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**Empathetic Narrative Techniques in Louise Glück's Mythological Retellings:
A Stylistic and Reader-Response Study**

MA thesis

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Vilnius

2026

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a reminder to me that, regardless of age or professional path, it is always possible to follow my interests. Literature and language have long been my greatest passions, and I am glad to have finally united them in this work.

This journey would not have been possible without my family's support. I would like to thank my husband for caring for our little daughter while I studied and conducted this research.

I am also especially grateful to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Davide Castiglione, who introduced me to stylistics and inspired this thesis. His understanding, attention to detail, and encouragement have meant a great deal throughout the process.

Finally, I would like to thank Vilnius University, my professors, and my classmates. These studies have become a meaningful part of my life, and I will always remember with warmth walking through the old streets of Vilnius to a place where I truly enjoyed learning.

Olha Bagdonas, *Empathetic Narrative Techniques in Louise Glück's Mythological Retellings: A Stylistic and Reader-Response Study*. Master's thesis, supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Davide Castiglione, Vilnius University, Faculty of Philology, 2026, 61 p.

Keywords: narrative empathy, empathetic narrative techniques, characterisation, consciousness representation, speech and thought presentation, reader-response research, empirical stylistics, poetry, Louise Glück, textual effects.

Abstract

While narrative empathy in fictional prose has sparked considerable scholarly interest, the ways in which poetic texts elicit empathy remain underexplored. This thesis addresses this gap by examining empathetic narrative techniques, particularly characterisation, in Louise Glück's mythological retellings: "Orfeo" and "Relic" from *Vita Nova*, and "The Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion" from *Averno*. It investigates the relationship between empathy-relevant stylistic cues and readers' empathetic, ambivalent, or resistant orientations toward the poems' characters. The stylistic findings show that, across the four poems, Glück characterises her mythological protagonists primarily through speech and thought presentation. These techniques portray Orpheus, Eurydice, Persephone, and Hades as psychologically complex characters rather than distant mythical figures. In "Orfeo," Free Direct Speech exposes Orpheus's grief as inseparable from artistic self-regard, while in "Relic" the same mode foregrounds Eurydice's suffering and self-interpretation. In "The Myth of Innocence," Free Indirect Thought makes Persephone's trauma and crisis of identity central to the poem's empathetic force. In "A Myth of Devotion," Free Direct Thought, Free Indirect Thought, and Narrator's Representation of Thought Acts give access to Hades's longing and apparent care while also exposing the possessiveness and control underlying them. The reader-response data reveal that speech and thought presentation modes do not produce uniform empathy. Readers' responses are instead shaped by stylistic cues, prior mythological knowledge, and especially moral evaluation. The thesis concludes that empathetic narrative techniques in poetry function as invitations rather than guarantees of empathy. These findings broaden the scope of narrative empathy research by extending it to poetic texts and underscore the value of combining stylistic analysis with empirical reader-response evidence.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: naratyvinė empatija, empatinės naratyvinės technikos, charakterizacija, sąmonės reprezentacija, kalbos ir minčių pateikimas, skaitytojų reakcijų tyrimai, empirinė stilistika, poezija, Louise Glück, teksto poveikis.

Anotacija

Nors naratyvinė empatija grožinėje prozoje sulaukė nemažo mokslinio dėmesio, būdai, kuriais poetiniai tekstai sužadina empatiją, tebėra nepakankamai ištirti. Šiuo darbu siekiama užpildyti šią spragą analizuojant empatines naratyvines technikas, ypač charakterizaciją, Louise Glück mitologiniuose perpasakojimuose: eilėraščiuose „Orfeo“ ir „Relic“ iš rinkinio *Vita Nova* bei „The Myth of Innocence“ ir „A Myth of Devotion“ iš rinkinio *Averno*. Darbe tiriamas ryšys tarp empatijai reikšmingų stilistinių užuominų ir skaitytojų empatinių, ambivalentiškų arba pasipriešinimu grindžiamų nuostatų eilėraščių veikėjų atžvilgiu. Stilistiniai rezultatai rodo, kad visuose keturiuose eilėraščiuose Glück savo mitologinius protagonistus pirmiausia charakterizuoja per kalbos ir minčių pateikimą. Šios technikos vaizduoja Orfėją, Euridikę, Persefonę ir Hadą kaip psichologiškai sudėtingus veikėjus, o ne kaip nutolusias mitines figūras. Eilėraštyje „Orfeo“ Laisvoji Tiesioginė Kalba atskleidžia Orfėjo sielvartą kaip neatsiejamą nuo meninės savireikšmės, o eilėraštyje „Relic“ ta pati technika išryškina Euridikės kančią ir savęs interpretavimą. Eilėraštyje „The Myth of Innocence“ Laisvoji Netiesioginė Mintis Persefonės traumą ir tapatybės krizę paverčia pagrindiniu eilėraščio empatinės galios šaltiniu. Eilėraštyje „A Myth of Devotion“ Laisvoji Tiesioginė Mintis, Laisvoji Netiesioginė Mintis ir Pasakotojo Minties Aktų Reprezentacija suteikia prieigą prie Hado ilgesio ir tariamo rūpesčio, kartu atskleisdami juose slypintį savininkiškumą ir kontrolę. Skaitytojų atsakymų duomenys rodo, kad kalbos ir minčių pateikimo būdai nesukuria vienodos empatijos. Skaitytojų reakcijas veikiau formuoja stilistinės užuominos, ankstesnės mitologinės žinios ir ypač moralinis vertinimas. Darbe daroma išvada, kad empatinės naratyvinės technikos poezijoje veikia kaip kvietimai empatijai, o ne kaip jos garantijos. Šios išvados praplečia naratyvinės empatijos tyrimų lauką, įtraukdamos poetinius tekstus, ir pabrėžia stilistinės analizės derinimo su empiriniais skaitytojų atsakymų duomenimis vertę.

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1. Introduction

From our earliest years, as we become immersed in fictional worlds, we often respond emotionally to the characters we encounter, sharing their joys and sorrows and becoming invested in their fates. While such reactions may appear intuitive, the mechanisms underlying empathetic engagement are complex. Over the last two decades, narrative empathy has emerged as a central research area in stylistics, narratology, and empirical literary studies, with Suzanne Keen's seminal work (2006, 2007, 2013) playing a key role in advancing the field. Keen defines *narrative empathy* as "the sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another's situation and condition" (2013, p. 521). In this thesis, I use the term to refer to readers' empathetic engagement with written fictional narratives.

Keen also groups together a range of strategies that may foster narrative empathy under the heading "empathetic narrative techniques" (2006, p. 216). In her account, character identification is the feature most frequently associated with empathy in discussions of fiction, but it is treated as a readerly effect rather than as a textual technique (Keen, 2006, p. 216). Character identification may, however, be prompted by techniques of characterisation, such as naming, depicted actions, plot trajectories, attributed speech, and the representation of consciousness (Keen, 2006, p. 216). The features most relevant to this study are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, as the coding of the data is based on them. Following Fernández-Quintanilla (2018, p. 45), characterisation will be understood as both (i) the textual construction of characters and (ii) readers' perceptions and interpretations of them.

Studying narrative empathy is important for two reasons. First, Keen's work has prompted sustained scholarly interest in the factors through which narratives invite empathetic engagement, as well as in the variability of readers' responses. Much of this research, however, has focused on prose fiction. Studies of the novel have examined empathy with morally problematic characters, particularly through consciousness representation (Bourget, 2023) and lexical representations of emotion (Bonasera, 2023). Attention has also been given to synecdochal character interpretation (Harrison, 2008), empathy with shared experiences of precarious work (Meinig, 2014), and intertextuality as a factor in readers' responses to characters (Karpenko-Seccombe, 2023). Short-story research has examined textual and reader factors in empathy (Fernández-Quintanilla, 2020), along with gapping, inferencing (Stradling, 2019), and pathetic fallacy (Stradling and Pager-McClymont, 2023) as features shaping empathetic engagement. Taken together, this body of work shows that narrative empathy remains unevenly studied, with poetry still comparatively underexplored.

Second, empathy carries broad social and ethical relevance, particularly in a world marked by hate speech, polarisation, and violent conflict. Empirical studies suggest that engagement with narrative fiction may help cultivate empathy from childhood (Adrián et al., 2005; Aram and Aviram, 2009) to adulthood (Mar et al., 2006; Mar et al., 2009). While these findings do not establish a direct causal relationship between reading and empathy, they nonetheless underscore the wider significance of narrative forms in fostering empathetic responses.

This thesis aims to extend narrative-empathy research to poetic texts. To do so, it adopts an empirical stylistic approach that combines close analysis of empathy-relevant textual cues with specifically elicited reader-response data. This design makes it possible to examine both how poetic techniques may invite empathetic engagement and how readers report empathetic and non-empathetic orientations toward the poems' characters.

1.1. Approaching narrative empathy in poetry

Despite growing academic interest in narrative empathy, relatively few studies have examined how poetic texts may prompt empathetic engagement. Anthony-Geroldt (2023), for instance, explores how sensory language and synaesthesia in poetry can facilitate empathetic responses by merging sensory perception with emotional experience. Lanzoni (2014) investigates the role of vivid, movement-oriented imagery in June Downey's poetry, arguing that such dynamic representations can intensify empathetic engagement through processes of psychic participation and inner imitation. De Felip (2014) analyses empathy towards animals in contemporary German lyric poetry, showing how poetic texts that adopt non-human perspectives can foster cross-species empathy and encourage ethical reflection. These studies demonstrate poetry's potential to elicit empathetic engagement, but they remain largely interpretive. As a result, poetic empathy research often extrapolates from prose-based frameworks without fully accounting for poetry's stylistic specificities or testing claims against reader-response data.

The limited attention to narrative empathy in poetry may stem from the perception of poems as less narrative and more difficult to understand than prose fiction. McHale argues that this view is shaped by poetry's marked segmentivity, since poetry foregrounds meaning through lines, stanzas, spacing, and other formal divisions (2009, pp. 14–17). Yet prose fiction is also segmented, for instance into episodes and events at the story level, and into shifting voices and micro-shifts of focalisation at the discourse level, even if its segmentivity is typically subordinated to narrativity (McHale, 2009, pp. 17, 23). This suggests that the contrast between narrative prose fiction and poetry may be overstated.

Castiglione (2017) makes a related point by identifying linguistic features associated with both poetic difficulty and low narrativity, such as the reduced presence of tense markers, proper names, personal pronouns, and temporal or spatial adverbials. He reports that poems with diminished narrativity are read more slowly than those with prototypical narrative features, suggesting that reduced narrativity may reflect comprehension difficulty and potentially hinder empathetic engagement. In a later study, Castiglione (2020) examines empathy-eliciting strategies traditionally associated with prose fiction in contemporary Italian poetry. His analysis reveals that poetry can employ some of the same techniques as prose, including concrete referents, speech and thought representation, narrative schemas, subjectivity markers, and deictic shifting. However, this work does not test its claims against reader-response data. Taken together, these studies point to a broader methodological direction in research on narrative empathy in poetry: claims about empathy should be examined through both textual analysis and empirical reader-response evidence.

1.2. Empirical reader-response and methodological rationale

In contemporary stylistics, reader-response research is increasingly treated as a necessary complement to textual analysis. As Whiteley and Canning note, empirical stylistics ranges from controlled experimental designs to more naturalistic studies of reading in social settings (2017, pp. 76–77). Reader-response data are important because they provide extra-textual evidence of how stylistic patterns are experienced and interpreted, allowing analytical claims to be tested and refined in relation to their effects (Whiteley and Canning, 2017, p. 72).

Within narrative-empathy research, empirical studies have often used experimental methods that manipulate textual stimuli and measure empathy through predefined scales (e.g., Van Lissa et al., 2016; Kuzmičová et al., 2017; László and Smogyvári, 2008). Although such designs offer a high degree of control, they may be less well suited to poetry, where responses often involve interpretive negotiation, ambivalence, and resistant or “difficult” engagement. More naturalistic approaches, such as focus groups, preserve textual integrity and can generate richer accounts of reading, but they may also introduce group interaction confound effects, such as convergence, politeness, or self-censorship (Fernández-Quintanilla, 2020).

The present study adopts an intermediate methodological position. It preserves the poems as complete, unmodified texts while using a structured online questionnaire to collect individual reader reports. This approach supports the aims of the thesis in two respects. First, it remains consistent with the stylistic focus by examining how readers respond to empathy-relevant cues in unaltered poems. Second, it allows for systematic analysis of response variability: because responses are elicited individually, they are not affected by group dynamics, and because the prompts are

open-ended, they can register empathetic, ambivalent, and non-empathetic orientations. To investigate narrative empathy in poetic texts empirically, this thesis takes selected poems by Louise Glück as case studies.

1.3. Louise Glück: myth and the poetics of empathy

The American poet Louise Glück (1943–2023) provides a compelling subject for investigating narrative empathy in poetry. Awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature for her “unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal,”¹ Glück is renowned for her innovative approach to mythological retellings, consistently transforming them into intimate narratives centred on psychological experience. In her acclaimed collections *Vita Nova* (1999) and *Averno* (2006), she revisits Eurydice, Orpheus, Persephone, and Hades, framing their stories not as distant, sacred myths but as experiences rooted in recognisably human, everyday concerns. In the words of Anders Olsson (2020), Chairman of the Nobel Committee, Glück uses the “voices of Dido, Persephone, and Eurydice – the abandoned, the punished, the betrayed – as masks for a self in transformation, *as personal as it is universally valid*” (Olsson, 2020). This dynamic between the individual and the universal underscores the empathy-eliciting potential of Glück’s mythological retellings and motivates their selection for the present study.

By revising well-known tales, Glück moves between personal, often autobiographical expression, and broader cultural commentary (Morris, 2006, pp. 30–31), and can thus be described as a contemporary myth-maker. As Melito (1964) notes, modern writers draw on myth as a flexible framework that enables them to establish “a common ground of understanding” with the audience (p. 165) and “order human experience into a meaningful pattern” (p. 165). Viewed from this perspective, myth in Glück’s poems functions as a structural and thematic device through which individual experiences, characters, and themes acquire symbolic and universal significance. It also offers readers a culturally shared point of reference that may facilitate empathetic engagement.

The four poems examined in this thesis are grounded in well-known classical myths. In *Averno*, “The Myth of Innocence” and “A Myth of Devotion” rework the story of Persephone and Hades. In the traditional myth, Persephone is abducted by Hades and becomes bound to the Underworld after eating pomegranate seeds, which divides her life between Hades and her mother, Demeter (Kapach, 2023b). Glück’s poems retain this recognisable framework but shift attention to Persephone’s and Hades’s inner lives, especially questions of agency, consent, and emotional ambivalence. “Orfeo” and “Relic” from *Vita Nova* return to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In

¹ NobelPrize.org (2026) *Louise Glück – Facts – 2020*. Available at: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2020/gluck/facts/> (Accessed: 11 March 2026).

classical accounts, Orpheus is a legendary musician whose songs could move animals, rocks, and trees. After his bride Eurydice dies from a snake bite, he descends to the Underworld to retrieve her but loses her again when he looks back before reaching the upper world (Kapach, 2023a). Glück's retellings preserve this narrative arc while foregrounding grief, longing, and the ethics of love and loss. Across all four poems, the emphasis on inner experience strengthens their relevance to narrative empathy.

Since empathy appears deeply interlaced with narrativity, the integration of myth contributes directly to the narrative quality of Glück's poems, bringing into play narrative strategies typically associated with prose fiction. Monika Fludernik defines narrative as:

A representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose center there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure). It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists (2009, p. 6).

I treat narrativity as a gradient property rather than an all-or-nothing category: poems may display narrative organisation through events, viewpoint, and represented experience while retaining lyrical features. Accordingly, I use the term narrative empathy for poetic texts insofar as readers process the poems' characters and situations narratively. Drawing on ancient Greek mythology, Glück's selected poems centre on anthropomorphic mythic figures whose emotional lives are foregrounded: Persephone grapples with her fate and conflicted desires, Hades constructs a world for her, Eurydice reflects on her life's final moments, and Orpheus struggles with his grief and artistic vocation. In this sense, all four poems align with Fludernik's (2009) definition of narrative and can be read as stories rather than as purely lyrical or meditative texts.

In addition to their mythic dimension, Glück's poems are marked by dialogism and polyphony. Chen and Woody (2023) argue that her poetry involves "the dismantling of the narrator's centrality" and "the release of the plurality of different voices through characterization" (p. 244). They identify a series of intersecting dialogues in Glück's work—between ancient and modern, subject and object, interior and exterior, and across temporal and spatial planes—that allow private experience to become shared. Although their analysis is not explicitly framed in terms of empathy, it helps to explain how Glück's poems may invite readers to inhabit shifting positions rather than a single viewpoint. Together, mythic framing, narrativity, and polyphony make the selected poems particularly suitable for exploring the relationship between poetic form, narrative strategies, and empathetic response. In the next section, I outline the central argument of the thesis, the research questions, and the overall structure of the study.

1.4. Argument, research questions, and structure

In this study, I argue that Louise Glück's mythological retellings achieve the effect of being both *personal* and *universally valid* through *empathetic narrative techniques* (Keen, 2006). Focusing on four poems—"The Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion" from *Averno*, and "Orfeo" and "Relic" from *Vita Nova*—I address the following research questions:

1. How and to what extent does Glück employ empathetic narrative techniques in the selected poems?
2. How do readers report empathetic and non-empathetic engagement with the poems' characters, and how does this engagement align with the cues of empathetic narrative techniques identified in the stylistic analysis?

These questions are examined through a mixed-method approach. The stylistic analysis identifies textual cues of empathetic narrative techniques in the poems (RQ1), while questionnaire responses show how readers engage with these cues in practice (RQ2). Throughout the thesis, these cues are treated as invitations to empathy rather than as guarantees of empathetic response. The thesis is organised as follows. This Introduction outlined the concept of narrative empathy, positioned poetry as an underexplored area within empirical empathy research, and motivated the focus on Glück's mythological retellings. Chapter 2 details the data and methods, including poem selection, the stylistic framework, the reader-response questionnaire, and the coding procedure. Chapter 3 presents the findings: it first offers a quantitative and qualitative stylistic analysis of the poems, and then reports the thematic analysis of readers' responses. Chapter 4 summarises the main conclusions and outlines implications and directions for future research.

2. Data and methods

2.1. Data selection and justification

The study draws on two complementary datasets: four poems by Louise Glück, selected as case studies for stylistic analysis, and questionnaire responses to the poems. The textual dataset is analysed to identify empathy-relevant narrative techniques, while the reader-response dataset is examined to assess readers' reported engagement with those techniques.

Dataset 1: Case studies

The textual dataset comprises four poems. Table 1 provides key bibliographical details, line counts, as well as identification codes that will be used throughout for ease of reference.

Table 1. Poems analysed in the study

Code	Title	Collection	Year	Lines
ORF	"Orfeo"	<i>Vita Nova</i>	1999	21
REL	"Relic"	<i>Vita Nova</i>	1999	23
MI	"The Myth of Innocence"	<i>Averno</i>	2006	44
MD	"A Myth of Devotion"	<i>Averno</i>	2006	48

As discussed in Section 1.3, Glück's mythological retellings are suitable for a study of narrative empathy because they combine mythic framing with narrative organisation. This section develops that rationale by showing how the selected poems correspond to certain expectations within narrative-empathy theory. First, across the set, perspective is frequently organised through what Genette (1980) terms internal focalisation. While this mode is most commonly associated with first-person narration, as in ORF and REL, it can also be realised in third-person texts, as in MI and MD. In both cases, events are presented "as if the narrator sat somewhere inside or just this side of a character's consciousness and strained all events through that character's sense of them" (Chatman, 1990, p. 144). Since Keen links internal perspective to an increased likelihood of empathetic engagement (2007, p. 96), the selected poems provide a basis for examining how proximity to consciousness may invite, though not guarantee, empathy.

Secondly, the poems foreground negative feeling states, which Keen identifies as especially relevant to empathy. She argues that representations of suffering and distress may prompt empathetic engagement even when readers have not experienced situations similar to those of the characters (2007, p. 72). This applies most clearly to REL and MI, where Eurydice and Persephone undergo painful, life-altering transformations. Keen also argues that empathy may extend to

characters who are significantly different from the reader or negatively portrayed (2007, p. 75). This is relevant to MD and ORF, which present male figures whose grief or devotion is entangled with self-regard, control, or moral ambiguity. Together, internal perspective, negative feeling states, and morally complex characterisation make the selected poems strong candidates for examining narrative empathy in poetry.

The decision to analyse four poems is justified by both stylistic and empirical considerations. From a stylistic perspective, characterisation is multidimensional and can be realised through several interacting features. As a result, even a small number of poems can generate substantial stylistic data. Castiglione (2026), for example, analyses only two poems, since each yields over a dozen pertinent features. Including more poems would make it harder to sustain the depth of close analysis and interpretive precision required by the study.

From an empirical perspective, the questionnaire places substantial cognitive demands on participants, particularly because responses are open-ended. As tasks increase in length or complexity, respondents may become “less thorough in comprehension, retrieval, judgement, and response selection,” a pattern Krosnick terms satisficing (1991, p. 215). Limiting the number of poems therefore supports more attentive reading, more detailed responses, and an overall higher-quality reader-response dataset. Having justified the poem selection and dataset size, I now turn to the stylistic framework used to identify empathy-relevant narrative techniques in the selected poems.

2.2. Analytical framework

2.2.1. Textual realisation of characterisation

Building on the Introduction, this chapter narrows Keen’s (2006) notion of “empathetic narrative techniques” to characterisation and its textual realisation. Keen identifies specific aspects of characterisation that may contribute to empathetic response, including “the quality of attributed speech” and the “mode of representation of consciousness” (2006, p. 216). These two features are treated as central to the present study. Although Keen’s account provides a useful starting point, it does not offer a sufficiently fine-grained linguistic framework for coding these textual cues. Fernández-Quintanilla makes a similar point, arguing that greater stylistic precision would be beneficial (2018, p. 110). To provide the required precision, the present study draws on Leech and Short’s (2007) model of speech and thought presentation. In this framework, Keen’s “attributed speech” is operationalised through speech presentation, while the “representation of consciousness” is analysed through thought presentation as the main means of access to characters’ inner experience. The mythic figures in the selected poems are treated as characters insofar as the texts

construct them through speech and thought presentation. The following subsection outlines the categories and diagnostic cues used for coding.

2.2.2. Characters' speech and thought presentation

Leech and Short's (2007) model distinguishes a range of speech and thought presentation categories differing in their degree of narratorial mediation. Tables 2 and 3 summarise these categories and illustrate them with examples from Glück's poems.

Table 2. *Speech presentation categories (Leech and Short, 2007) with examples from Glück*

Category	Abbreviation	Diagnostic cues	Example
Narrator's Representation of Speech Acts	NRSA	reporting verb + speech-act label/summary; no wording/content	<i>Illustrative:</i> He promised his return.
Indirect Speech	IS	subordinate syntax (that/if/whether); pronoun/deixis shift; tense backshift possible; no quotation marks	<i>Illustrative:</i> He said that he would return there the following day.
Free Indirect Speech	FIS	indirect-style syntax; reporting clause absent or overridden by character viewpoint markers (evaluatives; exclamatives/interrogatives; proximal deixis)	<i>Illustrative:</i> He would return there the following day—of course he would.
Direct Speech	DS	reporting clause present; direct-form utterance (quote-like syntax); character-centred deixis/pronouns typical; quotation marks optional	Then she says, I was not abducted. (MI, 29)
Free Direct Speech	FDS	no reporting clause; direct-form utterance; address/questions/exclamations common; quotation marks often absent	Where would I be without my sorrow... (REL, 1)

Note. Category labels and diagnostic cues are based on Leech and Short (2007, pp. 255–260). Illustrative examples are adapted from the same source. Glück examples are cited by poem code and line number.

Table 3. *Thought presentation categories (Leech and Short, 2007) with examples from Glück*

Category	Abbreviation	Diagnostic cues	Example
Narrator's Representation of Thought Acts	NRTA	reporting verb/mental-state noun; thought act only (content minimal/abstracted)	He dreams, he wonders what to call this place. (MD, 37)
Indirect Thought	IT	reporting clause + integrated thought content (subordination common but optional); narratorial tense/pronouns; no quotation marks	Gradually, he thought, he'd introduce the night... (MD, 8)
Free Indirect Thought	FIT	blend of narratorial grammar and character viewpoint markers (evaluatives; rhetorical questions; proximal deixis); no explicit attribution	Everything the same, including sunlight, / because it would be hard on a young girl... (MD, 5–6)
Direct Thought	DT	reporting clause present; direct-form thought;	That's my uncle spying again,

		character-centred deixis/evaluatives; quotation marks optional	she thinks. (MI, 8)
Free Direct Thought	FDT	no reporting clause; direct-form thought; standalone clause/fragment; questions/exclamations common; quotation marks often absent	And who knows, perhaps the gods never spoke to me in Dis... (ORF, 10)

Note. Category labels and diagnostic cues are based on Leech and Short (2007, pp. 260–277). Illustrative examples are adapted from the same source. Glück examples are cited by poem code and line number.

Beyond listing discrete categories, Leech and Short’s (2007) model also organises speech and thought presentation along a cline defined by the degree of narratorial mediation (Figure 1).

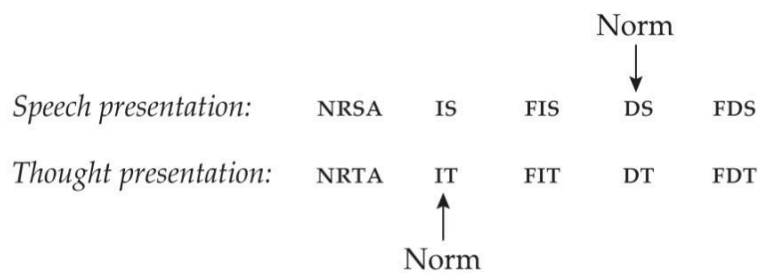


Figure 1

Clinal model of speech and thought representation (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 276)

As one moves along the cline in speech presentation from Narrator’s Representation of Speech Acts (NRSA) towards Free Direct Speech (FDS), the narrator’s interference decreases, with characters in FDS appearing to speak “entirely on their own” (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 260). In speech presentation, DS is often treated as a default norm because it presents speech in quotation-like form, creating an impression of immediacy and relatively low narratorial mediation (Leech and Short, 2007, pp. 274, 276). Freer direct modes (especially FDS) can further intensify this sense of immediacy, whereas more mediated modes (such as IS and, in many cases, FIS) foreground narratorial filtering and may contribute to effects of distance or reduced intimacy with the speaking character (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 268).

A parallel cline is proposed for thought presentation. Because thoughts are not directly accessible, the model is necessarily speculative; nonetheless, it describes in a principled way how texts give readers access to a character’s consciousness. The thought presentation cline ranges from Narrator’s Representation of Thought Acts (NRTA), heavily mediated by the narrator, to Free Direct Thought (FDT), the least mediated category. Free Indirect Thought (FIT) combines features of FDT and third-person narration and can invite readers to see things from the character’s perspective (Leech and Short, 2007, pp. 270–271). For thought presentation, the default norm is Indirect Thought (IT). Since we cannot directly access others’ thoughts, a mode that only commits to the

content of the thoughts is normatively more acceptable (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 276). FIT, a freer version of IT, is often associated with effects of sympathy and closeness, allowing readers to experience “a more vivid and immediate representation of the character’s thoughts as they happen” (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 276). By contrast, although Direct Thought (DT) directly presents what a character might explicitly and verbally articulate about their thoughts, it can seem artificial and less engaging due to its constructed nature (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 277).

Taken together, these categories and their associated effects suggest that empathetic engagement may be shaped by how characters’ speech and thoughts are textually mediated. Leech and Short’s model also provides a rigorous basis underpinning the coding procedure presented in Section 2.3 below.

2.3. Analytical procedure: quantitative and qualitative analysis

The stylistic analysis combines quantitative coding with qualitative close reading. In the quantitative component, each poem was manually coded for stretches of text corresponding to the categories N, NRSA, IS, FIS, DS, FDS, NRTA, IT, FIT, DT, and FDT. Narration was included as a residual category for stretches presenting events, states, or descriptions without sufficient viewpoint-marking to justify assignment to speech or thought presentation. This allowed the proportion of each mode to be calculated relative to the poem’s total word count.

Coding proceeded line by line, with each segment assigned a mode label based on the diagnostic cues outlined in Tables 2–3. A segment was defined as the shortest continuous stretch of text that could be assigned a single dominant mode without forcing a mode switch within it. Following Leech and Short’s discussion of embedded discourse (2007, p. 117), the analysis acknowledges that stretches of speech or thought presentation may contain embedded techniques within a dominant mode. For example, the lines “to hear the quiet breathing that says / I am alive, that means also / you are alive” (MD, 24–26) contain embedded DS within a dominant FDT passage. Embedded techniques were not coded separately because they remained structurally subordinate to the dominant mode. This avoided double-counting and unnecessary complexity, while still allowing embedded forms to be discussed qualitatively where they affected interpretation.

Coding was carried out using tables in Google Docs, with each segment assigned a mode and a corresponding word count for quantitative comparison. An illustrative extract is provided below, and the full coding tables are included in Appendix 1. The total number of words attributed to each mode was calculated for each poem, regardless of how many lines a segment occupied, so that proportions could be compared across poems of different lengths. Reporting clauses, such as *she says/said* or *she thinks/thought*, were included in the word count for the relevant mode.

Table 4. Illustrative extract from the coding table for ORF

Line(s)	Full segment	Mode	Word count
1–9	I have lost my Eurydice, / I have lost my lover, / and suddenly I am speaking French / and it seems to me I have never been in better voice; / it seems these songs / are songs of a high order. / And it seems one is somehow expected to apologize / for being an artist, / as though it were not entirely human to notice these fine points. /	FDS	63

Because Glück’s poems frequently omit quotation marks—and because, in the first-person poems (ORF, REL), pronoun shifts are less informative—mode assignments relied primarily on reporting clauses, grammatical integration, and subjectivity markers. In borderline cases where cues were mixed, mode assignment followed the predominant diagnostics in context, and such instances are discussed qualitatively where relevant. To improve consistency, the coding scheme was applied iteratively: initial coding was followed by re-reading, revision of difficult cases, and checking against the diagnostic cues in Tables 2–3. Percentage values for each mode are reported in Chapter 3 alongside the rest of the results.

In the qualitative component, instances are grouped by mode of presentation to examine how each technique contributes to characterisation and possible empathetic effects across the poem as a whole. This mode-based discussion is supported by stylistic and literary interpretation informed by relevant scholarship on Glück’s mythological retellings. The next subsection introduces the reader-response questionnaire and the response-coding procedure.

2.4. Reader-response questionnaire

2.4.1. Design, materials, and procedure

Reader responses were collected through an online Qualtrics questionnaire. The complete questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 2. Before beginning, participants viewed an information sheet and provided informed consent by typing “YES.” Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time by closing the browser window. No names, IP addresses, or other identifying information were collected, so as to ensure anonymity. Only the researcher had access to the raw dataset, and no secondary data reuse was planned.

After providing consent, participants completed a short section eliciting basic demographic information (age, sex, education level) and self-reported English proficiency (beginner/intermediate/advanced/native). Additional optional items captured prior knowledge relevant to the poetic stimuli: participants were invited to name any Louise Glück poetry collection they knew and to briefly retell the Hades–Persephone and Orpheus–Eurydice myths if familiar with

them. These items were included to investigate whether a participant's engagement was primarily anchored in textual cues or shaped by pre-existing knowledge; they were not used to assess correctness or to exclude participants.

Participants then read two poems and answered the same open-ended prompts after each text. To reduce reading load and limit satisficing in open-ended responses (Krosnick, 1991), each participant was randomly assigned one shorter poem, either ORF or REL (21–23 lines), and one longer poem, either MI or MD (44–48 lines). This pairing also aimed to reduce cross-poem influence. Because poems drawing on the same myth share characters and plot structures, pairing poems from different myths encouraged participants to respond to each text on its own terms. Participants were assigned different poem pairings and reading orders to approximate a balanced distribution across poems and minimise order effects. However, the final number of responses per poem varied due to exclusions and cases of partial completion.

The open-ended questions were designed to elicit character-oriented engagement and text-oriented evidence without explicitly priming the term empathy. Q1, which asked participants to describe the situation in the poem and the protagonist's emotions, provided the basis for empathy coding in line with Fernández-Quintanilla's (2018) framework (see Section 2.4.4). Q2 asked participants to copy any number of passages, including none, that triggered an emotional response and to describe that response. Finally, Q3 asked them to explain why the selected passage(s) stood out. Together, these questions enabled systematic comparison between the stylistic analysis and participants' reported engagement while avoiding deterministic assumptions about textual effects.

2.4.2. Participants and recruitment

Participants were recruited through university networks and personal contacts. The recruitment message and survey link were distributed by email, group channels, and social media. The message outlined the study focus (poetry reading and reader response), the estimated completion time (15–20 minutes), and eligibility criteria (aged 18+; able to understand English, including as an L2). Recruitment and participation procedures followed the consent and anonymity provisions described in Section 2.4.1. The full recruitment message is reproduced in Appendix 3.

Data were collected between 20 December 2024 and 14 March 2026. The questionnaire generated 51 entries. After entries without poem responses were excluded, the retained sample consisted of 30 participants, each of whom responded to one or two poems. As each poem was analysed independently, partial completion did not affect inclusion. This resulted in a final dataset of 58 usable poem responses across the four poems. The distribution was relatively even: 16 responses to ORF, 13 to REL, 14 to MI, and 15 to MD.

Participant characteristics for the retained sample were as follows: the mean age was 47.1 years (range 22–88); 22 participants identified as female and 8 as male. Self-reported English proficiency was distributed between Advanced (17) and Native (13). In terms of education level, 25 participants had postgraduate education (MA/PhD), 4 had graduate education (BA), and 1 had High School education. The optional background items were not coded as part of the main analysis of poem responses, but were considered when assessing whether pre-existing knowledge affected particular readings; where relevant, this is discussed in Section 3.2. The following section outlines the coding framework used to analyse the open-ended responses.

2.4.3. Framework for coding reader responses

To identify instances of empathetic engagement in the reader-response data, a coding scheme was developed based on Fernández-Quintanilla’s (2018) evidence-of-empathy cues. Because this study uses individually written questionnaire responses rather than focus-group interaction, the original framework was streamlined into a smaller set of categories suitable for written data. The main adaptation was to merge closely related cues according to their dominant function. Thus, character-oriented perspective-taking, attribution of speech/thought affiliation, and pronoun shifts were grouped under Perspective-Taking; attribution of emotional experience, evaluation of what the experience is like, and affective understanding were grouped under Emotional Attribution and Evaluation; and attribution of situation, imagined scenario, and attribution of situational factors were grouped under Situational Understanding. Explicit Empathy was retained as a separate category because it is marked by direct references to empathy. Table 5 presents the adapted coding scheme used in this study, and Appendix 4 reproduces the full set of original evidence-of-empathy cues.

Table 5. Coding scheme for identifying empathetic engagement in reader responses

Type	Code	Description / Indicators
Explicit	Explicit Empathy	Reader directly labels their response as empathetic. Illustrative phrasing: – “to empathise with [a character]” – “to feel empathy towards/for [a character]” – “to put oneself in [a character’s] skin / shoes” – “to put oneself in [a character’s] situation”
Implicit	Perspective-Taking	Reader adopts the character’s viewpoint and focuses on the character’s inner experience and circumstances. Includes: – reconstruction of inner states from the character’s position – enactment of character speech/thought in direct form (shift into character voice) – pronoun shifts associated with enactment (movement from talking about the character to speaking as/from within the character’s perspective)
Implicit	Emotional	Reader attributes emotional states to the character and/or evaluates what the

	Attribution and Evaluation	experience is like. Includes: – naming or inferring emotions implied by events – evaluative intensification indicating degree of distress/undesirability (e.g., “the worst”, “unbearable”) – affective understanding based on claimed similarity of experience (“I know what that feels like”)
Implicit	Situational Understanding	Reader explains the character’s feelings or actions by referring to the situation the character is going through. Includes: – describing defining features of the character’s circumstances – context-based explanations for behaviour (linking actions/feelings to events or conditions) – imagined parallel/extended scenario to articulate what the situation would be like

Note. Adapted and simplified from Fernández-Quintanilla (2018, pp. 235–237, 241–243); the original coding framework is reproduced in Appendix 4. The phrasing examples provided under Explicit Empathy are illustrative cues drawn from Fernández-Quintanilla (2018, pp. 241–243). Examples from the present dataset are discussed in Chapter 3.

The coding distinguishes between explicit and implicit empathetic engagement. Explicit cases directly mention empathy, whereas implicit cases are inferred from linguistic indicators such as Perspective-Taking, Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, or Situational Understanding. The following section explains how the questionnaire data were segmented and coded.

2.4.4. Coding and analytical procedure

Open-ended responses were exported from Qualtrics and organised in Google Sheets to enable systematic comparison between reader reports and stylistic features in the poems. Responses were grouped by poem in separate spreadsheet tabs, and each participant was assigned an anonymised identification code. Tables 6–8 provide schematic examples of the data structure, segmentation, and coding procedure; Appendix 5 contains the full raw responses and coded datasets.

Stage 1: Data preparation

In the initial stage, raw responses were transferred into poem-specific tabs structured as shown in Table 6. The aim was to preserve the integrity of each participant’s response prior to analytical coding.

Table 6. Example of raw response structure

Participant	Question	Response
P01	Q1	Persephone reminisces about her encounter with Hades to make sense of it and experiences a mixture of conflicting feelings: admiration, confusion, nostalgia and denial.

Stage 2: Segmentation and empathy coding

Empathy coding (see Table 7) was applied only to Q1 responses, since this prompt directly elicited character-oriented interpretation by asking about the poem's situation and the protagonist's emotions.

Table 7. Example of segmented response and empathy coding

Participant	Response segment	Empathy type	Empathy code
P01	Persephone reminisces about her encounter with Hades to make sense of it	Implicit	Situational Understanding
P01	and experiences a mixture of conflicting feelings: admiration, confusion, nostalgia and denial.	Implicit	Emotional Attribution and Evaluation

Responses were examined in full and divided into response segments. A response segment was defined as the smallest stretch of text expressing a single coherent interpretive point. For the analysis of reader responses, segmentation was carried out on a meaning basis rather than a sentence basis. Longer responses were divided when they shifted from one category in Table 5 to another. This ensured that each segment represented a distinct form of empathetic engagement. Each segment was then assigned the single empathy code that best matched its dominant focus.

Each response segment was then entered as a separate row in a coding matrix. The following variables were recorded: participant ID, response segment, empathy type (Explicit / Implicit / None), and empathy code (Explicit; Perspective-taking; Emotional attribution and evaluation; Situational understanding). Because data were stored in poem-specific tabs, poem identification was already built into the spreadsheet structure. Segments displaying no linguistic indicators of empathetic engagement (e.g., purely aesthetic comments or plot summaries without affective alignment) were coded as *None*. These segments were retained to preserve transparency and to allow identification of passages that were salient for reasons other than empathy. Coding was conducted by the researcher as sole coder. To improve consistency, the responses were re-read after initial coding, and borderline cases were revised with reference to the category definitions in Table 5.

Responses to Q2 were not coded as evidence of empathy because the question elicited participants' own emotional reactions to selected passages rather than character-oriented understanding. They were therefore used to explain passage salience, not to assign empathy codes. Q3 responses were likewise not coded as separate empathy categories, since they often combined observations about wording, imagery, structure, theme, and only occasional empathetic alignment.

Instead, they are used qualitatively to show how readers linked particular techniques to certain effects, including those associated with empathetic engagement.

Stage 3: Passage indexing and stylistic mapping

In Q2, participants copied and pasted any passage(s) that triggered an emotional response, and in Q3 they explained why the selected passage(s) stood out. Each pasted excerpt was treated as a separate analytical unit and assigned a Passage ID. For each poem, all participant-selected excerpts were compiled in a poem-specific spreadsheet tab, together with their corresponding line number(s).

Table 8. Example of passage-level indexing and stylistic mapping

Passage ID	Participant	Line(s)	Selected excerpt	Salience rationale	Stylistic techniques present
MI_P01_01	P01	5–6	“the horrible mantle / of daughterliness still clinging to her”	“They seem to have an assertiveness to them, and perhaps they tend to be framed negatively or in ultimate terms. You can almost hear the critical voice in her head.”	FIT

Note. Technique labels follow the categories defined in Section 2.2 (e.g., DS, DT, FIT).

Because participants could select multiple excerpts from a poem, one response could yield multiple Passage IDs. Where several passages were explained by the same rationale, this explanation was recorded next to each associated Passage ID. Where participants offered distinct rationales, each was recorded alongside the relevant Passage ID. Each selected excerpt was assigned line numbers and compared with the speech and thought presentation coding described in Section 2.2 and reproduced in Appendix 1. All relevant modes present within the excerpt were documented, with multiple modes recorded jointly where necessary. This passage-level dataset enables systematic comparison between participants’ salient selections and the stylistic features present in those passages.

3. Stylistic analysis and reader-response findings

This chapter brings together the stylistic and reader-response findings. Section 3.1 analyses the distribution and potential effects of speech and thought presentation modes in the four poems. Section 3.2 then examines readers' reported responses to these modes.

3.1. Stylistic analysis of the poems

3.1.1. ORF

ORF is written in the first person, which complicates the distinction between character voice and narratorial voice. As Leech and Short note, first-person narration often produces a "kind of merger of roles" (2007, p. 216), meaning that formal linguistic criteria alone do not always allow a clear distinction between a character's thoughts and the evaluative perspective of the narrator. In such cases, interpretation must remain especially sensitive to context: the analyst must decide whether a passage is better understood as vivid characterisation through speech or thought presentation, or as narratorial commentary (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 264).

Table 9 presents the distribution of narrative techniques in ORF, given as word counts and percentages of the poem's total coded words. Although Narration is used as a category for proportional comparison, it does not occur as a coded category in this poem.

Table 9. Narrative techniques in ORF

Technique	Number of words	Percentage of total words (%)
FDS	126	85.71%
FDT	21	14.29%
Total	147	100%

Note. The epigraph is excluded from coding and word-count totals.

As Table 9 shows, ORF is shaped primarily by Orpheus's self-presentation in the forms of FDS (85.71%) and FDT (14.29%). These modes foreground the immediacy of his utterance while allowing a brief shift from voiced address to inward self-reflection. Parker notes that ORF is the only poem in *Vita Nova* that grants Orpheus an extended monologic voice, and this voice already encourages a critical impression of him before Eurydice's perspective is introduced in REL (2016, p. 34). More broadly, Glück participates in a feminist tradition of revising "the male artist–female muse convention" (Parker, 2016, p. 34), and in ORF this revision is realised not only thematically but also stylistically.

The opening FDS passage quickly shifts the emphasis away from Orpheus's lament for Eurydice and towards artistic self-presentation: having lost his lover, Orpheus finds himself "speaking French" and in "better voice," producing "songs / of a high order" (ORF, 3–6). The effect of FDS is double: it brings readers close to Orpheus's voice, but what it reveals is less grief itself than investment in its aesthetic value. In this respect, the poem exposes what Parker describes as Glück's mocking presentation of Orpheus as "an unapologetic, pretentious narcissist," in contrast to his more idealised treatment in earlier male-authored traditions (2016, p. 35). This point aligns with Fernández-Quintanilla's argument that access to a character's mental states may facilitate empathy, while negative moral evaluation may also limit or override it (2018, p. 139).

The second FDS passage sharpens this impression through direct address to Eurydice. The apostrophe "O Eurydice" (ORF, 13) introduces a voice shaped less by mourning than by reproach. This becomes especially clear in the rhetorical question "why do you turn on me, wanting human comfort?" (ORF, 14), which recasts Eurydice's desire for comfort as a betrayal against Orpheus. The imperatives that follow — "Tell them I have lost my beloved; / I am completely alone now. / Tell them there is no music like this / without real grief" (ORF, 17–20) — continue to redirect attention away from Eurydice's suffering and towards Orpheus's own loss and artistic self-regard. As Parker suggests, the loss of Eurydice may be seen here as "necessary to his art" (2016, p. 37), while Morris similarly argues that poems such as ORF interrogate the transformation of experiential loss into poetic value (2006, pp. 119–120). Read in this light, the passage may invite an ambivalent response, since Orpheus's grief remains inseparable from self-interest.

Against this dominant pattern, the FDT passage "perhaps the gods never spoke to me in Dis, / never singled me out, / perhaps it was all illusion" (ORF, 10–12) briefly suspends Orpheus's outward, accusatory address and moves into reflection. Yet his concern here is still not Eurydice's loss, but whether the gods "singled [him] out" (ORF, 11). This inward turn does not soften the poem's characterisation of Orpheus so much as refine it. Even his moment of doubt remains bound up with artistic exceptionalism, as the closing assertion that "they will remember me" (ORF, 21) makes clear. Overall, the prominence of FDS, interrupted only briefly by FDT, characterises Orpheus through accusation, grief, and artistic self-regard. These techniques give readers close access to his perspective, but this proximity may produce moral reservation rather than straightforward empathetic alignment. Section 3.2 examines the extent to which these potential effects appear in readers' responses.

3.1.2. REL

Like ORF, REL is written in the first person, but it combines a wider range of speech and thought presentation modes. As a result, Eurydice is characterised through shifts between direct utterance, inward reflection, and more mediated thought. Table 10 shows the distribution of narrative techniques in REL, where Narration does not occur as a coded category.

Table 10. Narrative techniques in REL

Technique	Number of words	Percentage of total words (%)
FDS	62	53.91%
FDT	35	30.43%
IT	18	15.65%
Total	115	100%

Table 10 indicates that REL is dominated by FDS (53.91%), with FDT (30.43%) and IT (15.65%) also occupying significant parts of the poem. This distribution is central to Glück's revision of the myth, since it allows Eurydice to emerge not simply as the object of Orpheus's song, but as a speaker who articulates and reflects on her own experience. This is apparent from the opening FDS passage, where Eurydice's voice is marked by pain, irony, and interrogation. The poem begins with the question, "Where would I be without my sorrow, / sorrow of my beloved's making" (REL, 1–2), which immediately establishes that Eurydice's sense of self remains inseparable from Orpheus and the suffering associated with him. As Parker notes, the question is pointedly not "*who would I be*" but "*where would I be*," implying that without Orpheus's betrayal Eurydice would not be in the Underworld at all (2016, p. 40).

The later phrase "without some sign of him, this song / of all gifts the most lasting" (REL, 3–4) presents Orpheus's song in bitterly ironic terms. As Parker argues, the word "gift" suggests not consolation, but only a "relic" of the marriage rather than its continuation (2016, p. 40). The same irony shapes the direct question, "How would you like to die / while Orpheus was singing?" (REL, 5–6), where Orpheus's song appears not as redemptive, but as an accompaniment to Eurydice's death. Later in the poem, the embedded NRTA in "All the way to Dis / *I heard my husband singing*" (REL, 15–16) reinforces this pattern by placing Orpheus's song within Eurydice's experience of suffering. The predominance of FDS allows Eurydice to speak in her own voice and may encourage empathetic alignment with her perspective rather than with Orpheus's traditionally privileged one.

The two FDT passages interrupt this direct mode with more inward and compressed formulations. The fragment "Torment of earth / Torment of mortal passion—" (REL, 9–10) departs from the surrounding utterance through its nominal style, syntactic incompleteness, and repetition.

Rather than addressing a listener, Eurydice seems to register an internal aftershock, as though trauma has momentarily reduced language to its most concentrated terms. A similar effect appears in the closing FDT passage, also marked by affect-laden vocabulary: “Not the first response— / that was terror— / but the last” (REL, 21–23). In both cases, FDT reinforces the tragic reality of Eurydice’s experience and disrupts any consolatory rhetoric attached to Orpheus’s song. Since Keen argues that empathy is often prompted by representations of distress and suffering (2007, p. 72), these passages may be especially important in inviting readers’ empathetic engagement with Eurydice.

By contrast, the IT passage — “I think sometimes / too much is asked of us; / I think sometimes / our consolations are the costliest thing” (REL, 11–14) — introduces a more mediated mode. As Morris argues, these lines expose the cost of the Orphic exchange, in which Eurydice’s life is traded for “lines in a memorable poem” (2006, p. 119). The word “consolations” is especially revealing, suggesting that what is conventionally valued as lyric recompense may come at a high personal cost. Through IT, Glück gives Eurydice interpretive authority over her loss, encouraging readers to understand her situation more fully.

Overall, the range of modes in REL repositions Eurydice as a speaking and reflective subject rather than the silent object of Orpheus’s song. Although both ORF and REL combine FDS and FDT, the effects differ significantly. In ORF, these modes present Orpheus’s grief as primarily outwardly directed, almost as if performed before an audience. In REL, however, FDS, FDT, and the additional use of IT give Eurydice’s characterisation a more introspective quality. These modes therefore open several potential points of empathetic engagement with Eurydice, while still allowing for variation in readers’ responses (see Section 3.2).

3.1.3. MI

MI is written in the third person and is stylistically more varied than ORF and REL, combining Narration with FIT, DS, DT, FDT, NRTA, and FDS. This range of modes constructs Persephone’s perspective as fractured and repeatedly reinterpreted, which may provide a strong basis for empathetic engagement. Such shifts may also require more effortful processing, encouraging readers to dwell on particular lines and sustain attention to Persephone’s conflicted inner state. Table 11 shows the distribution of narrative techniques in MI.

Table 11. Narrative techniques in MI

Technique	Number of words	Percentage of total words (%)
FIT	134	45.89%

Narration	64	21.92%
DS	45	15.41%
DT	22	7.53%
FDT	14	4.79%
NRTA	8	2.74%
FDS	5	1.71%
Total	292	100%

As indicated in Table 11, FIT is the dominant mode in MI (45.89%) and is especially important to the poem's characterisation of Persephone. After the opening narration establishes her habitual return to the pool to look for changes in herself, the poem moves into FIT: "She sees / the same person, the horrible mantle / of daughterliness still clinging to her" (MI, 4–6). The metaphorical phrase "the horrible mantle / of daughterliness" conveys a strongly negative self-evaluation, presenting daughterhood as burdensome. A similar effect appears in the maxim-like, relational identifying clause "everything in nature is in some way her relative" (MI, 9), where the world around Persephone is filtered through her sense of oppression. Together, these passages present her as vulnerable within a restrictive familial environment and may therefore facilitate empathy with her desire for escape.

FIT also shapes the poem's treatment of memory and attachment. In the lines "But Persephone remembers. / Also that he embraced her, right there, / with her uncle watching. She remembers / sunlight flashing on his bare arms" (MI, 14–17), FIT renders Persephone's recollection as vivid and sensory, making Hades intensely present even as the scene remains marked by control and observation. As Daifotis argues, Glück reinterprets the myth by questioning Persephone's apparent passivity and complicating the boundary between victimhood and complicity (2017, p. 20). This tension is clear in "the chilling insight that from this moment / she couldn't live without him again" (MI, 21–22). These lines reveal both Persephone's immediate attachment to Hades and a painful paradox: while he initially appears to rescue her from her mother's hold, Persephone finds herself entering another form of dependence.

A related tension emerges in the FIT passage "The girl who disappears from the pool / will never return. A woman will return, / looking for the girl she was" (MI, 23–25). Although these lines sound summarising, they remain closely aligned with Persephone's experience and emphasise the irreversible nature of her transformation. As Cooke notes, Persephone enters "a deep identity crisis" that threatens the loss of self by "being forced into a new identity" (2017, p. 35). Here, the poem

may invite empathy less through direct depiction of violence than through Persephone's longing for the girl she can no longer be.

Another major pattern in the poem is the use of DS (15.41%), especially in the later section where Persephone tries to name what happened to her. The most striking instance occurs in "Then she says, I was not abducted. / Then she says, I offered myself, I wanted / to escape my body" (MI, 29–31). Together with the isolated FDS "Even, sometimes, / I willed this" (MI, 32), these lines are among the most difficult and potentially empathy-eliciting in the poem. On the one hand, they suggest Persephone's desire to escape her previous condition; on the other, they may lead readers to suspect that she responds to violence through denial and self-blame. Since Keen links empathy particularly strongly to representations of suffering, these lines may be especially salient: Persephone's vulnerability emerges not only in what happened to her, but in her struggle to understand it.

The poem then pulls back into Narration (21.92% overall): "But ignorance / cannot will knowledge. / Ignorance wills something imagined, which it believes exists" (MI, 32–34). The gnomic quality of these lines gives them the force of reflection or bitter wisdom, but they also sharpen the ambiguity of Persephone's earlier claims by means of antonyms ("ignorance" vs. "knowledge") and looser contextual opposites ("imagined" vs. "exists"). As Daifotis notes, Persephone does possess a "knowledge" that she was abducted, yet "some larger force inhibits her from believing it" (2017, p. 21). Here, the narratorial commentary reveals the gap between Persephone's understanding of what happened and her willingness to accept it.

The smaller categories — DT (7.53%), FDT (4.79%), NRTA (2.74%), and FDS (1.71%) — sharpen this larger pattern mainly through the content they present and through specific lexical and structural choices. In the DT examples, the recurring reporting clause "she thinks" links three moments of thought: "That's my uncle spying again, she thinks—" (MI, 8), "I am never alone, she thinks" (MI, 10), and "I must have been, she thinks, a simple girl" (MI, 39). This echoic pattern foregrounds surveillance, entrapment, and, later, estrangement from Persephone's former self. The FDT passages are even more immediate. "No one understands anymore / how beautiful he was" (MI, 13–14) highlights Persephone's attraction to Hades, while "Everything sounds so simple, so conventional" (MI, 38) shows her judging her own speech as inadequate to the complexity of her feelings. This may stem from her attachment to Hades and from her inability, or refusal, to name him clearly as an abductor. The single instance of NRTA — "This is the last moment she remembers clearly" (MI, 18) — marks the point at which memory begins to break down, just before her abduction. Together, these passages foreground Persephone as unable fully to make sense of her experience.

Overall, the poem presents Persephone’s experience as traumatic, internally divided, and resistant to stable interpretation. In this respect, Keniston’s observation that *Averno* offers an understanding of disaster “not in spite of but through indirectness, resistance, and refusal” (2008, p. 186) is especially apt. By bringing readers close to Persephone’s perspective without resolving its contradictions, the poem may invite empathy through ambivalence rather than clarity. The extent to which readers take up, resist, or reinterpret these invitations is discussed in Section 3.2.

3.1.4. MD

Like MI, MD is written in the third person, but it is more consistently centred on Hades’s consciousness. The poem moves between narration, several forms of thought presentation, including FDT, FIT, IT, and NRTA, with only a brief shift into DS at the end. This variety of modes gives readers sustained access to Hades’s inner processes, while also exposing the ethical complexity of his motives and actions. Table 12 presents the distribution of narrative techniques in MD.

Table 12. Narrative techniques in MD

Technique	Number of words	Percentage of total words (%)
FDT	76	24.52%
FIT	69	22.26%
Narration	58	18.71%
IT	44	14.19%
NRTA	35	11.29%
DT	16	5.16%
DS	12	3.87%
Total	310	100%

FDT (24.52%) and FIT (22.26%) dominate MD, although the poem opens with NRTA (11.29% overall): “When Hades decided he loved this girl” (MD, 1). The proximal deixis “this” immediately places readers close to Hades’s perspective, while the word “decided” suggests that his love is less spontaneous than deliberate. This opening framing is then developed through Narration (18.71% overall) in “he built for her a duplicate of earth, / everything the same, down to the meadow, / but with a bed added” (MD, 2–4). Although these lines may initially seem caring, the added bed subtly exposes the ulterior motive underlying the gesture.

From this point, FIT and FDT become the poem’s principal means of representing Hades’s consciousness. These modes are central in the passage where he tries to make Persephone’s

transition into the Underworld appear gradual and bearable: “Everything the same, including sunlight, / because it would be hard on a young girl / to go so quickly from bright light to utter darkness” (MD, 5–7). Here, Glück may initially invite empathy by showing Hades as attentive to Persephone’s discomfort. Yet his reasoning remains compatible with both care and manipulation, a tension sharpened in the transition toward FDT: “Then moon, then stars. Then no moon, no stars. / Let Persephone get used to it slowly” (MD, 10–11). As Kichouh-Aiadi argues, by reproducing Persephone’s earthly surroundings and gradually introducing darkness, Hades both deceives her and distorts her perception of reality (2023, p. 100).

FIT and FDT also shape the poem’s treatment of Hades’s longing for intimacy. In the FIT passage “A replica of earth / except there was love here” (MD, 13–14), the Underworld is imagined as an improvement on earthly life, but only according to Hades’s own sense of what Persephone lacks. A similar effect appears in the FDT passage beginning “Doesn’t everyone want to feel in the night / the beloved body, compass, polestar” (MD, 22–23), which may briefly position Hades as vulnerable in his desire for companionship. Still, the intimacy imagined here remains one-sided. The sequence continues through intimate sensory details — “to hear the quiet breathing that says / *I am alive*, that means also / *you are alive*” (MD, 24–26) — but the embedded DS is revealing because it stages mutuality without granting Persephone any actual voice. The doubly deictic “you” (Herman, 2002) adds further complexity and may address Persephone, function as Hades’s self-address, or even address the reader. In this way, the poem blurs the boundary between Hades’s inner discourse and the external world, subtly drawing readers into complicity with his viewpoint.

Hades’s self-absorbed logic becomes even clearer in the FIT passage “It never crossed his mind / that there’d be no more smelling here, / certainly no more eating” (MD, 31–33). Although Hades has constructed the Underworld as a loving substitute for earth, these lines reveal that the world he has made erases the sensuous forms of life that Persephone treasures. The abrupt FDT fragment “Guilt? Terror? The fear of love?” (MD, 34) intensifies this moment by naming possibilities that remain outside Hades’s imaginative reach, while the FIT statement “These things he couldn’t imagine; / no lover ever imagines them” (MD, 35–36) gives the passage a gnomic quality. These lines may still sustain some empathy, since Hades appears as someone overwhelmed by feeling and unable to think beyond immediate desire. Such empathy, however, is likely to be limited by readers’ growing awareness that Hades’s longing depends on Persephone’s confinement.

NRTA and IT (14.19%) are also important because they reintroduce interpretive distance. In the NRTA passage “That’s what he felt, the lord of darkness, / looking at the world he had / constructed for Persephone” (MD, 29–31), the title “the lord of darkness” reminds readers of the power imbalance that his own thoughts tend to obscure. In the IT passages “In the end, he thought,

she'd find it comforting" (MD, 12) and "If you have one appetite, he thought, / you have them all" (MD, 20–21), Hades imagines not Persephone's actual response, but the one he wants her to have. Together with the FDT formulation "Persephone, a smeller, a taster" (MD, 19), these lines may initially seem to register attentiveness to Persephone's nature. Yet Hades's linking of Persephone's "appetite" to erotic desire — "to feel in the night / the beloved body" (MD, 22–23) — exposes how he sexualises her innocent acts of smelling and tasting, reframing them through his own impulses (Kichouh-Aiadi, 2023, p. 101).

The smaller categories DT (5.16%) and DS (3.87%) become significant in the final part of the poem, where Hades tries to define both the world he has made and the relationship he wants to establish. DT appears in "First he thinks: The New Hell. Then: The Garden" (MD, 38), giving readers direct access to his own verbal formulations. The following IT shows that he eventually decides to name it "Persephone's Girlhood" (MD, 39–40), a bitterly ironic choice, since Persephone is about to lose that girlhood in the Underworld. As Wong notes, this naming "testifies to the callousness and cruelty" of his desire (2008, p. 85).

The poem's brief moment of DS is even more striking. After the NRTA representation of Hades considering saying "I love you, nothing can hurt you" (MD, 43), DT reveals that "this is a lie" (MD, 44–45), and Hades finally says: "you're dead, nothing can hurt you" (MD, 45–46). Because direct speech is so rare in the poem, its appearance here is especially forceful. For the first time, Hades speaks aloud, and what emerges is both truthful and chilling, underlining the tragedy of Persephone's situation. The final non-restrictive relative clause in FIT — "which seems to him / a more promising beginning, more true" (MD, 47–48) — completes the irony, confirming that even this apparent honesty remains bound to Hades's own perspective.

Overall, MD presents Hades as emotionally accessible but morally compromised. Its varied modes bring readers close to his longing and desire for companionship; however, this access does not neutralise the violence of his situation. Instead, the poem produces empathy without endorsement: readers may understand Hades's emotional logic while remaining critically aware of the possessiveness and control that structure it. Like ORF, MD may therefore invite an ambivalent response in which emotional proximity coexists with moral condemnation. The extent to which these potential effects are reflected in readers' responses is discussed in Section 3.2.

3.2. Reader-response findings

Reader responses are presented poem by poem in order to facilitate comparison with the stylistic analysis. Each subsection first summarises the main empathy-coding patterns, and then

examines recurrent passage selections in relation to the speech and thought presentation modes identified in Section 3.1.

3.2.1. ORF

Table 13 summarises the distribution of coding categories in readers' responses to Q1 for ORF, from most to least frequent. Q1 asked participants to describe, in their own words, the situation in the poem, including the emotions the protagonist seems to experience. The unit of analysis is the meaning-based response segment, not word count, since response length may reflect writing style or elaboration rather than stronger empathetic engagement. These counts are therefore used descriptively to show whether and how empathetic engagement is expressed in the responses.

Table 13. Distribution of coding categories in Q1 responses to ORF

Coding category	Number of segments
Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation	14
Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding	9
None	3
Implicit Empathy: Perspective-taking	1
Total	27

In the reader-response data for ORF, the dominant pattern is Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation (14 segments), which suggests that readers primarily focus on Orpheus's emotional condition. Across responses, he is repeatedly described as "grief-stricken" and "distressed" (P02), "heartbroken" (P11), "lost and heartbroken" (P29), and "sad... alone and grieving" (P30). However, these emotional attributions are often qualified by readers' awareness of Orpheus's self-consciousness and artistic pride. P14, for example, interprets him as not simply grieving but also "resentful," "proud of the power of his singing," and marked by "entitlement," while P18 notes a combination of "sadness and despair" and "intellectual pride." Several participants interpret Orpheus's pain as a source of creative power. P15, for instance, identifies a sense of betrayal but also remarks on the value Orpheus seems to find in "his suffering in that it enhances his talent." Similarly, P08 states that "he is channeling his grief into music," P11 notes that "heartbreak inspires the best music/songs in him," and P23 suggests that "grief has heightened his powers," allowing "him to sing songs that are of a higher order." Overall, readers do not merely recognise grief in the poem; they often perceive it as inseparable from self-regard and from the conversion of suffering into artistic value.

A second recurring pattern is Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding (9 segments). Responses in this category typically frame the poem through the narrative situation of loss and separation, as when P02 states that “The protagonist... has lost Eurydice again,” or P10 writes that “The protagonist has lost his love... and is alone now.” Yet readers do not all interpret that situation in the same way. Some read the poem through broader cultural ideas associated with the figure of the artist: for example, P05 observes that “an artist compares himself... with Orpheus” and that a lover “falls out of love.” Others rely less on mythological framing. P08, who did not report prior familiarity with the myth, suggests that Eurydice “has not died” but “has left him,” reading the poem instead as a scenario of abandonment. The responses therefore show a shared recognition of loss, but not a single framework for interpreting it.

By contrast, Implicit Empathy: Perspective-taking is notably rare, occurring only once. In a single extended segment, P21 reconstructs Orpheus’s inner reasoning in some detail, describing him as “repenting the loss of his love” while also recognising that “in his grief his songs have acquired a greater depth and musicality.” This participant further imagines Orpheus reflecting on his status as a favourite of the gods and on how Eurydice may judge him. The scarcity of such responses is revealing. Although ORF gives readers close access to Orpheus’s voice through FDS, most do not adopt his perspective in any sustained way.

A small number of segments were coded as None (3), typically where participants referred only to their own emotional response (“sympathy for the protagonist,” P03) or provided general comments about the poem without engaging with the character’s inner state (P19, P21). These responses show that ORF can prompt emotional reaction without producing character-oriented empathy.

Taken together, the Q1 responses point to a consistent pattern: readers tend to engage with Orpheus primarily through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation and Situational Understanding, whereas Perspective-taking remains limited. To examine this pattern more closely, Table 14 presents the recurrent passage clusters identified in Q2, ordered from most to least frequent. Q2 asked participants to copy and paste any passage(s) that triggered an emotional response and to describe the emotions triggered, while Q3 asked them to explain why the selected passage(s) stood out. These responses make it possible to compare readers’ reported salience with the stylistic features discussed in Section 3.1.

Table 14. Recurrent passage clusters in responses to ORF

Passage cluster (line[s])	Recurrent passage	Stylistic technique(s)	No. of selections	Participant IDs
1–2	“I have lost my Eurydice, / I have lost my lover”	FDS	6	P02, P03, P10, P14, P19, P21
13–14	“O Eurydice, you who married me for my singing, / why do you turn on me, wanting human comfort?”	FDS	5	P03, P08, P14, P15, P23
19–20	“there is no music like this / without real grief”	FDS	5	P02, P08, P11, P14, P23
3	“and suddenly I am speaking French”	FDS	4	P02, P05, P21, P29
4	“and it seems to me I have never been in better voice”	FDS	4	P08, P14, P18, P21
7–8	“it seems one is somehow expected to apologize / for being an artist”	FDS	4	P14, P15, P21, P23
12	“perhaps it was all illusion”	FDT	4	P02, P03, P25, P27
18	“I am completely alone now”	FDS	3	P02, P27, P30
21	“In Dis, I sang to them; they will remember me”	FDS	2	P15, P27

Note. The table includes passage clusters selected by at least two participants. Clusters were formed around the narrowest recurrent salient textual unit, with broader selections included where they clearly contained that unit. Paratextual selections were excluded.

The recurrent passage clusters in ORF are concentrated mainly in lines coded as FDS, the mode that dominates the poem. The most frequently selected cluster is the opening passage at lines 1–2, chosen 6 times. Here, readers highlight the poem’s linguistic shaping: P02 comments that the anaphora “emphasized the sad conclusion of Orpheus,” while P03 points to the “repetition of words.” The opening further helps to establish the poem’s mythic frame, as P10 notes that it “reminded me about the myth.” Yet this initial declaration of loss also prompts resistant reactions, with P14, for instance, reporting “annoy[ance] and disapprov[al]” at Orpheus’s “coldness and self-absorption.” This FDS cluster is therefore salient not only because it expresses loss directly, but also because it foregrounds the poem’s stylistic and mythic framing while already leaving room for critical distance.

Two further clusters, each selected 5 times, continue this pattern. The accusatory passage at lines 13–14 stood out to readers for its reproachful emotional force. P14 reads the lines as showing that Orpheus “speaks rather resentfully of her [Eurydice],” a response that aligns with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation while remaining clearly critical. At the same time, P23’s comment that the poem uses “mythological figures to meditate on personal experiences” points to the broader

significance of the poem's mythic framing. The other highly recurrent cluster, at lines 19–20, drew responses centred on Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P02 comments on Orpheus's "isolation and grief," adding that "his recognition ... heightens the emotion," whereas P14 again evaluates him critically as "more focused on how this loss has pleasingly triggered his best singing." In both clusters, readers register grief, but also recognise that it is bound up with artistic self-regard.

A second group of 4-selection clusters sharpens this pattern. At line 4, for instance, P18 remarks that, given the tragic circumstances, they were not expecting Orpheus to display "such self-awareness." The cluster at lines 7–8 develops this further. P15 interprets the lines as showing that Orpheus "feels the injustice" of his treatment, which aligns with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P23, by contrast, reads the same passage as "an insight into the artistic process" and "the ramifications of loss and trauma to artistic experience," a response that corresponds more closely to Situational Understanding. P21 likewise foregrounds the ethical tension by suggesting that Orpheus is more preoccupied with his "reputation and skill as a musician" than with grief itself, and by questioning whether he feels "any sense of guilt about failing her [Eurydice]." At line 3, readers seem especially responsive to the poem's linguistic choices. P05 interprets the line as "self-ironic, meta-poetic reflection," while P29 notes that it triggered a personal association with "the French language and expressing missing a lover." Viewed together, these clusters show that readers are repeatedly drawn to places where grief is entangled with performance, language, and artistic self-consciousness.

Also selected 4 times, line 12 stands out somewhat differently from the surrounding FDS passages. Readers' comments on this FDT moment focus more clearly on Orpheus's uncertainty and align most directly with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P02 reads the line as signalling "his despair and struggle to cope," while P25 condenses its effect to "His doubt." Unlike the more expansive FDS passages, which foreground accusation and self-dramatisation, this FDT moment gives access to inward instability in a more concentrated form. It therefore offers one of the clearest points of empathetic access in ORF.

Line 18, selected 3 times, does not produce a single uniform response pattern. For P02, the line invites Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, as Orpheus is described as voicing "his isolation and grief." P30's response, however, points to a more personal resonance, with the participant stating that they "relive these things" and describing loneliness as "a harsh problem nowadays." The closing line, selected only 2 times, reinforces the tendency for readers to notice Orpheus's self-regard alongside his suffering. P15 reads the ending in relation to Orpheus's sense that his music gives him "solace and strength," while P27 comments on the emotional force of the lexis and on how knowledge of the myth enhances the resonance of the passage. These smaller clusters are

therefore salient not only for their emotional intensity, but also for how they draw attention either to isolation or to the persistence of artistic self-assertion.

Taken together, the Q1 and Q2/Q3 data show that readers respond to Orpheus primarily through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation and Situational Understanding, while Perspective-taking is notably rare. This empathetic engagement is marked by ambivalence. The dominant FDS passages give immediate access to Orpheus’s grief, but also foreground pride, resentment, and artistic self-consciousness, producing critical distance. By contrast, the FDT passage at line 12 presents doubt and inward instability, allowing a more direct empathetic engagement. These reader responses are consistent with the stylistic findings, suggesting that ORF invites empathy in a qualified and unstable form.

3.2.2. REL

Table 15 summarises the coding categories identified in readers’ Q1 responses to REL, presented in descending order of frequency.

Table 15. Distribution of coding categories in Q1 responses to REL

Coding category	Number of segments
Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation	12
Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding	10
None	4
Implicit Empathy: Perspective-taking	3
Total	27

As Table 15 shows, the most prominent tendency is Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation (12 segments), indicating that participants primarily engage with Eurydice through the emotional dimension of her experience. At the most immediate level, readers repeatedly characterise her state in terms of “sorrow, pain, grief” (P06), the “feeling of lost, sorrow” (P17), and “agony” (P26). Several participants also register a more complex emotional configuration, combining “love that slightly replaces the fear she first felt” (P07), “longing” (P13), and “torment, for her beloved’s grief in losing her” (P12). This complexity is heightened by the way readers connect Eurydice’s emotions to Orpheus’s continuing presence: as P28 observes, his music “made the sorrow more bearable,” while P13 suggests that sorrow itself “has become part of her.” At the same time, some responses foreground the poem’s reflective quality. P01 describes Eurydice as being in a “wondering, confessional and self-reflecting mood” in which she attempts to “console

herself,” while P20 similarly characterises her as “contemplative, reflective, and thoughtful.” Overall, readers do not simply identify discrete emotions, but interpret them as layered, ambivalent, and bound up with pain, memory, and attachment.

The second most frequent pattern is Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding (10 segments). Responses in this category most often frame Eurydice’s experience as occurring at the threshold between death and its aftermath. Participants describe the poem as representing “the last thoughts” (P06) or “her final moments” (P07) before death, while P16 places Eurydice after Orpheus’s failed rescue, leaving her “forever lost to the underworld.” What connects these responses is not only the emphasis on loss, but also the sense that this final moment remains inseparable from Orpheus’s song. P28, for instance, recalls “Orpheus’ music accompanying her before he turned,” while P20 highlights the painful persistence of that memory, describing Eurydice as “wondering whether or not she would be better off without that relic.” Although most responses align with the mythological framework, there is some variation in how participants conceptualise the scene. P09, for example, adopts a broader formulation, suggesting that the poem’s speaker “imagines she has died with the sorrowful voice of her lover, here imagined as Orpheus.” Even where the interpretive framing differs, the data show a shared understanding of the poem as structured around final moments before death, intertwined with the last traces of the beloved’s presence.

Implicit Empathy: Perspective-Taking accounts for only 3 segments, but remains analytically significant. Although limited, it appears more often than in ORF, suggesting a somewhat stronger tendency for readers to enter Eurydice’s perspective. P16, for example, develops a detailed account of how Eurydice’s sorrow is connected with the memory of Orpheus’s music, which is described as both “consoling” and “a painful reminder of her time on earth with him.” Similarly, P24 interprets Eurydice as understanding Orpheus’s decision to turn back “given the strength of his passion,” suggesting that she “comes to terms with [his] mistake.” P26, in a more compressed form, generalises Eurydice’s experience into a broader reflection, stating that “with love comes sorrow, with love comes death.” These responses demonstrate a deeper level of alignment with the character’s perspective than in ORF, even if they are comparatively limited in number.

A small number of segments were coded as None (4), typically where participants focused on formal or stylistic features without engaging directly with Eurydice’s inner experience. For instance, P17 comments on first-person narration, rhetorical questions, and comparisons, while P20 states that the poem is “not feeling but thought,” foregrounding its reflective dimension rather than its emotional content.

Taken together, the Q1 responses suggest a pattern in which readers engage with Eurydice primarily through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation and Situational Understanding, with more limited but still meaningful instances of Perspective-taking. Compared to ORF, the data point toward a stronger empathetic alignment with Eurydice and an absence of pronounced critical distance. To explore how this engagement is anchored in specific textual features, Table 16 presents, in descending order of frequency, the recurrent passage clusters identified in Q2.

Table 16. Recurrent passage clusters in responses to REL

Passage cluster (line[s])	Recurrent passage	Stylistic technique(s)	No. of selections	Participant IDs
7–8	“A long death; all the way to Dis / I heard him”	FDS	5	P16, P17, P20, P22, P26
9–10	“Torment of earth / Torment of mortal passion—”	FDT	4	P16, P17, P22, P26
1	“Where would I be without my sorrow”	FDS	3	P07, P13, P26
11–12	“I think sometimes / too much is asked of us”	IT	3	P09, P12, P13
18–20	“Perhaps it was better that way, / my love fresh in my head / even at the moment of death.”	FDT	3	P01, P07, P16
21–23	“Not the first response— / that was terror— / but the last.”	FDT	3	P16, P17, P24

Note. The table includes passage clusters selected by at least two participants. Clusters were formed around the narrowest recurrent salient textual unit, with broader selections included where they clearly contained that unit.

As Table 16 shows, the most frequently selected cluster in REL is lines 7–8, chosen 5 times. Responses to this passage are shaped mainly by Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P17, for instance, writes that he was “impressed by the depth of the sorrow and grief,” adding that the first-person address makes the poem “more intimate for readers,” while P26 emphasises the focus on mortality. Other responses lean more clearly towards Perspective-taking. P16, for example, suggests that Eurydice is “asking us to reflect the pain she may have felt,” then imagines “how we would like to die with our lover next to us.” What stands out in this FDS cluster, then, is the directness with which Eurydice’s suffering is presented: readers are encouraged not only to register her pain, but also to relive it from within her position.

The second most frequent cluster, at lines 9–10, was selected 4 times and continues this pattern through FDT. Here, the poem’s emotional force becomes more compressed and inward. P22

describes the passage as expressing “extreme passions,” which aligns with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. Perspective-taking is also evident, especially in P16’s response, where the passage is read as inviting readers to imagine “when people we love begin to mourn for us” while death is still unfolding, and to feel something of “the weight of [their] sadness.” In this cluster, readers are brought into especially close contact with Eurydice’s inward suffering, which intensifies empathetic alignment.

Several other clusters were selected 3 times, and together they show how this engagement is distributed across additional stylistic modes. The opening cluster at line 1, realised through FDS, stood out because readers experienced it as immediate and intimate. P07 refers to the poem’s “strong emotional wording like ‘sorrow’ and ‘death’ and ‘terror,’” while P13 writes, “I felt the pain of the protagonist echo my own.” This is one of the clearest instances of Perspective-taking in the Q3 explanations, as the participant relates Eurydice’s pain directly to the self. The poem establishes this empathetic orientation from the outset through a highly immediate FDS formulation.

A somewhat different pattern emerges in the cluster at lines 11–12, coded as IT. Rather than foregrounding emotional intensity in the same way as the FDS and FDT clusters, this passage prompts a more reflective mode of engagement. P09 says that it “seemed to be speaking directly to my personal experience,” while P12 similarly notes that it “made me think of my own situation” and of “what is asked and I ask of myself.” These responses are most closely marked by Situational Understanding, since readers connect Eurydice’s reflections to broader experiences of burden, consolation, and helplessness. P09 also links the passage to “the emotional weight of the mythological allusion” in the poem, suggesting that its force is shaped partly by awareness of the wider myth. This IT cluster is therefore less emotionally immediate than the FDS and FDT passages, and more likely to prompt reflective, generalising forms of uptake.

The final two clusters, at lines 18–20 and 21–23, were also selected 3 times each and are both realised through FDT. At lines 18–20, some responses align with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, as when P01 highlights the “authentic confession” and the contrast between “the fresh love” and “the co-occurring moment of death.” At the same time, Perspective-taking is also visible in P16’s response, which reconstructs Eurydice’s final reflections “as a way of coping with her loss,” while also preserving love at the moment of death. The adjacent cluster at lines 21–23 elicited similarly strong reactions. P24 describes the ending as a “stark response to her situation,” while P16 comments on the narrowing final lines, reading them as if Eurydice “were disappearing from the poem and readers.” In these closing FDT passages, readers attend not only to Eurydice’s emotional condition but also to its stylistic framing, which further strengthens their alignment with her final reflections.

Taken together, the Q2 and Q3 data show that readers' passage selections in REL align closely with the patterns identified in Q1. Emotional Attribution and Evaluation remains the most frequent category, especially in responses to FDS clusters; FDT clusters are associated with Perspective-taking, while the IT passage prompts Situational Understanding. Compared with ORF, REL produces a strong empathetic orientation: readers respond to Eurydice's suffering, reflection, and final terror without the moral reservations that shape responses to Orpheus. This contrast confirms that FDS, although dominant in both poems, does not have a fixed empathetic effect. In REL, it facilitates empathy by foregrounding a voice that is vulnerable, reflective, and ethically less compromised.

3.2.3. MI

Table 17 shows how readers' Q1 responses to MI are distributed across the coding categories.

Table 17. Distribution of coding categories in Q1 responses to MI

Coding category	Number of segments
Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation	14
Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding	14
Implicit Empathy: Perspective-taking	2
Total	30

Emotional Attribution and Evaluation is one of the most prominent patterns in the MI responses (14 segments), with readers consistently presenting Persephone's state as emotionally divided and resistant to any single definition. Many participants identify a mix of emotions: P01, for instance, suggests "admiration, confusion, nostalgia and denial," while P06 lists "loneliness, love, ignorance, pain, desperation." P14 similarly presents Persephone as "conflicted over her motives, her experiences." In other responses, this instability is framed more explicitly as part of an ongoing inner change. P02 refers to Persephone's "struggle to cope with her new circumstances," while P18 notes "a sense of quiet detachment from the person she was." Overall, rather than isolating one dominant emotion, these responses present Persephone's state as marked by emotional instability and ambivalence.

This ambivalence becomes especially apparent in the way readers negotiate the troubling attraction Persephone appears to feel toward Hades. P14, for example, suggests that Persephone experiences death as "a beautiful and alluring presence," while P21 similarly writes that she "felt relief at being released from her physical body and was actually enthralled by Hades." At the same

time, this attraction is not interpreted as straightforward by other participants. P24 notes that Persephone is “haunted by questions as to her complicity in this abduction,” P25 states that she “cannot understand what her feelings were at the time,” and P04 interprets her earlier choice as retrospectively marked by “disillusionment and perhaps disappointment.” This pattern suggests that readers register the coexistence of desire, vulnerability, and self-questioning within Persephone’s response.

Situational Understanding is equally frequent (14 segments), showing that readers engage not only with Persephone’s emotions but also with the circumstances that produce and complicate them. A number of responses present the poem as retrospective, centring on Persephone’s attempt to come to terms with a life-altering event. P01 writes that she “reminisces about her encounter with Hades to make sense of it,” while P25 similarly notes that she “looks back at the events leading to her abduction.” Within this remembered scene, readers repeatedly foreground Persephone’s uncertainty about her agency. P14 observes that she “cannot decide whether she has been abducted or whether she went willingly,” and P18 likewise emphasises that she “questions her own agency, wondering that maybe it wasn’t a kidnapping after all.” These responses show that readers do not simply recount the mythic situation, but interpret it through the poem’s lens as a scene of incomplete self-understanding.

A closely related pattern is the way readers situate identity transformation at the centre of Persephone’s experience. Several responses understand the poem in terms of a passage from innocence to experience or from girlhood to womanhood. P29 condenses this into the formulation that “the protagonist dies a girl but is reborn as a woman,” while P06 describes the poem as involving “becoming a woman, meeting her husband, dying and ‘coming back’ searching for the sense of life.” A similar understanding appears in P21’s description of a woman looking back on her younger self “as an innocent.” Across these responses, the poem is consistently read as representing a change of identity, though one that remains unstable and difficult to resolve.

Perspective-taking occurs rarely (2 segments), but the examples are still revealing because they show where readers attempt to move from interpreting Persephone to imaginatively inhabiting her experience. P10, for example, presents Persephone as drawn away from her “somewhat innocent and boring life” by the promise of something new, only to reinterpret that transition as “too good to be true and a mistake.” P30 offers a more compressed instance, suggesting that Persephone “should feel sad and terrible” but instead accepts Hades’s actions. Such responses remain limited, suggesting that readers find it challenging to align fully with Persephone’s perspective when her own understanding of the event is presented as uncertain.

Taken together, the Q1 responses reveal equally strong Emotional Attribution and Evaluation and Situational Understanding, with Perspective-taking occurring only rarely. Importantly, no segments were coded as None, indicating that all responses contained some form of empathetic engagement as defined by the coding framework. What the responses register most consistently is her ambivalence: uncertainty over her feelings, her agency, and the meaning of the transformation she undergoes. Compared with REL, where empathetic engagement is more directly facilitated by Eurydice's suffering, MI prompts a more complex form of empathy, centred on ambivalence and constant self-questioning. The next section examines how this engagement is connected to recurrent textual elements identified in Q2.

Table 18. Recurrent passage clusters in responses to MI

Passage cluster (line[s])	Recurrent passage	Stylistic technique(s)	No. of selections	Participant IDs
5–6	“the horrible mantle / of daughterliness”	FIT	7	P01, P10, P14, P18, P21, P24, P29
32–33	“But ignorance / cannot will knowledge”	Narration	6	P02, P04, P09, P10, P12, P29
41–42	“she keeps thinking the pool will remember / and explain to her the meaning of her prayer”	FIT	6	P01, P06, P10, P14, P18, P21
13–14	“No one understands anymore / how beautiful he was”	FDT	5	P01, P10, P14, P18, P25
21–22	“the chilling insight that from this moment / she couldn’t live without him again”	FIT	4	P01, P04, P12, P21
9	“everything in nature is in some way her relative”	FIT	3	P10, P14, P18
24–25	“A woman will return, / looking for the girl she was”	FIT	3	P09, P14, P30
11–12	“Then death appears, like the answer to a prayer”	Narration	2	P10, P14
15–17	“he embraced her, right there, / with her uncle watching”	FIT	2	P10, P24
26–32	“She stands by the pool saying, from time to time, / I was abducted ... Even, sometimes, / I willed this”	DS + FDS	2	P01, P02
37	“Death, husband, god, stranger”	DS	2	P02, P10
39	“I must have been, she thinks, a simple girl”	DT	2	P01, P10

Note. The table includes passage clusters selected by at least two participants. Clusters were formed around the narrowest recurrent salient textual unit, with broader selections included where they clearly contained that unit.

As Table 18 shows, the most frequently selected cluster is the metaphorical image in lines 5–6, chosen by seven participants and realised through FIT. Here, responses align most often with Situational Understanding, as readers reconstruct the familial constraints from which Persephone wishes to escape. P18 connects the passage to becoming “more mature and not a child anymore,” while still being treated by parents as such. P24 similarly reads it through “the experience of adolescence,” especially the need to separate from “parental/conventional expectations.” At the same time, some responses involve a more personal form of empathetic engagement. P21 states that “I saw my own experience reflected in the lines,” suggesting that the passage encourages readers to connect with Persephone through perceived similarity of situation. Participants also comment on the stylistic effects of FIT, with P01 noting that “you can almost hear the critical voice in her head,” and P14 writing that the lines made him “want to understand why she longed for death.” This cluster is therefore especially significant for empathetic engagement because FIT brings readers into proximity with Persephone’s thoughts, while the content itself evokes a recognisable experience of familial pressure, adolescence, and the desire for separation.

The next two most frequent clusters are lines 32–33 and 41–42, each chosen 6 times. Lines 32–33, coded as Narration, were often read as a moment of broader reflection. P09 describes the passage as a point where the poem reaches toward a wider “moral of the story,” while P12 connects it to “all the things we do not know but spend too much time wondering about.” These responses suggest that the narrator’s gnomic formulation supports a mediated form of Situational Understanding. The narrator does not give readers direct access to Persephone’s consciousness, but guides them to see her as someone whose confusion stems from something she could neither predict nor fully understand.

By contrast, lines 41–42, realised through FIT, return readers more directly to Persephone’s inner uncertainty. P06 begins with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, describing Persephone as “lonely,” and then moves into Situational Understanding by explaining that “no person in the world can help her answer her questions.” P18 offers a more reflective response, suggesting that “although we change, the places ... preserve the traces of who we were” and can help us “understand ourselves.” The shift into the first-person plural signals Perspective-taking, as the participant generalises Persephone’s longing into a shared human experience and partially adopts the internal logic of her search for self-understanding.

Another prominent cluster is lines 13–14, chosen by 5 participants and realised through FDT. Readers responded to these lines as a moment of emotional ambiguity involving both attraction and danger. P18 writes that they were “struck by the humanity” of the passage and its focus on “the importance and influence of physical attraction,” which aligns with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P14 similarly describes the “image of death as beautiful” as “striking,” but also reads it through Situational Understanding, adding that “one thinks of teenage girls of all ages who seem possessed by death wishes or at least a desire to escape ... the trap of their youth and restrictions.” This response gives Persephone a degree of agency by framing her attraction to death as bound up with a wish for escape. P25, by contrast, suggests that the passage shows how “inexperienced young girls are seduced,” thus positioning Persephone more as a passive victim. Overall, the cluster supports empathetic engagement through ambivalence: participants recognise both Persephone’s vulnerability and the disturbing appeal that death, figured through Hades, holds for her.

Lines 21–22, chosen 4 times and coded as FIT, develop this ambiguity further by focusing on attachment and dependency. P10 shows Situational Understanding by connecting the passage to “the myths that young girls believe in about life and romance” and to the danger that follows when such myths are projected onto reality. Other participants, through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, identify the affective intensity of Persephone’s attachment and evaluate it as both compelling and unsettling. P04 writes that the passage reminded them of personal experiences of “inevitability and disillusionment,” while P12 associates it with love that feels “inescapable” and with the idea of not being “whole without it.” What is significant here is that readers’ empathy is not displaced by judgement or criticism of Persephone’s dependency. Instead, they attempt to understand her complex feelings, including the coexistence of attraction, dependency, and unease.

The less frequent clusters further develop the same pattern, revealing additional aspects of Persephone’s constraint, transformation, and retrospective uncertainty. Line 9, chosen by 3 participants and realised through FIT, was linked to feelings of surveillance and entrapment. P18 observes that the passage inserts an “ordinary awareness into a mythological context,” comparing it to emotions “which might be felt by a youth feeling trapped” in a place where family and community are too close. This response approaches Perspective-taking insofar as the participant imaginatively reconstructs what such a position might feel like from within. Most importantly, however, it shows that readers do not treat Persephone merely as a distant mythic figure, but perceive her experience as a socially and emotionally recognisable one. Lines 24–25, also chosen 3 times, prompted responses concerned with lost youth and transformation. P30 writes that the passage triggered personal emotions because they were “reliv[ing] these things” at that moment in

life; this indicates Perspective-taking, as the participant aligns their own experience with Persephone's.

Clusters in lines 11–12 and 15–17, each chosen by 2 participants, continue to bring readers closer to Persephone's perspective, even though they were mostly discussed alongside more salient passages rather than as independent focal points. Lines 26–32, also chosen twice and combining DS and FDS, are particularly important because they show Persephone's attempts to make sense of what happened to her. P02 describes this as her “struggle to properly word her traumatic experience,” adding that there is no way to tell “whether she actually cannot say how she felt or she is really dismissive of her feelings.” Although these clusters attracted fewer selections, they reinforce the main reader-response pattern: Persephone's experience becomes empathy-eliciting because it is difficult to interpret, even for Persephone herself.

Overall, the Q2 and Q3 responses to MI support the stylistic analysis in Section 3.1.3 by showing that readers respond empathetically to the presentation of Persephone's fragmented consciousness. Emotional Attribution and Evaluation and Situational Understanding remain prominent, especially in responses to recurrent FIT passages, while Perspective-taking occurs more rarely. Persephone's conflicting selves — the constrained daughter, the attracted girl, the possible victim, the dependent lover, and the woman who later tries to understand what happened — form the basis of this empathetic engagement. MI therefore encourages empathy not by resolving these contradictions, but by making self-division central to Persephone's narrated experience.

3.2.4. MD

Table 19 summarises the distribution of coding categories in readers' Q1 responses to MD, in descending order of frequency.

Table 19. Distribution of coding categories in Q1 responses to MD

Coding category	Number of segments
Implicit Empathy: Emotional Attribution and Evaluation	17
Implicit Empathy: Situational Understanding	11
Implicit Empathy: Perspective-taking	4
None	4
Total	36

Emotional Attribution and Evaluation is the most prominent pattern in the Q1 responses to MD (17 segments), with several participants assessing Hades's feelings toward Persephone in broadly positive terms. P05 writes that "Hades loves sincerely a girl," P08 describes him as "lovesick for Persephone," and P20 suggests that he feels "a deep longing to care for Persephone." P17 also interprets the poem as highlighting "the strong emotions of a man's passion, desire, and love," presenting Hades as someone ready "to reach for the stars" for the beloved. P03's comment that Hades "seems to be behaving honestly" likewise suggests an initial perception of his intentions as sincere rather than simply malicious. These responses show that MD enables some readers to see Hades not only as a mythological antagonist, but as a figure marked by longing, desire, and care.

Yet this emotional recognition is rarely unqualified, with readers repeatedly evaluating Hades's love as possessive and self-centred. P07 writes that he is "blinded by his own want for her" and "does not consider her feelings in the matter." P11 develops the same tension by noting that Hades's actions first seem "like a nice thing to do," but later appear as "a golden cage" and "very controlling behavior." The image of the cage is especially important because it captures the double effect of Hades's devotion: what he presents as care becomes confinement. P26 similarly associates the poem with "kidnap, possession. Control," and concludes that "True love is not possession." Some responses lean even more strongly toward moral condemnation: P13 states that Hades "reminds me of domestic violence, of date rape," while P28 calls him "a sad selfish manipulative bastard". These responses establish the central pattern of reader engagement with the poem: MD produces empathy without endorsement. Readers recognise Hades's emotional logic while condemning its ethical consequences.

Situational Understanding is the second most frequent category with 11 segments. This code centres on readers' attention to Hades's attempt to adapt the Underworld for Persephone. Some participants describe his actions in relatively neutral terms. P07 writes that Hades is trying "to create a duplicate world for her within the underworld," and P08 similarly observes his attempt "to prepare the underworld to be more pleasant for her." P17 gives a more detailed version of this, noting that Hades is "ready to do everything for her, even if it means to create a copied Earth with the sunlight." However, many readers also identify the failure of Hades's imagined solution to accommodate Persephone. P05 observes that "he builds a kind of Ersatz, a Doppelgänger," but that what he offers is "a life without pleasures." P27 similarly concludes that "whatever he could do will be a lie." Several participants also note the absence of Persephone's perspective. P17 explicitly comments that "no Persephone's thoughts or desires are mentioned," while P13 observes that Hades "gives her everything he can, but ignores her wishes and needs."

Perspective-taking occurs less often, with 4 segments, though still more frequently than in responses to the other poems. P07, after judging Hades for ignoring Persephone's feelings, asks: "But then again, how can he when the underworld is all he knows?" This response momentarily reframes Hades's behaviour through the limits of his world and experience. Other participants reconstruct his reasoning with even more details. P15 describes him as "consumed by love," and unable "to face the reality of what he is condemning her to." P23 similarly writes that Hades is "fearful of frightening her," and tells Persephone that she is dead because he wants "to be honest, to make her feel safe." Yet the same response concludes that he "has no concept of the effect this will have on her." These responses demonstrate ambivalent Perspective-taking: readers model Hades's motives from within while also observing that his imagined care condemns Persephone to the world of death.

The segments coded as None are limited (4 segments) and mainly consist of interpretive or aesthetic observations that neither attribute emotion to Hades, nor identify his situation, nor adopt his viewpoint: "the reader feels sympathy for him," (P03); "The writer identifies with Persephone." (P28); the poem has a "good beginning, and then it becomes worse and worse" (P19) or is an "Interpretation of myth. Hades' perception" (P22).

Taken together, the pattern of empathy codes in the Q1 responses shows a distinctly ambivalent form of empathetic engagement. Emotional Attribution and Evaluation is the dominant category; Situational Understanding is also frequent, whereas Perspective-taking occurs more rarely. Readers identify Hades's love and desire to care for Persephone, but they also see these feelings as possessive, deceptive, and controlling. Reader engagement here therefore takes the form of recognising Hades's inner logic while maintaining critical distance from the harm it produces. To examine how this response is shaped by textual features, Table 20 presents the recurrent passage clusters identified in Q2 and the stylistic techniques associated with them.

Table 20. Recurrent passage clusters in responses to MD

Passage cluster (line[s])	Recurrent passage	Stylistic technique(s)	No. of selections	Participant IDs
44–46	"but he thinks / this is a lie, so he says in the end / you're dead, nothing can hurt you"	DT + DS	8	P03, P08, P11, P15, P17, P22, P23, P27
48	"a more promising beginning, more true"	FIT	8	P03, P05, P08, P11, P15, P17, P22, P23
31–33	"It never crossed his mind / that there'd be no more smelling here, / certainly no more eating."	FIT	5	P08, P11, P17, P26, P28

43	“He wants to say I love you, nothing can hurt you”	NRTA	5	P03, P08, P11, P17, P20
34	“Guilt? Terror? The fear of love?”	FDT	4	P05, P07, P17, P23
35–36	“These things he couldn't imagine; / no lover ever imagines them.”	FIT	4	P05, P07, P15, P23
38	“First he thinks: The New Hell. Then: The Garden.”	DT	4	P03, P05, P11, P17
39–40	“In the end, he decides to name it / Persephone's Girlhood.”	IT	4	P05, P11, P15, P17
10	“Then moon, then stars. Then no moon, no stars.”	FDT	3	P03, P17, P27
12	“In the end, he thought, she'd find it comforting.”	IT	3	P11, P13, P17
16–18	“He waited many years, / building a world, watching / Persephone in the meadow.”	Narration	3	P07, P15, P28
4	“but with a bed added”	Narration	2	P07, P17
5	“Everything the same, including sunlight”	FIT	2	P03, P05
15	“Doesn't everyone want love?”	FDT	2	P17, P20
22–24	“Doesn't everyone want to feel in the night / the beloved body, compass, polestar, / to hear the quiet breathing that says”	FDT	2	P07, P23
25–26	“I am alive, that means also / you are alive, because you hear me”	FDT	2	P07, P11
29–31	“That's what he felt, the lord of darkness, / looking at the world he had / constructed for Persephone.”	NRTA + Narration	2	P17, P26
37	“He dreams, he wonders what to call this place.”	NRTA	2	P05, P11

Note. The table includes passage clusters selected by at least two participants. Clusters were formed around the narrowest recurrent salient textual unit, with broader selections included where they clearly contained that unit.

As Table 20 shows, the most frequent clusters are lines 44–46 and line 48, each selected by 8 participants. Lines 44–46, coded as DT and DS, foreground the tension between honesty and harm. P03 states that the passage depicts Hades as “being honest,” while P22 connects it to “the idea of honesty in love relationship.” As Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, these responses register Hades’s attempt to replace a comforting lie with truth. At the same time, many participants find this truthful statement disturbing. P11 describes it as “horrible to say to someone,” while Situational Understanding appears in the recognition that Persephone “could just as well be dead in that golden cage he built her.” P27 reads the passage through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, suggesting

that it conveys “hopelessness and giving up.” As noted in the stylistic analysis, the shift from DT to DS makes Hades’s final statement especially salient: it presents his desire to be sincere while exposing the bleakness of the reality he offers Persephone.

Line 48 extends this ambivalence through FIT. Readers respond to the phrase as a troubling form of self-justification. P17 says that they were “shocked” that the initial statement of love and protection is exposed as false, while the final statement appears “more promising, more true.” The participant’s question — “Does it mean that he really loved Persephone?” — revealingly captures the ambiguity of Hades’s feelings by casting doubt on the authenticity of his love. P05 interprets Hades’s final words as hinting at Persephone’s death: the poem appears to be “shouting ‘he killed her!’” Responses to this FIT passage offer one of the clearest examples of empathy without endorsement: Situational Understanding does not soften moral unease, but intensifies it.

The next cluster, lines 31–33, selected by 5 participants and realised through FIT, leads readers to notice Hades’s selfishness and possessiveness. Through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, P08 reads the passage as reflecting “Hades’ desperate love for Persephone, and the futility thereof.” P28’s response, “I feel terror because it transpires he dwells in Death,” shows Situational Understanding, as the reader grasps the implications of the world Persephone is being brought into. Other participants lean toward moral judgement: love “can’t be under pressure” (P17) and “To love someone, you should consider them, not yourself” (P26). FIT is especially important here because it presents the world as shaped by Hades’s perception while revealing everything that Persephone will lack there.

By contrast, line 43, also selected by 5 participants and coded as NRTA, foregrounds Hades’s intended consolation. P20 responds with “sympathy,” explaining that this is what they would “want to say to those I love.” This suggests Perspective-taking, since the reader enters Hades’s protective impulse through personal analogy. P11 responds through Situational Understanding, describing the passage as a “sad reality” because saying “nothing can hurt you” is a lie, since “you can never truly protect someone else from all possible misery in life.” Thus, NRTA here makes readers recognise Hades’s desire to comfort Persephone and even produces a relatively direct empathetic alignment with his impulse. However, this empathy remains unstable because the poem immediately exposes the flaws in the comfort he wants to offer.

The next two clusters, lines 34 and 35–36, each selected 4 times, develop the ambivalence of Hades’s actions. Line 34, realised through FDT, presents possible emotions in compressed form, while lines 35–36, realised through FIT, underline Hades’s imaginative failure. P17’s comment that Hades “didn’t think about Persephone’s feelings, only about his own plan” shows critical Situational

Understanding, while P07's "sadness" at "the emotions that Persephone probably felt" is Emotional Attribution and Evaluation directed toward Persephone rather than Hades. P15, by contrast, reads the claim that lovers do not imagine such things as truthful, observing that "love is blind and deceptive in many ways"; this frames Hades's failure to consider Persephone as part of love's self-deceptive logic. Overall, these clusters foreground both Hades's emotional blindness and the consequences it has for Persephone.

The clusters at line 38, coded as DT, and lines 39–40, coded as IT, were selected 4 times each and caught readers' attention through the names Hades chooses for the new world. P17 writes that the names "impressed" them, especially the association of "Persephone's Girlhood" with a personal "hell" or "jail." Similarly, P15 describes the final name as "poignant" because "her girlhood is what he loves but what he will destroy." These responses lean toward Perspective-taking by inferring Hades's desires and self-understanding from the names he gives the new world. P15's continuation — "the honesty of Hades to himself at last is quite moving" — confirms the recurring pattern: Hades's moments of openness can elicit empathy, but they remain inseparable from the harm he causes.

Lines 10 and 12, each selected 3 times, focus on Hades's plan to introduce darkness gradually. Line 10, realised through FDT, was often noticed for its oppositional structure. P03 identifies contrasts such as "moon, stars/no moon/stars" as "particularly emotional," while P27 notes that the "repetition and parallelism" create "two opposite pictures in the mind." These responses underline stylistic features that foreground the cluster. Simultaneously, line 12, realised through IT, prompts strong moral condemnation. P11 writes, "I hate male characters/protagonists who decide these kinds of thing for females," while P13 says the passage makes them "furious" because it evokes "men who are sure the woman will enjoy what they are doing to her. He knows better than her what she 'really' wants." P17 similarly reads the passage as "maniac captivity," where Persephone is treated as "an object of someone's intentions and passion." Readers recognise the logic behind Hades's gradual adjustment of the Underworld, but this remains critical Situational Understanding: the more clearly they grasp his plan, the more controlling it appears.

Lines 16–18, selected by 3 participants and coded as Narration, intensify this critical response by framing Hades's desire through waiting and surveillance. P15 responds to the "sense of longing" and "obsessively biding time," which aligns with Emotional Attribution and Evaluation. P07 finds the passage "more evil and creepy" than a sudden act of passion, and P28 concurs that it is "creepy and makes me shiver" because of Hades's "evil intent." Here, even highly mediated Narration

produces strong Situational Understanding, as readers interpret Hades's long preparation as threatening rather than romantic.

The less frequent clusters also develop complex responses toward Hades. Lines 4, coded as Narration, and 5, coded as FIT, each selected twice, concern the construction of the duplicate world. P17 reads them through Emotional Attribution and Evaluation as evidence of "strong passion" and Hades's readiness to do everything possible "for being loved by someone," which suggests direct empathetic alignment with his love. At the same time, P07 responds to the added bed with "disgust at Hades," interpreting it as evidence that "lust and passion" motivate the abduction.

Other clusters, realised through FDT, further highlight how Hades projects his desires onto Persephone. Responding to line 15, P17 notes that the desire for love appears obvious, but stresses that love must be "mutual," especially because "in this poem we read nothing about Persephone's feelings." P20 similarly describes Hades as having "a limited perspective" and using the words "love" and "want" without fully understanding them. These responses show critical Emotional Attribution and Evaluation: readers recognise Hades's desire while identifying its limitations. Lines 22–24 and 25–26 produce more straightforward forms of empathetic alignment. P23 points to "the honesty" and "reality" of lines 22–24, while P11's personal memory of darkness in the Alps creates a moment of Perspective-taking, as the reader understands the need to "rely on hearing the other person to know that they are still there with you." Simultaneously, P07 reads lines 22–24 and 25–26 as "ironic" because Hades "is dead and he is going to tell Persephone she is dead."

Finally, lines 29–31, realised through NRTA and Narration, and line 37, realised through NRTA, were each selected twice. These clusters were generally discussed alongside other salient passages rather than independently, but they still contribute to the broader pattern. They reinforce readers' sense of Hades's imagined devotion while also keeping its tragic implications in view.

Overall, the passage-selection responses support the Q1 findings by showing that readers' engagement with Hades is strongly ambivalent. Emotional Attribution and Evaluation appears across most clusters and is especially prominent in DT and DS passages; Situational Understanding is frequently prompted by FIT and FDT, while Perspective-taking occurs most clearly in responses to FIT and IT. These responses point to a central pattern of engagement with MD, which may be described as empathy without endorsement. Access to Hades's consciousness does not necessarily soften moral judgement; instead, it often clarifies how care turns into confinement, truth into hopelessness, and love into possession.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined how Louise Glück employs empathetic narrative techniques (Keen, 2006), particularly characterisation, in four mythological retellings, and how readers respond to them in practice. The findings show that Glück characterises Orpheus, Eurydice, Persephone, and Hades primarily through speech and thought presentation modes (Leech and Short, 2007), which transform these mythic figures into psychologically complex characters. However, these textual cues do not produce uniform empathetic effects. Instead, they function as invitations rather than guarantees: readers may respond with empathy, ambivalence, or resistance. This supports Fernández-Quintanilla's (2018, p. 139) argument that empathetic engagement can be complicated or overridden by negative moral evaluation, as is particularly evident in responses to ORF and MD.

The first research question asked how and to what extent Glück employs empathetic narrative techniques in the selected poems. The stylistic analysis showed that such techniques are used extensively, but with different effects across the four poems. ORF and REL are both dominated by FDS, yet they show that the same mode does not produce a single empathetic effect. In ORF, direct access to Orpheus's voice exposes grief entangled with artistic self-regard; in REL, by contrast, Eurydice's voice foregrounds the intensity of her suffering. In MI, the dominance of FIT makes Persephone's trauma and crisis of identity central to the poem's empathetic force. Finally, in MD, the central modes — FDT, FIT, and NRTA — give access to Hades's longing and apparent care, while also exposing the possessiveness and control underlying them.

The second research question concerned readers' empathetic and non-empathetic engagement with the poems' characters and its alignment with stylistic cues. The reader-response data showed that participants most often engaged with the characters through Implicit Empathy, especially Emotional Attribution and Evaluation, often alongside Situational Understanding. Perspective-Taking occurred rarely, and Explicit Empathy was not observed. These reader-response patterns are broadly consistent with Fernández-Quintanilla's (2018) findings in that empathy appears more often indirectly than through explicit statements. The present study adds to this by showing how such engagement is associated with particular stylistic cues in the selected poems. In ORF and REL, the most salient passages were mainly realised through FDS; in MI, participants were particularly drawn to FIT and FDT; and in MD, the most salient passages included DT and DS, alongside FIT and NRTA. Readers' engagement with these techniques largely supports the effects identified in the stylistic analysis. Notably, reader-selected passages were frequently realised through freer modes of speech and thought presentation, suggesting that reduced narrator mediation may be especially important in shaping empathetic response.

Another important observation from the data is that the grammatical person in which a poem is written does not by itself determine empathetic engagement. The analysis shows that the third-person poems, MI and MD, display a greater variety of speech and thought presentation modes than the first-person poems, ORF and REL. However, REL, a first-person poem, and MI, a third-person poem, were both associated with strong empathetic alignment, while ORF, a first-person poem, and MD, a third-person poem, both prompted more morally critical responses. These patterns are also consistent with a feminist reading of Glück's mythological retellings: the poems complicate traditionally central male figures while directing empathetic attention towards female experiences of distress, vulnerability, and self-interpretation.

At the same time, certain limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the coding of both poems and reader responses was carried out by a single researcher, which may affect the objectivity and replicability of the analysis. Second, the study is based on a relatively small dataset: four poems by one poet and 58 usable poem responses. This limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised beyond the selected texts and participants. Third, the reader-response data were collected through an online questionnaire, which preserved individual responses but did not allow for follow-up questions or real-time clarification of readers' interpretations. Finally, the stylistic analysis focused primarily on speech and thought presentation, leaving other potentially empathy-relevant poetic techniques outside the main scope of the study.

These limitations also suggest several directions for further research. Future work could test the framework on a larger and more varied corpus, including non-mythological poems, other poets, different historical periods, and different poetic forms. Future research could also combine questionnaires with interviews or focus groups in order to capture more detailed accounts of how readers negotiate empathy, resistance, ambiguity, and moral judgement while reading poetry. The passage-selection data may also be relevant to future stylistic work on foregrounding, since they indicate which textual passages readers experienced as especially salient. Finally, the framework could be expanded to examine how other poetic techniques shape empathetic engagement.

Overall, the study achieves its aim by providing substantial stylistic and reader-response evidence for analysing narrative empathy in poetry. It shows that poetic texts can produce empathetic effects through techniques more commonly associated with prose fiction, especially speech and thought presentation. More precisely, the thesis contributes to narrative-empathy research by revealing that poetic characterisation does not simply generate empathy. Rather, it creates conditions under which readers may respond empathetically, ambivalently, or with moral judgement to the characters constructed through these techniques.

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Summary

While narrative empathy in fictional prose has sparked considerable scholarly interest, the ways in which poetic texts invite empathy remain underexplored. This thesis aims to extend narrative empathy research to poetry by examining empathetic narrative techniques, particularly characterisation, in Louise Glück's mythological retellings: "Orfeo" and "Relic" from *Vita Nova*, and "The Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion" from *Averno*. Methodologically, the thesis adopts a mixed-method approach. Since speech and thought presentation are treated as key aspects of characterisation, the stylistic analysis focuses on these modes. It uses Leech and Short's model (2007), and the results are assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the empirical part, reader responses collected through an online questionnaire were coded thematically, drawing on Fernández-Quintanilla's framework for identifying evidence of empathy in readers' responses (2018).

The stylistic findings show that, across the four poems, the dominant modes of speech and thought presentation and their effects vary. In "Orfeo," Free Direct Speech exposes Orpheus's artistic self-regard; in "Relic," the same mode foregrounds Eurydice's suffering. In "The Myth of Innocence," Free Indirect Thought makes Persephone's trauma and identity crisis central to the poem's empathetic force. In "A Myth of Devotion," Free Direct Thought, Free Indirect Thought, and Narrator's Representation of Thought Acts give access to Hades's longing while exposing his control. The reader-response data demonstrate that participants most often engaged with the characters through Implicit Empathy, especially Emotional Attribution and Evaluation alongside Situational Understanding, while Perspective-Taking was rare. Reader-selected passages broadly supported the stylistic findings. Significantly, the analysis reveals that these techniques do not produce a uniform empathetic effect. Empathetic engagement was often complicated or overridden by negative moral evaluation, especially in responses to "Orfeo" and "A Myth of Devotion," which aligns with Fernández-Quintanilla's findings (2018). These patterns also support a feminist reading of Glück's retellings, as empathetic attention is directed toward female experiences of distress.

The thesis concludes that empathetic narrative techniques in poetry function as invitations rather than guarantees of empathy: readers may respond with empathy, ambivalence, or resistance. The study is limited by its relatively small scope, single-researcher coding, and questionnaire format. Future research could apply the framework to a larger corpus of poetry, expand it to other poetic techniques, or employ interviews and focus groups to access readers' interpretive processes. Overall, the thesis broadens narrative empathy research by extending it to poetic texts and underscores the value of combining stylistic analysis with empirical reader-response evidence.

Santrauka

Nors naratyvinė empatija grožinėje prozoje sulaukė nemažai mokslininkų dėmesio, būdai, kuriais poetiniai tekstai kviečia į empatiją, vis dar menkai tyrinėti. Šiuo magistro darbu siekiama išplėsti naratyvinės empatijos tyrimus poezijos link, nagrinėjant empatinius naratyvinius būdus, ypač charakterizaciją, Louise Glück mitologiniuose perpasakojimuose: „Orfeo“ ir „Relic“ iš rinkinio *Vita Nova* bei „The Myth of Innocence“ ir „A Myth of Devotion“ iš rinkinio *Averno*. Metodologiškai darbe taikomas mišrusis tyrimo metodas. Kadangi kalbos ir minčių vaizdavimas laikomas vienu esminių charakterizacijos aspektų, stilistinėje analizėje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama šiems būdams. Remiamasi Leecho ir Shorto modeliu (2007), o rezultatai vertinami tiek kiekybiškai, tiek kokybiškai. Empirinėje dalyje skaitytojų atsakymai, surinkti per internetinę apklausą, buvo koduojami teminiu būdu, remiantis Fernández-Quintanilla (2018) pasiūlytu modeliu, skirtu empatijos požymiams skaitytojų atsakymuose atpažinti.

Stilistinės analizės rezultatai rodo, kad keturiuose nagrinėjamuose eilėraščiuose dominuojantys kalbos ir minčių vaizdavimo būdai bei jų poveikis skiriasi. Eilėraštyje „Orfeo“ Laisvoji Tiesioginė Kalba atskleidžia Orfėjo meninį narcisizmą; eilėraštyje „Relic“ tas pats būdas iškelia į pirmą planą Euridikės kančią. Eilėraštyje „The Myth of Innocence“ Laisvoji Netiesioginė Mintis Persefonės traumą ir tapatybės krizę paverčia centriniu eilėraščio empatinio poveikio elementu. Eilėraštyje „A Myth of Devotion“ Laisvoji Tiesioginė Mintis, Laisvoji Netiesioginė Mintis ir Pasakotojo Minties Aktų Reprezentacija suteikia prieigą prie Hado ilgesio, kartu atskleisdamos jo kontrolės siekį. Skaitytojų atsakymų duomenys rodo, kad dalyviai dažniausiai įsitraukė į veikėjus per Implicitinę Empatiją, ypač per Emocijų Priskyrimą ir Vertinimą bei Situacijos Supratimą, o Perspektyvos Perėmimas pasitaikė retai. Skaitytojų pasirinktos teksto ištraukos iš esmės patvirtino stilistinės analizės rezultatus. Reikšminga tai, kad analizė atskleidžia, jog šie būdai nesukelia vienodo empatinio poveikio. Empatinį įsitraukimą dažnai komplikavo arba nustelbdavo neigiamas moralinis vertinimas, ypač atsakymuose į „Orfeo“ ir „A Myth of Devotion“, o tai sutampa su Fernández-Quintanilla (2018) išvadomis. Šie dėsniumai taip pat pagrindžia feministinį Glück perpasakojimų skaitymą, nes empatinis dėmesys nukreipiamas į moterų kančios patirtis.

Darbe daroma išvada, kad empatiniai naratyviniai būdai poezijoje veikia kaip kvietimai, o ne garantijos empatijai: skaitytojai gali reaguoti empatiškai, ambivalentiškai arba priešišškai. Tyrimą riboja palyginti nedidelė apimtis, vieno tyrėjo atliktas kodavimas ir apklausos formatas. Tolesni tyrimai galėtų taikyti šį modelį didesniai poezijos korpusui, išplėsti jį kitiems poetiniams būdams arba pasitelkti interviu ir tikslines grupes, siekiant priartėti prie skaitytojų interpretacinių procesų.

Apibendrinant, darbas praplečia naratyvinės empatijos tyrimus, išplėsdamas juos į poetinius tekstus, ir pabrėžia stilistinės analizės derinimo su empiriniais skaitytojų atsakymų duomenimis vertę.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Full coding of narrative techniques in the selected poems

Note. The note applies to all tables in this appendix. Segments are the smallest contiguous stretches assigned a single dominant technique. Word counts were obtained using the Google Docs word-count function and include reporting clauses where present. Mode labels follow Leech and Short's (2007) framework for speech and thought presentation.

Table A1.1. Full coding table for "Orfeo" (ORF)

Line(s)	Full segment	Mode	Word count
1–9	I have lost my Eurydice, / I have lost my lover, / and suddenly I am speaking French / and it seems to me I have never been in better voice; / it seems these songs / are songs of a high order. / And it seems one is somehow expected to apologize / for being an artist, / as though it were not entirely human to notice these fine points. /	FDS	63
10–12	And who knows, perhaps the gods never spoke to me in Dis, / never singled me out, / perhaps it was all illusion. /	FDT	21
13–21	O Eurydice, you who married me for my singing, / why do you turn on me, wanting human comfort? / Who knows what you'll tell the furies / when you see them again. / Tell them I have lost my beloved; / I am completely alone now. / Tell them there is no music like this / without real grief. / In Dis, I sang to them; they will remember me.	FDS	63

Note. The French epigraph ("J'ai perdu mon Eurydice...") is treated as paratext and excluded from coding and word-count totals, since it frames the poem but is not part of the poem's primary discourse; including it would slightly skew proportional distributions in a short text.

Table A1.2. Full coding table for "Relic" (REL)

Line(s)	Full segment	Mode	Word count
1–8	Where would I be without my sorrow, / sorrow of my beloved's making, / without some sign of him, this song / of all gifts the most lasting? / How would you like to die / while Orpheus was singing? / A long death; all the way to Dis / I heard him. /	FDS	46
9–10	Torment of earth / Torment of mortal passion— /	FDT	7
11–14	I think sometimes / too much is asked of us; / I think sometimes / our consolations are the costliest thing. /	IT	18
15–17	All the way to Dis / I heard my husband singing, / much as you now hear me. /	FDS	16
18–23	Perhaps it was better that way, / my love fresh in my head / even at the moment of death. / Not the first response— / that was terror— / but the last.	FDT	28

Table A1.3. Full coding table for "The Myth of Innocence" (MI)

Line(s)	Full segment	Mode	Word count
1–4	One summer she goes into the field as usual / stopping for a bit at the pool where she often / looks at herself, to see / if she detects any changes.	Narration	29

4–7	She sees / the same person, the horrible mantle / of daughterliness still clinging to her. / The sun seems, in the water, very close.	FIT	22
8	That’s my uncle spying again, she thinks—	DT	7
9	everything in nature is in some way her relative.	FIT	9
10	I am never alone, she thinks,	DT	6
11–12	turning the thought into a prayer. / Then death appears, like the answer to a prayer.	Narration	15
13–14	No one understands anymore / how beautiful he was.	FDT	8
14–17	But Persephone remembers. / Also that he embraced her, right there, / with her uncle watching. She remembers / sunlight flashing on his bare arms.	FIT	20
18	This is the last moment she remembers clearly.	NRTA	8
19	Then the dark god bore her away.	Narration	7
20–22	She also remembers, less clearly, / the chilling insight that from this moment / she couldn’t live without him again.	FIT	18
23–25	The girl who disappears from the pool / will never return. A woman will return, / looking for the girl she was.	FIT	20
26–27	She stands by the pool saying, from time to time, / I was abducted,	DS	13
27–28	but it sounds wrong to her, / nothing like what she felt.	FIT	11
29–31	Then she says, I was not abducted. / Then she says, I offered myself, I wanted / to escape my body.	DS	19
31–32	Even, sometimes, / I willed this.	FDS	5
32–34	But ignorance / cannot will knowledge. / Ignorance wills something imagined, which it believes exists.	Narration	13
35–37	All the different nouns— / she says them in rotation. / Death, husband, god, stranger.	DS	13
38	Everything sounds so simple, so conventional.	FDT	6
39	I must have been, she thinks, a simple girl.	DT	9
40–44	She can’t remember herself as that person / but she keeps thinking the pool will remember / and explain to her the meaning of her prayer / so she can understand / whether it was answered or not.	FIT	34

Table A1.4. Full coding table for “A Myth of Devotion” (MD)

Line(s)	Full segment	Mode	Word count
1	When Hades decided he loved this girl /	NRTA	7
2–4	he built for her a duplicate of earth, / everything the same, down to the meadow, / but with a bed added. /	Narration	20
5–7	Everything the same, including sunlight, / because it would be hard on a	FIT	24

	young girl / to go so quickly from bright light to utter darkness. /		
8–9	Gradually, he thought, he'd introduce the night, / first as the shadows of fluttering leaves. /	IT	14
10–11	Then moon, then stars. Then no moon, no stars. / Let Persephone get used to it slowly. /	FDT	16
12	In the end, he thought, she'd find it comforting. /	IT	9
13–14	A replica of earth / except there was love here. /	FIT	9
15	Doesn't everyone want love?	FDT	4
16–18	He waited many years, / building a world, watching / Persephone in the meadow. /	Narration	12
19	Persephone, a smeller, a taster. /	FDT	5
20–21	If you have one appetite, he thought, / you have them all. /	IT	11
22–28	Doesn't everyone want to feel in the night / the beloved body, compass, polestar, / to hear the quiet breathing that says / I am alive, that means also / you are alive, because you hear me, / you are here with me. / And when one turns, / the other turns— /	FDT	45
29	That's what he felt, the lord of darkness, /	NRTA	8
30–31	looking at the world he had / constructed for Persephone.	Narration	9
31–33	It never crossed his mind / that there'd be no more smelling here, / certainly no more eating. /	FIT	16
34	Guilt? Terror? The fear of love? /	FDT	6
35–36	These things he couldn't imagine; / no lover ever imagines them. /	FIT	10
37	He dreams, he wonders what to call this place. /	NRTA	9
38	First he thinks: The New Hell. Then: The Garden. /	DT	9
39–40	In the end, he decides to name it / Persephone's Girlhood. /	IT	10
41–42	A soft light rising above the level meadow, / behind the bed. He takes her in his arms. /	Narration	17
43	He wants to say I love you, nothing can hurt you /	NRTA	11
44–45	but he thinks / this is a lie,	DT	7
45–46	so he says in the end / you're dead, nothing can hurt you /	DS	12
47–48	which seems to him / a more promising beginning, more true.	FIT	10

Appendix 2. Reader-response questionnaire

Note. The questionnaire below was administered online through Qualtrics.

General Information for Participants

Project title: Exploring Readers' Interaction with Poetry

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study exploring readers' responses to selected poems by Louise Glück. This study is part of my Master's programme at Vilnius University, conducted by me, Olha Bagdonas, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Davide Castiglione, Associate Professor at Vilnius University.

Procedure Description

You will first complete a short demographic questionnaire. Then, you will read one poem and respond to three open-ended questions. This process will be repeated with a second poem. Your responses will be recorded electronically. The entire study should take approximately 15–20 minutes.

Participant Rights

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent or stop participating at any time by closing your browser, in which case your responses will be deleted and not included in the study. Your privacy will be respected throughout, and all data will be anonymised.

Benefits and Risks

There are no known risks or direct benefits associated with this study.

Confidentiality and Data Security

All data collected will be anonymous; no IP addresses or personally identifiable information will be stored. Only the researcher will have access to the data, which will remain non-identifiable. Data reuse is currently not foreseen.

Contact Information

For any questions about the study, please contact Olha Bagdonas at olha.bagdonas@flf.stud.vu.lt.

Consent

Please type YES if you have read and understood the above statements and freely consent to participate in this study.

Questionnaire

Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. Age
2. Sex
3. English language proficiency
 - Beginner
 - Intermediate
 - Advanced
 - Native
4. Education
 - High School
 - Graduate (BA)
 - Postgraduate (MA, PhD)
5. Name any poetry collection by Louise Glück, if you know any titles. If not, leave blank.
6. Please briefly retell the myth of Hades and Persephone, if you know it. Otherwise, leave blank.
7. Please briefly retell the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, if you know it. Otherwise, leave blank.

First poem-reading task

Now I would like you to read this poem. Take as long as you need to read it, and read it as many times as necessary. You are going to work closely with the text, so I encourage you to pay attention to the passages from the text that are remarkable for some reason or evoke thoughts and feelings of any kind.

[Full text of Poem 1, randomly assigned by Qualtrics]

First poem-response task

Please respond to the poem honestly. Your responses will not affect any academic performance.

1. In your own words, describe the situation, including emotions, the protagonist experiences in the poem.

2. Return to the poem and copy-paste any passages that triggered a strong emotional response in you. You may select as many passages as you like, including none, and they may be of any length. After each passage, describe the emotions it triggered.
3. What made these particular passages stand out to you?

Second poem-reading task

Read the following poem closely. Take as much time as needed and read it multiple times if necessary. Focus on passages that feel significant or evoke particular thoughts and feelings.

[Full text of Poem 2, randomly assigned by Qualtrics]

Second poem-response task

Please respond to the poem honestly. Your responses will not affect any academic performance.

1. In your own words, describe the situation, including emotions, the protagonist experiences in the poem.
2. Return to the poem and copy-paste any passages that triggered a strong emotional response in you. You may select as many passages as you like, including none, and they may be of any length. After each passage, describe the emotions it triggered.
3. What made these particular passages stand out to you?

Appendix 3. Recruitment message

Note. The following recruitment message was circulated through university networks, personal contacts, group channels, and social media.

Dear friends/colleagues,

I am Olha Bagdonas, an MA student at Vilnius University. I have devised a questionnaire to collect reader-response data on literary reading, with a focus on poetry and how readers interact with it. My supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Davide Castiglione, and I would be grateful if you could share the link below with your students, friends, and colleagues, or complete the questionnaire yourself and read some beautiful poems in the process.

The questionnaire should take approximately 15–20 minutes. Anyone aged 18 or older who can understand English, including as a second language, is eligible to participate.

[Qualtrics survey link]

Thank you very much for your help. It is greatly appreciated.

All the best,

Olha

Appendix 4. Original evidence-of-empathy cues from Fernández-Quintanilla (2018)

Note. This appendix reproduces Fernández-Quintanilla's (2018, pp. 235–237, 241–243) original evidence-of-empathy cues, which served as the basis for the adapted coding scheme used in this thesis. The original table layouts are retained in screenshot form, while the table titles have been standardised for consistency with the appendix numbering.

Table A4.1. Original implicit evidence-of-empathy cues

	CODE	DESCRIPTION
perspective	Character-oriented perspective taking	Participants imaginatively adopt characters' viewpoint and focus on characters' inner states and circumstances (rather than self-orientedly imagining themselves in their situation)
	Attribution of speech/thought_affiliation	Participants verbally articulate characters' speech/thought in direct form. This may suggest that participants simulate characters' mental activity. This is seen in sudden shifts to the 1 st person pronoun
	Pronoun use/shift	Readers' pronoun use shows differences between (i) talking about characters in the 2 nd or 3 rd person from an observer position and (ii) the verbal simulation or enactment of characters' experience in the 1 st or 2 nd person, where readers suddenly impersonate characters. Pronoun shifts can be accounted for in terms of a tension: when readers enact a character's consciousness a tension is created between the reader's simulation of the experience in the 1 st person and the reader's attribution of the experience to the character in the 2 nd or 3 rd person (Caracciolo, 2014, p. 110) (see 1.5.2)
emotions	Attribution of emotional experience	Participants attribute specific emotional states to characters. They spell out the emotional implications of story-world events; that is, what characters are likely to feel as a result of the story-world events (i.e. <i>pain, anguish</i>)
	Evaluation of what experience is like	Sometimes the attribution of emotional experiences (above) is coupled with evaluative expressions. This explicit element of evaluation indicates degrees of how distressing and undesirable the characters' emotional experience is (i.e. <i>the worst</i>)
	Affective understanding	Display of understanding of the character's emotional states based on first-hand experience: readers claim to have first-hand knowledge or experience of a similar situation and, as a result, they verbalise what the experience must be like

		for characters. These displays of understanding based on similarity of experience can suggest, as noted by Kuroshima and Iwata (2016), (i) affiliation with the target's stance towards the experience, (ii) understanding of the nature of the experience and its meaning (i.e., what the experience is like), and (iii) a congruent affective stance (i.e. potentially shared feelings)
other mental states	Attribution of thought processes	Thought processes are attributed to characters
	Attribution of values and beliefs	Values and beliefs are attributed to characters
	Attribution of goals and needs	Goals and needs are attributed to characters
situation	Attribution of situation	Participants spell out characteristics of the situation characters are going through
	Imagined scenario	Participants describe a scenario parallel to the events undergone by characters, and they vividly depict the details of the situation, thus suggesting understanding and a potential projection into characters' situation
	Attribution of situational factors	Participants attribute situational forces to characters' actions and circumstances; i.e. they provide contextual explanations for characters' behaviour (N.B. in my data situational attribution co-occurs with empathy whereas dispositional attribution co-occurs with lack of empathy)

Table A4.2. Original explicit evidence-of-empathy cues

Story 1.Celebration of the Human Voice		
[1]	PRISONERS: <i>ya directamente empatizas con las dos personas que están en la cárcel porque tú asocias dictadura a malo, a represión y a tal</i> (B1, 171:171)	you directly empathise with the two people who are in prison because you associate dictatorship with evil, with repression and so on
[2]	PRISONERS: <i>me identifico quizás más con... quizás la solidaridad esa que he dicho antes de ponerme en la piel, se me hace más fácil empatizar con estos personajes que con el ente que es la dictadura uruguaya</i> (C1, 144:144)	perhaps I identify more with... perhaps that solidarity of putting myself in their skin that I talked about before, I find it easier to empathise with these characters than with the entity which is the Uruguayan dictatorship

- [3] PRISONERS: *seguirás empatizando con la situación* porque son oprimidos, o encarcelados, prisioneros de una dictadura (14, 196:196) you will keep **empathising with the situation** because they are oppressed, or imprisoned, prisoners of a dictatorship

Story 2. Gelman

- [4] GELMAN: *quizás porque yo soy madre y me pongo en la situación* del protagonista (H5, 75:75) perhaps because I am a mother and I **put myself in the protagonist's situation**
- [5] UNSPECIFIED: *yo creo que en la sociedad actual la palabra 'dictadura' ya te provoca un rechazo moral automáticamente y automáticamente te hace sentir empatía hacia las personas que están sufriendo esa dictadura* (H5, 111:111) I think that in today's society the word 'dictatorship' readily provokes an automatic moral rejection, and it automatically makes you **feel empathy towards** the people who are suffering that dictatorship
- [6] GELMAN: *aquí te dan detalles del sufrimiento de la persona y te pone en situación* lo que está viviendo, yo creo que en realidad eso influye, no es lo mismo que te diga 'no, esta persona lo está pasando mal porque hay una dictadura', fin, a que te explique exactamente cuál es su situación, yo creo que eso influye mucho (G5, 117:117) here you're given details of the person's suffering and **you're put in the situation** he's going through, I think this actually has an influence, it's not the same if it [the text] says 'this person is having a bad time because there is a dictatorship', full stop, than being told exactly what his situation his, I think that makes a difference

Story 3. Professional Life

- [7] AHMADOU: *también me pongo en la situación* del torturado que después de estar ahí hecho polvo que el otro te venga contando los problemas como 'venga hhh ¿te estás cachondeando de mí encima o qué?' (C3, 136:136) I also **put myself in** the tortured man's **situation** because after being there feeling crushed the other one [the torturer] tells you about his problems like 'come on hhh are you kidding me or what?'
- [8] AHMADOU AND TORTURER: *yo me pongo un poco en la piel de los dos, que deber de ser muy duro que te obliguen a hacer...* (B3, 144:144) I **put myself a bit in the skin of** both of them, because it must be very hard to be forced to do...
- [9] TORTURER: *Pero yo soy capaz de sentir más empatía del verdugo que del torturado porque el torturado es una situación por la que yo no voy a pasar, espero, pero la otra es una situación en la que yo sí puedo tener en mis manos el control de una persona* (B3, 282:283) But I am able to **feel more empathy for** the executioner than for the tortured one because the tortured one is in a situation which I'm not going to go through, I hope, but the other is a situation in which I can have control over another person

Appendix 5. Reader-response dataset and coding

The full raw responses and coded reader-response datasets are submitted separately as Excel files to the Secretary of the Defence Committee. The supplementary files contain:

- raw reader responses organised by poem, in tabs labelled ORF_Raw, REL_Raw, MI_Raw, and MD_Raw;
- segmented Q1 responses coded for evidence of empathetic engagement, in tabs labelled ORF_Q1, REL_Q1, MI_Q1, and MD_Q1;
- participant-selected passages from Q2, alongside salience rationales from Q3 and links to the stylistic techniques identified in the analysis. These tabs are labeled ORF_Q2&3, REL_Q2&3, MI_Q2&3, and MD_Q2&3.

The data are anonymised through participant codes and contain no names, IP addresses, or other identifying information.