

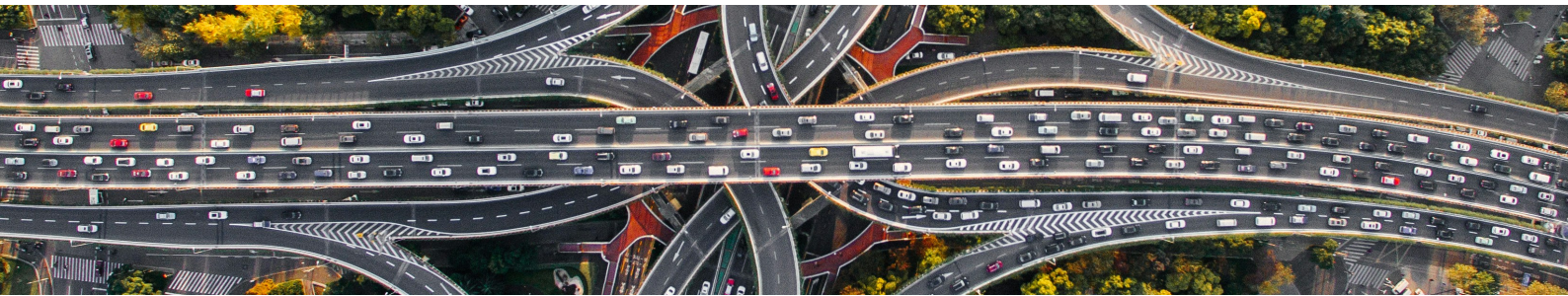


Actor-Network Theory and Literary Interpretation

Call for Participation: Friday, 4 April 2025, University of Zurich

Bruno Latour opens his foundational text *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) with a perusal of complicated news stories shoehorned into the “tidy compartments” of a newspaper, splintered and categorized under headings such as “Economy, Politics, Science, Books, Culture, Religion and Local Events” (2). Though reading the daily paper may no longer be the “modern man’s form of prayer” as Latour suggested then (2), the cult of categorization and separation persists, in the news cycle, academia, and elsewhere, as does the labor of “retying the Gordian knot” that would hold disciplines, events, humans, nonhumans, and other actors together in dynamic networks. Actor-network theory (ANT) recognizes and engages these complex and shifting relationships.

In her book *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Rita Felski proposes literary texts as “non-human actors” that “survive and thrive by making friends, creating allies, attracting disciples, inciting attachments, latching on to receptive hosts” (165-66). By evaluating our relationship to these actors, as well as to those actors with which literary texts engage, it is possible to critically consider what role we might play as literary scholars in retying the Gordian knot.



To put this into practice, we invite PhD students and early career scholars in literary studies in Switzerland to come together for the first meeting of the **Swiss Literary PhD Network** (DocNetCH) – an informal network of PhD students in literary studies across Switzerland. Our aim is to provide a place for PhD students to exchange ideas, develop a broader support system, and meet peers with similar projects and interests outside of their own universities. One method of doing this is to carry out biannual meetings centering on theory with a rotating organizing team at a different university each semester.

For this spring’s meeting, hosted at the University of Zurich, we are pleased to have **Professor Caroline Levine** joining us remotely from Cornell University to give a talk entitled “**ANT and Narrative Theory, or Questions about Causality.**”

The event will take place at the **University of Zurich at 13:00 on 4 April 2025**. After Professor Levine’s talk and a Q&A, we will have an informal workshop to discuss our reflections further, get to know each other, and imagine a future for the Swiss Literary PhD Network.

Due to limited space, we ask you to register by **17 March** by emailing both Nastacia Schmoll (nastacia.schmoll@es.uzh.ch) and Tammy Imboden (tamaradima.imboden@unibas.ch). 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.

