

# Expressive Reading: A Phenomenological Study of Readers' Experience of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Shelley Sikora, Don Kuiken, and David S. Miall  
University of Alberta

To articulate what constitutes expressive reading, we conducted a phenomenological study of readers' responses to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. After reading the poem twice during 1 week, each of 40 readers chose five passages that they found striking or evocative and then commented on each one. Numerically aided phenomenological methods [(Kuiken, D., & Miall, D. S. (2001). Numerically aided phenomenology: Procedures for investigating categories of experience. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(1). Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/976>] were used to (a) compare these commentaries, identifying and paraphrasing recurrent meaning expressions (called constituents); (b) create matrices reflective of the profiles of constituents found in each commentary; (c) create clusters of commentaries according to the similarities in their profiles of constituents; and (d) examine each cluster to ascertain their distinctive attributes. Among the six distinct types of commentary identified, one in particular involved (a) metaphoric and quasi-metaphoric engagement with sensory imagery from the poem; (b) progressive transformation of an emergent affective theme; and (c) metaphoric blurring of boundaries between the reader's and narrator's perspectives. This mode of reading, which we call expressive enactment, contrasted with five other types of response: ironic allegoresis, aesthetic feeling, autobiographical assimilation, autobiographical diversion, and nonengagement.

*Keywords:* expression, aesthetic feeling, literary reading, formalism, self-transformation

A few researchers remain committed to the notion that literary texts afford a different mode of understanding than is offered by nonliterary texts. According to one version of this commitment, we read literary texts because they enable us to reflect on our feelings and concerns, clarify what they are, and reconfigure them within an altered understanding of our own and others' lives (Kuiken, 2008; Robinson, 2005). In other words, literary reading facilitates a form of feeling expression that deepens understanding. However, little is known about the distinctive characteristics of expressive reading. The primary objective of the present study was to articulate these characteristics through close examination of readers' descriptions of their experience of reading a literary text.

## A Conceptual Framework

Among the obstacles to investigation of expressive reading is the difficulty of providing a coherent and intelligible conception of feeling expression. Expression theories have been challenged in several ways (cf. Tormey, 1971), most notably in attempts to locate expression within the text rather than within readers' reactions to the text. So, for the New Critical generation of literary

theorists, declaration of the "affective fallacy" (Wimsatt, 1954) was an attempt to distinguish the a-meaningful, nonreferential effects of the text from the meaningful, referential tensions or resistances within it (Brooks, 1968). Underlying apprehension about epistemic subjectivity (Ogden & Richards, 1923) gave rise to a subject-object split that was maintained by shunning the feelings that emerged during even carefully considered interpretive efforts (Freund, 1987). For a more recent generation of theorists, the episteme guiding Critical Theory continued to challenge the integrity of feeling expression—although on different grounds. Assertions about the "death of the subject," originally grounded in the Derridean critique of Husserl's account of the living present (Derrida, 1973), left readers with a persistently decentered and affectively neutered subjectivity (Jameson, 1991). Claims that literature expresses feeling were construed as illusory—and even self-deceptive (Terada, 2001).

In their attempts to address such theoretical challenges, expression theorists (e.g., Robinson, 2005) often begin by emphasizing what feeling expression is not. First, they differentiate feeling expression from the unintentional embodiment of feeling. They are neither concerned with behaviors that inadvertently mark an emotional moment (e.g., a blush) nor with symptoms that betray suppressed or defensively obscured feeling (e.g., a slip of the tongue). Second, they differentiate feeling expression from intentional but merely communicative embodiment of feeling (e.g., gestures, verbal labels). They are not concerned with utterances in which people convey feelings that they have already conceptualized. Instead, following theories of poetic imagination (e.g., Dilthey 1887/1985), expression theorists usually are concerned with the active uncovering and articulation of feelings. Feeling

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Shelley Sikora and Don Kuiken, University of Alberta; David S. Miall, Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Don Kuiken, Department of Psychology, P217 Biological Sciences Bldg. University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 2E9. E-mail: [dkuiken@ualberta.ca](mailto:dkuiken@ualberta.ca)

expression, in this sense, is an accomplishment, an enhancement in understanding.

For some expression theorists, feeling expression remains isolated within the intentionality of an author or authorial persona (e.g., the narrator). The reader is given responsibility for recognizing feelings expressed by the author or authorial persona—but is not credited with a form of reading that is itself expressive. For example, in his summary of expressivist aesthetic theories, Carroll (1999) emphasizes the “transmission” to a reader of feelings that have been uncovered and articulated by an author or authorial persona (p. 64). However, for other expression theorists, the reader is not merely a recipient of communication about feeling but rather an active contributor to feeling expression. For example, in Collingwood’s (1938) classic account, the author’s (or authorial persona’s) articulation of feeling is embodied in the text, and yet the reader’s “collaboration” enables extension, if not completion, of that original effort toward articulation (p. 321). In this way, Collingwood respects the possibility that depth of expression, rather than merely the recognition of expressive depth, occurs as part of literary reading.

Investigation of the reader’s collaborative contribution to feeling expression quite possibly requires a “poetics” of the reader that complements the more familiar poetics of the author. In studies of actual readers, several investigators have identified a mode of reader engagement that points toward this possibility. On the basis of interviews with young adults, Hunt and Vipond (1986; Vipond & Hunt, 1984) identified a mode of reading they characterize as “dialogic” (Hunt, 1996), which is distinguished, in part, by readers’ identification of a rhetorical “voice” in stylistic aspects of the text (cf. Bakhtin, 1986). Similarly, on the basis of young adults’ think-aloud commentaries during their reading, Kuiken and Miall (1995, 2001) identified a mode of reading they called “aesthetic coherence,” which is distinguished, in part, by figuratively attributing moods to settings, by anthropomorphizing nonhuman characters, and by developing an integrated account of the text’s “symbolic” significance.

Given the attention to linguistic nuance required to identify a readerly poetics, further empirical study may require the creation of research settings that are conducive to expressive reading and the development of research methods that are sensitive to its expressive forms. Regarding the research setting, Hunt and Vipond (1991) have argued that gaining access to dialogic reading requires creation of a situation in which readers are given the opportunity to (a) continue referring to the text after completing their reading; (b) relate what they read to their own knowledge and concerns; and (c) be understood as individuals with valued perspectives on the text. Regarding research methods, Kuiken and Miall (2001) have argued that phenomenological methods provide (a) access to readers’ most carefully considered verbal descriptions of their experience; (b) the means for identifying individual differences in modes of reading engagement; and (c) a balance between sensitivity and systematicity in pursuit of these objectives.

### Numerically Aided Phenomenology

A method that seems well suited to identification of the characteristics of different modes of literary reading is numerically aided phenomenology (Kuiken, Schopflocher, & Wild, 1989; Kuiken & Miall, 2001; Wohl, Kuiken, & Noels, 2006). This

method provides a classificatory (taxonomic) approach to a set of experiential narratives, that is, first person accounts. It is a qualitative-quantitative hybrid that involves

1. Selecting a sample of experiential narratives, identifying meaning expressions (called constituents) that recur among these narratives, and creating a numeric array indicating the presence or absence of a broad range of these constituents in each narrative.
2. Calculating distance coefficients to express the degree of (dis)similarity between all pairs of experiential narratives, using cluster analytic algorithms to identify classes of narratives that are more-or-less similar, and comparing these classes of narratives to identify constituents that differentiate each class.

The categories of experience identified in this way have the following similarity structure: (a) each instance of a category possesses a subset of constituent features from a larger feature array; (b) each constituent feature in that array is an attribute of many instances of the category; and (c) no constituent feature in that array is a feature of every instance of the category (Beckner, 1959).

The goal of the present study was to apply numerically aided phenomenology to experiential narratives describing readers’ responses to Coleridge’s (1817/1963) *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Specifically, a set of five experiential narratives in response to “striking or evocative” passages from the poem was collected from each reader. Numerically aided phenomenology was then used to identify the more-or-less characteristic features of the modes of reading engagement described in these narratives.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were recruited through classroom presentations to undergraduates in English courses and through notices posted in various locations on the University of Alberta campus. Respondents were given an outline of the study, including a general description of the tasks, information regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and the approximate time requirements of the study. Respondents who had completed a course in Romantic literature or who had read *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* within the past 3 years were not eligible to participate.

Forty-one people participated, 30 women and 11 men. Twenty-one participants were poster respondents (mean age = 27.2 years); 10 were classroom respondents (mean age = 25.7 years). Ten percent of the participants were first year undergraduate students, 15% were second year, 31% were third year, and 26% were fourth year; 10% were graduate students, and 10% were not currently attending university. Thirteen percent of participants were minoring in English, and 33% were majoring in English. One participant was excluded from the study because of missing data.

### Procedures

**Laboratory session.** At the beginning of the first session, small groups of participants (1–3 per group) were given a brief

description of the tasks they would be asked to complete; advised that their responses would be confidential and anonymous; informed that they could withdraw at any time; and asked to complete a consent form.

To familiarize participants with the procedures for gathering tape-recorded commentaries, they were asked to practice by reading an excerpt from Coleridge's poem, *The Nightingale*. They read that excerpt once, read it a second time, and during the second reading marked a passage that seemed particularly striking or evocative. Then, using a voice-activated tape recorder, they described in what way they found that particular passage striking or evocative. When participants had completed the tasks for the first session, they were given the instructions and materials for the at-home portion of the study. These consisted of a copy of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the Reading Experience Questionnaire (REQ, see below), and a voice-activated tape recorder.

**At-home session.** For the at-home session, participants were instructed to choose a quiet time and place and then to read *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in its entirety. They then read the poem a second time, underlining passages that they found particularly striking or evocative. After completing the second reading, they went back and picked the five passages that seemed most striking to them. From those five passages they chose one and then described (using the tape recorder) their experience of it in as much detail as possible. After recording of their commentary on the first passage, they completed a brief REQ for that passage. After completing the REQ, participants chose another from among the five most striking passages, described their experience of that passage, and then completed the REQ again. This process was repeated until they had completed these tasks for all five passages. All commentaries were later transcribed for subsequent analysis.

## Materials

**Reading Experience Questionnaire.** The REQ contained nine items that probed experience of each selected striking or evocative passage. Five items assessed aspects of personal feelings (My experience involved "... feelings about myself;" "... feelings in reaction to situations or events in the poem;" "... resonance of my own feelings with those in the poem;" "... an impression of the feelings that were expressed/embodyed in the poem;" "... feelings that I typically ignore"). Two items assessed aspects of memory (I remembered "... a prior thought about the poem;" "... an event external to the poem"), one assessed distraction ("I was thinking about what was happening around me at the time"), and another anticipation ("I anticipated something that would happen in the future"). All items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all true, 5 = extremely true).

**The primary poem.** For three reasons, the 1817 version of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1963) was chosen as the primary poem presented to readers in this study. First, the poem's precisely portrayed natural settings, hauntingly presented characters, and poignantly reflective spiritual crisis contribute to a narrative that remains engaging to many contemporary young-adult poetry readers. Second, the style of the *Rime* has a compelling lyrical effect even though the mood of that effect cannot be readily articulated. Because such inarticulable effects are a widely cited criterion for "literature" (Bowie, 1997), the *Rime* is an exemplary site for the study of feeling expression during "literary"

reading. Third, Haven (1972) has drawn a particular parallel between the *Rime* as a whole and the death-in-life figure of the Ancient Mariner: both the poem itself and its principle character have the potential to haunt readers during mournful reflection. We have pursued this possibility in a separate but closely related study of the effects of loss on feeling expression while reading the *Rime* (Sikora, Kuiken, & Miall, 2010).

## Phenomenological Analysis

The first step in the phenomenological analysis was to identify recurrent meaning expressions that reflected aspects of the reader's engagement with a selected passage. During comparative reading, if a similar expression was found in at least two commentaries, the basis of that perceived similarity was made explicit in a paraphrase called a constituent. Here, as in phenomenological philosophy (Gurwitsch, 1957/1964) and phenomenological psychology (Giorgi, 2009), a constituent is understood as a context-dependent rather than context-independent meaning. Here is an example:

**Statement 1.** "I think there's an awful lot of times, and I can list quite a few, where there's something that you really, really want to do . . . and something gets in the way."

**Statement 2.** "It reminds me of times when I felt despair and end up with nothing good in my life."

**Constituent.** "I was reminded of a generic autobiographical event."

In this example, Statements 1 and 2 suggest a similar aspect of reading engagement; both refer to personal memories that are generic in form. In general, as indicated by this example, the nature of the mental act (generic autobiographical reference), rather than its content (e.g., reference to a moment of despair), is emphasized.

Constituents identified in this way were used to create an array of dichotomous variables that summarized the recurrent expressed meanings found across all 196 commentaries. For each commentary, a constituent variable was assigned the value "1" when the commentary contained it and the value "0" when it did not. This resulted in an array of 48 binary variables for each commentary. These arrays were extended to include nine variables derived from the REQ. Specifically, items from the REQ rated 4 or 5 were assigned a value of "1," and those rated 3 or less were assigned a value of "0." The resulting matrix was of the order 196 (commentaries) by 57 (constituents).

## Results

The (dis)similarity between each pair of commentaries was assessed using squared Euclidean distance coefficients. Then hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's method) was used to group commentaries according to the (dis)similarity in their profiles of constituents. Monte Carlo studies indicate that Ward's method effectively recovers cluster structure with binary data when cluster sizes are comparable (Hands & Everitt, 1987). Also, there is evidence that with symmetrical binary data, the use of squared Euclidean distances (or its numeric equivalent, simple matching coefficients) with Ward's method enables effective recovery of cluster structure (Finch, 2005). In the present study, the relative magnitude of the gaps between joinings in the agglomeration

schedule indicated the presence of six clearly interpretable clusters with 66, 31, 15, 29, 33, and 22 members.

The prevalence of each constituent across clusters was compared to identify the constituents that differentiated each cluster from the others. A constituent was regarded as differentiating if the proportion of individuals expressing it within a cluster was greater than the proportion expressing it in at least one other cluster, using

Fisher's LSD test as a guideline that takes into account both mean differences and variability ( $p < .05$ ). Because clustering algorithms maximize between-cluster differences, the LSD statistic was used descriptively here and not in its usual role for testing nonrandom departures from group equivalence (Everitt, Landau, & Leese, 2004, p. 180). Results for the 46 constituents that met our criteria for cluster differentiation are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1  
*The Proportions of Cluster Members Reporting Each of the Differentiating Constituents*

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Cluster 6
Associations: memories, texts, ideas						
1. Reminded of a generic (typical) autobiographical event	.08	.81***	.47**	.45**	.24	.09
2. Reminded of a specific (singular) autobiographical event	.02	.65***	.40**	.72***	.06	.00
3. Reminded of events outside of the poem (not autobiographical)	.47***	.06	.33	.07	.27	.50***
4. Remembered an event external to the poem (REQ)	.35	.87***	.67***	.86***	.55**	.32
5. Interpreted the poem by situating it within a larger literary context	.20***	.00	.00	.00	.09	.05
6. Provided repeated allusions to other thematically relevant texts	.11***	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
7. Elaborated an abstract thematic interpretation of the poem	.30***	.32***	.13	.07	.45***	.05
8. Identified a "symbol" for an abstract theme not explicit in the poem	.42***	.06	.00	.00	.03	.00
Poetic imagery: sensory and felt engagement						
9. Commented on the poem's setting	.47*	.13	.73**	.24	.03	1.00***
10. Referred to the mood or kinesthetic sense of the poem's setting	.17	.10	.53***	.07	.03	.64***
11. Referred to personal feelings toward an aspect of the poem	.30**	.35**	.80***	.03	.03	.55***
12. Described connotations of imagery in the poem	.08	.00	.13***	.00	.00	.09
13. Provided metaphoric elaboration of imagery in the poem	.15**	.06	.40***	.03	.00	.36***
14. Engagement with sensory imagery within the poem: synaesthesia	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.32***
15. Engagement with sensory imagery within the poem: visual	.27**	.03	.67***	.07	.00	.86***
16. Engagement with sensory imagery within the poem: kinesthetic	.02	.00	.40***	.00	.00	.41***
17. Engagement with sensory imagery within the poem: auditory	.03	.00	.13***	.03	.00	.09
18. Commented on language style: phonetic features	.05	.00	.27***	.00	.00	.05
Associations: sensory and felt engagement						
19. Commented on the setting within an association	.06	.10	.87***	.72***	.00	.36**
20. Sensitivity to the mood or kinesthetic sense of an association	.02	.00	.20***	.14***	.00	.09
21. Referred to personal feelings toward an aspect of an association	.02	.35**	.67***	.45**	.00	.18*
22. Described connotations of imagery in an association	.03	.00	.13***	.03	.00	.00
23. Provided metaphoric elaboration of imagery in an association	.02	.03	.53***	.31**	.00	.05
24. Engagement with sensory imagery in an association: visual	.05	.00	.73***	.45**	.03	.23*
25. Engagement with sensory imagery in an association: kinesthetic	.00	.10	.47***	.28**	.00	.23*
26. Engagement with sensory imagery in an association: olfactory	.00	.00	.00	.10***	.00	.00
27. Engagement with sensory imagery in an association: auditory	.00	.00	.07	.07***	.00	.00
Poetic narrative: actions, situations, and characters						
28. Commented on action sequences in the poem	.21	.23**	.07	.00	.39***	.18
29. Commented on situations to which characters respond	.32**	.45***	.67***	.00	.27	.09
30. Commented on situations to which associated individuals respond	.06	.81***	.07	.14	.15	.05
31. Commented on character attributes of figures in the poem	.33***	.13	.07	.00	.24***	.09
Coherence: recurrent themes, related passages						
32. Identified recurrent expressions of a theme (within passage)	.05	.39***	.20	.14	.06	.14
33. Identified recurrent expressions of a theme (across passages)	.23	.32***	.33***	.10	.12	.09
34. Identified autobiographical memories with similar affective tone	.02	.35***	.47***	.00	.03	.00
35. Identified a thematically relevant image from earlier in the poem	.27***	.03	.33***	.00	.12	.09
36. Related current passage to a passage that comes later in the poem	.11***	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00
37. Referred to images that represent contrasting themes in the poem	.21***	.00	.00	.00	.06	.05
38. Noted incongruity between expectations and poem development	.17***	.03	.07	.00	.03	.14
39. Noted incongruity between seemingly related images in the poem	.14***	.03	.07	.00	.00	.00
Interpretive stance: self, other, and self/other						
40. Blurred boundaries between self and other	.08	.13	.33***	.00	.03	.14
41. Elaborated personal experience external to the world of the text	.06	.97***	.53**	.62**	.09	.00
42. Elaborated personal experience within the world of the text	.70**	.61**	.87***	.14	.61**	.91***
43. Experienced feelings about myself (REQ)	.27	.65***	.07	.31	.12	.23
44. Experienced feelings about events in the poem (REQ)	.76***	.77***	.73***	.07	.33**	.05
45. Experienced resonance of feelings with those in the poem (REQ)	.77***	.94***	.80***	.31	.24	.45
46. Had an impression of the feelings embodied in the poem (REQ)	.82***	.90***	.80***	.41**	.15	.14

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

\*\* A proportion smaller than the largest that is also larger than the proportion in at least one other cluster.

\* A proportion smaller than the largest that is designated \*\* and larger than at least one other cluster.

### Cluster 1: Ironic Allegoresis

As evident from the table, commentaries in Cluster 1 reflected moments in which readers interpreted elements of the poem allegorically, that is, objects, persons, or events in the poem were understood as referring to abstract themes embodied in cultural narratives external to the poem (e.g., killing the albatross as reference to “the fall” in Christian mythology) (#8). These allegorical references sometimes were grounded in abstract thematic similarities between the poem and another identifiable literary text (e.g., “sinning against nature” in both the poem and the Bible) (#5). Finding a cluster reflective of this abstract interpretive approach is not surprising; the *Rime* has traditionally been interpreted allegorically, and this perspective is commonly taught in the classroom. Accordingly, nearly one third of the commentaries belong to this cluster.

Examination of the other constituents defining this cluster reveals additional aspects of such allegorical reading. First, this approach to reading supported what seems an ironic reversal of the “symbolic” meanings identified in these commentaries: when readers related one aspect of the poem to another, nearly exclusive emphasis was given to contrast and incongruity (#37, #38, #39). Second, these commentaries focused particularly on impersonal (sometimes literary) associations (#3, #5), rather than locating the poem’s themes within either generic or specific personal events and circumstances (#1, #2). Finally, although commentaries in this cluster often referred to feelings, either in response to (#11, #44, #45) or embodied in (#46) the poem, and moderately often referred to visual imagery in the poem (#13, #15), they lacked reference to imagery involving the proximal (especially kinesthetic) sensory modalities that, in other reading moments, enlivened objects and settings within the world of the text (#16, #17).

Examination of prototypic commentaries (i.e., those with the largest number of differentiating constituents for this cluster) enables more concrete grasp of this mode of reading. In the following example, narrative elements (situations, actions) and related visual imagery are read as reflecting an abstract cultural narrative about gender:

**Passage.** *The bride hath paced into the hall,/Red as a rose is she.* (lines 33–34)

**Commentary.** Well, red, you know, red is the color of passion, sort of unrestrained, unbridled emotion of the moment . . . And it foretells a later stanza . . . where the Spectre-Woman makes her appearance with her companion, Death. One of the lines there is, “Her lips were red”; so there is this foreshadowing of the presence of death. But in this stanza . . . the bride is kind of juxtaposed against the Mariner. And, of course, the Mariner is, he’s the representation of “good” here, and so the bride is, I’m taking it, the representation of evil. And, I don’t know, kind of a classic, casting the woman as the evil one in any work that’s authored or created by a man.

The relationship this reader initially observes between a poetic narrative element (the red cheeks and lips) and a cultural narrative element (unrestrained feminine passion) involves abstract thematic resemblance, although, consistent with standard conceptions of allegory, the cultural narrative element is given priority as the “symbolic” referent. Moreover, the “evil” of the Spectre-Woman’s red lips is extended to the bride’s red cheeks in ways that contradict maidenly bridal conventions. This juxtaposition signals that

what is represented on the surface cannot be what is actually meant in the selected passage, prompting an ironic interpretation of the image. This ironic reversal, in turn, grounds extended allegorical treatment of the Mariner and the Bride within an abstract thematic opposition. Thus, both the form and content of this prototypic commentary echo the reader’s earlier suggestion that this poem is a “parable. . . very much like a Bible story.”

### Cluster 2: Autobiographical Assimilation

As indicated in Table 1, commentaries in Cluster 2 described moments in which readers were reminded of autobiographical events (#1, #2), and affective themes repeatedly evident in those autobiographical events were considered similar to affective themes evident in the poem (#34). In some respects, this cluster resembled Cluster 1 (Ironic Allegoresis): readers interpreted narrative elements of the poem in relation to external narrative elements, and their interpretive effort depended upon thematic similarities. However, in Cluster 2, readers were concerned with relations between the poetic narrative and external autobiographical narratives, rather than between the poetic narrative and external cultural narratives; they identified generic affective themes, rather than abstract conceptual themes, and the syntax of their interpretation involved simile-like resemblances (A is *like* B), rather than giving semantic priority to an external referent (A *refers* to B).

More specifically, in addition to describing the narrative events to which characters in the poem had to respond (#28, #29), these readers described similar life events to which they or others had to respond (#1, #2, #4). They also elaborated affective parallels between separate instances of these autobiographical events (#34, #41). In fact, intensive self-reflection seemed to displace attention to the poem: these readers distinctively reported that they experienced feelings *about themselves* during reading (#43). Finally, these readers’ affective involvement with the poem (#11, #44, #45, #46) was tempered by their lack of engagement with its sensory imagery. Their commentaries referred neither to language style (e.g., assonance or alliteration) (#17) nor to engagement with sensory imagery in the poem, even in its visual form (#11, #14–#18). In sum, generic affective interpretation and intensive self-reflection accompanied inattention to the poem’s sensory imagery. Examination of a prototypic member of this cluster concretizes this pattern:

**Passage.** *I saw a third— I heard his voice:/It is the Hermit good!/He singeth loud his godly hymns/That he makes in the wood./He’ll shrieve my soul, he’ll wash away/The Albatross’s blood.* (lines 508–513)

**Commentary.** The Mariner is feeling intense guilt, which I think we all do at some point in our lives . . . The idea of confession is really big here. If you actually tell somebody . . . about what you’ve done . . . somehow it’ll be easier . . . And I can think of a couple of examples where this happened to me. When I was really young . . . I got involved with a bunch of kids that . . . used to steal candy from the corner store. And I remember . . . feeling terribly guilty about it . . . I went to church . . . the priest told me that that was okay, that I should go and say three hail Mary’s . . . I [also] remember making a really, really big blunder at work. And I had done everything I could think of to fix this thing without telling anybody . . . I went to my boss . . . and said this has hap-

pened and I don't know what to do. "Can you help me fix it?" Well as soon as I told him, I felt better . . . This was another example of that.

This commentary illustrates the simile-like focus on generic affective similarities between events in the poem and events in the reported autobiographical memories. Also, elaboration of the recurrent affective theme in those autobiographical memories replaces attention to the poem with attention to self-directed feelings (relief from guilt).

### Cluster 3: Expressive Enactment

Commentaries in Cluster 3 described transformations of meanings central to readers' experience of the poem. Readers referred to their bodily felt sense of the setting (#10); engaged the multimodal sensory complexity of poetic imagery (#16, #17); and provided metaphoric elaboration of that imagery (#12, #13). As in Cluster 1 (Ironic Allegoresis) and Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation), these commentaries referred to feelings in response to (#11, #44) and embodied in (#45, #46) the poem. Also, as in Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation), these commentaries included frequent reference to generic and specific forms of autobiographical memories (#1, #2) that frequently played an important role in interpretation (#34, #41). However, the contrasts with Clusters 1 and 2 are substantial: the commentaries comprising Cluster 3 most nearly manifested the characteristics of feeling expression, the broad conception of which was introduced earlier in this paper. We will concentrate on the constituents that support this claim and that articulate further how expressive reading moves toward depth of understanding.

**Engagement with sensory imagery.** As indicated in Table 1, the commentaries in Cluster 3 referred to personal feelings in response to events in the poem (#44), perhaps even more explicitly than in either Cluster 1 (Ironic Allegoresis) or Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation) (#11). Moreover, beyond their affective response to the poem, readers' bodily felt sense of the world of the text in Cluster 3 was broader than in Clusters 1 and 2: their commentaries distinctively referred to engagement with kinesthetic imagery (e.g., sensed position, sensed movement) (#16), especially in relation to the poem's setting. For example:

**Passage.** *The many men, so beautiful!/And they all dead did lie;/And a thousand, thousand slimy things/Lived on; and so did I* (lines 236–239)

**Commentary.** I . . . picture a pulsating, a living sea full of . . . full of living wet and slimy creatures . . . It makes me think of ponds . . . or oceans I've walked through . . . brushing against things that are slimy . . .

By elaborating not only the visual (#15) but also the kinesthetic (#16) aspects of textual imagery, these readers gave their referents a felt presence. Rather than an external system of abstract meanings (Ironic Allegoresis) or generic affective themes (Autobiographical Assimilation), these readers described their felt sense of imagery *within* the poem (#42) in a manner that enlivened objects and settings in the world of the text.

**Phonetic metaphors.** In these commentaries, something more than the capacity to vividly engage sensory imagery characterized readers' bodily felt sense of the world of the text. These readers also identified linguistic, especially phonetic, features of the text as striking or evocative (#18). Moreover, rather than

merely indicating appreciation of language style, these phonetic features were sometimes linked metaphorically to the auditory imagery of the setting (#17). For example:

**Passage.** *The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,/And southward aye we fled./And now there came the mist and snow,/And it grew wondrous cold:/And ice, mast high came floating by./As green as emerald.* (lines 49–54)

**Commentary.** . . . I'm really struck by how the language also expresses this change, from the sharp 's' sounds . . . to 'wondrous cold,' [with its] very drawn out syllables, and the language does reflect that, the changes, as does the scenery . . .

Sensitivity to phonetic aspects of language style (e.g., assonance, alliteration) arguably has a kinesthetic basis (see Fónagy, 2001) and, hence, is separable from but compatible with the bodily felt sense of the text found in readers' reported engagement with kinesthetic imagery (#16). Also, phonetic metaphors in this example seemed striking or evocative (e.g., "I'm really struck"), suggesting that a time-worn conception of wintry cold has been momentarily unsettled or "defamiliarized," as would be expected from formalist (Erlich, 1980) and neo-formalist (Miall & Kuiken, 1994) theories of response to stylistic devices.

**Semantic metaphors.** Another metaphoric—or at least quasi-metaphoric—aspect of commentaries in Cluster 3 was evident as figurative re-expression of the reader's felt sense of visual or kinesthetic imagery. Although, as in Cluster 1 (Ironic Allegoresis), these commentaries returned to the imagery of previous passages in the poem (#35), in Cluster 3 this return most often occurred when a current image reminded the reader of an earlier similar (rather than contrasting) image. This is illustrated in the following example:

**Passage.** *Brown skeletons of leaves that lag/My forest-brook along;/When the Ivy tod is heavy with snow,/And the owlt whoops to the wolf below,/That eats the she wolf's young.* (lines 533–537)

**Commentary.** 'Brown skeletons of leaves'; it's sort of dying. It's a dead image. Yet, the idea of the she-wolf's young is sort of in spring; so that's kind of weird; so it's probably the last remnants of winter. The long dead is still hanging on and, [in] my echo back [to an earlier image], I'm thinking of the sailors that are lying there dead, and they really are lingering there beyond their time.

Here, reconsideration of an earlier image is accompanied by modification of its felt sense. What described the "brown skeletons of leaves" (i.e., "long dead" but "still hanging on") now also describes and complicates the previous image of the dead men. The reader's assertion that ". . . they really are lingering beyond their time . . ." has the same class inclusion syntax that characterizes metaphor (*A is B*, rather than *A is like B*; the dead men *are* [leaves] lingering beyond their time). Its wording ("they really are") suggests that the current image of the leaves captures something about the earlier image of the men that was not fully realized before. In sum, such similarity-seeking has the structure of metaphor and, like the phonetic metaphors described above, defamiliarizing effects.

**Affective themes.** Similarity seeking also was evident in these readers' review of autobiographical references: despite differences in setting, character, or actions, separate autobiographical references often had a similar affective tone (e.g., apprehension or disappointment) (#34). Whereas Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation) also involved a search for personal memories with a similar affective tone, in Cluster 3, similarity seeking remained

closely linked to imagery from the poem. In fact, the affective similarity of these memories became a vehicle for understanding textual imagery (#41), especially the bodily felt sense of such imagery (#11, #16), as in the following example:

**Passage.** *All in a hot and copper sky,/The bloody Sun, at noon,/Right up above the mast did stand,/No bigger than the Moon.* (lines 111–114)

**Commentary.** . . . the first part of the passage reminded me of when I was in Washington. And I was walking along by myself; it must have been about 110 degrees outside . . . And every breath was like a chore and I had to stop every block because . . . It also reminds me of when I went fishing with one of my friends in this bay off Vancouver Island . . . you could see as far as the eye could see. And you just had this sense of being all alone, there's no one around. There's just the waves, the sun beating down on you . . . I didn't really feel afraid, but I felt kind of anxious. This, just, it's just like a picture, everything is perfect, except in your mind it's not perfect; you feel worried, you feel a little bit of anguish. It's hard to explain.

In this commentary, the identification of an affective theme uniting two autobiographical memories with poetic imagery is not exclusively personal. Rather, the anxiety identified by the reader remains oriented toward the "bloody Sun at noon." Moreover, this anxiety is not a garden variety emotion; it is at the limits of expressibility and "hard to explain."

**Blurred self/other boundaries.** Unlike the commentaries in Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Memory), readers in Cluster 3 did not disengage from the poem and entertain purely personal aspects of their associations. Instead, it was sometimes difficult to determine whether the reader was describing her own experience of the world of the poem, the experience of the narrator, or the experience of one of the narrative personae (e.g., the Mariner; #40). Here is an example:

**Passage.** *Like one, that on a lonesome road/Doth walk in fear and dread,/And having once turned round walks on,/And turns no more his head;/Because he knows, a frightful fiend/Doth close behind him tread.* (lines 446–451)

**Comment.** Knowing that there's nothing you can do about it, keeping on walking and pretending it's not happening, just because there's no other way to cope with it, you can't run from it. All you can do is hope that somehow or other it magically just disappears and leaves you alone . . . I also sense there's no point in fighting this because, like it's a guilt thing, he's the one that's responsible for what's happened, he's the reason that this thing is following him, so there is no point in trying to get away from it because it's your fate.

This reader's style is suggestive, especially her use of the pronoun "you" to speak inclusively but still personally (e.g., "you can't run from it"). Although spelling out what the Mariner is like (e.g., "he's the reason that this thing is following him"), this reader also is implicitly referring to herself as a person of the same kind. Through repeated use of the third person pronoun ("you"), she identifies the Mariner, herself, and perhaps others as members of the same inclusive class. Thus, the reader's assertion that "there's nothing you can do about it" has a class inclusive import reminiscent of metaphor (*A is B*; "I *am* the Mariner"), rather than simile-like comparison (*A is like B*; "I *am like* the Mariner"), suggesting again a form of similarity-seeking that has the structure of metaphor. Rather than comparison through simile, this form is

enactive in a manner that is aptly called a metaphor of personal identification (Cohen, 1999; Kuiken, Miall, et al., 2004).

**Theme transformations across passages.** The possibility that readers in Cluster 3 were engaged in a form of metaphoric or quasi-metaphoric thinking is bolstered by evidence of transformations in affective themes across passages (#33). Because metaphoric expressions make salient previously unnoticed features of a referent (Ortony, 1979) and even gesture toward compellingly apt features of a referent (Glucksberg, 2008), it might be expected that the occurrence in this cluster of phonetic metaphors, semantic metaphors, and metaphors of personal identification would prompt shifts in understanding. That outcome is exemplified in the prototypic member of this cluster. This reader revisited the threat of getting caught up in something from which you are powerless to escape.

**Passage 1.** *He holds him with his glittering eye—/The wedding guest stood still,/and listens like a three years' child:/The mariner hath his will./The wedding guest sat on a stone:/He cannot choose but hear.* (lines 13–18)

**Commentary 1.** It appeals to me, just knowing that stories do have that kind of power, there's also an element of danger because he's not there because he wants to be, he feels he has no control. I relate to this just because I have been known to get caught up in books or in stories . . .

This is a threat with which the reader herself is at least distantly implicated: "I have been known to get caught up in books or in stories." However, in a later commentary, the nature of the threat and the reader's involvement with this theme become intensified:

**Passage 3.** *Day after day, day after day,/We stuck, nor breath nor motion;/As idle as a painted ship/Upon a painted ocean.* (lines 115–118)

**Commentary 3.** I felt as if I was glued to a piece of canvass, just stuck there with a painting around me, like I'm the only living thing, that everything else is completely static. This has the element of threat and lack of control, that there's absolutely nothing that he can do . . . Even though he wants to, he's just like some helpless butterfly pinned on a canvass for display, just stuck there and dead.

The threat of getting caught up in something from which you are powerless to escape is now amplified. Continuity with the captivating character of the literary arts is maintained by references to the captivating character of the visual arts. However, there is now also implicit comparison with the Mariner's captivation by a frightfully becalmed "painted ocean," a comparison that intensifies the threat and the helplessness.

The reader's fourth commentary addresses the central turning point in the narrative of the poem (where the Mariner moves from spiritual stasis to renewed vitality in response to "the snakes that coiled and swam"). She participates in this transformation by returning to the same affective theme considered in response to passages 1 and 3:

**Passage 4.** *I watched their rich attire:/Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,/They coiled and swam;/and every track was a flash of golden fire.* (lines 278 to 281)

**Commentary 4.** Once again it's somewhat threatening . . . you'd be feeling kind of cursed and haunted, but on the other hand, maybe you're being given a gift that very few people have received . . . just forget about who you are and get caught up in what is happening around you.

The phrase “on the other hand” signals a shift in understanding. The threat of captivation persists, but the source of captivating fear now also is the source of an exceptional gift. Given this shift toward acceptance of captivating fear, it is not coincidental that this reader selects next a passage in which the Mariner, and perhaps the reader, becomes open to the one threat from which we all are powerless to escape:

**Passage 5.** *Like one, that on a lonesome road/Doth walk in fear and dread,/And having once turned round walks on,/And turns no more his head;/Because he knows a frightful fiend/Doth close behind him tread.* (lines 446 to 451)

**Commentary.** I’m just going to share the emotion of being alone in the dark with this threat . . . Loneliness is being, having no one around to help you, feeling like you’re the only person, there’s nobody else that’s near enough to do you any good . . . no point in trying to get away from it, it’s your fate . . . a reminder that everybody dies.

In contrast to the previous commentaries, this one begins immediately with the feeling experienced in relation to the metaphorically capturing and inescapable threat of mortality. She articulates in an impassioned (but not merely personal) way what it is to be alone in the face of this “frightful fiend.” The Mariner’s world becomes the reader’s, and enactive use of the third person pronoun helps the reader to articulate in both feeling and thought the reality of this truth in her own life. Reading moments such as this seem not only to crystallize previously vague affective themes but also to open up new meanings in which readers themselves are implicated.

#### Cluster 4: Autobiographical Diversion

Commentaries in this cluster described familiar environments, derived from autobiographical events (#1, #2, #4), that physically resembled the settings in the poem. Readers elaborated their engagement with sensory imagery from these autobiographical events (#19–#21, #23–#25)—although they reported almost no engagement with sensory imagery from the poem itself (#13–#17). Thus, their autobiographical associations remained segregated from poetic imagery (#41) and served neither the interpretive function they had in Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation) nor the expressive function they had in Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment). In general, the tendency for readers to recall environments physically similar to those in the poems coincided with relatively low levels of felt involvement in the poem (#44–#46). Here is a prototypic example:

**Passage.** *And ice, mast-high, came floating by,/As green as emerald.* (lines 53 to 54)

**Commentary.** I grew up in [City Name] . . . and we were always taking trips up into the mountains and at the Columbia Ice fields, and at the top of Mount Edith Cavell, there are lakes formed from glacial run-off. I was always struck by the purity of the emerald lakes and there would be huge chunks of ice floating around . . . And up at Angel last year, there were huge chunks of ice falling off and occasionally avalanches here and there that echoed throughout the mountains, it was almost primal it was so powerful . . . the ice itself was just so beautiful and clear and colors, it was really peaceful . . .

This commentary begins and ends with the elaboration of sensory imagery from personal memories. There seems to be a distinct separation between the remembered past and the poem itself.

#### Cluster 5: Nonengagement

Members of Cluster 5 were generally identified by the *absence* of the constituents that characterized the other five clusters. Commentaries in this cluster were marked by the absence of: (a) felt involvement in the narrative, (b) autobiographical associations, and (c) engagement with sensory imagery (either in the poem or in their associations). The constituent most consistently present in this cluster reflected these readers’ tendency to elaborate on abstract themes (#7). As in the following example, these themes were usually derived from other contexts (#4) and concerned with character attributes (#28, #31).

**Passage.** *He Holds him With His Glittering eye*—(line 13)

**Commentary.** . . . [It] brings to mind what I’m doing in one of my English courses this year . . . we have been talking a lot about, sort of, this physical sort of aspect of vision, the power of vision. This particular passage . . . really is reflected a lot in the American fiction we’ve been studying in that class. It’s interesting to me . . . the power that this vision can hold for people . . . it’s an interesting power position . . . It doesn’t hold any personal references for me but it’s just interesting . . .

#### Cluster 6: Aesthetic Feeling

The commentaries in Cluster 6 uniformly reflected engagement with the sensory imagery of the poem, including both its visual (#15) and kinesthetic aspects (#16). Moreover, these readers described their bodily felt sense of imagery *within* the poem (#42) in a manner that enlivened objects and settings in the world of the text. In these ways, members of Cluster 6 resembled Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment), but there were also noteworthy differences. First, the commentaries in Cluster 6 distinctively included references to synaesthetic imagery, especially cross-modal representations of aspects of the setting (#14). Second, noticeably absent in Cluster 6 were references to language style (e.g., phonetic features) (#18) and auditory imagery (#17). Thus, the metaphorical elaboration of poetic imagery reported by members of this cluster (#13) apparently did not involve phonetic imagery but rather visual and kinesthetic imagery.

Also, members of this cluster differed from those in Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation) and Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment) in their lack of (a) felt involvement in the narrative and (b) autobiographical associations. In general, commentaries in Cluster 6 reflected a tendency for readers to become imaginatively absorbed in the aesthetic surface of the text without simultaneously becoming personally implicated.

**Passage.** *The ice was here, the ice was there,/The ice was all around:/It cracked and growled, and roared and howled.* (lines 59 to 61)

**Commentary.** The ice image . . . I get this sort of deep blue feeling about looking at cold. The landscape with lots of blue water, blue ice, blue sky. But it’s a sort of oddly warm feeling . . . even though it’s really cold, the sound of, like “it cracked and growled, roared and howled” . . . I still get the feeling of some kind of warmth.

Often, as in this example, synaesthesia involved the experience of color with somatic properties such as touch or temperature (e.g., “deep blue feeling about looking at cold”). Also, as in this example, reported synaesthesia tended to coincide with comments regarding the novelty of the poetic image (e.g., “oddly warm”). Thus, although derived from different sensory sources, members of Cluster 6, like those of Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment), seem to have experienced the defamiliarizing effects of their engagement with metaphoric or quasi-metaphoric figurative forms.

### Relations With Reader Background

As might be expected, there is evidence that the preceding forms of response are associated with differences in literary background. Although only 33% of the participants were English majors, these readers contributed commentaries more often classified as Ironic Allegoresis (41%), Autobiographical Assimilation (42%), or Expressive Enactment (67%) than as Autobiographical Diversion (10%), Nonengagement (22%), or Aesthetic Feeling (29%),  $\chi^2(1) = 7.25, p < .007$ .

### Discussion

For some of the clusters identified in the present study, there are precursors in other typological studies of reading engagement. Hunt and Vipond (1986; Vipond & Hunt, 1984) differentiated between information driven, story driven, and point driven (or dialogic; Hunt, 1996) reading. Story driven and point driven reading are most relevant to our present concern with expressive reading because both are “lived through” forms of reading (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 37ff). Story driven reading emphasizes plot, character, and event, whereas point driven reading emphasizes discourse style (e.g., figurative language). Although it may be tempting to equate point driven reading with the mode of reading found in Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment), there are at least two reasons not to do so. First, readers in Cluster 3 *and* readers in Cluster 6 (Aesthetic Feeling) frequently provided metaphoric elaboration of their felt sense of the text, although only readers in Cluster 3 were responsive to language style (e.g., phonetic features). Second, readers in Cluster 2 (Autobiographical Assimilation), Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment), *and* Cluster 4 (Autobiographical Diversion) frequently responded to narrative aspects of the poem, although only readers in Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment) did so in concert with attention to stylistic aspects of the text. It seems more plausible, then, to characterize expressive enactment (and perhaps point driven reading) as a hybrid mode of engagement that gives attention to both narrative and stylistic aspects of the text. Story driven reading, in contrast, gives attention to narrative aspects of the text without attention to style, although in ways that are either assimilative or diversionary.

In a phenomenological study of readers asked to think aloud while reading a short story, Kuiken and Miall (2001) also identified a mode of reading engagement comparable with that described in Cluster 3 (Expressive Enactment). In addition to hybridic attention to both narrative and style, three other aspects of that type of reading warrant comparison with expressive enactment. First, as in Cluster 3, readers in the aesthetic coherence cluster metaphorically described the connotations of sensuous imagery, especially images derived from description of the setting (e.g., a dark path described

as “menacing” or “gothic”). Second, as in Cluster 3, readers in the aesthetic coherence cluster enactively engaged story personae (e.g., anthropomorphizing a “lonely” trout trapped in a small pool). Third, as in Cluster 3, readers in the aesthetic coherence cluster returned to and elaborated the interpretive significance of imagery encountered earlier during their reading (e.g., by providing progressively nuanced accounts of a character’s traits). Despite differences in detail, isolation of similarly expressive modes of reading across these two studies bodes well for the replicability of the mode of reading we here call expressive enactment.

Several features of expressive enactment are made particularly salient by results of the present study. First, the figurative, especially metaphoric, forms identified in this group of commentaries (e.g., phonetic metaphors, semantic metaphors, metaphors of personal identification) affirm that investigation of first-hand experiential accounts facilitate the documentation of a readerly poetics. Further articulation of these expressive forms may provide important evidence of the collaboration between reader and author (or authorial personae) that define expressive reading (Collingwood, 1938). Partly through the voice of the author and partly through the voice of the reader, figurative forms evoke feeling, prompt reflection on felt meanings, and loosen the boundaries that normally delimit conceptual categories (Miall & Kuiken, 1994, 2002; Kuiken, Miall, et al., 2004). Their interplay provides a vehicle for the shifts in understanding, including self-understanding, that are at the core of expressive reading.

Second, articulation of the enactive form of engagement that characterizes expressive enactment extends the articulation of this readerly poetics to include what might be called empathy (e.g., Zillman, 1994; Mar & Oatley, 2008) but what we have characterized as a metaphoric form of identification (Kuiken, Miall, et al., 2004). Cohen (1999) argued that the momentary state of a reader’s absorption within an author’s, narrator’s, or character’s perspective can become self-modifying when the reader metaphorically identifies with that figure’s perspective. Cohen had in mind a mode of identification resembling dramatic enactment: a figure in literature may be brought to presence, as in method acting, through the improvisational, embodying activity of the reader. In doing so, the embodied self is present but subsidiary within a performance that enlivens and extends, rather than merely simulates (as in empathy), the character’s demeanor. Within the moment of emerging metaphoric identification, the possibility of changing the reader’s sense of self also emerges.

Third, in expressive enactment, the tendency to return to previous images in the text reflected readers’ concern with variations on an affective theme. However, these returns were not merely repetitions but rather variations of an affective theme that progressed toward realization of less prototypic meanings and toward theme engagement through metaphors of personal identification. Such recurrent engagement with affective themes through metaphors of personal identification is expressive in the sense that it carries forward (Gendlin, 1962/1997) a freshly conceived sense of the text—as well as of the self. Some available evidence supports this proposal. First, Kuiken, Philips, et al. (2004) found that the interactive combination of affective theme variations and metaphors of personal identification predicted reading-induced shifts in self-understanding, especially among readers who are high on the “openness to experience” personality dimension (i.e., trait absorption; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974). Second, Sikora et al. (2010)

found that an index of expressive enactment based on the profile of constituents identified in the present study predicted shifts in self-understanding among readers who had experienced recent (but not *very* recent) loss due to death. Thus, expressive enactment plausibly transforms self-understanding through deepened understanding of the text.

Expressive reading should be understood both in terms that define expressive enactment and in terms that identify other forms of reading engagement with which it can be empirically contrasted. For example, aesthetic feeling (Cluster 6), like expressive enactment, involves metaphoric engagement with sensory imagery from the poem. However, aesthetic feeling neither involves the response to narrative features, the attention to language style (e.g., phonetic metaphor), nor the iterative consideration of self-implicating affective themes that occurs during expressive enactment. The dissociation of aesthetic feeling from expressive enactment implies that a simply formalist framework is unable to account for the complexities of expression that occur in expressive enactment. Also, ironic allegoresis (Cluster 1), like expressive enactment, involves engagement with visual imagery from the poem and recurrent consideration of thematically linked imagery. However, ironic allegoresis neither involves the attention to language style nor the iterative consideration of self-implicating affective themes that occurs during expressive enactment. On the other hand, ironic allegoresis does involve, as our label suggests, a search for allegorical references, usually in a form that ironically undermines the surface narrative. Such “educated” reading superficially resembles expressive enactment but, nonetheless, is an intellectualized form of reading that has external sources and is incompatible with careful consideration of imagery within the world of the text.

Finally, expressive enactment is a form of reading engagement that seems self-implicating without being self-absorbed. This is evident especially in the contrast between expressive enactment and autobiographical assimilation (Cluster 2). In the latter, self-reflective preoccupation with the autobiographical sources of text interpretation displaces engagement with the sensory imagery that might otherwise enliven the world of the text. Such inattention to the world of the text (in favor of attention to oneself) plausibly justifies the declared dangers of the “affective fallacy” (Wimsatt, 1954). However, in expressive enactment, metaphors of personal identification direct attention focally to the text and subsidiarily to the reader. The present study indicates that it is possible to differentiate empirically the self-transformative potential of expressive enactment from self-absorbed assimilation of the world of the text.

Numerically aided phenomenological methods, then, enabled fine-grained differentiation between expressive reading and some similar modes of reading engagement with which it might be, and in fact has been, confused. Even when the patterns that emerged seemed, after the fact, to be consistent with one or more of the available critiques of expressive reading, they were not fully anticipated and, in some instances, they serve to challenge aspects of those critiques. Despite the tentative nature of the present classification, the results of the study represent a promising step toward a classification of modes of literary reading that is compelling, replicable, and useful.

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