

Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in Contemporary German, French and English Literature

Abstract

The dissertation analyses and compares the representation of euthanasia and assisted suicide in contemporary German, French and English literature. The study is based on a corpus of more than thirty literary texts in different genres.

The main focus lies in the aesthetic forms in which euthanasia and assisted suicide are expressed, in particular, their narratology, metaphorology and the dramaturgy of emotions.

The literary texts will be read against the background of the current and historical debates on euthanasia. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this literary study refers to medical, ethical, juridical and social contexts and incorporates film in addition to literary material.

As a project of “narrative ethics”, the dissertation analyzes the connection between artistic representation and its message, as well as the emotional and persuasive effects which a text may have on its reader.

In addition to results in the field of literary studies (opening up the topic; analysis of the relevant texts), and interdisciplinary suggestions (for disciplines such as medical ethics), this study can intervene in current debates by foregrounding the various treatments of euthanasia in literature.