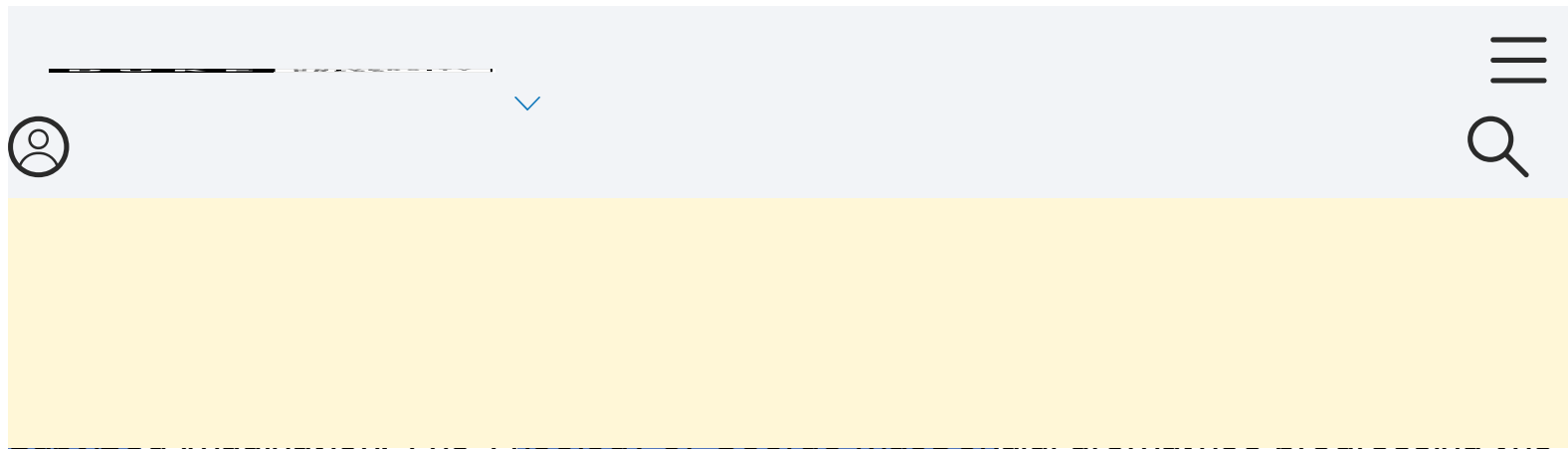


Empathetic Hardy: Bounded,
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Empathetic Hardy: Bounded, Ambassadorial, and Broadcast Strategies of Narrative Empathy

Suzanne Keen

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Suzanne Keen, Guest Editor

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Pursuing my earlier theory of strategic narrative empathy, this essay shows Thomas Hardy's bounded strategic empathy for his fictional creations, Wessex countrymen and women; his ambassadorial strategic empathy for animals and select members of despised outgroups; and his broadcast strategic empathy for feeling humanity in an indifferent, Godless universe. Hardy's work demonstrates engagement with a variety of empathetic narrative strategies outlined in my *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), from the fellow-feeling of eighteenth-century moral sentimentalism, to the role-taking imagining of Romanticism, to the projection of feeling onto inanimate objects theorized by late-nineteenth-century German aesthetics as *Einfühlung*. Hardy's diction and notes show his knowledge of the related concepts, sympathy and altruism. At the time, *sympathy* (feeling *for* someone) was differentiated from *empathy* (feeling *with* someone); and for Hardy, *altruism* (nowadays seen as a consequence of empathy and sympathy) included such empathy. Hardy's strategic empathizing in his novels, in his epic poem *The Dynasts*, and in some of his shorter verses, I argue, links his representational strategies to his evolutionary meliorism and his belief that individual altruism might yet alleviate the painful drama of human existence. The essay details Hardy's employment of aesthetic *Einfühlung* to represent inanimate objects, to feel with the dead, and, paradoxically, to imagine the evolution of consciousness on the part of the unfeeling Immanent Will.

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