so dead inside and you just - like you can't get over it and like nothing makes you feel happy. And nothing it is - okay and it is okay and it doesn't matter how many things you buy or how many great people are surrounding you, you just feel so empty and like dead. Because you can't get happy. Sorry.

I: No, that's fine. And that's where this - how is this like? Did this sort of put you there, did this remind you of it, is it different?

P: It reminds me of it. Because like I have been at that point. And like you just - like when you're at that point all you want to do is just like protect yourself. And you find that shelter which is comforting, which is - like just keeps you warm and makes you happy. Like.

I: Where have you had that shelter?

P: It's always been with my family. Like not necessarily like my home, my house? It's always been with my family and their constant support. And like their own experiences. Like I - like my siblings and I have ALL dealt with that personal feeling of depression. Like varying degrees but we've all been there. So we could all relate to each other. And help each other.

I: Is there a place for you in the world that is the opposite of the kind of scene that's described here?

P: Like you mean like a happy scene?

I: Or one that really goes against or captures the antithesis of whatever it is that this scene is giving; so if happy does it then that's good, but if there's more to it that can oppose this, what is that. Or where is that for you?

P: That's - well it's in the mountains. At Christmas. And like it's funny 'cause it's snow and there's no life and there's like - all the trees are like sleeping inside of that. But it's such a great feeling. And usually it's snowboarding for me. When you're going so fast on the hill you've got tears coming out of your eyes. And that

great feeling that you know that - like you feel it. All in your body and you just feel so great.

I: Tell me more about that, you said you feel it all in your body.

P: Like - when you're snowboarding and people ask you like how do you carve. You can't even actually teach them you just say you feel it. And it is that instant where you don't really watch your toes - if you don't kick back onto your toes you're going to miss it and you're going to face plant.

I: But you do?

P: But you do. But you get up and you know that - you're just that step closer to getting it. And then the step after that is taking a really great jump. And you miss that one too. But you keep on getting up and it's the feeling that you want this SO bad. That it doesn't matter how many bruises you have. It doesn't matter that your tail bone is practically broken. You're just SO stoked to be on there. On that hill.

I: Describe for me the moment when it's right, when you get it right.

P: It's like OH YEAH!

I: Can you give me more than that?

P: It's - it's just a feeling like you'd want to - like you pump your arms and you're like yeah, this is awesome. And then you turn back and you're looking at all of your family just sitting on the hill, like your uncle who's snowboarding at 40 years old. Who's just as good as you and your brother that's ten times better than you and your sisters are just sitting there. And looking at you and just laughing and clapping and it's just so great.

I: So you've just done something for the first time, right? You've just done it. So even before you're in the after period, even before sort of you stop and look back up - which is part of it but it's a little later. So I'm talking about that second, that instant of how powerful it is where you just got it right, you JUST did the thing for the first time that you've been working at and not getting right. And then it happens. Could you describe that, sort of your bodily sense of that.

P: Your bodily sense like you just - after that you just relax. Like all your muscles relax. And you just land and - you have like one second of relaxation. And pure pride and excitement and everything. And then next moment you just have to keep on going.

I: So whatever that moment is it's brief.

P: It's brief. It's really brief because like unfortunately if you stay in that moment, then it ruins everything because you - because like if you just stay in that moment and you keep relaxing, then you'll miss it. And you'll - so it's like oh. A split second of pure pride, excitement and just - like practically kind of arrogant because you did so well. And you're happy with yourself. Then you go and brag about it.

I: In that second of arrogance, correct me if I'm wrong here. Are you above the situation.

P: No. You just - you kind of just one upped yourself. You always have to keep on like trying to get better so that every little moment of arrogance you're like okay. I've done this. Now what's the next step to make it even better.

I: And how does that moment, when it's remembered or later on, how does that moment set you up for moving forward?

P: It just gives you confidence that you know you can do it. And - like even if you fail, you're still at that level. And you can't go more down. Kind of thing.

I: I get it, so once you've achieved a certain level, that forms a new sort of floor or baseline that keeps you above a certain sort of falling down below it.

P: Yeah. Exactly.

I: Okay. When you put these two situations together, so you have THAT moment and then you have the one sort of where it's shelterless. What's the difference between those moments if you sort of sit down in both of them for a second and look back at yourself sort of in each one. What's the difference, what's the main thing that stands out for you as making these two things different?

P: In the one with the tree, like I'm all alone and completely alone. But the one when I'm snowboarding it's - like I may be snowboarding alone and I may be doing this all by myself but there is always someone to share it with. Like I'm not - like I don't - you don't have no one to support you, you have someone that's either at the top of the hill watching you go down or you have someone at the bottom of the hill taking pictures and like sharing in your elation.

I: So in the positive moment there's a kind of - you described earlier I can't describe the feeling but if you've done it and had it you know. (P: Yeah.) In the other situation in the sort of unsheltered situation, is there that same sense that you can't describe that feeling?

P: Yeah. Because it's hard to tell to explain to someone why you're feeling so sad? And they're just like okay, like [inaudible] get over it, like you'll do better

on the next exam and you'll do better in your next relationship it's like no. Like for me right now, you don't understand, you can't - like you don't - like I can't describe to you how I feel. Because it's just so difficult to put into words. And then if you haven't been there, then it's really hard to relate to? And that's why - like a lot of my friends didn't get it. Or if you'd start talking about it, they'd start talking about their own experiences and you're like no. You're completely off the mark. That's not it.

I: So even those who thought they had gone through what you were going through, hadn't.

P: No. Like unless - like every person's experiences are very individual. But a lot of them who - like haven't felt that way. And THOUGHT they could relate to me? Was just - they were wrong. And then those who have experienced it, was something different so it gave you a different perspective. That you - like with my siblings they understood but it was different things that made them feel that way. So you could understand the base? And a lot of different things but in the end there was a lot of things that made our feelings so much different because of our experiences. I may be contradicting myself.

I: No. I'm just going to ask on the positive side then - when you were sort of having a moment and maybe you're seeing sort of the elation afterwards and you're having that and having that with others, does it feel like you're all in it together in the same sort of thing?

P: Yeah, because you're like - 'cause everybody's happy for me. And the next person that succeeds we're all happy for them. And it's not - it's not competition? It's just everybody's happy and everybody - like something like snowboarding, everybody has those steps to follow. You're not just snowboarding like various different things, like everybody has those steps. And if you can't get that first step of being able to like snow plough, the next step being able to carve. So you always have like these different steps to go through. So everybody knows how it's been? And how you feel and we're all doing it at different speeds? Where we've all experienced it? So that's why like that's easy to relate to. And that's easy to be happy for someone because you're either going towards that or you've just experienced it.

I: Okay. So there's an isolation in the negative that's very sort of impenetrable. Others are trying to get at it and not really succeeding, even if you're surrounded by people who are there trying to get it. On a more positive side or on the very positive side, people are all in it and they seem to be getting it. And maybe even those who haven't done it are still able to share in it to some extent. (P: Yeah.) Okay. Is there a kind of openness you feel in one situation and a closed-ness in the other?

P: Yes. I am so much more open to talking about snowboarding and sharing that joy with my family. While the other one is like a really touchy subject. And you don't really want to go towards that. Because you feel as if it's something you have to deal with by yourself? And there's kind of - there's like a sense of shame? Because you're not doing as well as everybody else. And everybody's like well, like why aren't you happy, you have everything. And you're like no I don't. And there's so many things that just - you don't want to talk to people about it. Because you feel judged and you feel as if you're not good enough, that you're not to like everybody else's level. It's not true but you can't shake that feeling.

I: From within that, the world seems - how would you end that sentence?

P: In that - sorry, can you repeat it?

I: Yeah, you're in that unsheltered sort of place. And you're looking out at everything else. And it is how it is all the time. But when you're there, the world looks . . .

P: It looks like kind of hostile. Because you feel as if you don't fit in. Because you have all these issues and all this baggage and stuff and the world outside looks so happy and so perfect and everything is together while inside yourself you're just crumbling.

I: You're in the other situation. The positive one, the sort of [inaudible] how does the world look?

P: That one it's kind of as if the world is at your feet. And you can do anything and there ain't nothing stopping you. Except a tree in the road. And that's it.

I: As far as your possibilities are concerned in these two different states, could you describe the differences you feel there.

P: In the one that's unsheltered you might see like very small, small light. At the end of the tunnel. Would be like – if I can just get to there, I'll be fine. But like getting there is just SO hard and so daunting that it's to the point where it's like do I even want to? And then the other one is just, it's like pure like everywhere. And you have no obstacles, there's not darkness and you just can keep going and going.