

The Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre presents:

**'Sonorous eloquence' and 'reeking bodies': Sensing the Animal in
Slaughterhouse Fictions**

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15:00 – 17:00

FC-F02a, Firth Court

The University of Sheffield, UK

In fiction, as well as real-life, encounters with other beings are often conceptualized in terms of the visual. Whether the encounters with nonhuman animals take place in animals' natural surroundings, in a zoo or on the page, emphasis is often on what is seen (and how the nonhuman is seen) by the human, more rarely on what is heard, and hardly ever on what is smelled.

In literary analysis as well, the visual holds a privileged position as the experience most often intellectualized and/or aestheticized. However, increased focus on the phenomena of sound and smell often open up new perspectives on the experiences of literary characters and on the nature of experience as such. This is especially compelling in the case of texts in which humans encounter nonhumans (and vice versa), perhaps also because other animals often have different sensory capacities and therefore may privilege other senses than the visual in their modes of experience.

Through a particular focus on encounters with animal markets and slaughterhouses in texts from the nineteenth century onwards, this paper attempts to theorize the literary experience of the sounds and smells of nonhuman animals. In doing so, I argue that a heightened focus on other senses than the visual allows for reading experiences that are often more emotive and intuitive, rather than rationalized, which creates potential for more empathetic encounters with literary animals as subjects rather than objects.