

Diminishing the Distance

Imagining Empathic Bodies in Henry James's

The Beast in the Jungle

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Real and Fictional Others

Emotional involvement breathes life into a text. It is the net that is cast to capture the reader. The fictional quality of storyworld participants does not prevent us from immersing ourselves in genuine emotional experiences in relation to literary characters. Fictional characters' bodies, just as real bodies, display emotions by means of movement, gestures, and facial expressions and act as a window to fictional minds, providing insight into fictional personalities' emotional worlds and empathic behavior. Suzanne Keen argues that emotions even constitute the ground on which empathic responses are built (2007: ix), and Peter Stockwell points out that emotions serve the function of an evident intersection of literature and cognition (2002: 171). Mental processes are embodied phenomena, and since they are anchored in and function in accordance with our bodily experiences, mental processes are displayed and communicated by means of corporeality. More precisely, embodiment "encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms" (Varela et al. 1993: xvi). A literary character's corporeality, although fictional by nature, can exhibit embodied mental processes which are comparable to those conducted by human beings in real life and

serve as a reference point for gaining insights into mental mechanisms. In other words, since literary narratives “invariably contain corporeal aspects, whether in the most common form of visual perception or other sense experiences such as body movements, postures, gestures and facial expressions that can be decoded by readers effortlessly” (Brosch 2017: 172), examining literary texts adds valuable information to the comprehension of mechanisms in which corporeal aspects and techniques embody and transmit emotions and other mental processes.

In this article, I examine characters’ body language as an aspect of empathy development in Henry James’s novella *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903). In the novella, John Marcher is convinced that “[s]omething or other [lies] in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching beast in the jungle,” (James 1903: 561-562) and while waiting for what he believes to be his own particular but uncertain destiny, he meets his old acquaintance May Bartram. Bartram consents to spend her life with him in endless waiting for the inevitable to occur. And thus, the text chronicles the two protagonists’ entire lifespan, which is dominated by conversations about the mysterious nature of Marcher’s destiny. As the years pass by, Marcher appears as self-centered and insensitive to Bartram’s emotions, while she embodies the patient and insightful companion. There is, however, more behind the two protagonists’ dispositions than perceivable at first sight: the characters’ body language — more precisely, the way in which their bodies move inside the storyworld — point to a dimension of their inner lives and relationship that counteracts their spoken words, as well as their immediate actions and gives insight into an unspoken empathy development between them.

With what literary scholar David Herman refers to as the “first cognitive revolution,” research on cognition came into view in the mid-twentieth century within the fields of the natural sciences (2007: 312). For Herman, these investigations and insights provide discoveries that can be incorporated into narrative studies and constitute a crucial supplement to prior classical narratological endeavors (Herman 2007: 306). Lisa Zunshine observes that literary scholars today “draw on insights from cognitive science [and] approach them critically and pragmatically, thinking through them on the terms of their own discipline” (2015: 2). Thus, literature does not only borrow from scientific insights, but examining how literary texts present empathic bodies and embodied cognition also contributes to a better

understanding of cognitive processes outside the literary domain. In *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response*, Marissa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon call attention to the centrality of narrative in learning about mental processes and social relationships. “[U]nderstanding the dynamics of narrative,” they summarize by drawing on multiple positions,

can be instrumental in gaining knowledge about how the mind works [...] how individuals behave in social and personal relationships [...] how they acquire and organize knowledge and analyze themselves, the world, and others around them [...] how they shape their experience of reality [...] and how they are affected by cultural codes and norms (Bortolussi/Dixon 2003: 1).

In other words, narrative is an essential part of reality, and literature as the analysis of narrative can offer insights into these narrative aspects of individual and collective minds, including the role of emotions and empathy. An examination of the fictional, written account of characters’ nonverbal, bodily techniques of empathy in James’s novella draws attention to the relations between verbal and nonverbal aspects of empathy and to ways in which knowledge about the mind can be gained by representing techniques of the body with the means of narrative and literary imagination.

Approaching the Other: Empathic Bodies

The beginning of the twentieth century marks the emergence of the English term ‘empathy.’ Rooted in German aesthetics, empathy derives from *Einfühlung*, a concept coined by philosopher and psychologist Theodor Lipps. Before the twentieth century, empathy was commonly equated with sympathy within the English language (Keen 2007: 4). Historian Susan Lanzoni expounds the difference between the two terms, stating that

back in the eighteenth century ‘sympathy’ was the moral and aesthetic concept debated by philosophers David Hume, Adam Smith, and Edmund Burke. Nineteenth-century psychologists spoke of ‘sympathy’ as an interpersonal value in evolutionary and physiological frameworks [...]. Rather than feeling bad for someone else’s misery, empathy [enables] a comprehensive grasp of another’s experience (2018: 5-6).

Einfühlung was translated into empathy by Edward B. Titchener in 1908 and since then, empathy has passed through various different stages of definition and interpretation, depending on the particular research interest and scholar (Lanzoni 2018: 8). Social psychologist C. Daniel Batson offers a comprehensive compilation of possible definitions. In his essay *These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena*, he identifies diverse concepts philosophers and scientists commonly associate with the notion of empathy ranging from “knowing another person’s internal state” and “[a]dopting the posture or expression of an observed other,” over “[i]maginatively projecting oneself into another’s situation,” to “[o]ther-oriented emotion felt when another is perceived to be in need” or an emotion that “is felt *for* the other” (Batson 2009: 4-8). All of these criteria either add to gaining knowledge about another person’s inner life or replying to another’s affliction with sensitivity (Batson 2009: 12). Philosopher Peter Goldie points to the simulant quality of empathy. In *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* (2000), he explains that empathy in fact “involves imagining the experience of a narrative from [another] person’s point of view” (2000: 178). This process does not only involve a reconstruction of the other’s thoughts, but also her feelings and emotions, everything that can be part of that person’s narrative (Goldie 2000: 178). The key concept in Goldie’s account is experience. “[Y]our experience of me is invisible to me and my experience of you is invisible to you,” writes Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing and adds, “I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another” (qtd. in Palmer 2004: 9, italics in original). Naturally, we cannot invade the body and mind of another person, but Goldie points out that we can imaginatively try to reconstruct another person’s experience by drawing on our own empirical knowledge and thus developing empathic reactions with regard to the other. Pioneer in the philosophy of emotions, Martha C. Nussbaum also underscores the experiential quality of empathy. “‘Empathy’ is often used [...] to designate an imaginative reconstruction of another person’s experience, without any particular evaluation of that experience,” reads her definition of the term (Nussbaum 2001: 301-302). The nature of this experience is not of particular importance. Whether empathy results from sad, pleasant, painful, or even neutral circumstances does not play a major role, but it is grounded in the process of actively imagining

another person's condition (Nussbaum 2001: 302). Literary scholar Suzanne Keen underlines this statement by explaining that most examples pertaining to empathy tend to relate to negative emotions, although we can include positive emotions, such as happiness and joy in our account of empathy (2006: 209).

Keen's *Empathy and the Novel* (2007) connects empathy research with the study of literature. She defines empathy as a "vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect" (Keen 2007: 4) and further explains that an empathic situation is reached when we witness "another's emotional state," hear "about another's condition," or even in the process of reading (Keen 2007: 4). Her definition of the concept relies on an emotional basis and suggests access to an involuntary, genuine, and unconscious display of sentiments, as opposed to controlled or feigned emotion mediation, which would distort the interpretation of a character's body language (Keen 2007: 4). Keen emphasizes that empathy is sometimes even referred to as an "emotion in its own right" and explains that in experiencing empathic appeal we indeed feel what we assume "to be the emotions of others" (Keen 2006: 208), thereby underlining the concept's affective component as compared to the manifold definitions provided by Batson, whose catalogue of empathy definitions also includes the purely cognitive side of empathy in the act of perspective taking.

Emotions are an essential basis in both perspectives on empathy, the cognitive as well as the affective. In both cases, emotions are a window to the mind and the door to empathic experience. In other words, emotions and empathy are inextricably linked: in order to react empathically to another's state of mind, we have to gain access to the other's emotional condition. At this point corporeal signals come into play. Already in 1953, Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein notes in *Philosophical Investigations* that "[t]he human body is the best picture of the human soul" (1953: 178), and points to the outward corporeal representation of what has often been declared to be vague and intangible. Nussbaum, as well, set forth that "all human experiences are embodied [...] In that sense, human emotions are all bodily processes" (2001: 58). Body language such as postures, gestures, or facial expressions are only some of the features that give access to our inner landscape. Support for this proposition can also be found within neuroscientific research. Antonio Damásio, for instance, specializes in the role that emotions play with regard to the body and consciousness. In *Looking*

for Spinoza: *Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (2003), he explores the seemingly unexplorable; that is, feelings and emotions. Damásio sheds light on the shadow of subjectivity surrounding emotions and treats the concept as mostly public “actions or movements” (2003: 28). They are “visible to others as they occur in the face, in the voice, in specific behaviors,” he argues (Damásio 2003: 28). However, he adds that the terms ‘emotions’ and ‘feelings’ are not to be used interchangeably, only the latter fulfilling the condition of subjectivity, as they are invariably concealed and only accessible to the possessor. Or, as Damásio describes the concept: feelings are “the most private property of the organism in whose brain they occur” (2003: 28). He draws on a most apposite comparison to illustrate the difference between emotions and feelings: “Emotions play out in the theater of the body. Feelings play out in the theater of the mind” (Damásio 2003: 28).

Many corporeal phenomena are then outward emotional manifestations. Groundbreaking work in the research field of bodily signals as revealing emotional interiors has been conducted by psychologist Paul Ekman. Focusing mainly on the recognition and interpretation of cross-cultural facial expressions pertaining to emotions, as well as the identification of deceit via corporeal phenomena, he has paved the way for studies on the communicative quality of emotions (see Ekman 1988; 2003). And empathic reactions, too, can be manifest in the body. One way of identifying these reactions is by means of mimicked body movement or imitation. Already in the 1880s, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche commented on the mimetic effect of what he referred to as *Mitempfindung*, suggesting that we imitate others in order to understand their emotional condition. In *Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile* (1881), he expounds:

Um den Anderen zu verstehen, das heisst um sein Gefühl in uns nachzubilden, gehen wir [...] häufig auf den Grund seines so und so bestimmten Gefühls zurück [...] indem wir den Ausdruck seiner Augen, seiner Stimme, seines Ganges, seiner Haltung [...] an unserem Leibe nachbilden [...]. Dann entsteht in uns ein ähnliches Gefühl, in Folge einer alten Association von Bewegung und Empfindung [...]. In dieser Geschicklichkeit, die Gefühle des Anderen zu verstehen, haben wir es sehr weit gebracht, und fast unwillkürlich sind wir in Gegenwart eines Anderen immer in der Übung dieser Geschicklichkeit [...] (Nietzsche 1881b: 121-122).

Empathy. – To understand another person, that is, *to imitate his feelings in ourselves*, we do indeed often go back to the *reason* for his feeling thus or thus and ask for example: *why* is he troubled? – so as then for the same reason to become troubled ourselves; but it is much more usual to omit to do this and instead to produce the feeling in ourselves after the *effects* it exerts and displays on the other person by imitating with our own body the expression of his eyes, his voice, his walk, his bearing (or even their reflection in word, picture, music). Then a similar feeling arises in us in consequence of an ancient association between movement and sensation, which has been trained to move backwards or forwards in either direction. We have brought our skill in understanding the feelings of others to a high state of perfection and in the presence of another person we are always almost involuntarily practising this skill [...] (Nietzsche 1881a: 89, italics in original).

According to Nietzsche, we are able to reproduce other people's feelings by reproducing their physical signs with our own corporeality. Thus, it is possible for us to arouse similar or even the same feelings in ourselves. We are able to use this ability whenever we are in the presence of others. In 2009, social scientist Rick van Baaren and neuroscientist Jean Decety examined this crucial connection between mimicry and empathy, linking imitation to the interaction with our social environment by arguing that "[i]mitation is, in essence, the bridge leading to empathy" (2009: 33-38). Batson also draws attention to the mimetic effect of empathy. "Adopting the posture or expression of an observed other is a definition of empathy in many dictionaries," he explains (Batson 2009: 4). Hence, neuroscientific research takes "mimicked neural representations" as the basis for empathy (Batson 2009: 5). This approach gained support by the discovery of mirror neurons in 1992, a particular type of braincells which fire when a specific body movement is performed, when the movement is only observed or even when a sound associated with a motion is heard (Iacoboni 2007: 236). However, the existence of mirror neurons is still subject to debate. The enthusiastic reception of these particular braincells was followed by a wave of critique pertaining to the exact neural foundation of mirror neurons, also with regard to empathy and not least because of the manifold types of this concept (Lanzoni 2018: 252). Still, body language can be understood as a mirror of one's inner life and consequently subject to an imitation effect. As we feel empathy for one another, we often mimic body movements performed by our fellow human beings. Furthermore, increased imitation of

other persons is associated with a heightened concern for mental and emotional states of others. In other words, “[e]mpathic people tend to mimic what other people do” (Iacoboni 2007: 238-239).

In essence, emotions become manifest in and visible through the body. Consequently, the identification of empathy development between human beings is highly dependent on corporeal phenomena, as the physical manifestation of emotions. The approximation of bodies and the imitation of body movements provide information on the nature and degree of empathy between persons. This is equally true for the real and the fictional sphere. The identification and interpretation of these corporeal motions require a suitable decoding device. The study of kinesthetics constitutes a fruitful ground for research on empathy, inasmuch as it correlates with the emergence of the English term ‘empathy.’ Psychologist Edward B. Titchener already established a connection between the moving body and empathic reactions when he built his understanding of empathy on the grounds of kinesthetic imagery (Lanzoni 2018: 58). In his treatise *Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes* (1909), he explains that he associates the concept ‘stately’ with a heroine, “a tall figure, the only clear part of which is a hand holding up a steely grey skirt,” (Titchener 1909: 13) and adds: “Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind’s muscles. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of *Einfühlung*” (Titchener 1909: 21). Recent studies within the literary domain have also underlined the analogousness of kinesthetic mechanisms and the concept of empathy. Guillemette Bolens, for instance, argues that empathy is a kinesthetic operation and can be accessed via kinesic intelligence. Following Ellen Spolksy’s account of kinesic intelligence, she defines the term as “our human capacity to discern and interpret body movements, body postures, gestures, and facial expressions in real situations as well as in our reception of visual art” (Bolens 2008: 1). This particular knowledge is rooted in our awareness of the manner in which single body parts interact and how they relate to the body in its entirety (Spolksy 1996: 159). Bolens’s account of empathy is grounded in what she terms “perceptual simulations” (2008: 41). “In order to understand an uncommon gesture or a polysemic smile, we consciously or unconsciously simulate the possible somatosensory precepts linked to their kinesic appearance. The process of empathy is based on such perceptual simulations,” she argues (Bolens

2008: 41). In other words, as we empathize with others, we mentally reconstruct what we believe to be the sentiments of the other and we do so with the help of our “own kinesthetic memory and knowledge” (Bolens 2008: 3). Bolens, like Goldie, refers to a simulation effect as far as empathy is concerned: we are not able to exactly feel another person’s kinesthetic sensations, others’ coordinated movements of their body which are operated and transmitted by the brain (Bolens 2008: 2-3). Nevertheless, kinesic signals, defined as “the interactional perception of movements performed by oneself or another person in relation to visuomotor variables such as [...] speed of a gesture or the relation of limbs to the rest of the body” serve a communicative function and may well be taken as a tool in order to deduce a person’s sensations (Bolens 2008: 2-3). Kinesic signals are not only applicable to real-life encounters, but can also be transferred to literary narratives, as explored by Bolens who demonstrates the “interpretive value of kinesic intelligence” within fiction (2008: 1-2). The analysis of Henry James’s novella *The Beast in the Jungle* in the following section of this essay will show how kinesic signals in a literary piece possess the power to reveal empathic behavior as mediated through bodily movement.

Both Bolens and Keen acknowledge the interdisciplinary character of studies in narrative empathy. Empathy research stemming from diverse academic disciplines such as the neurosciences, psychology, philosophy or the social sciences has found its way into the domain of literature. Alan Palmer, pioneer in the study of fictional minds, underlines the value of illuminating “the study of fictional minds by making use of the insights of some of the disciplines relating to real minds” (2004: 4). In his groundbreaking work *Fictional Minds* (2004), he argues for the utmost importance of fictional characters’ minds as the core of our comprehension of a literary text’s operation “because, in essence, narrative is the description of fictional mental functioning” (Palmer 2004: 12).

Literature then serves as a fruitful ground for examining mechanisms of empathy mediation between fictional characters, these mechanisms being tied to similar mental processes as occur during the deciphering of bodily resonances when being face to face with other persons in real life. The automatic cognitive capacity to visualize the fictional other enables us to discern corporeal motions almost as accurately as if we saw the character standing in front of us. Literature may thus provide insight into real mind empathy transmission. Hence, literary studies do not only profit from in-

sights stemming from other disciplines but research in the literary imagination can give meaningful input to scientific research as well.

The Emotional March Towards May: Empathy Meditation in *The Beast in the Jungle*

In Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle*, two bodies are in constant communication with each other. The interplay of corporeal motion inside the storyworld unfolds in two dimensions, operating along the horizontal as well as vertical axis. Each of the movements is part of a separate mode of empathy mediation and as such discloses distinct forms of empathic development in the characters' personal and endless endeavors to gain access to the other's emotional disposition. In other words, May Bartram's and John Marcher's movements towards and away from each other, and their bodies' upward and downward motions, eventually exhibit a particular empathic imbalance which can hardly be discerned on a purely verbal level of character representation. Moreover, the imitation of the other complements an active diminishing of space between their two bodies, thus strengthening the interplay of empathy in the story.

The novella opens with Bartram's and Marcher's encounter at the establishment of Weatherend. Their meeting starts out with a wide distance between their bodies: they sit "much separated, at a very long table" (James 1903: 549). Shortly afterwards, it is Bartram who diminishes the distance between them and initiates a conversation when she "finally [drifts] toward him" (550), while Marcher first "wander[s] at [his] will," is "lost in the crowd" (548), and "need[s] some straying apart" (549). Bartram's slow and targeted body movement contrasts with Marcher's disoriented and restless motions, denoting an asymmetry of corporeal movement in the beginning which points to an equally distinct asymmetry of empathy distribution. Bartram consents to joining Marcher in his wait for his exceptional destiny to strike: "I'll watch with you" (558), she approves and accepts to remain near him.

After their "renewal of acquaintance" at Weatherend (548) and the consolidation of their relationship over an undefined span of several years, Bartram is dying and Marcher visits her for the last time at her house. While Bartram's bodily motion is formerly aligned to Marcher's — moving

together with him through London (559), “accompany[ing] him to the opera [...] a dozen nights in the month” (570), and their bodies being “literally afloat together” (559) — she is now mainly seated in her chair: “She kept the house as she had never done; he had to go to her to see her – she could meet him nowhere now, though there was scarce a corner of their loved old London in which she hadn’t in the past, at one time or another, done so” (573). This moving together on a horizontal plane also heralds the start of a vertical locomotion. Bartram’s way downward, towards her grave, starts out with her being tied to her sitting accommodation: “he found her always seated by her fire in the deep old-fashioned chair she was less and less able to leave” (573). Her body becomes subject to a postural change; she is confined to a deep chair, meaning that she goes from standing upright and moving in line with John’s physicality, as well as constantly moving towards him, to approaching the bottom of earth. She descends from Marcher’s eye level to a lower position in which her body turns into a seated entity. In other words, the initial lowering of her body is suggested by her beginning to sit “motionless and white in her chair” (579), and the posture is associated with a dwindling of empathy. Crucially, her attempt to approach Marcher once more goes hand in hand with moving her body into a standing position:

“No, no!” she repeated. “I’m with you – don’t you see? – still.” And as to make it more *vivid* to him she rose from her chair – a movement she seldom risked in these days – and showed herself, all draped and all soft, in her fairness and slimness. “I haven’t forsaken you.” (579-580, my emphasis)

The emphasis on the communicative function of movement – Bartram is described as rising to Marcher’s eye level so as to make her connection to and support of him more explicit – draws attention to the nonverbal aspect of empathy. Bartram physically moves towards Marcher who stands by the chimney-piece, and her changed position recalls both her youth and communicates to Marcher her continued ability and willingness to help him. That the nonverbal mediation of empathy becomes prominent again further clarifies with her subsequent movement: “She had, with her gliding step, diminished the distance between them, and she stood nearer to him, close to him, a minute, as if still charged with the unspoken” (581). Reducing the physical gap between their bodies, she succeeds in ‘making vivid’

her support: noting her “movement and attitude,” Marcher concludes that “she had something more to give him,” and feels her “contact imponderably pressing” (581-582). Bartram’s prominent corporeal motion underlines the quality of bodily movement to add ‘vividness’ to meaning in the narrative. Her body reveals Marcher’s anticipated truth — the nothingness that shall dominate his life in the end and his unconscious neglect of Bartram as his savior from this nothingness — although he initially does not realize her complete influence on his own corporeality. When his time of revelation finally occurs, there is indication that this ‘vividness’ has already transferred to Marcher: “So *she* had seen it, while he didn’t, and so she served at this hour to drive the truth home. It was the truth, vivid and monstrous, that all the while he had waited the wait was itself his portion” (596, italics in original). It is by means of Bartram’s body movement in a last imitational act — her rising to make vivid her empathy by mirroring his bodily position and be on his eye level again — that this truth is conveyed to Marcher and that the whole meaning of his existence unfolds in front of him. The “end of what she had been intending” (582) is again marked by a corporeal movement when she regains her seat. Yet, the continuing effects of their empathic connection show in the first and only explicit reference to a skin-to-skin contact in the story: Bartram puts her hand on Marcher’s, which rests on the arm of her chair (585). The fact that she again reduces — or here even overcomes — the distance between their bodies and mirrors the posture of his hand, acts as a clear sign of her still existing empathy for Marcher.

The decay of Bartram’s physicality prevents the active transfer of empathy, and this has a clear effect on Marcher, although he is not able to recognize it. Analyzing his bodily movement shows the change however: he begins to stay at Bartram’s home, restricting his motion to a small space and thus mirroring her decreased mobility. Entering her personal territory, his body succumbs to habits of movement formerly characterizing Bartram’s physicality. As Marcher is suggested to stand motionless at the chimneypiece during their conversation, he exhibits an inhibition of movement that mirrors Bartram’s loss of mobility due to her illness. John’s formerly unsettled motion — restless and wandering — has come to a temporary halt. In close proximity to Bartram, his usual restlessness is tempered by her disposition to pause for a moment: “She only kept him waiting, however; that is he only waited” (581). Later, he does not even

stand around randomly in the room, as he used to do on his previous visits, but he is, uncharacteristically, “seated by her chair” (584), lowering himself to be at eye level with Bartram. Further gestures signal his increasing empathy, for example his leaning closer to her and putting his hand on the arm of her chair (585), touching an object associated with Bartram if not herself. From the point of Bartram’s renewed avowal of support and empathy with Marcher and the only depicted instance of skin-to-skin contact after he moves towards her, Marcher continues to physically approach Bartram’s body, even after she has died: his body begins to align with hers, not only by pausing in his horizontal movement but also by mirroring Bartram’s motions in a downward movement. Descriptions of Marcher’s bodily movements gradually incorporate instances of vertical change. Bartram’s physical decline goes hand in hand with an increase in Marcher’s vertical movement, particularly of his sitting down, thus suggesting an increased degree of empathic mirroring from his side.

Finally, May Bartram undergoes one final bodily downward movement. She dies, is buried, and this creates an empathic imbalance in their relationship that Marcher is not able to compensate in her absence. Consequently, he again aims to approach her, beginning a downward motion and, by mirroring her body movement, signaling emotions and empathy for her that reach their highest point as his despair over her death becomes overwhelming. Marcher’s strikingly increased emotions and empathy grasps at nothing — as she is dead, he cannot achieve closeness by touching her or mirroring her movements. His frustration is tied to the awareness that now that he is ready to emotionally and empathically respond to Bartram and her feelings for him, he is stuck in the same imbalance of empathy which Bartram experiences before she passes away: if during most of their time together Marcher does not respond to her, the roles are reversed after death. Even the miserable attempt to return to his old habits of traveling the world in pointless wandering and returning to his former self of continual and aimless movement does not bring about the desired relief:

He stayed away, after this, for a year; he visited the depths of Asia, spending himself on scenes of romantic interest, of superlative sanctity; but what was present to him everywhere was that for a man who had known what *he* had known the world was vulgar and vain [...] and there were hours when, before the temples of gods and the

sepulchres of kings, his spirit turned for nobleness of association to the barely discriminated slab in the London suburb (591, italics in original).

Beneath the London slab lies the only person that could have balanced his empathy and although she is dead and her body disintegrated by the end of the story, her effect on Marcher's emotional life persists. His reaction to the loss of his companion's body entails a desperate continuation of approach, although Bartram is, in the end of the novella, buried and her corporeality beyond reach. At the cemetery, he kneels down, lowering his body in imitation of Bartram's previous downward movement. Robbed of the empathy that she has bestowed on him for many years, he tries to move closer to its former source but does not manage to establish a connection: he kneels "on the stones, however, in vain; they kept what they concealed" (591). If formerly, his sitting down on a chair next to May Bartram marks his growing empathy, his even lower bodily position on the grave signals his further emotional and empathic openness.

He then rests on the "low stone table" of her grave, remaining there "without power to move," so that his body still more closely resembles her lifeless frame (594). Marcher's desire to stretch "himself on the slab that was ready to take him, treating it as a place prepared to receive his last sleep" underlines his desire to be as close to Bartram as possible (594). Traces of Bartram's perpetual willingness to empathically respond to Marcher resonate in the phrase, characterizing the slab as "ready to take him" and "prepared to receive" him (594). Finally flinging "himself, face down, on the tomb" (597), Marcher ends his desperate attempt to approach his friend and once again enable empathic exchange: given that she is lying on her back inside her coffin, his prostrate position brings him as close as possible to 'face to face' with her, just as during their first encounter at Weatherend when "some accident of grouping brought them face to face" (549), during their conversations when "the long look they exchanged held them together" (558), or on his many visits as they frequently find themselves so often "face to face" (584). Thus, the last scene, in which Marcher flings himself at Bartram's grave, represents his final endeavor to diminish the space between their two bodies, even if this means to join her in death.

Thus, May Bartram's physical disease triggers two effects. Firstly, it causes her growing inability to continue her empathy transfer for her male

counterpart since her body is no longer able to function as the source of this transfer. Secondly, and as a consequence thereof, John Marcher begins to empathically react to Bartram and finally finds himself in her position, fighting with the empathic imbalance caused by his own initial ignorance and her death. His attempted approach and mirroring of his companion's body movement acts as evidence of his newly discovered capacity for empathy. By creating two characters whose bodies continually balance on the empathic scale, James elevates the nonverbal layer of the novella. While Bartram's corporeal motions quite plainly suggest an emotional attraction towards Marcher, the latter's movements are designed to give insight into this character's empathy development which is not perceivable on the verbal level of character interaction in the novella and which reveals Marcher's increased corporeal imitation and approach towards Bartram finally resulting in empathy transmittance without reciprocation.

Imagined Others

Literature enables readers to acquire immediate insight into another person's mind, which is why reading novels, short stories or poems has its own particular appeal. It appears natural that literary texts provide us with the in-depth look into interior worlds that we often miss or have difficulties interpreting in real-world encounters. "Only in fiction is the mind of another transparent," notes Martha Nussbaum in this respect (2001: 328). In this sense, we indulge in the mental states of characters as made possible by different kinds of narrative techniques and "we have learned to accept this as perfectly natural" (Palmer 2004: 9-10). However, the verbal component of fictional minds constitutes only one constituent for deciphering the interior workings of fictional minds. Similar to real-life encounters, we also have to take nonverbal signals into account. In his criticism of the speech category approach to the study of fictional minds, Palmer maintains that the verbal component is generally overestimated in thought (2002: 31). Rather, he argues, inner speech should be considered as only a minor part of "the total activity of fictional minds" (Palmer 2002: 31). Indeed, as the analysis of James's novella shows, the fictional body plays a crucial role in mental processes such as empathy transmittance.

Emotions possess the power to reveal a person's private inside and may trigger bodily empathic reactions. This being the case, emotions are a crucial communicative device. In other words, "[a]ll emotions use the body as their theater" (Damásio 1999: 51). This theater of the body enables a visible interplay of bodily responses, emotions, and empathy in fiction. Storyworld participants' transfer of empathy can therefore be understood through a close analysis of corporeal phenomena in narratives. In the case of Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle*, approaching and imitating bodies disclose nonverbally conveyed empathy development, frequently contradicting expectations evoked by the characters' verbal communication with each other. In her analysis of James's novel *The Golden Bowl* (1904), Vanessa L. Ryan argues that the author "frequently reminds us that the narrative is an attempt to put into words things that were not perhaps ever verbal," and explains that he "dances around the line of the linguistically expressible and the unintelligible, or unsayable [...] with an [...] emphasis on gesture, pause, and almost detachable scenes" (2012: 124). James's focus on the unspeakable as mediated through corporeal phenomena dominates most, if not all of his works and *The Beast in the Jungle* constitutes no exception in this regard. Since James's novella foregrounds fictional characters' inner workings as operating inside the nonverbal domain of character representation, it pushes the verbal dimension of their dispositions into the background of the story: "James develops a style dependent on obliquity and indirection that captures the ineffability of consciousness, demonstrating how it defies rationalization as it does verbalization" (Ryan 2012: 25). In this sense, James succeeds in capturing the verbally inexpressible by means of nonverbal bodily behavior.

Fictional characters' minds are not only brought to the fore by means of direct or indirect speech and thought, but mental processes such as empathy mediation in a literary text become manifest in and are made visible through storyworld participants' bodies. Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle* proves to be an illustrative case study for the analysis of empathy development as transmitted by means of techniques of the body. Being empathic — that is, approaching another person in order to reconstruct her inner thoughts and feelings — essentially entails a reduction of space between oneself and the other. As I have shown, a diminishing of distance between and imitation of corporeal forms marks heightened empathic conduct. Since "[f]iction and poetry are constructed in the imagination"

(Oatley 2011: 7), we make sense of empathy in narratives on the basis of an active imaginative reproduction of corporeal movement. Literature thus “offer[s] special access to the embodied and reflexive mind that is denied to science” (Ryan 2012: 25) and can provide insight into the role of the literary imagination in shaping and understanding bodies and their movements and techniques.

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