

Department of Languages and Cultures

2017 Research Seminar Series

Presents

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History of Human Animal Relations

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Suffering and Reification: The Silence of the Other in Animal Dying



This paper offers three distinct reflections on animal suffering: a reading of the painting *The Death of the Stag* by Benjamin West; a personal experience with caring for a cancerous dog; and an argument from Theodor W. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*. By confronting these three instances with each other, contradictions within the human relation to animal suffering become visible. These reveal limitations in our acknowledgement of animals as sentient and autonomous selves. Developing neither a coherent theory of animal suffering nor robust ethical or medicinal recommendations for the handling of such situations, the paper argues that suffering contains a dialectic between individualising and reifying tendencies. In the specific case of treating fatally ill companion animals, such suffering, finally, can provide an expression of and a potential for acknowledging an animal patient's individuality.

Tuesday 14th March 12pm A3N7 (Arts Building)