The oceanic mind: a study of emotion in literary reading
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Appendix
THE NOVEL-READING QUESTIONNAIRE (NRQ)

- The questions below require you to be self-reflective about how you read novels and especially how you read when you reach the end of a novel.

- Please fill in these basic details before you start

Age: Gender: Study (major/minor, language/literature, etc):

*QUESTION 1 (Please circle)*
Approximately how many novels do you read a year?
a. 0-5  b. 5-10  c. 10-15  d. 15-20  e. 20-25  f. more than 25

*QUESTION 2: (Please circle and add additional comments afterwards).*
When you feel/realise that you are reaching the end of a much-enjoyed novel does your default reading speed tend to alter? I.e. does it tend to:
a. slow down  b. speed up  c. remain the same
Additional Comments:

*QUESTION 3*
Once you have finished reading a much-enjoyed novel, do you tend to go back and re-read the final few pages or paragraphs?
a. Yes  b. No

If you answered [a], then please answer the following two questions:
(a) Why do you think you do this?
(b) What reading tempo do you adopt during this second re-reading?

*QUESTION 4*
4a. Try to recall the moment when you had just finished reading a much-enjoyed novel. Can you remember the feeling you had at that moment? If so, can you say something about that feeling?

4b. Were any specific memories triggered by this reading experience?
a. yes  b. no
QUESTION 5
If you have answered ‘yes’ to the above question (4b), could you please add some detail. For example, did these memories pertain to a specific time in your life or a specific event or to specific people or a specific place/location or even a blend of some or all of these? Please elaborate here below.

QUESTION 6
If you want to read a novel that you have very much looked forward to reading, does it matter to you, and to the quality of your subsequent reading experience, where you actually read it, i.e. where you decided to physically put/position your body for the reading process?
a. Yes  b. No
If you have answered [a], could you please say something about the physical nature of these locations.

QUESTION 7
[a] Have you ever experienced what is known as a ‘reading epiphany’ while reading a novel? i.e. a sense that one minute you are reading and the next you have been gripped by a powerful and inexplicable overwhelming emotion?
i. Yes  ii. No

[b] If you have answered [a] has this also happened to you at the end of a much-loved novel at the very moment when you finish reading?
i. Yes  ii. No

[c] If you have experienced such a reader epiphany in your life, does your body, as well as your mind, appear to play a role in this ‘feeling’? Does anything appear to happen to you? For example, do you experience a feeling of ‘movement’ while you are sat still? Or do you experience the opposite, i.e. a sense of being very stationary and static? Does this experience feel like any other kind of cerebral or corporeal experience you have had in another domain other than reading literature? Please expand below as much as you like on what you feel happens to you during such ‘reader epiphany’ moments.

QUESTION 8
Prior to starting to read a novel, do you think that your mood has ever affected the actual reading event itself?
a. Yes  b. No
If you chose answer [a] could you please elaborate somewhat.
**QUESTION 9**
Do you think the way in which the closing lines of a novel are written, i.e. the style (e.g. lexical choices, syntax structure, clause structure, punctuation, use of metaphor, etc) can affect the way you read (i.e. can affect your reading speed and the chunks of text you read in one go, as it were, i.e. words, clauses sentences, etc.)? 
- a. Yes  
- b. No
If you chose answer [a] could you please elaborate below

**QUESTION 10**
Do you think that a well-structured literary style can alter or affect your emotions?
- a. Yes  
- b. No
If you have answered [a], could you say how? Could you also say whether you think this is also the case for literary closure, i.e. at the end of novels?

**QUESTION 11**
Do you think that certain themes in a novel, that appear both throughout a novel and at the closure of a novel can affect your emotional mood during the actual reading process itself? 
- a. Yes  
- b. No
If you have answered [a] could you please expand on this below.

**QUESTION 12**
Have any of the themes below ever affected you during your novel reading experiences? There is a space below for you to elaborate on all of this and to add any theme that has not been mentioned here.
- a. childhood  
- b. mother  
- c. father  
- d. the childhood home (inside)  
- e. other (outside) childhood locations  
- f. Distance/nostalgia/a sense of returning  
- g. siblings  
- h. incommunicability  
- i. death  
- j. promises
Other themes:

**QUESTION 13**
Do you think that any of the above themes can be evoked in a reader’s mind even if they are not mentioned directly in the text? (For example, is it possible that a novel can invoke in you memories of your childhood, even if the passage you are reading is not specifically about a child or a childhood event?)
- a. Yes  
- b. No
If you have answered [a] why do you think that this is the case? I.e. how do you think it works?
QUESTION 14
[a.] When you read, can you readily visualise the persons and places described in a novel or short story?
   a. Yes b. No
[b.] Do those persons and places more often than not appear very clearly in your mind or are those images more often than not indistinct?
   a. more often clear b. more often indistinct
[c.] Since you have never physically seen these fictional settings and characters before, what and who is it then that you actually see? And also, where are those locations and settings, i.e. where/what are they based on? (Please expand on these two central questions below. Please also try not to think of a book that you first saw as a TV adaptation or as a film at the cinema. Instead choose a book that you read without the prior aid of Hollywood imagery)

QUESTION 15: A case study
Here are the closing lines from the popular novel The Great Gatsby. Some of you may know this novel well, some slightly and some not at all. Ideally, the fragment should be read in the context of the entire novel. Please do not read it from the screen but instead print and read it in whichever location/position you feel most apt to enhance your reading experience. I realize that I cannot make large scale demands on your time but if you would like to grasp the chance to read this novel right now for reasons of pure personal pleasure, then you are encouraged to do so. It is a short novel and can be easily read in a day. You certainly won’t regret reading it - or indeed re-reading it.

      Gatsby’s house was still empty when I left — the grass on his lawn had grown as long as mine. One of the taxi drivers in the village never took a fare past the entrance gate without stopping for a minute and pointing inside; perhaps it was he who drove Daisy and Gatsby over to East Egg the night of the accident, and perhaps he had made a story about it all his own. I didn’t want to hear it and I avoided him when I got off the train.

      I spent my Saturday nights in New York because those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I could still hear the music and the laughter, faint and incessant from his garden, and the cars going up and down his drive. One night I did hear a material car there, and saw its lights stop at his front steps. But I didn’t investigate. Probably it was some final guest who had been away at the ends of the earth and didn’t know that the party was over.

      On the last night, with my trunk packed and my car sold to the grocer, I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more. On the white steps an obscene word, scrawled by some boy with a piece of brick, stood out clearly in the moonlight, and I erased it, drawing my shoe raspingly along the stone. Then I wandered down to the beach and sprawled out on the sand.

      Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferry boat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes — a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last
and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his
breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither
understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to
his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat brooding on the old, unknown world I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he
first picked out the light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn,
and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know
that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the
dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future, that year by year recedes before
us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter — tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms
further ... And one fine morning —

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.
[F] Did the rhythm of the piece do anything to you emotionally? (Please look at the whole piece but please look especially carefully at the very last section starting from “And as I sat brooding on the old, unknown world ...” up until the end of the piece).

[G] What kind of central underlying themes do you think this piece deals with and what emotive effect, if any, did they have on you? (Please look at the whole piece but please look especially carefully at the very last section starting from “And as I sat brooding on the old, unknown world ...” up until the end of the piece).

[H] Did this piece do anything to you emotionally or bodily? (Please look at the whole piece but please look especially carefully at the very last section starting from “And as I sat brooding on the old, unknown world ...” up until the end of the piece).
   i. Yes  ii. No
If you answered, ‘yes’ could you please expand below.

[I] Did this passage have any ‘reader epiphany’ effect on you at all? (Please look at the whole piece but please look especially carefully at the very last section starting from “And as I sat brooding on the old, unknown world ...” up until the end of the piece).
   i. Yes  ii. No
If you have answered ‘yes’, could you please expand here in some detail.

[J] If you have answered ‘no’ to the above question, do you think that if these closing lines had been read in a more normal/natural novel-reading situation, i.e. in your own time and on your own terms, these closing lines might just have had the power to ‘trigger’ a reader epiphany in you or indeed in another reader?
   a. Yes  b. No

Please expand below.