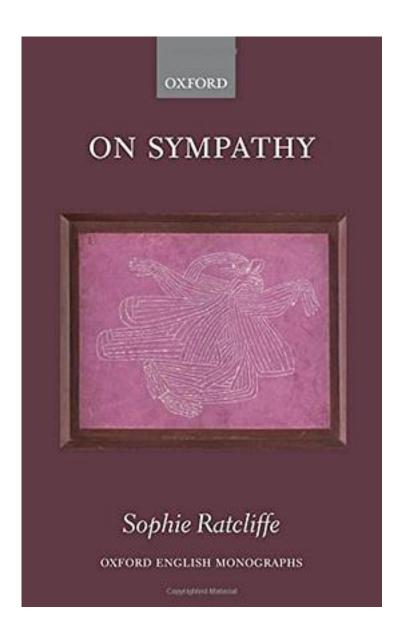
## On Sympathy



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What happens when we engage with fictional characters? How do our imaginative engagements bear on our actions in the wider world? Moving between the literary and the philosophical, Sophie Ratcliffe considers the ways in which readers feel when they read, and how they understand ideas of feeling. On Sympathy uses dramatic monologues based on The Tempest as its focus, and broaches questions about fictional belief, morality, and the dynamics between readers, writers, and fictional characters. The book challenges conventionally accepted ideas of literary identification and sympathy, and asks why the idea of sympathy has been seen as so important to liberal humanist theories of literary value. Individual chapters on Robert Browning, W. H. Auden, and Samuel Beckett, who all drew on Shakespeare's late play, offer new readings of some major works, while the book's epilogue tackles questions of contemporary sympathy. Ranging from the nineteenth century to the present day, this important new study sets out to clarify and challenge current assumptions about reading and sympathetic belief, shedding new light on the idea and ideal of sympathy, the workings of affect and allusion, and the ethics of reading.

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