

## “THE PERFECT COMMUNION”: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BODY IN *THE SECRET SHARER*

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the sense of physical presence in *The Secret Sharer*, and analyzes how the narrator matures into a seaman worthy of a command by developing this sense. The paper is part of my research on the emotional sub-text of Conrad’s works. According to Najder, the work is based on Conrad’s “specialist knowledge as a seaman.” Seamanship demands a developed sense of physical presence. This theme is also important in *Under Western Eyes*, written during the same period. However, according to Jeremy Hawthorn, Conrad’s concern with “communicative and expressive potentialities of the physical human body” has not been given sufficient attention, and the same can be said about this work. In this paper, first, I will discuss the theme of physical presence; second, I will analyze the captain’s relationship with Leggett from this perspective; and, finally, I will argue that the captain’s relation with the ship changes as he develops his physical sense.

**Keywords:** *The Secret Sharer*, body, physical presence, seamanship

In his essay, *Memorandum on the Scheme for Fitting Out a Sailing Ship*, Conrad stresses the importance of physical exertion in seamen’s work: “In its essence life at sea has been always a healthy life, and part of that was owing to the very nature of the physical exertions required” (*Last Essays* 54). He maintains that the physical work that seamen do brings them into intimate contact with the physical aspect of the ship, such as its machinery, and enables them to “learn the feel” (53) of the ship. Moreover, he claims that physical work, when it is done intelligently, develops what he calls “the sailor’s mentality” (54); it is through physical exertion that seamen develop their typical way of thinking.

In spite of Conrad’s stress on bodily exertion in seamen’s life, critics of *The Secret Sharer* tend to stress the mental aspect of the story, reflecting, perhaps, the traditional Western view of the body. In the “Introduction” to *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, David Hillman and Ulrika Maude say:

The body has always been a contested site. In the Christian and Humanist traditions, it has often been seen as a mere auxiliary to the self, a vehicle or object that houses the mind or the soul. In these views of embodiment, the self is seen as a transcendent entity whose existence depends

only contingently on the body, which the “true” self will eventually shed like a defunct item of clothing. (1)

Albert Guerard, for instance, regards *The Secret Sharer* as the “most frankly psychological of Conrad’s shorter works” (21); Barbara Johnson and Marjorie Garber assert that “*The Secret Sharer* seems an ideal ... text on which to base an introduction to the varieties of psychoanalytic criticism” (628); and C. B. Cox maintains that “... the captain’s quest for self-identification will not be helped by his perceptions of exterior objects. He must seek to find himself in his subjective consciousness...” (144).

In contrast, some critics emphasize the importance of the literal aspect of *The Secret Sharer*. Cedric Watts, for instance, criticizes the psychoanalytic approach by saying that “The stress on strange kinship has encouraged some critics to see Leggatt as some kind of Freudian ‘id’ or Jungian ‘anima,’ as a repressed part of the hero’s psyche, but this endeavor is resisted by the tale’s predominant realism which establishes fully the external existence of Leggatt” (134). Similarly, Ian Watt calls into question the non-literal approach to the work by drawing the reader’s attention to the emotional attributes of Leggatt—his conspicuous self-possession, the ability to control his feelings:

The reader can enjoy the narrative at its literal level, and must decide for himself how much more Conrad intends; and this must include why, if he intends Leggatt to represent the captain’s unconscious, he makes him so conspicuously self-possessed. (31)

Does Conrad intend the story to be read at its literal level or non-literal level? In this essay, I would like to address the narrative at its literal level, with special focus on the potential of the body to express, communicate, and, above all, to learn. First, I will examine the significance of the physical potential to express and communicate in reference to what Jeremy Hawthorn calls “bodily communication”; second, I will discuss the physical potential of the captain to learn by citing the two learning processes introduced by J. K. Kadowaki; and, finally, I will argue that *The Secret Sharer* can be interpreted at its literal level by focusing on the physical aspect of the characters, and suggest an answer to Ian Watt’s question why Conrad makes Leggatt so conspicuously self-possessed.

## THE BODY’S POTENTIAL TO EXPRESS AND COMMUNICATE

*The Secret Sharer* was composed in December 1909 during a break in the composition of *Under Western Eyes*, and, therefore, it reflects some features of the longer work. One such feature is the theme of the body. In *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*, under the chapter heading of “*Under Western Eyes* and the Expressive Body,” Jeremy Hawthorn expresses his concern for a lack of critical attention to what he calls “bodily communication”:

*Under Western Eyes* is reiteratively preoccupied with these three areas of human communication, with human word language, facial expression and eye-contact, and what we can call bodily communication. Conrad’s concern with language and with “seeing” in the novel has received considerable critical attention already, but it has not always been recognized that the communicative and expressive potentialities of the physical human body are also closely scrutinized in this work. (236)

According to Hawthorn, *Under Western Eyes* is full of references to “the expressive physical disposition of the human body: posture, gesture, movement, touch, expression” (236), and it is necessary to pay close attention to them because “such detailing is easy to miss, for it is rarely foregrounded, and often takes place in the context of fuller description” (240).

Hawthorn’s concern for the lack of critical attention to “bodily communication” in *Under Western Eyes* applies also to the criticisms of *The Secret Sharer*. As in *Under Western Eyes*, there are many references to posture, gesture, movement, touch, and expression, including eye-contact, in *The Secret Sharer*. For example, there is a reference to touch in the opening scene of the story when the captain is resting his hand lightly on the rail of the ship, feeling as if he were putting his hand “on the shoulder of a trusted friend” (82). Likewise, there are references to posture, gesture, movement and expression in the scene in which Leggatt narrowly escapes detection by the steward: There is a reference to posture in the way Leggatt stands, a reference to gesture and movement in the way he raises his hands to convey the feeling of relief, and a reference to facial expression on the look of concern on his face:

I saw him standing bolt-upright in the narrow recessed part ... . Motionless, with a grave face, he raised his hands slightly at me in a gesture which meant clearly, “Heavens! What a narrow escape!” (109)

Finally, there are references to eye-contact, for instance, when the captain and Leggatt part in the cabin, they look into each other’s eyes: “Our eyes met; several seconds elapsed, till, our glances still mingled, I extended my hand and turned the lamp out” (115).

Out of the three areas of human communication that *Under Western Eyes* is preoccupied with—word language, facial expression and eye-contact, and bodily communication, *The Secret Sharer* is least preoccupied with word language. This is because Leggatt is a stowaway and, therefore, he and the captain have to keep their oral communication to a minimum to avoid detection by the crew. The strained circumstance, on the other hand, could have propelled them to develop the two other areas of communication—the facial expression and eye-contact, and the bodily expression.

## THE BODY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO LEARN

*The Secret Sharer* not only features the potential of the body to express and communicate, but also the potential of the body to learn. Jacob Lothe maintains that the

story “definitely dramatizes an important learning process on the part of the narrator,” but indicates that “problems arise if we enquire into the terms and possible results of this learning” (69). In *The Secret Sharer*, the terms of the learning are just as important as the results of learning; and, moreover, they reflect the learning process suggested by Conrad in the essay *Memorandum* quoted earlier. The learning process proceeds from physical exertion to mentality, in other words, from the body to the mind.

Learning first through the body is not just typical of seamen, but is characteristic also of certain forms of religious training, such as Zen. In *Zen and the Bible*, J. K. Kadowaki, a Japanese Jesuit priest who is also trained in Zen Buddhism, contrasts the learning process of Zen with the learning process of Christianity:

Learning through the body is a fundamental of Zen. It is a way which proceeds “from the body to the mind.” We can call it a method of practicing with the whole body. Christianity took the opposite direction as it developed in the West. The Western way is to first reflect rationally, make a judgment, will to do something, and finally use the body to carry out the act. This way of proceeding can be called “from reason to the body.” (10)

According to Kadowaki’s definition, the body is “the whole person as seen from its physical nature,” and it ultimately covers “the conscious and the unconscious” (31). Kadowaki maintains that the word “body” is often used in this sense even in the Bible, as the Bible “does not separate the body from the soul as the Greeks did, nor does it hold that the soul is noble and the body is base...” (122). Although the two learning processes take opposite directions, they both cover the mind and the body.

In Zen, the direction of the learning process proceeds “from the body to the mind,” and it is practiced in the form of meditation: “... by first adjusting one’s posture in a proper position, regulating the breath and composing the mind” (10). It is analogous to the learning process of the seamen in the sense that it proceeds from physical exertions to a mentality—“from the body to the mind.”

The analogy between the learning process of seamen and that of Zen practitioners, of course, does not suggest that Conrad was a Zen Buddhist. However, an attempt to interpret *The Secret Sharer* in terms of the learning process that proceeds “from the body to the mind” is not so absurd as it seems. In his essay, *Autocracy and War*, occasioned by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, Conrad remarks:

... it is from the East that wonders of patience and wisdom have come to a world of men who set the value of life in the power to act rather than in the faculty of meditation. (75)

The allusion to “the faculty of meditation” suggests that Conrad knew something about the Eastern way of meditation, and the words, “wonders of patience and wisdom” indicate that he appreciated its value. Thinking about the Russo-Japanese War has somehow reminded Conrad of “the faculty of meditation” valued in the East, and he was moved to contrast it with “the power to act” valued in the West.

The purpose of this essay, however, is not to discuss the effects of meditation or the merits and demerits of the two contrasting learning processes. It is to examine whether *The Secret Sharer* can be interpreted at its literal level; and, if it can be inter-

preted through the physical presence of the characters, the captain’s learning process may have taken the direction of first of all learning from the body.

## LEARNING “FROM THE BODY TO THE MIND”

We perceive the physical presence of ourselves and others through our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Of the five senses the predominant sense is sight; Jacob Lothe remarks that in *The Secret Sharer* “Visual impression constitutes the narrator’s primary source of information” (60), and Daniel R. Schwarz in “*The Secret Sharer*” as an Act of Memory discusses “retrospective seeing” (97). It should be noted, however, that sight is a physical sense; Kadowaki reminds us that “when you look at a view, the principal role is played by the seeing eyes, so it would be more correct to say that it is the body that is seeing.” Sights we see are the impressions received by the bodily eyes.

*The Secret Sharer* opens with the captain alone on the deck of his ship allowing his eyes to roam through the scenery of the sea and the land that surrounds him. First, his eyes wander from the mysterious “lines of fishing-stakes” on the right to “a group of barren islets” on the left (81). He then glances at the receding tug and notes the dividing line between the land and the sea, broken only by the estuary of the river Meinam with the Great Pagoda in its background. Finally, his eyes rest on the deck of his ship, his first command, whose fitness of the task of accomplishing the long journey is not yet known to him. He puts his hand lightly on the ship’s rail and for a moment all his senses seem to be focused on the ship; however, not for long. The next minute the captain’s eyes wander off the deck of his ship to the islands and catch the sight of a ship anchored between them (82). In this scene, the captain is seeing things with his bodily eyes, and his attention is fixed on reality.

However, when the captain returns to the deck after supper with the two officers to take the self-imposed five hours’ anchor-watch occasioned by his sense of strangeness, he very soon ceases to see with his bodily eyes. The feeling of strangeness arises from his unfamiliarity with the ship and the crew and his anxiety about his fitness for the task of the first command, and it provokes him to indulge in reassuring imaginings which soothe the feeling of strangeness. It indicates that the captain is trying to solve the problem of strangeness by approaching it first from the mind:

I descended the poop and paced the waist, *my mind picturing to myself* the coming passage out through the Malay Archipelago, down the Indian Ocean, and up the Atlantic. All its phases were familiar enough to me, every characteristic, all the alternatives which were likely to face me on the high seas—everything! ...except the novel responsibility of command. But I took heart from the reasonable thought that the ship was like other ships, the men like other men, and that the sea was not likely to keep any special surprises expressly for my discomfiture. (84, emphasis added)

He imagines the phases of the coming passage which reassure him that he is “familiar enough” with them, and regains his self-possession by the rather dubious “rea-

sonable thought” that no unexpected occurrence could happen to him. This “comforting conclusion,” in its turn, emboldens him to go down to his cabin to get a cigar, neglecting his task as a watch. Downstairs, his sense of security is strengthened when he finds everybody sleeping profoundly, and it is further strengthened when, back on the deck, he observes that the riding-light is burning “clear” and “untroubled” (85).

However, for seamen, indulging in a sense of security is a sign of negligence and inattention. In *The Mirror of the Sea*, Conrad says that “... a sense of security..., even the most warranted, is a bad counsellor. It is the sense which ... precedes the swift fall of disaster. A seaman labouring under an undue sense of security becomes at once worth hardly half his salt...” (30). In Conrad’s works, “an undue sense of security” is often a sure sign that something unforeseen is going to happen, and that is precisely what happens in the next scene.

The first unexpected object that upsets the captain’s sense of security is a rope ladder. When the captain returns to the deck with his cigar, he notices that a rope side-ladder has been left unhailed. In *Secret Sharing: Reading Conrad Psychologically*, Johnson and Garber state that the rope side-ladder can be seen as symbolizing “vulnerability to castration,” if it is interpreted as a sign of the captain’s Oedipal complex, or “an umbilicus,” if Leggatt is compared to a newly-born infant:

... viewed mythically or archetypally, the dangling rope ladder, though it may in one way signal vulnerability to castration, in another resembles an umbilicus, and the scene is a birth scene, the naked infant emerging from the water clinging to the cord. (635)

But what does a rope side-ladder signify literally? A rope ladder is “A ladder made of two long pieces of rope connected at intervals by short crosspieces of rope, wood, metal, etc.” (*OED*). It is such a rope ladder that the captain tries to draw in, but he fails to do so unexpectedly:

I proceeded to get the ladder in myself. Now a side-ladder of that sort is a light affair and comes in easily, yet my vigorous tug, which should have brought it flying on board, merely recoiled upon my body in a totally unexpected jerk. (85)

Anyone who has taken part in a tug of war, a contest in which two teams pull at opposite ends of a rope, would be familiar with the physical sense of such a jerk. What it signifies is that the captain’s first encounter with Leggatt is tactile, and, therefore, physical.

After this, the captain and Leggatt learn about one another by responding physically to each other. When the captain fails to draw in the rope ladder, he looks over the rail and sees “a naked body of a man”—the very body that only a moment ago “recoiled upon [his] body.” He then perceives Leggatt’s body part by part: “a pair of feet, the long legs, a broad livid back” and “the neck” (85). When he notices that the head is lacking, the reaction of his amazement is also physical: his mouth loses hold of his cigar. To this Leggatt also responds physically by raising up his face at the sound made by the cigar dropping into the water, and the sight of his “black-haired head” (86) prevents the captain from making exclamations.

Even after they begin to communicate verbally, they still continue to communicate non-verbally, especially through the tone of their voices. For instance, when the captain, prompted by the disquieting suspicion that Leggatt does not want to come on board, asks him in an ordinary tone “What’s the matter?” Leggatt responds by answering nonchalantly “cramp.” However, he acknowledges later that it was the captain’s unexpected tone of composure that had prevented him from recklessly swimming away: “... you speaking to me so quietly ... made me hold on a little longer” (95). Therefore, Leggatt, instead of swimming away, announces his name. The captain is impressed by the sense of self-possession that Leggatt’s voice carries, and finds himself becoming self-possessed.

The voice was calm and resolute. A good voice. The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself. It was very quietly that I remarked: “You must be a good swimmer.” (87).

The captain’s self-possession, in its turn, provokes Leggatt to confess to him the dilemma he is in—whether he should swim away or come on board. However, instead of responding verbally to Leggatt’s confession, the captain perceives that Leggatt must be young enough to face such a dilemma. The concatenation of successful non-verbal communication makes the captain realize that “A mysterious communication [is] established already” between them (87). The upshot of which is that, as if he, too, had perceived the mysterious communication, Leggatt suddenly climbs up the ladder; and this spontaneous physical reaction prompts the captain to hasten away from the rail to fetch clothes for him. It is to be noted that this mysterious communication between the two has been established before the captain learns that Leggatt is the son of a parson in Norfolk, that he was a *Conway* boy, or that he has unwittingly killed a man on the ship anchored inside the group of islets. Physical communication entails alertness to what is there and then, in other words, it entails self-possession, and in this scene the captain and Leggatt induce each other’s self-possession. The examination of the captain’s first encounter with Leggatt demonstrates that the learning process that it takes is “from the body to the mind.”

## THE MIND’S EYE VS. THE BODILY EYES

As we have seen, the captain regains the faculty of bodily eyes and develops his physical sense through his chance meeting with Leggatt. But just before this encounter, he was picturing to himself “the coming passage out through the Malay Archipelago, down the Indian Ocean, and up the Atlantic.” Interestingly enough, there is a scene strongly reminiscent of this scene in *The Shadow-Line*, published in 1917. The captain of *The Shadow-Line* also pictures to himself the expected passage before he embarks on his journey of the first command:

I was familiar enough with the Archipelago by that time... . The road would be long... . But this road *my mind's eye* could see on a chart, professionally, with all its complications and difficulties. (*The Shadow-Line* 41, emphasis added)

In this scene, the captain of *The Shadow-Line* sees the coming passage in detail with “[his] mind’s eye.” Seeing with one’s mind’s eye in *The Shadow-Line* corresponds to one’s mind picturing to oneself in *The Secret Sharer*. Etymologically, the early form of “one’s mind’s eye” is “the eye of the mind,” and there is an example in Chaucer. The examples of the present form, ‘one’s mind’s eye’ are found in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In Act I of *Hamlet*, Horatio says, “A mote it is to trouble the mind’s eye” (I. i. 55-57), and later when Hamlet says “My father, methinks I see my father,” and Horatio asks “Where, my lord?,” Hamlet answers, “In my mind’s eyes, Horatio” (I. ii. 83-84). “One’s mind’s eye” means “one’s visual memory or imagination; recollection, contemplation” (*OED*), and, therefore, what it signifies is the direct opposite of what bodily eyes signify.

The concept of the mind’s eye is closely related to psychoanalytic criticism which focuses on such expressions as “the double” or “the other self.” In “*The Secret Sharer*”: *Complexities of the Doubling Relationship*, Joan E. Steiner discusses the concepts of doubling by duplication and doubling by division. Such concept of doubling is made possible only by the captain seeing Leggatt in his mind’s eye. However, examined closely, these expressions signify, not Leggatt in the captain’s mind’s eye, but Leggatt seen through his bodily eyes. When the captain, as a narrator, refers to Leggatt as a “double,” “the other self,” or “the secret sharer,” these words are often followed by a qualifying phrase which signifies physical space. For example, when the captain refers to Leggatt as “my double” for the first time, he does not just say “my double,” but “like my double on the poop” (87). The word “like” in this phrase indicates that it is a simile and the qualifying phrase “on the poop” implies that Leggatt is physically occupying a space on the poop. The same is true about such phrases as “the secret self ... sleeping in that bed” (97), “the secret sharer of my cabin” (101), and “my double there in the sail-locker” (117). The qualification of space added to these expressions indicate that the captain was conscious of Leggatt’s physical presence. It corroborates Ian Watt’s assertion that the “narrative interest and psychological realism” of the story, “may well supply a sufficient reason for all these emphases on the captain’s identification with his ‘other self’” (xi).

Although the captain does not seem to be indicating that Leggatt is a doppelganger of himself, it must, however, be admitted that the captain’s awareness of Leggatt’s physical presence weakens, if temporarily, in the course the story. This is due, partly to the stress placed on him by the fact that Leggatt is a stowaway in hiding from the rest of the crew, added to the stress placed on him by the visit of the skipper of the *Sephora* in search of the fugitive. For example, immediately after the captain draws the curtains of his bed-place for Leggatt, he loses his control over his physical sense: “I sat there ... trying to clear my mind of the confused sensation of being in two places at once” (96). Similarly, when he is breakfasting with his two mates, he says: “all the time the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity” (97). Again, during the interview with the skipper of the *Sephora*, he admits that

he is obsessed with Leggatt’s image in his mind; he reflects later, “I should have sympathized with him if I had been able to detach my mental vision from the unsuspected sharer of my cabin...” (100); and, finally, he confesses that even his professional ability of responding alertly to certain conditions as a seaman has been affected by his “mental feeling of being in two places at once” (106). What these words, “clear my mind,” “working of my mind,” “mental vision,” and “mental feeling” indicate is that the captain is not split between his “double” and himself, his “other self” and himself, or his conscious and unconscious self, but he is split between what he is seeing with his “mind’s eye” and what he is seeing with his bodily eyes. What the captain has to do to solve this problem is to learn to see with the bodily eyes without the interference of the mind’s eye.

The captain solves this problem in the climactic scene in which he faces Leggatt immediately after he has escaped the steward’s detection. When the steward suddenly opens the door of the bathroom to hang the captain’s coat, Leggatt’s self-possession enables him to squat down at once so as not to be seen by him. However, the captain in the dining room becomes temporarily convinced that Leggatt has been detected by the steward, so when he sees Leggatt safe in the cabin he cannot believe his eyes: “an irresistible doubt of his bodily existence flitted through my mind” (109). Fortunately, he is called back to reality by the sight of the bodily communication that Leggatt makes: he gestures to the captain by raising his hands slightly to express his relief at having escaped a close detection. This strong appeal to his bodily eyes strikes out the sight of the captain’s mind’s eye and revives his awareness of physical presence: “I think I had come creeping quietly as near insanity as any man who has not actually gone over the border. That gesture restrained me, so to speak” (109). When Leggatt tells him what had happened, the captain is impressed by Leggatt’s self-possession that enables him to respond physically with such resilience and alertness to sudden changes of circumstances.

## THE ART OF HANDLING MAN AND THE SHIP

It is significant that just as the captain’s bodily senses have been revived by this incident, two things occur that forebode further difficulties ahead: one is that Leggatt announces suddenly his wish to leave the ship by being marooned, and the other is that the wind changes so the mate puts the ship on the off-shore tack. These two things are incompatible, because to enable Leggatt to swim safely to the shore, the captain has to put the ship, not on the off-shore tack, but on the shore tack; and, moreover, to do this, he first has to learn how to handle the ship.

The learning process that the captain undergoes with the ship is reminiscent of the learning process that he undergoes with Leggatt. At one point, the captain becomes so affected by the strain of the manouevre that he briefly shuts his eyes: “The strain of watching the dark loom of the land grow bigger and denser was too much for me. I had shut my eyes—because the ship must go closer” (116); he feels that “Already

she [the ship] was ... gone too close to be recalled, gone from me altogether” (116). It reminds us of the scene in which the captain becomes temporarily convinced that Leggatt is “Lost! Gone!” (109) However, fortunately, this strain is dispelled physically when he shakes his mate several times to bring him back to his senses.

By this time, the captain has forgotten all about Leggatt, but he has not yet “learnt the feel” of the ship, so he cannot tell whether she is coming-to. Conrad says that “... the art of handling ships is finer, perhaps, than the art of handling man” (*The Mirror of the Sea* 28). The captain, however, overcomes this crisis by detecting a hat drifting forward in the shadow of the ship. It turns out to be the hat that he rammed on Leggatt’s head, just as he was leaving, seized suddenly by “pity for his mere flesh” (118), and so the sight of the hat may have sharpened his physical sense. Helped by the hat he learns to feel the ship gather sternway and completes his learning process with the ship; he attains the physical state that Conrad in *The Mirror of the Sea* describes as a state in which the seaman’s sense “were like her [the ship’s] sense, that the stress upon his body made him judge of the strain upon the ship’s masts” (33)—“the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command” (295). It suggests that the captain learns about the man and the ship through the process of “from the body to the mind”.

## CONCLUSION

*The Secret Sharer* has often been interpreted at its non-literal level; however, as has been suggested by some critics, it can also be interpreted at its literal level. The two main characters, the captain and Leggatt, communicate with each other predominantly through the senses of their bodies, and learn about each other through the process, “from the body to the mind.” As Kadowaki indicates, traditionally the body is more foregrounded in the Eastern culture than in the Western culture. However, Hillman and Maude say that there is now in the West “an alternative way of understanding the body, supported by more recent discoveries in science, medicine and philosophy,” and according to this understanding, the body “participates in crucial ways in thinking, feeling and the shaping of our personalities and that precisely for this reason, the body is in fact constitutive of what we call the self” (1).

This view of the body is reminiscent of Kadowaki’s definition that the body is “the whole person as seen from its physical nature” (31), and, therefore, it sometimes even has “a force, subtlety and sophistication that goes way beyond the reaches of language” (Hawthorn 236). In *The Secret Sharer*, the captain first of all learns to know Leggatt through the learning process which proceeds “from the body to the mind,” and secondly learns to commune with his ship through the same process.

The story demonstrates also, as Hillman and Maude suggest, how the captain’s body influences the feelings of the captain and shapes his personality. What enables him to learn through the body in the first place is the self-possession that Leggatt inspires in him; Leggatt had to look “always perfectly self-controlled, more than

calm—almost invulnerable” (107), so as to be able to communicate with the captain effectively and alertly through the body, because bodily communication of the kind depicted in this story entails response on the spur of the moment; if one is distracted by or preoccupied with one’s personal feelings, one would not be able to respond alertly through the body. It is for this reason that, as Ian Watt indicates, Leggatt’s self-possession—of being in control of his emotions—plays an important role in this narrative.

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