The oceanic mind: a study of emotion in literary reading
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Chapter 11

Disportation

11.0 Introduction
In the final part of this case study I will illustrate my theoretical notion of disportation based on my cognitive stylistic reading of the ending of *The Great Gatsby* and the reader-response data discussed earlier. This will be supported by a reactivation of some cognitive and neural empirical data discussed in Part I and Part II of this work. After introducing the term disportation, I will first show how it can occur in a single SOURCE-PATH-GOAL structure during literary closure while reading the final few paragraphs. I will combine this with the affective theme of ‘stretching out’. Next, I will show how it can occur at the very moment of closure, i.e. when reading the very last words. Both these examples aim to show that disportation can be facilitated when image-schematic structures become confluent. In my following discussion on the assumed cognitive and neural underpinnings of disportation I will suggest that this highly skeletal cognitive process in all probability occurs simultaneously with mirror-neural and proprioceptive activity. I will conclude by discussing the essentially post-textual, affective-cognitive phases of this phenomenon, followed by a concise philosophical discussion on what the effects of disportation may be and why such embodied phenomena occur during acts of literary discourse processing. In doing this I seek to highlight an embodied secular form of consolation that might compete with the increasing number of disembodied non-secular ones that abound at the start of our twenty-first century.

11.1 Disportation
Discussing literature and emotion, Barbara Herrnstein Smith writes that “varying degrees or states of tension seem to be involved in all our experiences, and that the most gratifying ones are those in which whatever tensions are created are also released” (3). She then shows how this is the case in poetic closure. Tension building toward a sense of release at poetic closure suggests that some kind of change takes place in a reader or some shift from one state to another. Disportation is the label I propose to define this embodied affective-cognitive event.¹ I examine it in this chapter, as it occurs at the end of the physical reading cycle. However, such events can plausibly take place at almost any part of the text, and echoes of such events remain in implicit memory during the post-, pre- and non-reading stages that I have described (see Figure 12). Depending on the context, its primary triggers can also be cognitive rather than exclusively linguistic. When I use the term disportation I am referring to a heightened emotive state that occurs in affectively-engaged individuals while reading literature. It is characterised by a distinct feeling that a reader undergoes for a few seconds whereby he/she feels that they are in motion even though this is not the case. This is a process that I recognise from my own engaged reading experiences and believe other avid readers may do too. Disportation, an example of the human mind in an affective, oceanic processing mode, is what this case study has been working towards. It will be recalled that according to Ashton Nichols, cognitive studies should be able to illuminate

¹ Etymologically, the term ‘disportation’ incorporates the notions of movement/projection as well as affect. The *OED* cites the noun ‘disport’ as meaning ‘a positive diversion/pastime’, while the verb means ‘to divert from sadness’, i.e. to make happy. The emotive aspect therefore lies in the word’s semantics. The sense of movement, however, is to be found in the word’s etymology, namely ‘port’ from *portare* (L) meaning ‘to carry’, i.e. to transfer/displace. My sense of disportation thus attempts to embody a sense of these emotive and directional force vectors.
the concept of literary epiphany. Disportation is my answer to this. In order to facilitate it, two things must occur: (i) the focus of investigation must be moved from specific epiphanic events that happen to characters in novels, to the felt motion and felt release experienced by real readers when they read literature, especially when they approach the end of a much-enjoyed novel, and, (ii) the focus must not just be on the text but rather on the ongoing confluent interplay between text and the affective cognition of the engaged reader. An important topic here is felt movement. As we have already seen, both in the image-schematic work of Mark Johnson and in Hochberg’s comments that “apparent motion may actually be more convincing than actual motion”.

Below, I analyse and discuss two examples. The first takes place during closure and is primarily text-based, with some cognitive input. The second occurs at the very moment of closure and beyond, and has a more significant level of affective-cognitive input. After these two analyses I move on to reflect why disportation occurs at all and what its function might be in both physiological and philosophical terms.

11.2 A ‘stretching-out’ example of reading processes during closure

Herrnstein Smith writes that “in lines which involve references to terminal motion (such as falling or sinking), there is a kinesthetic aspect to our responses, as if we were subliminally, but nevertheless physically, participating in the motion so described” (178). She adds that phrases like ‘stretched painfully’ or ‘stood on tiptoe’ can evoke what might be called a kinesthetic image, “not as a picture of the event from outside, as it were, but a sense of what it feels to be engaged in it” (178). This sense of motion is important for Johnson too, when he claims that “image schemata have a certain kinesthetic character” (25). Herrnstein Smith also suggests that “references to terminal motion may strengthen the reader’s experience of closure by inviting him to re-enact the physical event which itself terminates in repose or stability” (178). That invitation to re-enact, I believe, takes place at an affective-cognitive level. Herrnstein Smith adds that this “more or less subliminal kinesthetic identification is not, of course, confined to the experience of poetry or even of language or art. A spectator at a ballet performance or a football game may be physically exhausted at the end of it though he never left his seat” (178). Almost four decades after this was written, advances in the fields of discourse psychology, cognitive linguistics and neurobiology have made it possible to start fleshing out Herrnstein Smith’s astute literary intuitions with regard to this particular kind of text processing, which includes poetic closure in novels. Disportation can be seen as a part of that ongoing ‘fleshing out’ process.

As Herrnstein-Smith suggests, felt motion can be triggered by direct textual reference to several different kinds of motion events, terminal or otherwise. These could include events like ‘losing one’s grip’, ‘reaching out and missing’, ‘losing one’s balance’, etc and might be extended to some of the emotive linguistic features I have discussed in my chapter on style. All of these references can be either literal or metaphorical. In some cases it can be triggered as well by the memory of such an event while reading, induced by associative intertextual mind-fed echoes or by other, normally unassociated, words triggering heightened emotion. The triggering might take place at a higher thematic level; perhaps activating some of the emotive themes I discussed in my earlier chapter. However, there is more to activation than ‘the world out there’. Recall Kintsch’s comment that neither direct linguistic referents nor associative ones need be present for a cognitive concept to be evoked. In such cases the implicit memories of previous episodes of LRI, a comfortable reading location and one’s pre-reading mood may play a part. In the rest of this

\[\footnote{Disportation involves the kind of powerful force vectors seen in Johnson’s categories of REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT and ENABLEMENT. J. E. Hochberg is cited in Wurtz and Kandel (551) from his work \textit{Perception} (1978)}\]

\[\footnote{The novelist and critic Jeanette Winterson makes a similar claim when she says “books are kinetic” (123).}\]
section, I shall somewhat artificially pull this confluent process apart in order to focus on the effects that textual input can have on triggering disportive feelings in readers.

The closing lines of *The Great Gatsby* contain a number of textual elements that might induce disportation in a reader. The ones I wish to focus on fall under ‘acts of stretching out’ and include manual, visual or even cognitive acts of stretching. Four are mentioned below. In the right hand column I have tried to include both literal and figurative meanings. I believe that there are image-schematic PATH structures at the cognitive core of such events.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>when he first picked out the light at the end of Daisy’s dock</td>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it</td>
<td>Cognitive &amp; Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>the orgastic future, that year by year recedes before us</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>To-morrow (we will run faster), stretch out our arms farther …</td>
<td>Manual &amp; Cognitive</td>
</tr>
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All four of these examples contribute to the image-schematic attraction of this passage. However, I shall only analyse one here. Since the final lines of the text have proved most fruitful thus far, both in the group responses and in my own analysis, I will focus on the fourth example, which appears in the text just prior to the final powerful IN-OUT/EBB-FLOW force structures in discourse unit twelve. From the semantic content of this unit of discourse and the context of the rest of the story one can guess that a person (or group of people) have previously tried and failed to achieve something. This can also be assumed from the word ‘tomorrow’, and the comparative ‘faster’ that suggests that a previous ‘fast’ must have failed. The most important thing is that readers are given the strong impression that a previous attempt has failed and, in light of this, the next one will too, despite the apparent optimism of the speaker, whose ponderings appear to be influenced by the spirit of Gatsby himself.

My previous image-schematic analysis showed how this clause involved the following: (i) a projected (future) bodily mobility, (ii) a ‘from there to yonder (future)’ projection, and (iii) ‘goal not known, unattainable, but very much desired’. I suggested that the goal has not been attained since either the stretching out had led to no contact or incomplete contact, that is, the desired object was touched, but was beyond reach to be properly grasped. Both of these events

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4 As suggested, approaching the end of a novel we have some distant felt sense of what we can expect, through the prior unconscious experience of rhythmic embodiment and mirror neural remembrance. Arguably, expectations are higher here than anywhere else in the whole cycle of reading. As Herrnstein Smith wrote, one reason why poetic convention and styles are important in the study of closure is that formal and thematic elements that typically appear at closure will activate past experiences of similar discourses within a particular culture, often learned in childhood. So, for example, a repeated final line in a poem may seem familiar to a Western reader because of the nature of such repetitions found in nursery rhymes and ballads (30).

5 As I remarked in an earlier chapter, such acts of stretching out at the close of novels seem quite frequent.

6 Affective themes may also get triggered here, albeit largely implicitly. On the final page of the novel, Nick notes that Gatsby was unaware that his dream was no longer within his grasp. From the spatial perspective of ‘place’, the dream was back where he came from, ‘beyond the city’, i.e. back in the place he was born and grew up: his childhood location. Several readers may recognise particular aspects of their own lives. Some key affective themes that are activated here are ‘death’ (seen in Nick’s reflections on the death of Gatsby), ‘childhood’ and ‘a return to the location of childhood’, in Gatsby’s case the mid-west “somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.” Not all of these elements are explicit in the text but they are retrievable through inference.
lead to chain-event embodied notions of (i) ‘balance’, (ii) ‘loss of balance’, and (iii) a plausible ‘spilling over’, but in different ways. In the first case, balance is lost, for instance, because an attempt at a swipe or grasp has been made without contact, which causes the person doing the lunging to lose his/her balance and fall to the ground. We know this may occur because of our world knowledge and our own bodily experiences of imbalance. This embodied knowledge is fundamental to how image schemata inform comprehension. It is accentuated by the fact that our brain and most of our sensory processing are located in our head, which is some distance from the ground. In the second case, the imbalance is where the object ‘spills’ out of our hand. It is thus a sudden loss of grip or an incomplete grip, resulting in the object falling to the floor. In addition to the textual ‘source-path-goal’ of ‘stretching out’, the notions of grasping for one’s goal and missing it, as occurs in the text, albeit implicitly, has a sense of a ‘loss of balance’. This can evoke the BALANCE image-schema. Further, the sense of something being grasped at and missed evokes the IN-OUT image-schema. Both of these evocations take place automatically because we are human beings with embodied minds and we have built up a wealth of both conscious and subconscious knowledge about our personal past experiences. The BALANCE/IN-OUT image that I am trying to describe might be represented in more concrete terms by imagining a container first filling up with a fluid and then overflowing. It is at the point of overflowing where the BALANCE schema gives way to the IN-OUT schema. Since metaphorical thought informs language it is not surprising that such representations have entered our lexicon. These three image schemata, i.e. SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, BALANCE, and IN-OUT, should not be viewed as monolithic conceptual structures. Instead, they function in my notion of disportation in an infused fashion. In this sense, when they come together they can be seen as a single FLUVIAL schema.

This can occur in part because, in addition to the linguistic sign-fed input, there is a strong mind-fed presence that is brought to bear on working memory almost immediately. In top-down cases this may occur already in anticipation. I will say more about what is happening in both cognitive and neural terms during disportation in the following section. For now, I will just state that if all the five affective inputs that have been discussed in this work are in place when an engaged, emotive reader learns about Nick’s thoughts on Gatsby’s failure, then those readers are capable of experiencing a similar feeling of grasping and missing, albeit in a neurally-embodied way. This process is facilitated by mirror neural and proprioceptive simulation inputs. In this way certain readers may experience heightened emotion that may in turn lead to the felt sense of disportation. The affective cognitive processing of such ‘stretching out’ events described here during emotive episodes of literary reading, whether they be manual, cognitive or visual, can lead to the firing of mirror neurons in the cortical premotor areas of the brain. This is irrespective of whether they are manual, cognitive or visual in nature. This process coincides with the embodied

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7 Interestingly, the linguistic SOURCE-PATH-GOAL event is accompanied by a similar physical one. The hand at rest, with the arm coiled inwards, can be viewed as the SOURCE stage, the movement towards extension by means of the fully outstretched arm can be seen as the PATH, and grasping is the GOAL. In cognitive linguistic terms the hand can be seen as the trajector and the arm the landmark.

8 The BALANCE schema is made active by our world knowledge. The primary stage of balance is an image of scale on a fulcrum. Imbalance takes place when one side is overloaded (or tightened) and the overloaded side falls to the floor. Although imbalance is equally related to UP as it is DOWN, for some reason humans more readily link imbalance to falling to the ground than to rising into the air. A loss of balance is something negative. Our world knowledge of the gravitational field must determine the way we comprehend balance.

9 For example, in English, if a person catches and then immediately drops an object, one can say colloquially that it has ‘spilled’ out of his/her hands. This idiom is often heard in the commentary of diverse sports journalists.
movement that is felt to take place in an individual during disportation. My following post-
closure example will clarify what I mean.

11.3 Reading processes at the moment of closure and beyond
This work started with the quote by F. Scott Fitzgerald that “the purpose of a work of fiction is to
appeal to the lingering after-effects in the reader’s mind”. I believe that Fitzgerald was talking
about more than just conscious, post-reading reflection here. The question is then; if not
reflections on reading, what was he speaking of? Some of the respondents in my NRQ experiment
suggested that their reading process did indeed appear to continue in some affective form after
they had finished reading the text, even though there was nothing concrete on the page left to
read. Other respondents also appeared to suggest that this was accompanied by, or even facilitated
by, a heightened emotive state.\(^\text{10}\) But how can a reader still be reading in his/her mind once the
text has finished? And what does a sense of excitement and euphoria have to do with this? The
answer to these questions may lie in the infused, continuum-like image schemata and more
specifically in the notion of disportation. As I have suggested, this mode of processing occurs in
the post-reading and the subsequent non-reading stage of literary discourses processing.\(^\text{11}\)

Below, I show an example that uses the same mechanism as described in the previous
‘stretching out’ one. However, this time it will occur not during closure of the text (while a
person is still reading) but at the very point of closure (as the physical reading ends). Although
there is one predominant image schema in the text, namely, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL one, when
reader epiphany occurs two other schemata may be evoked that are not specifically textually
represented. These are not solely linguistically prompted, even though they come into being
because of the initial sign-fed text producing the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. Instead, they are
embodied structures that somehow get evoked because of the context of the literary discourse
processing. The two inference-generated, embodied-cognitive structures that I mentioned
previously are BALANCE-IMBALANCE and IN-OUT. Not only can they occur individually but, as
suggested, they can also come into being as a kind of chain reaction. The PATH schema gets
extended from the text base into the non-textual domain. In short, the PATH schema in this
example begins with primarily textual prompts and ends with primarily cognitive ones. The three
image schemata therefore blend to become one fluvial PATH schema. Below I will explain how
this works in practice. Here again are the closing lines and the relevant image-schematic
SOURCE-PATH-GOAL ‘pull’: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly
into the past”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Units</th>
<th>The 5 phases</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Direction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12a. from here to there &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>►</td>
<td>►</td>
<td>◄</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flow &amp; OUT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b. from then to yonder</td>
<td>(◄)</td>
<td>◄</td>
<td>◄</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ebb</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td></td>
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Here we see how the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema is first turned one way and then
another: the forward flowing ‘on’ and ‘against’ are immediately followed by the ebbing ‘back’

\(^{10}\) Perhaps the best example for this was the respondent who said at the end of the novel he/she was
excited, euphoric … somehow I am still reading in my mind\(^\bullet\) (my emphases).

\(^{11}\) At the post reading stage the resonances must flow in and out of working memory, perhaps retained in
the buffer regions described by Baddeley and discussed earlier, while in the non-reading phase such
knowledge and feelings descend into implicit long-term memory. I will say much more about this shortly.
and ‘into’ ending with the word ‘past’.\textsuperscript{12} The many prepositions have a significant function.\textsuperscript{13} This forth and back motion can affect the reading patterns, mood and emotions of an engaged reader and in doing so prepare the ground for possible disportation. This will have already been primed by affective elements of the style and rhetoric of the piece, the like of which I have discussed earlier. As can be seen, the SOURCE-PATH GOAL structures are principally text-driven by prepositions, though subconscious mind-fed inputs from previous reading experiences may come into the equation, enriching and even (re)directing the effect. There need not be a one-to-one match, and indeed often there is none. The BALANCE schema is not primarily text-driven but is activated on the PATH continuum at the very moment when the written language on the page ends. The expected yet nonetheless abrupt shift from a blend of text and cognition to the purely mind-based inputs helps to facilitate a sense of loss of balance. This now in turn triggers the BALANCE schema. However, since its only linguistic prompt is the sudden lack of text, it does not form a new image schema but is, rather, a continuation of the SOURCE-PATH GOAL schema. The two operate in this context on a continuum, with the one blending effortlessly and seamlessly into the other as one embodied cognitive procedure. This process is facilitated in implicit neuro-cognitive ways by a reader’s rapidly increasing sense of affective cognition. The effect is also helped by the ongoing continuation of mind-based inputs, as well as the residue of the underlying force effects highlighted earlier. Many of those mind-fed inputs will be guided by, and consist of, affective cognitions that have been stimulated and charged by all of the possible affective inputs I have mentioned, from LRI to reader mood and location and the themes and style of the work itself. It is at this moment that readers might feel like the poet Allen Ginsberg did or the scholar Alice Kaplan.\textsuperscript{14} All of this can be seen as happening on the cusp of a further fusion of image schemata, namely from the BALANCE IMBALANCE schema to the IN-OUT schema. Here, the IMBALANCE part of the schema is the starting point for the OUT part of the IN-OUT schema. The IN part thus overlaps with the BALANCE schema. For those readers who are affected at closure, this feeling of ‘overflowing’ will be the first real moment of felt movement after the tingling sense of rapture which is the apex of balance. This is akin to a feeling of a vertiginous ecstasy.\textsuperscript{15} The OUT part of the IN-OUT schema is the very moment when a reader may feel that he or she is moving while still stationary. This is the very core of felt motion and thus of disportation. From a physiological perspective there is no real bodily movement at all. Perhaps the only thing moving

\textsuperscript{12} The eye-tracking reading experiments of Just and Carpenter discussed in section I showed that readers appear to focus longer on content words than function words. Readers appear to focus longer on words at the opening and closing of sentences too. This being the case, we might ask whether the word ‘past’, being the final word of the final paragraph of the final chapter of \textit{The Great Gatsby}, receives more of our reading attention – and, if so, whether this somehow helps facilitate the effects of disportation.

\textsuperscript{13} As we saw earlier, words are represented and processed in the brain by strongly connected distributed neuron populations called “word-webs”. According to Pulvermüller, these dynamic processes involve “fast oscillations in the rhythmic brain”. Words referring to objects and actions are thought to be organised as widely distributed cell assemblies in the sensory and motor areas, which would be the case for the final word ‘past’. However, grammatical function words and grammatical affixes, like these prepositions, are thought to be housed in the left cortical areas, as well as in Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas (49). Grammar functions in the brain are thought of in terms of “neuron assemblies”, whose activity relates to the serial activation of other neurons.

\textsuperscript{14} See their epiphanic reading events described in chapter eight.

\textsuperscript{15} We may be reminded of Barthes’s \textit{punctum} here too, in spite of the fact that he is referring to such a feeling as a result of an interface with visual prompts in photographs.
will be the hairs standing on end on a reader’s arms as goose bumps appear. In space grammar terms, during such acts of disportation, it is as if even though the closing lines are processed sequentially, lighting up as they go, by the end point of disportation the whole lights up once again. This is what ordinarily happens in summary scanning. In image schematic terms, this process can also be viewed as an ‘arrival’ at some goal. In abstract terms it is, as it were, an arrival at, and, by extension, an insertion into, a new ‘container’. This facilitates the regaining of equilibrium in the BALANCE schema and is supported by the phenomenon of homeostasis. Let us now take a step back and try to account for what is actually happening during disportation in both cognitive and neural terms, by reintroducing some of the theories, studies and results discussed in earlier chapters.

11.4 The conjectured cognitive and neural underpinnings of disportation
In chapter seven I illustrated by means of charts and diagrams how cognitive and neural phenomena are thought to operate during regular emotive literary reading experiences. At the end of that chapter I put forward seven propositions: (i) that style and themes are in the mind as well as on the page; (ii) that in the pre-reading stage themes, style fragments and LRI are already drifting in and out of working memory before a reader’s eyes have met the page, suggesting that intertextuality is active much earlier than we might think; (iii) that during engaged acts of literary reading it is impossible to separate sign-fed and mind-fed sources, due to their constant ebbing, flowing and coalescing; they should henceforth be known as the affective inputs of literary discourse processing; (iv) that literary reading is not just about the actual text interface; there are four confluvial parts that make up what is the literary reading loop; (v) that affective cognition in literary reading is made up of affective inputs; (vi) that oceanic cognition is to some extent the interactive, ever-fluvial combination of explicit and implicit memory, together with cognitive emotion and affective cognition, and, lastly, (vii) that engaged acts of reading at literary closure involve an intensification of all affective inputs. I also suggested that to understand oceanic cognition and the oceanic mind, we need to look not just at the emotive events encountered while reading literature, as was mainly the case in chapter seven, but also at those intense emotive moments that come about while reading fiction, namely disportation.

During disportation, when endorphins flood the synapses, a reader is overwhelmed by intense emotion, and experiences a sense of rapid rising and forward movement followed by a gentle felt sense of slowing and descending. How can this be accounted for? Let us first look at structure. Just as there are three parts to the image-schematic model I have just discussed, there are as well three stages to disportation: (a) the start and rapid rise, (b) the pinnacle, and (c) the decline, gentle reverberation and rest. The first stage is dependent on anticipation, which, as Frijda explained, extends the period of time over which a given event exerts emotional influence and intensifies considerably the emotional experience itself. Reading induced disportation is no different. At the moment of disportation, the continual priming of fragmentary personal memories that Hogan had described explodes in a torrent of affective cognition ‘beyond the text’ in the embodied mind of the engaged reader and out into the post-reading phase, eventually settling on a low-swell in the non-reading phase.

This general idea, that there can be phases in intense emotive responses to literature, was supported by Hogan’s comments that literature-induced euphoric emotions involve ‘thresholds’. He maps out three stages concerning orientation, expression and control. In stage one mood is dominant and volition on the part of the reader still present. In stage two, control is ebbing: tears may dominate here but there is still control over actional impulses. In stage three all control is

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16 Some of my respondents remarked that they subconsciously appear to hold their breath and only exhale during the descent into the post-reading phase.
lost. We see a parallel with disportation in the loss of volition. This leads to states of euphoria tinged with sadness. It is this third state of what, following Hume, I have named a state of ‘agreeable melancholy’ that typifies disportation. Another model was observed in the literary description of epiphany by Langbaum who constructed four stage-like criteria: (1) psychological association (i.e. epiphany is secular not divine); (b) momentousness (i.e. the epiphany is fleeting but leaves a lasting effect); (c) suddenness (i.e. a shift takes place in sensory perception) and (d) fragmentation or ‘epiphanic leap’ (i.e. the text never quite equals the epiphany). Aspects of most of these can be found in my account of disportation.

Perhaps the best structural fit for disportation is Berlyne’s theory of aesthetic response, though it is only a two-stage model. We recall that Berlyne spoke of “tension” and “release” in his theory of aesthetic arousal, using the terms arousal “boost” and “jag”. Tension involves activation, a readiness to respond emotionally or attentionally, while jag refers to a drop in heightened emotion. My claims seem to agree with Berlyne’s empirically tested model. It will be recalled that according to Frijda there is a drive to regain homeostasis since long exposure to high levels of arousal is unpleasant. The ‘jag’ or ‘relaxation’ thus becomes more pleasurable than even the object of arousal. This also seems to be the case in disportation, which ties in with Bachelard’s remark that readers might feel a “poetic power rising within them” and after the original ‘reverberation’ they are able to experience “resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of their past”. This, in my opinion, is the very stuff of disportation in philosophical form. Further, alluding to the seemingly oceanic nature of the reading mind, Bachelard added that this state of poetic reverie must always “set the waves of the imagination radiating”. As Frijda noted, being moved by aesthetic objects (as happens in my model when I speak of disportation) should not be seen in mere terms of ‘tension release’, for it is not simply a physiological matter. Rather, it should be thought of as “surrendering to something greater than oneself” (358). Aesthetic emotion is then to my mind not only less cognitive, but it also involves what Frijda calls a “relevance to desire, to join and to possess”. This includes proximity, coherence and additionally “losing oneself”. Could this ‘joining’ be during disportation a desire to be reunited with a childhood past and primary caregivers from that past? In a later section I will explore this philosophical aspect.

Felt disportation, a sense of ‘delay’ (i.e. rising or ‘boost’) followed by ‘catch-up’ (i.e.
descending or ‘jag’) might be explained as well in neurobiological terms. In Part I we learned that blood flow is crucial to memory and cognitive processing and that fMRI-scans measure activity later, rather when it actually occurs. This is because blood flow needs time to respond to a stimulus. In fact there is a 3-4 second delay in fMRI scanning. The whole process of blood being redirected to a part of the brain to process information and then moving away again once the action has taken place can take up to 25 seconds in total. So what neurolinguistic researchers see on the monitor during language experiments using fMRI scanning equipment is not language processing but rather its ‘shadow’ or ‘echo’. Might this, in part, account for what is felt during disportation, adding to what I have already claimed about implicit memory and affective cognition? Furthermore, the seeming immediacy in the ‘boost’ stage of disportation can be accounted for by the operation of mirror neurons. Morrison observed that mirror neurons fire at an early visuomotor stage of processing, so that memory processing of this information occurs downstream from mirror perception. In short, the feeling of movement comes before the actual memory of the event. She added that mirror perception contributes at a relatively early stage to a

17 My second ‘pinnacle’ category occurs between ‘boost’ and ‘jag’.

18 Interestingly, Frijda also set out a three-step scheme with regard to desire: (i) it is engendered by the thought of, or encounter with, a fit object not in possession, (ii) emotions proper arise from events that are encountered on the way to possession, and (iii) enjoyments arise when being there; they respond to unobstructed possession (283).
cascade of responses that couple perception with action, and action disposition with memory. A third plausible neurobiological link pertains to the ‘jag’ of disposition which leads to neural and cognitive relaxation. As we learned in chapter four when discussing mood, when a person is in a relaxed and awakened state, as one is at the end of disposition, he/she produces alpha waves.

Let us now step back and recap before looking at the psychological aspects of disposition. Literary readers are often egocentric, surreptitious beings, who have basic subconscious goals even before they come to the first page of a novel. One of their aims may be to strive to achieve disposition; the idealised “preferred final outcome”, as Tan put it, of several engaged and committed lovers of books. From a neural perspective, the overwhelming part of literary reading is principally a stimulus-thalamus-cortex-amygdala or ‘high road’ event, as Hogan calls it. However, reading-induced disposition is almost certainly a low-road (thalamo-amygdala) phenomenon. This observation calls into question Hogan’s claim that in literature, as opposed to the visual arts, we cannot have low road responses. So why is it that emotion can appear to dominate in literary reading so much so that disposition no longer seems to be a cognitive act of text processing, but more a somatic-emotive event? A number of facets need to be explored in order to answer this question. First, as we saw from my discussion in Part II, there is an ongoing ‘oceanic’ interaction between what I termed affective cognition on the one hand and cognitive emotion on the other, and this operates in tandem with implicit and explicit memory (see Figure 17). Second, we also saw that there are two processing routes: one that skips the higher cortical processing areas before moving on more or less directly to the sub-cortical emotive areas of the brain, and the other that does not (see Figures 15 and 16). Further, I showed that reading has four confluent phases: pre-reading, reading and post-reading as well as non-reading (see Figure 12).

When a reader is engulfed in a disportive state at literary closure, the body takes on a major processing role in that immediate post-reading phase. But how is this possible? The answer in part lies in affective cognition, which in some measure is made up by the five affective inputs. Affective cognition works so effectively in literary discourse processing because at the very moment of disposition the physical text processing stops, either because the novel has ended or because the reader has encountered a disportive moment in the reading process. Here, the cognitive emotion of text processing begins to coalesce, not just sporadically, but in earnest, with affective cognition. In effect, a neural and cognitive ebbing back and forth between these two processing centres is set in motion. This would mean that the body is represented in working memory, but this is not formally mapped out in existing accounts and models. We know from LeDoux’s findings in The Emotional Brain that the body indicates changes back to other parts of the brain via the somatosensory cortex. This input then becomes part of the meaning-making appraisal maelstrom that is somehow played out in the working memory. Alan Baddeley’s aforementioned model of working memory (Baddeley and Hitch 1974) has just three slave (or ‘buffer’) systems that interact with the central executive, the supervisory system that controls the back and forth flow of information to and from those slave systems. As mentioned, these are the phonological loop, the visuo-spatial sketchpad and the episodic buffer. The last of these was only added relatively recently and is responsible for linking information across the existing domains by structuring it in a kind of chronological narrative to make visual or phonological information comprehensible. It also has strong links with long-term memory (see Baddeley 2000). This is

19 As we saw earlier, reading and the mirror system are linked, since reading is an essentially non-vocal procedure that involves both Broca’s area and motor areas. The fact that Broca’s is analogous to the F5 mirror neural area facilitates the link from silent reading to felt movement and disposition.

20 It will be recalled that alpha waves are electromagnetic oscillations found to originate predominantly in the visual cortex.
plausibly where Kintsch’s earlier-mentioned “retrieval cues” are located. Below is a schematic representation of Baddeley’s model of working memory.

![Diagram of Baddeley's model of working memory]

**Figure 18:** *A schematic representation of Baddeley’s model of working memory*

However, if somatic inputs are as important as so many cognitive neuroscientists tell us (e.g. Damasio, LeDoux, Kintsch, Gibbs, etc.), then there must be an additional slave system that will help account for a whole host of felt phenomena, including disportation.\(^2\) Let us then attempt to model this and call this new system ‘the somatic cushion’. The addition of such a new buffer zone gives structure to Damasio’s observations on ‘somatic markers’ i.e. feelings we have about our own body.\(^2\) Furthermore, it would also help to account for Kintsch’s claims that we react to the world not only with our sense organs but with gut-level feelings too (412). Hence, the things that excite us, please us, scare us are most closely linked to the body. Indeed, if Kintsch is to be believed, our innermost memories are the ones most intimately linked to our body. The somatic cushion must therefore have links with the somatosensory cortex, the amygdala and the prefrontal cortices. This may be so, since we have previously learned from LeDoux that the amygdala, together with the pre-frontal cortices, represent information and feelings about a person’s body. These areas also control the state of the body. We know further through LeDoux’s experiments that processed stimuli may activate the amygdala without activating explicit memories or otherwise being represented in consciousness, and that links between cues and responses are basic, and memories robust and open to strengthening as times wears on – unlike the hippocampal memory system (203).\(^3\) These neurological findings match Schank’s

\(^{21}\) For example, in *Comprehension*, Kintsch says that ‘introspectively, it appears plausible’ that working memory contains a set of somatic markers in addition to cognitive nodes (410).

\(^{22}\) During disportation, wavelets of information come together and intermingle in what Damasio described as ‘convergence zones’.

\(^{23}\) From Gruber’s earlier discussion on mirror neurons in chapter two we are also aware of the crucial link that exists between working memory, Broca’s area and other areas of the premotor cortex.
psychological ones, which show that the mind is at its core a collection of stereotypical experience-based stories. Recall is therefore about the brain deploying and replaying the nearest match.\textsuperscript{24} Further, we saw how at times the amygdala can have direct access to the central processing parts of the brain. The following diagram, an extended version of Baddeley’s model, shows the somatic cushion in operation.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{baddeley_model_with_somatic_cushion_added.png}
\caption{Baddeley’s model with the added ‘somatic cushion’ slave system}
\end{figure}

Recall from chapter six how Kintsch described short term memory as “a dynamically changing stream” awash with “changing patterns of activation” (411). My model goes some way towards accounting for this.\textsuperscript{25} The strong somatic-emotive felt effects of disportation are so overwhelming, because they are capable of ebbing back and forth via the somatic cushion from short-term to long-term memory; and beyond them too, in and out of higher cortical and sub-cortical regions.\textsuperscript{26} This oceanic process brings with it the fragmentary memories of places and people. The role of the episodic buffer in this process is to provide narrative structure between the somatic cushion and the other slave systems, especially the visuo-spatial sketchpad.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Bartlett observed that when we recall an event it is never an exact copy of the information that was originally stored. Affective attitudes influence recall and the nature of the recalled event may tend, in particular, to produce stereotyped and conventional reproductions that adequately serve all normal needs, though they are very unfaithful to their originals (55).

\textsuperscript{25} It should be noted that the basic arrows used in this rudimentary model in no way do justice to the reality of the constant ebbing and flowing of information across, between and beyond these areas.

\textsuperscript{26} This idea of memory sources flowing into each other is akin to Barsalou’s idea of “event fragmentation”.

\textsuperscript{27} Barsalou showed that from a PSS perspective short-term memory and long-term memory share neural systems with perception: the long-term system harbours the simulators while working memory implements specific simulations (604). The addition of the somatic cushion helps to explain and facilitate this process. It will be recalled that perceptual symbols fit into a disportive framework as they, (i) function unconsciously (583), (ii) reside at the neural level (583), (iii) are dynamic in nature, (584), (iv) produce
Barsalou’s terms, this produces a simulation of the earlier event that differs from the original perception because of fewer bottom-up constraints. The neural centres and patterns responsible for these images are located in the early sensory cortices of varied modalities. This is what Barsalou calls “dispositional space”: unconscious, implicit knowledge where images can be reconstructed and processed in recall. The link that the somatic cushion maintains between memory systems allows for this implicit content. So even though affective cognition and implicit memory have the upper hand during disportive reader states, emotive cognition and explicit memory also play a role through the involvement of short-term memory. With this knowledge, let us review a chart that I proposed in chapter seven to which I now add a column on the left that attempts to account for disportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>During highly emotive reading (especially at closure)</th>
<th>During reading</th>
<th>Pre-reading &amp; Post-reading</th>
<th>Non-reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive emotion</td>
<td>Styles, themes</td>
<td>Styles, themes</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective cognition</td>
<td>(strong) Styles, themes, LRI, mood, location</td>
<td>LRI, mood, location</td>
<td>(strong) Styles, themes, LRI, mood, location</td>
<td>(weak) Styles, themes, LRI, mood, Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, in the added category of ‘during highly emotive reading (especially at closure)’ the textual aspects of styles and themes hover in state between the explicit and implicit, and in doing so tip the overall balance of the emotive reading experience into the domain of affective cognition. This is one explanation why it seems that during that most cognitive of events, discourse processing, emotion appears to take over from cognition during episodes of disportation. Cognition is, of course, involved at all stages, but affective cognition, charged with somatic inputs, from both short-term and long term areas, and implicit memory, take over the text processing during such deeply subconscious, highly-emoted moments of reading. The role of the somatic cushion is of central importance in this process.

In sum, we can conclude that, from a neural perspective, many cross-cortical processes must be taking place during disportation. This is possible because of the deeply fluvial and cross-

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28 Barsalou suggested that memories of the same component then become organised around a common ‘frame’: an integrated system of perceptual symbols that is used to construct specific simulations of a category (590). This leads to the implementation of a ‘simulator’, which can produce limitless simulations of the component.

29 The link between these two mnemonic systems was already theorised by LeDoux: there are many neural connections between the hippocampus and the amygdala as well as between lots of other cortical regions (203). He also stated that in order to have a fully embodied emotive experience the amygdala system must be activated (201).
cortical nature of mind and brain processes. Recall, for example, that human brains and minds use both parallel and distributed processing strategies. Consider also that the brain processes do not work like computers, in distinct stages, for the brain is continually awash with processing activities, allowing sensory input to continually cascade back and forth in and out of working memory and the buffer zones that surround it. Other aspects of disportive confluential cognition include neural simulations of movement that have their base in proprioception (for force), the vestibular function (for balance) and mirror neurons (for the integrated feeling of felt motion). Indeed, all of these may very well be triggered simultaneously. In addition to these pre-cortical and sensory-motor areas, the sub-cortical emotive areas of the brain must also be fully engaged at this stage, producing the smiles and the tears and the affective memories that were all too obvious in the earlier cited examples, including Kaplan’s tearful reading of the closing lines of The Great Gatsby and the comments of the NRQ respondents. Readers “stay in the story” during disportation, as one NRQ respondent put it. This may be so, because a person feels as though he/she is being “sucked into the end of the story” as another respondent stated. As we have seen, textual elements play a role in this process too. Some evidence for this is given by the respondent who admitted that “metaphors and disrupting style at the end always pull me into the novel and affect how I read it”. We observed actual indications of disportation in some of the earlier NRQ responses, for instance, when one person admitted to “feeling strange” at the moment of finishing a much-enjoyed novel and another one remarked “it was like I was still living in the story”. All of these real responses from real readers allude to different phases of disportation. The last one, in particular, alludes to a reading that takes place in the post-textual phase. Similarly, one person wrote that they were “quite excited, climactic - just like waking from a vivid dream or coming off a roller-coaster” and another admitted being “very emotional: disappointed and euphoric at the same time but also calm and focused”. Two comments, however, that best highlighted disportation were very brief: “I felt a sort of release” and “somehow I am still reading in my mind.” The former puts into words the very act of entering a disportive state, while the latter, as suggested earlier, provides evidence for the mainly mind-fed and affective cognitive processing that takes place in the post-reading phase, as well as the non-reading and pre-reading phases, in what I have termed, the literary reading loop.

The felt nature of movement during disportation suggests as well that mirror-neural activity occurs simultaneously with conceptual image-schematic processing. This in turn implies that in addition to a known processing area for image-schematic structures in the visual cortex, set out by Turner and discussed earlier, there is as well an as yet undiscovered neural activity in the pre-motor areas where the processing of mirror neurons takes place and other motor areas employed in proprioception. Since the human brain uses many areas when processing visual data, as explained in chapter three, it can be assumed that the emotive sub-cortical regions of the brain must also be part of the neural processing network. As stated, there are no technological means available to support my theoretical claim just yet. However, improved neural scanning techniques of the future may go some way toward shedding more light on this, though the

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30 Remember that according to the neuroscientist Zull many, if not most, pathways of signalling in the brain include a combination of neurons that send signals in one direction and neurons that send signals in the other one. Zull noted further that during emotive and cognitive episodes many parts of the human brain can be active at once, “in neuronal networks of incomprehensible complexity” (100). Specifically with regard to reading itself we learned how recent fMRI experiments have revealed that there is a vast network of cortical areas that are active in the different stages of reading. In fact, there appear to be about a dozen regions involved, spread across the entire brain.

31 Like Kaplan, one NRQ reader-respondent recalled that he/she “always had to cry near the end” while his/her thoughts “wandered off, slowing down the reading process”.

32 This could involve the visuo-spatial sketchpad, linked to the somatic cushion via the episodic buffer.
location of the reading event will always remain a stumbling block with regard to observing what really happens in the brains and bodies of readers when they read literature in an engaged and emotive manner. 33

To conclude this part, I have tried to show how disportation may work at literary closure, how three image schemata can become one by flowing into each other along an affective cognitive continuum and how mind and language are involved in confluent ways. This all takes place in a matter of seconds, milliseconds even. I have shown too that this can cause a highly emoted reader to undergo a form of image-schematic ‘vertigo’, which can be the starting point of reader disportation. I have termed this phenomenon of several image schemata becoming one in specific discourse processing environments the FLUVIAL schema. As I have shown, this whole process is supported in force terms by all the image gestalt force vectors coming together to set up the EQUILIBRIUM version of the BALANCE schema at the moment the discourse ends. I have also shown how this sense of the vertiginous has the capability to send an emoted literary reader spinning into a sensory maelstrom, which has the feeling of moving upward and outward in a FLUVIAL/PATH-like fashion. This exemplifies the affective-cognitive way in which the oceanic human mind can work, facilitated by the somatic cushion. This is the sense of euphoria and elevation that all those who have experienced reader disportation should be able to recognise.

In image gestalt terms, the forces of REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT and ENABLEMENT dominate here. In cognitive image schematic terms, in reaching a state of disportation a reader transgresses the image-schematic notion of a CONTAINER, namely a bounded space with an interior and exterior. Hence, disportation, as it is channelled here in this text, contains, in my opinion, a blend of three image schematic structures: (1) the transition from SOURCE to PATH (on the way to the GOAL); (2) BALANCE, followed by IMBALANCE; (3) a movement from INSIDE to OUTSIDE. In order to mentally visualise this in more concrete terms imagine a container, as indeed our bodies are, at the very moment it overflows. At the moment when disportation starts, at least three image schemata become fluid and flow into each other. This supports Johnson’s largely forgotten claim that image schemata are “dynamic”, “continuous”, “flexible” and most importantly of all, “relatively fluid” (30).

All of the above is, of course, in part facilitated by the main themes in The Great Gatsby. By the time a reader reaches the end of the book, the characters’ ‘longing to return’ and the ‘yearning for a state of true contentment’ will have set in place an abstract PATH schema in the affective cognition of an engaged reader. Readers might also empathically project — in the embodied way, as Lakoff and Johnson described it — for both Gatsby and Nick. It is towards the end of the book that readers might conceptually feel the ‘blockage’, as it were, in Gatsby’s life-journey, as both Nick and we, as readers, come to realise that his dream was already behind him, in his irretrievable, incommunicable past. It is at this stage that we recall Gatsby’s stretching-out through Nick’s reminiscing/mental stretching. Readers are prompted to experience the disportive, emotive infusion of image schemata. Another important point is that since an empathetic sense of projection is involved, readers might map Gatsby’s flawed life onto aspects of their own life. This ties in both with Scheff’s mentioned idea of experiencing emotions through art “at a safe aesthetic distance” and with Aristotle’s cathartic insights into pity and fear.

33 See my comments in chapter four as to why neural experiments on literary readers, although desirable, are nigh impossible to perform in a way that produces relevant and reliable data.
11.5 Some philosophical implications of disportation

Why can disportation occur during highly emoted episodes of literary reading, in this case at closure? Does this phenomenon have any function in the wider sense? It seems plausible that disportation occurs principally because of our biological need to experience intense emotional states like moments of euphoria. This is a somewhat sweeping statement and will need some clarification. I have used the word ‘principally’ here quite purposely. Frijda, for example, points out that emotional intensity is not a simple concept (32): “the relationship between arousal and experienced emotional intensity is complex” (226). Probing this matter further, Rita Carter has stated in Mapping the Mind that some moments of euphoria are only arrived at after considerable conscious processing (130-1). 34 Although the end product is largely physiological, the immense amount of explicit and implicit cognitive processing that is needed to reach that state must not be forgotten. In short, as Carter points out, “there must be an elaborate exchange of information taking place between the conscious cortical areas of the brain and the sub-cortical limbic system” (130-1). It would seem, therefore, that we are neurologically wired to undergo such states of euphoria from time to time, be they religion-induced, art-induced or otherwise. Even though reading, and especially literary reading, is a new medium in evolutionary terms, and even though reading is what Kosslyn and Koenig rightly call an example of “opportunistic processing” in its use of neurocognitive pathways meant for other activities such as object identification (168), literature is an abstract art par excellence and as such is well-suited for emotive-cognitive embodied events. As Mortimer Adler and Charles van Doren rightly argue, “one reason why fiction is a human necessity is that it satisfies many unconscious as well as conscious needs” (220). The reason why disportation can occur is because we have bodies and minds that facilitate it. The question here, however, is not how it occurs while reading literature, which I have already attempted to explain in the previous section in neural and cognitive terms, but why?

Can one assume that readers in a disptive state may momentarily gain entry to the normally inaccessible parts of their subconscious and their long-term memory? When disportation occurs, a reader may sometimes appear to ‘travel back’, perhaps to the remembered locations of the past, which may also include the felt, fragmentary presence of primary caregivers. This felt regression has the effect of appearing to distance the reader from his/her inevitable death. Returning to my above example in abstract cognitive terms, all this appears to happen when the OUT part of the IN-OUT schema is activated. This is the ‘ebbing away’, as it were. So the question is, whether disportation can be viewed as some kind of ‘portal to the past’? Might such an “Erhebung without motion”, to borrow a phrase from the poet and critic T.S. Eliot, be a form of secular revelation? 35 Can literary disportation momentarily appear to ward off death and offer a reader a soft landing into the reality of his/her undeniable mortality? Might such LRI of past locations in which a reader is a child again; skipping, running, jumping or swinging, momentarily soften the inevitable drift that is to come? I will now look at some of these questions in detail.

A first important matter is that there is no guarantee that disportation will occur in a reader; indeed some engaged readers may never experience it. Second, if it takes place, it must be accompanied by a series of physiological states that ordinarily should include an increase in heart-rate, body temperature and blood pressure, erratic breathing patterns, a reddening of the skin colour of the face and neck, etc. 36 This will begin with the person becoming suddenly highly

34 It seems unlikely to me that this is a fully conscious process.

35 Cited from ‘Burnt Norton’ in Four Quartets.

36 Although I know of no experiments pertaining to heightened moments of literary reading, most of these physiological phenomena have been tested extensively in a variety of domains. The most pertinent to my area of investigation are, for example (a) when heart rate was shown to increase when subjects view a gruesome film (Lazarus and Optron 1966); (b) when blood pressure was shown to rise when male subjects
emoted by an essentially empathetic mechanism, but one which is based on a reader’s socio-cognitive knowledge of both other texts and other worldly events, especially those that impinge on that person’s life or of his/her loved ones.

So what is disportation & why does it occur? In the following section I will offer support for the following five statements:

- Disportation has some of the characteristics of spirituality but is not a form of spiritualism
- Disportation is a transformational phenomenon in the sense described by Winnicott
- Disportation is an embodied phenomenon
- Disportation helps us to close the gap between culture and cognition
- Disportation helps us to both understand and deal with our own mortality

Are such literary effects, as set out in my disportation hypothesis, akin to a religious ‘state of mind’? The answer to this is both yes and no. Let me start by returning to a question I posed to a group of test subjects in Part I of this thesis: ‘Do you think that literary reading has anything to do with spirituality?’ Of the fifteen subjects asked, nine answered affirmatively. Eight of the fifteen subjects added an additional comment all of which I have listed in chapter three. Some said it depended on the spiritual content of the book; a sign-fed prompt, while others said it depended on the existing spirituality of the reader, a mind-fed trigger. Others were more eclectic, saying “mental imagery and spirituality are both really personal”, and “I sometimes get spiritual experiences when a book is very captivating”.

For Robert Langbaum, literary epiphany is “the Romantic substitute for religion” (59). Literature of a certain kind can indeed be an important aspect of modern spirituality for some individuals, as has previously been claimed. The nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold said that “more and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us”. He added that “without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry”. Although I agree with the first part of Arnold’s claims I cannot fully concur with the second; not simply because poetry is less ideological and political than religion, but also because there are too many other discrepancies between the two. Marcel Proust famously said that “reading is at the threshold of spiritual life; it can introduce us to it. It does not constitute it”. My position is somewhere between Arnold’s “consoling “, and “sustaining” claim and Proust’s suggestion that reading can only take one to the borders of spirituality. Acts of disportation do comfort and maintain us, whether we are consciously aware that they are happening to us or not.

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view erotic material in books (Wenger et. al 1968), and (c) when electrodermal activity (sweating) was shown to increase when subjects were exposed to anxiety-provoking images (Klorman 1974). All of these experiments, and many more, are cited and discussed in chapter three of Frijda’s The Emotions. I believe that in the future the neurosciences should be able to test the physiological effects of disportation. The two stumbling blocks, however, are, how to witness and record it (remember, there is no guarantee of disportation) and how to make the monitoring apparatus so unobtrusive that readers forget that it is there, or that they are in a laboratory. As argued in chapter four, this will be far from easy.

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37 From “The Study of Poetry” in Essays in Criticism (the second series).
38 From “On Reading” (reproduced in Gilbar 39).
but this is not spirituality in the true sense. Disportation is an ideal for life, not an insurance policy against death. It is about celebration rather than confession. In this sense, the effects of disportation are similar to what Rolland experienced, in the writings of Freud, as ‘oceanic feeling’, namely “a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded”.

The idea that heightened emotive moments within a framework of affective literary reading might act as some kind of surrogate for a long-dead caregiver might seem outlandish, but we saw D. W. Winnicott argues in his work on transitional phenomena that our experience of human culture develops in the space that opens up between our infant selves and our mothers (or, in some cases, another primary caregiver). In the beginning, infant and mother are one, but then they slowly but surely begin to separate, and blankets, pacifiers and teddy bears begin to fill the space between them. These surrogate objects are, in effect, the transitional phenomena. The object represents the mother, or to be more exact, it represents the child’s relationship with the mother. Although the object is not the mother, it has similar soothing and calming effects on the child. Later in life, the space gets filled with such things as language and culture, which become the new transitional phenomena, the new comforters. Mirroring Winnicott’s ideas, cognitive psychologist Keith Oatley (2000) has also recently argued that “without the space that grows in between the mother and infant there would be no culture” (104). It is my contention that disportation, as experienced during affective interfaces with literary texts, is an apt example of a language-based cultural transitional phenomena for adults, an experience through the medium of literature. I propose further that the feeling experienced will be stronger in an older reader and in the reader whose favourite primary caregiver is deceased. In a way, the older the reader, the narrower the transitional space, in the sense that it waxes into maturity, then wanes in old age. This may indicate that disportation may occur more frequently in such older readers. The transitional space in which disportation operates grows until our loved ones and primary caregivers start to die. At this point it peaks, and then turns and starts to shorten again. Accordingly, it seems plausible that if a person lives into old age, the disportive transitional space that a reader will have to travel will be only slightly longer than it was in pre-adolescence.

Winnicott’s psychoanalytic claims on location are embodied in some of the philosophical ones of Bachelard, who suggested that we comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection through the poetry of space. Is this perhaps one of the reasons why we desire to encounter childhood locations, namely in order to be able to re-participate in the original locative intimacy and warmth. In another work The Poetics of Reverie Bachelard claims that “childhood lasts all through life. It returns to animate broad sections of adult life”. He adds that “poets will help us to find this living childhood within us, this permanent, durable, immobile world”. Perhaps then the late eighteenth-century German novelist and philosopher Novalis was not too wide of the mark when he said that all philosophy is about homelessness and homesickness and only the novel can transcend this distance. Critiqued in the early twentieth-century by eminent Marxist literary critics such as Georg Lukács for its hopeless romanticism, I believe this idea warrants a reappraisal — For although nostalgia is thoroughly anti-modern, and therefore problematic, secular nostalgia, as it occurs in the confluence of culture and cognition, is centrally humanist and is thus worthy of our renewed attention.

In light of the above one might conclude that from a psychoanalytic perspective literary readers who seek to undergo disportation are akin perhaps to perennial infants, unable to tear

39 This should ideally be supported by future reader-response testing involving different age groups of avid readers.

40 Cited from the introduction to section 6.

41 See Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen and Lukács’ The Theory of the Novel. For and overview of Novalis’ philosophical thought see Stoljar (1997).
themselves away from the site of the mother’s breast, or, worse still, individuals who are locked into some kind of self-indulgent, pseudo-onanistic state. Although such psychoanalytic interpretations of disportation may prove fruitful, they are beyond the remit of this thesis. Nonetheless, they should be explored in future research. Perhaps, though, they appear to miss the main point of an embodied, affective cognitive mind. This is summed up succinctly by one of the reader respondents who said that he/she felt “climactic” but “climactic in the reading sense”.

Since disportation is channelled by an art form, it is an aesthetic emotion, and as cognitive psychologist Frijda states “aesthetic emotion is not mere pleasure, like that produced by sexual climax” (357). However, there is one enticing psychoanalytic claim brought up by Keith M. May while discussing epiphany-like impressions in novels: “a suitable succession of such moments would be the ideal psychoanalysis, the means to perfect self-understanding” (66). This is an appealing point and one that echoes some of my own claims about disportation.

Disportation is also a fundamentally embodied experience, not an ‘out-of-body’ occurrence. The idea of ‘stepping outside oneself’ is something that has remained popular in Western philosophy since the time of the pre-Socratic Pythagoreans and their ponderings about the ‘transmigration of the soul’.²² Twenty-first century philosophical investigations of heightened affective states during literary reading should remember that human bodies and human brains do not merely cause cognitions and emotions, they house and facilitate them as well. Motion during disportation is at all times ‘felt’; it is a simulation, not a physical performance. It is a kind of cognitive shadow-play; an event that sends us “moving through the silence without motion”.³³ Disportation is thus a rhythmic sense of embodied cognition that is at the centre of the oceanic human mind.

The disportation hypothesis shows too how aspects of culture and cognition are blended. Culture nourishes the brain with language, literature, art, science and religion, and the brain, in turn, both facilitates and reverberates those cultural phenomena back out into the apprehended world, until the stimulus-driven and concept-driven enter a confluence of emotive human appraisal. These cultural phenomena are also all, to a greater or lesser extent, human-designed cerebral safety nets, as L. S. Vygotsky once remarked in Mind in Society. They are strategies of survival, to counter the greatest danger of consciousness, namely that we know that one day we shall die. Humans arguably need the comfort of culture and/or religion, since both may act as life-preservers. The disportation hypothesis puts forward the theoretical claim that one of the most buoyant of such life-preservers may be located in the literary reading adventure. To extend on this point: without culture there would be no human brain as we know it today. Culture allows our brains to grow so that we can imbibe and create more culture. Culture does not oppose the biological processes of the brain but is at its very heart, since it is to a large extent responsible for its enlarged cortical state. One might even say that culture is the source of the human brain, the source of human cognition and, as such, the source of human emotion. This is why when speaking of the ‘embodied’ human mind we are speaking of a mind that is grounded in a blend of biology and society. In effect, the oceanic mind that I have been describing is neuro-culturally grounded. So what might the purpose of disportation be? Can its effects somehow stave off the inevitability of our ensuing death – albeit in perceived and felt terms rather than in reality? Reading and death, as concepts, might seem far removed from each other: some, however, would disagree. The writer Stanley Elkin has claimed that the reason we read is to die – or more specifically to learn how to die (114).⁴⁴ Similarly, Harold Bloom suggests in How to Read and

²² The idea of being able to ‘leave one’s body’ is prevalent in Eastern philosophy too.

³³ This appropriate line that captures the idea of felt motion during literary reading is taken from Ian Curtis’ text to the Joy Division song Shadowplay.

Why that “one of the uses of reading is to prepare ourselves for change, and the final change alas is universal” (21). Literary reading, it would therefore seem, is not just the midwife of human emotion, it is her mortician as well.

In sum, literary reading is, indeed, a cognitive activity, but it is a confluent cognitive emotive and affective cognitive phenomenon involving both explicit and implicit memory all of which occurs within the embodied basin of the oceanic human mind. Oceanic cognition is therefore confluent cognition. Moreover, I view disportation in all engagements with art as an evolutionary survival strategy. During disportive moments, when feel-good chemicals flood the synapses of the brain, readers momentarily feel they have been successful in momentarily stopping time, even though this is not factually the case. Not only that: in appearing to stop time they also facilitate a process whereby they can flow back to whence they believe they came. This felt embodied journey has the function of empowering the reader for the real journey that is inevitably to come. Engaged and committed literary readers can enjoy a momentary window in time, plausibly sending those individuals back to their indistinct locations of their remembered, or pseudo-remembered, childhood. The ability therefore of the embodied mind to travel back may be a survivalist strategy that has evolved to a higher function of the embodied mind. Moreover, this process keys into being conducive to well-being and happiness. In this sense, the effects of literary reading are fundamentally eudaemonistic. Prior to literature and reading there were other, less-abstract, art forms that facilitated this, such as basic rhythm and image paintings on rocks.

Disportation does not ward off the inevitable descent into death, as nothing can, but it does offer readers the option of a parachute for a softer landing than otherwise might have been the case. When our time comes it may very well be our longing for the safety and comfort of a childhood location or childhood moment or childhood object that will fill our minds. And when that moment is upon us, we may reach out, but when we do, we are preordained to flail and miss; such is the human condition. And in doing so we will be borne back ceaselessly, into our incommunicable pasts: all the wiser for the experience; all the milder for the deliverance.

11.6 Some closing thoughts
As the psychologist Esther Salaman noted earlier, “we are all exiles from our lives; we need to recapture it”. I believe that one of the several ways to go some way towards accomplishing this is to read literature in an engaged and committed manner. I propose that there is a familiar childhood space that drifts deep in the undertow of our embodied oceanic minds. This place has long disappeared from the real world and has dissolved in the shifting memories of our individual pasts. But there is a common cultural process requiring a confluence of the sociological world and the biological body that allows us to reclaim fragments of this lost time. In doing so it permits us to drift back momentarily on the backwash of our subconscious memory to a time of protection and comfort, even if, in reality, this was very different. Such is the deceptive quality of memory. Such acts of literary reading are facilitated by the affective-cognitive processes of the embodied, oceanic reading mind. Like Stevenson’s shipwrecked character, described in chapter three, we come to realise as we grow older that we too are marooned. Thankfully, as there was for him, there is a cultural process whereby we can momentarily become furnished with a distal sense of those lost childhood locations and those cherished primary caregivers. So if you want to go in search of lost time, of some distal half-remembrance of things past, simply wait till your mood is optimal, take down a book, make yourself comfortable, open that book and start to read.