

STRANGE ENCOUNTERS

Call for Participation: Friday, 16 October 2026, University of Basel
Registration by 10 September 2026 [\[tamaradima.imboden@unibas.ch\]](mailto:tamaradima.imboden@unibas.ch)

Sara Ahmed opens her seminal study *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* by considering how the extraterrestrial alien evokes not only fascination in our cultural imaginary, but also existential questions about what it means to be human. “[T]he detection of alien forms becomes a mechanism for the reassertion of a most human ‘we’,” she writes [2], and, as a result, the alien becomes the means by which the borders of the human are negotiated. Through this analogy, Ahmed considers how the figure of the stranger, like the alien, is ever-present in our imagination and governs who is defined as ‘us’ in contrast [2].

Ahmed’s study, from which the present event borrows its name, highlights the productive fluidity of the strange. The concept connects postcolonial and migration studies to the study of speculative fiction and fantasy, humanist and posthumanist theories, and even questions of aesthetic form: As Viktor Shklovsky posits in *Theory of Prose*, it is the function of art to “‘estrang[e]’ objects and complicat[e] form,” thereby allowing the observer to appreciate or even “‘experienc[e]’ the ‘process of creativity’” [6].

To interrogate these multiple perspectives, we invite PhD students to the fourth meeting of the [Swiss Literary PhD Network \(DocNetCH\)](#), “Strange Encounters.” DocNetCH is a self-organised research and networking group of doctoral students in Literary Studies across Switzerland that aims to provide a place for early career researchers to exchange ideas, develop a broader support system, and meet peers with similar projects and interests outside of their own universities. This semester’s meeting will take place at the **University of Basel** on **16 October 2026**. We are pleased to host a collaborative keynote lecture by **Aylin Walder (Braunschweig)** and **Daniel Ortiz (Basel)**, followed by a discussion round on ‘strangeness’ and its applicability in our work. Participants will be able to continue discussions in the customary extended coffee break and will have the chance to participate in the biannual DocNetCH Townhall.

Please register for the workshop by sending an email to **Tammy Imboden** [\[tamaradima.imboden@unibas.ch\]](mailto:tamaradima.imboden@unibas.ch) by **10 September 2026**. If you are interested in joining the network, regardless of whether you are able to join the upcoming event, [get in touch with us](#) and we’ll put you on the mailing list.