NETHERLANDS RESEARCH SCHOOL
FOR LITERARY STUDIES

NIAS
Netherlands Institute
for Advanced Study
in the Humanities and
Social Sciences

Stranger Things:
Rethinking Defamiliarization in Literature and Visual Culture

DAY I: Thursday 12 December
(Roeterseiland REC A 1.02, Amsterdam)

13:30-14:00: Welcome and opening remarks
Jan Willem Duyvendak (NIAS Director) and Pablo Valdivia (OSL Director)

14:00-15:30: Keynote I
Chair: Alberto Godioli

- **Defamiliarization for a Sustainable Planet**
  Caroline Levine, Cornell University

  Artists and critics have long committed ourselves to disruption—to the dismantling of
  dominant structures and systems. But as neoliberal economics undoes hopes of secure work,
  and as fossil fuels radically disrupt longstanding ecosystems, our greatest threats to a just
  world come not from static institutions but from the onrush of rapid and destructive change.
  The steady provision of food, clean air, shelter, and water, is by definition unexciting. But it
  is one of the core goals of a leftist politics, and one that is increasingly out of reach for most
  of the world's population. So: what art forms might help us to appreciate social forms like
  food security? This paper will argue for the importance of realist defamiliarization to global
  climate justice. Many critics have argued that realism seeks to naturalize the status quo. I will
  argue, instead, that realist fictions defamiliarize the ordinary work of keeping life going.
  They are interested in exposing and exploring the mundane forms necessary for sustaining
  collectives over time—that is, the project of sustainability.

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30: Panel I
Chair: Christian Kirchmeier

- **The Good, the Bad and the Familiar: Deconstructing "Cultural Normality" with
  Zygmunt Bauman and François Jullien**
  Florian Lippert, University of Groningen

  Research has shown that one of the key causes of the rise of xenophobia and populism in
  Europe is the fear of "cultural change." This inevitably poses the question how the respective

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"cultural *normality*" is thought, perceived, and/or constructed. While concepts of "culture" and "normality" have been extensively discussed in cultural studies, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, the implicit interconnections between an alleged "cultural normality" and *"familiarity"* still await further inspection. My contribution will follow this trace by drawing on two main sources: Zygmunt Bauman's conception of culture *as* change; and François Jullien's differentiation between "the Universal, the Uniform, and the Common."

- **Defamiliarizing the Rural Idyll in Jon McGregor's *Reservoir 13* and Cynan Jones' *The Long Dry***
  Esther Peeren, University of Amsterdam

  The rural idyll is an old and highly familiar – not to say over-familiar – genre that many (from literary scholars to geographers and sociologists) have argued has a damaging stranglehold on the imagination of the rural in literature, other arts, and society at large, not least in the UK. This is the case even though the genre's conventions – especially its association with isolated, self-sufficient locales and a cyclical time hostile to change – are an increasingly bad fit with the realities of rural life. In Lauren Berlant's terms, it is high time for a waning of this genre, but such waning is prevented by the affective attachments many people have in idyllic imaginations of the rural. Defamiliarization – in this case not of reality but of a particular lens through which rural reality has been sensed, understood and shaped – is one technique that may produce different imaginations of the rural capable of engaging with pressing rural issues such as sustainability, immigration, tourism, racism and poverty. In this paper, I look at two examples of literary texts that, on the level of both the story they tell and how they tell it (form, style, narration/focalization), set out to defamiliarize the rural idyll. The first is Jon McGregor's 2017 *Reservoir 13*, which tells the story of a rural community caught up in the disappearance of a young girl and which defamiliarizes the idyll by pushing its cyclical temporality to the extreme. The second is Cynan Jones' *The Long Dry*, which tells the apparently uneventful story of a day in the life of a Welsh farmer, focalizing part of it through the eyes of a cow, in an updated version of Shklovsky's famous example of defamiliarization in Tolstoy (who uses a horse). I will explore how, in each case, defamiliarization takes shape and what it does to the rural idyll and its affective associations.

- **If You Only Knew How Strange It Was… Viktor Shklovsky's Theory of *Ostran(n)enie* and Its Relevance for 21st-century Research on Techniques and Technologies**
  Annie van den Oever, University of Groningen

  In this paper, I return to the research work done with a team of (early) film scholars, Yuri Tsivian, Ian Christie, and Frank Kessler among them, for the edited volume on *Ostrannenie*, published by Amsterdam University Press in 2010. I will argue that Viktor Shklovsky's key text "Art as Technique", which revolves around the famous Russian neologism *ostran(n)enie* ("making strange"), draws from two historically related phenomena: (1) the early film shows which cleverly exploited the expressive potential of the Lumière's 1995 "new cinema machine" to make humans and objects look "strange" if not "grotesque," as Maxim Gorky had aptly argued in 1896 in his seminal essay, "Last Night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows"; and (2) the 1910s avant-garde performances in which Shklovsky's Futurist friends (the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky among them) mimicked and celebrated the "strangeness" of the film shows. These two phenomena form the context for the inception of

"Art as Technique." To make this point, I will reread "Art as Technique" within the historical context of the early film shows; and I will address the question how the new cinema machine functioned to make Maxim Gorky label it a "grotesque" creation. The aim of my paper is to create a new understanding of the theory of *ostran(n)enie* and its relevance for 21st-century research on techniques and technologies. To this end, it will present specific fragments of a cultural archaeology of the then new cinema machine and an excavation of its novelty and strangeness effects. This method is chosen in an attempt to avoid the misunderstandings created by the retrospective perspective. From this perspective, one tends to overlook the novelty experiences triggered by that turn of the century's "new medium." As is so aptly explained by Shklovsky in "Art as Technique," novelty/strangeness experiences vanish overtime. Thus, excavations such as in this paper are needed to remind us of them and to reinvigorate the context from which "Art as Technique" and the notion of *ostrannenie* emerged.

DAY II: Friday 13 December
(NIAS Conference Room, Korte Spinhuissteeg 3)

10:00-11:30: Keynote II
Chair: Pablo Valdivia

- **Strangers in Paradise: Migrant Figurations in Media Culture**
  Sandra Ponzanesi, Utrecht University

  The notion of defamiliarization is very much linked to processes of othering and alienation but also of fear and fascination. From Homi Bhabha's notion of the uncanny as "un-homely" to Sara Ahmed's concept of "stranger fetishism" (2000), defamiliarization has played a central role in postcolonial theory in articulating constructions of difference and intimacy. This talk analyses how this *Verfremdung* takes place in media culture in general, and in cinema more specifically, with respect to migration, the migrant body and migrant figurations. The aim is to explore how alternative modalities of representation and subjectification are possible through different visual registers in contestations and deconstructions of "symbolic bordering" (Chouliaraki, 2018).

11:30-11:45: Coffee Break

11:45-13:30: Panel II
Chair: Camilla Sutherland

- **Making the Strange Familiar: Getting Intimate with Toxicity**
  Ruby de Vos, University of Groningen

  How does defamiliarization relate to that which it assumes to be familiar? In this paper, I explore this question in the context of toxicity, an often invisible and imperceptible power. For artists, defamiliarization has therefore been a useful aesthetic strategy to make toxicity's presence in the everyday tangible. But if toxicity always has to be discovered or remembered anew, as Lawrence Buell (1998) already pointed out, how can we learn to *live* with toxicity and to understand its on-going, pervasive presence? Tracing the work done by

defamiliarization in several examples drawn from contemporary art and scholarship on toxicity, this paper goes on to complicate the ability of this strategy to stay with the toxic trouble at hand (Haraway 2016, Tsing 2015). I conclude with some artistic examples that suggest we need to get intimate with toxicity instead: it is time to make the strange familiar again.

- **Defamiliarization in New Languages of Protest: The Literary Uncanny as a Challenge to Post-Truth Rhetoric**
  Maria Boletsi, University of Amsterdam / Leiden University

  This talk will trace the political force of forms of defamiliarization emerging through new languages of protest. It focuses on recent events of public protest in Madrid, Seoul, Toronto, Paris, and Moscow, marked by the absence of actual bodies of protesters, which were replaced by holograms, empty shoes or toys. These uncanny figures were mobilized to oppose the criminalization of protest, state control of public space, or the environmental crisis and violation of native people's land. In these events, bodies asserted presence in public space through their absence. Unsettling the boundaries between the virtual and the real, materiality and immateriality, power and impotence, these protests fostered spectral, uncanny spaces, in which the opposition between fiction and reality was contested and redrawn differently. The spectral subjectivity the protests put forward, both underscored and challenged conditions of precarity and crisis today, showing how new forms of agency could spring through defamiliarization. Functioning in a manner analogous to Freud's "literary uncanny," these protests reintroduced the conflict between fiction and reality as a condition for critique to neoliberal governmentality in a post-truth era.

- **Thinking the Unfamiliar: On Weird Ontologies and Eerie Agencies**
  Christian Kirchmeier, University of Groningen

  In his 2016 essay *The Weird and the Eerie*, Mark Fisher argued that contemporary aesthetic media established new modes of the strange that could no longer be described in terms of Freud's concept of the *unheimlich*: While the *unheimlich* remains within the opposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the weird and the eerie represent experiences of radical strangeness that are beyond the familiar. The paper will focus on these new types of radical strangeness. It will examine the systematic differences between the unfamiliar and the defamiliarized, and it will reflect on the social functions of the different historic aesthetics of the strange.

- **Thresholds and Metaphors: The Physics of Cultural Narratives**
  Pablo Valdivia, University of Groningen

  In this presentation, I will discuss the applicability of Threshold Concepts theory for the study of the regimes of metaphors that articulate cultural narratives in combination with a quali-quantitative approach for modelling the study of pre-cognitive cultural and literary knowledge. I will mainly focus on cross-domain and multi-modal metaphors which operate in the learning mechanisms anchored in specific pre-existing neuronal circuits. The final goal of my talk is to critically assemble a theoretical model for the study of fundamental cultural and literary attributes.

14:30-16:00: Panel III
Chair: Olga Krasa-Ryabets

- **Stranger Futures: Critical Dystopia and Dark Humor in Contemporary Video Art**
  Nilgun Bayraktar, California College of the Arts, NIAS

  How can art conjure up radically different futures for those who have been left outside the dominant trajectory of Western progress? How can art envision alternative temporalities for contemporary crisis-scapes beyond discriminatory histories of colonization and neoimperial practices in the present? This paper will explore recent video art works that employ dystopian sci-fi aesthetics and dark humor to tackle questions of dispossession, displacement, and futurity. With a specific focus on European borderlands and the Palestinian/Israeli context, it will examine the ways in which artistic practice can defamiliarize the seemingly static temporality of such crisis-scapes (defined by a protracted sense of crisis/conflict) as well as the dominant vision of the future as a frontier of exploration, technological progress or apocalypse. By offering a close analysis of the works of artists such as Larissa Sansour and Halil Altindere, this paper will investigate various artistic techniques of estrangement that offer new audiovisual forms and narratives in order to imagine decolonial futures.

- **Familiarly Strange / Strangely Familiar: Humor and Contemporary Artists from Turkey**
  Lora Sariaslan, University of Amsterdam

  Focusing on a selection of contemporary visual artists who are of Turkish origin, this paper will query how their humorous, and at times ironic artistic gaze can provide critical insight into identity negotiations through defamiliarization. By creating art that incorporates humor, these artists reject dominant preconceptions and presuppositions of what their identity is supposed to be determined by, transforming it into forms of artistic and hence political transgression. By looking at how mobility and transnational encounters shape humorous artistic production, this paper will present how, in turn, such transnational and intercultural works can shed new light on the making of contemporary European identities 'beyond borders' enriching the global artistic discourse.

- **Playing with Fire: Dark Humor, Defamiliarization and Empathy**
  Alberto Godioli, University of Groningen

  Being based on incongruity and on various kinds of diversion from conventional logic, humor maintains a privileged link with defamiliarization. This is especially the case with dark humor, where the role assigned to the "dark" component often results in a second-degree defamiliarization of humorous discourse itself. This paper will propose a systematic definition of dark humor, establishing a distinction between three different types (or reception modes) and discussing how each of these types relates to defamiliarization. Particular attention will be paid to what can be defined as 'engaged dark humor', i.e. occurrences of dark humor where the (perceived) main goal is that conveying a deeper social or political message. The discussion of selected examples of engaged dark humor (from Swift's *A Modest Proposal* to *Charlie Hebdo*) will set the basis for a broader reflection on

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defamiliarization and political engagement, particularly in relation to empathy. Building on Paul Bloom's controversial book *Against Empathy* (2016), I will argue that dark humorists often use defamiliarization as a tool to promote an idea of political activation that does not rely on superficial empathic engagement, but rather on a more diffuse form of rational compassion.

16:00-16:30: Coffee Break

16:30-18:00: Conversation with Artist alaa minawi and Curator Jo-Lene Ong
Chair: Nilgun Bayraktar

- **(inside - out)**
  alaa minawi
  when I was asked by arthur kneepkens, a dutch dramaturge and performer, if my performative installation "2048 bodies – borders – belonging" would have the power to make an actual /physical /political change, then what would I want it to be, my answer was that I would like it to demolish the current state system and simultaneously start a new social contract. from then onwards I started perceiving my work as a catalyst of change stripped from its powers. "2048" was conceived from an urgency to not only present statelessness as a witness on the failure of the system, but rather a chance to escape it. it is one of a series of installations which can be described as a representation or a presentation of certain aspects of my ongoing artistic research revolving around the notion of belonging. this research started in 2016 and still in progress.

- **Elsewheres Within Here, through a fluid sense of belonging and watery embodiment**
  Jo-Lene Ong

  How can a work of art apprehend the different temporalities and geographies present in a single coordinate? Migration (its legacies, effect on the present, and potential in claims to the future) are ever more pertinent today yet the term itself is loaded with emotions and preconceptions. I will discuss the use of defamiliarization in the exhibition Elsewheres Within Here that asks what do we welcome, refuse, or overlook in marking the boundaries of spaces we call home trough the works of eleven Dutch based artists that come from, or think with different places. The exhibition presents works that tell stories of errant movements of "domestic" plants, animals, objects, and symbols. It proposes a reworlding that considers the connectivity of being and things through fluid borders borders of bodies of water and porous bodily boundaries of watery bodies. This is done by drawing upon the historic Maritime Southeast Asia conception of belonging through the Malay term "tanah-air" that joins the words "land"(tanah) and "water" (air) and the post-human feminist text Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water that rethinks embodiment as watery. In doing so, it proposes a more elemental sense of belonging that stems from a sense of self and the world not as fixed coordinates but as a process that is always coming into being through interactions and relations.

18:00-19:00: Closing Reception at NIAS

BIOS

Nilgun Bayraktar
Nilgun Bayraktar is an assistant professor of film history and theory in the Visual Studies Program and Film Program at California College of the Arts. Currently, she is a Research Fellow at NIAS (The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences) in Amsterdam. She received her Ph.D. in Performance Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Film Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Her work focuses on migrant and diasporic cinema, transnational cinemas, the essay film, and contemporary art. Her recent book, *Mobility and Migration in Film and Moving Image Art: Cinema Beyond Europe* (Routledge 2016), examines cinematic and artistic representations of migration and mobility in Europe since the 1990s. Her academic publications include articles in journals such as *Journal of European Studies*, *Screen City Biennial Journal* and *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* as well as chapters in edited collections such as *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium*. She recently curated the CCA exhibition "No Place Else: Dystopian Sci-fi Imagination," which explored concepts such as the dystopian city, the posthuman, and ecological crises.

Maria Boletsi
Maria Boletsi is Endowed Professor of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Amsterdam (Marilena Laskaridis Chair) and assistant professor in Film and Comparative Literature at Leiden University. She has published on various topics, including the conceptual history of barbarism, post-9/11 literature, crisis-rhetoric and alternative subjectivities and narratives emerging from the Greek debt crisis. She is the author of *Barbarism and Its Discontents* (Stanford UP 2013) and co-author of *De lichtheid van literatuur: Engagement in de multiculturele samenleving* (Acco 2015) and *Barbarian: Explorations of a Western Concept in Theory, Literature and the Arts*, vol. 1 (Metzler 2018). She has co-edited the volumes *Languages of Resistance, Transformation, and Futurity in Mediterranean Crisis-Scapes: From Crisis to Critique* (Palgrave, in press), *Barbarism Revisited* (Brill 2015) and *Subjects Barbarian, Monstrous, and Wild* (Brill 2018).

Alberto Godioli
Alberto Godioli is Senior Lecturer in European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen, and program director of the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL). He obtained his PhD in 2012 from the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa; from 2013 to 2015, he was a Newton International Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. He has published extensively on humor and satire across media, including the monographs *La scemenza del mondo* (2011; Edinburgh Gadda Prize 2012) and *Laughter from Realism to Modernism* (Oxford: Legenda, 2015). He is currently developing a project on public and juridical debates over dark humor, and he is the organizer of the summer school *Humor and Satire in Contemporary Europe: Cultural, Political, and Legal Perspectives*.

Christian Kirchmeier
Christian Kirchmeier is Assistant Professor for European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen. He is the author of a monograph on morality and literature and has edited books and journals on German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, on World War I in the literary discourse, on intermedial narratology, on Romanticism, and on Brecht. He received his PhD in Modern German Literature at the University of Munich and was visiting scholar at Yale University for his postdoc. He is currently finishing a habilitation thesis on parabasis in modern literature and aesthetics.

Caroline Levine
Caroline Levine is David and Kathleen Ryan Professor of the Humanities at Cornell University. She is the author of three books, *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt* (2003), *Provoking Democracy: Why We Need the Arts* (2007), and *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015). She is at work on a book on formalism and climate change.

Florian Lippert
Florian Lippert is Associate Professor and Deputy Chair of European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen and Expert Evaluator for the European Commission. He is the author of *Selbstreferenz in Literatur und Wissenschaft. Kronauer, Grünbein, Maturana, Luhmann* (Wilhelm Fink, 2013) and has published widely on modern and contemporary comparative literature and film, the European "migrant crisis", literary and film theory, Discourse Theory and Social Systems Theory. He received his PhD in Modern German Literature at the University of Freiburg, Germany, with a Full Scholarship by the German Research Foundation (DFG), and had lecturer positions at King's College London, Sungshin University Seoul and the University of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe.

Alaa Minawi
Alaa Minawi is an artist based in Amsterdam with a BA in Communication and Arts from the Lebanese American University (LAU), and an MA in Fine Arts, Scenography, and Design from Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht (HKU). Alaa started as a light designer and scenographer for theater and live performances in 2006. He then started making his own installations that tackle socio-political contents. One of which is "my light is your light. . ." (2014); an installation tackling migration. In 2016 alaa started an artistic research around the notion of belonging. From then onwards, he has started a series of installations and performances all under the same name "2048". There has been three 2048 presentations so far; "2048 – the machine" (2018), "2048- bodies borders belonging "(2019), and "2048 – what does not make us one" (2019).

Annie van den Oever
Annie van den Oever is Professor by special appointment to the chair in "Film and Visual Media" at the University of the Free State, South Africa, Director of the Master in Film Studies, and Head of the Film Archive & Media Archaeology Lab of the University of Groningen, as well as Director of Studies of the Research Masters in Cultural Leadership and Arts, Media and Literary Studies at the University of Groningen. She is Associated Researcher for Cinema and Audiovisual Studies of the Research Institute ACTE - UMRS CNRS Université Paris 1 and co-editor of *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies* (Amsterdam University Press). She publishes regularly on film theory, film technologies, and film aesthetics, recently in international journals such as *Image & Text*, *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, and *Leonardo*. She is (founding) series editor of *The Key Debates* (Amsterdam University Press) and the editor of its first and fourth volume; *Ostrannenie* (2010) and *Technē/Technology* (2014) respectively.

Jo-Lene Ong
Jo-Lene Ong is an independent curator from Kuala Lumpur currently based in Amsterdam. She is co-curator of visual arts and theory at Other Futures (2020), an Amsterdam based multidisciplinary festival of non-Western science fiction and futurisms and co-editor Practice Space (2019) a volume on approaches in responding to context by art initiatives around the globe that operate outside of conventional institutional frameworks. A curious cat when it comes to 'influence' and 'transmission', her long-term research Spectres of Batavia in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam pursues the networks of encounters, influences, and collaborations between Indonesia and the Netherlands that

haunt the margins of the museum's collection. She was awarded the De Appel Curatorial Research Fellowship 2018-19 after completing De Appel Curatorial Programme 2017-18. Recent exhibitions include Khabar dan Angin: Excursus on Faith in Kelantan (2016) at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur; SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia from 1980s – Now (2017) at the Mori Art Museum and National Art Centre, Tokyo; Brace For Impact (2018) at De Appel, Amsterdam; and Elsewheres Within Here (2019) at Framer Framed, Amsterdam.

Esther Peeren
Esther Peeren is Professor of Cultural Analysis at the University Amsterdam and Academic Director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). She directs the ERC-funded project "Imagining the Rural in a Globalizing World" (2018-2023). Recent publications include *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Palgrave, 2014) and the edited volumes *Peripheral Visions in the Globalizing Present* (Brill, 2016, with Hanneke Stuit and Astrid Van Weyenberg), *Global Cultures of Contestation* (Palgrave, 2018, with Robin Celikates, Jeroen de Kloet and Thomas Poell) and *Other Globes: Past and Peripheral Imaginations of Globalization* (Palgrave, 2019, with Simon Ferdinand and Irene Villaescusa-Illán).

Sandra Ponzanesi
Sandra Ponzanesi is Professor of Gender and Postcolonial Studies, Department of Media and Culture Studies/Graduate Gender Programme, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. Among her interests is the reception of the postcolonial field in relation to the cultural industry, the understanding of the notion of Europe from a postcolonial perspective, postcolonial cinema studies, and the exploration of digital literacies of migrants in transnational contexts. She is currently project leader of the ERC consolidator grant "Digital Crossings in Europe: Gender, Diaspora and Belonging" CONNECTINGEUROPE. She is the author of *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture* (Suny, 2004) and *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry* (Palgrave, 2014). She is also editor of *Gender, Globalisation and Violence. Postcolonial Conflict Zones* (Routledge, 2014) and co-editor of *Migrant Cartographies* (Lexington Books, 2005), *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (Routledge, 2011), *Deconstructing Europe* (Routledge, 2011), *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe* (Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016) and *Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe* (Rowman and Littlefield International, 2018). She has also guest edited several special issues for Social Identities, Crossings, Interventions, Transnational Cinemas, Popular Communication and Television and New Media.

Lora Sariaslan
The art historian and curator Lora Sariaslan is currently a lecturer and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Amsterdam with her dissertation *What 'moves' artists? The Making of Identity in the Transnational Art Practices of Contemporary European-Turkish Artists*. Her academic focus is on contemporary visual artists who came to Europe from the other side of the EUropean border, Turkey. She received her B.A. in Art History and Integrated International Studies from Knox College, Illinois and her M.A. in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin. She was Assistant Curator at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas (2001-2005) and Curator at Istanbul Museum of Modern Art (2005-2011). She has curated exhibitions internationally, among others, the 2nd Mardin Biennial: *Double Take* in Turkey (2012), *This yearning is ours!* at the Center of Contemporary Art in Torun, Poland (2016) and co-curated *What We Forget* at Nieuw Dakota, Amsterdam (2019). A member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), Sariaslan is the National Correspondent for the European Museum Forum (EMF) for Turkey.

Pablo Valdivia
Pablo Valdivia is Full Professor and Chair of European Culture and Literature at the University of Groningen, Executive-Scientific Director of the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL), and Member and Expert Scientific Advisor of the Netherlands Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW) and the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities (NIAS). Before joining the University of Groningen in 2016, he worked at the University of Amsterdam, The Cambridge Foundation Villiers Park and the University of Nottingham. In 2007, he received his PhD degree on "Philosophy of Hispanic Studies" at the University of Nottingham. His research deals primarily with the "Humanities" and "Technology", and the notions of "Literature and Crisis" from an interdisciplinary transnational perspective. The relation between "Exile and Literature" and "Literary Interculturality" are some of his main research focus as well. He is an expert on "Cultural Narratives" and "Conceptual Metaphors". He carries multidisciplinary research with special emphasis in the fields of Applied Sciences, Social Sciences, Cultural Industries and Cognitive Sciences. Professor Valdivia is reviewer and editor of more than a dozen international top scientific journals and book series; researcher of METAPHORA project (UAM-Spanish Government); researcher of "Converging Horizons" project (CONICYT) and expert reviewer European Commission research projects. From 2014 to 2018, Valdivia was President Steering Committee H2020 European Commission Excellent Science Marie Curie RISE project "Cultural Narratives of Crisis and Renewal (CRIC)" project; from 2016 to 2018 he was co-director of the "Research Centre Arts in Society" (University of Groningen), and from 2017 to 2018, Valdivia was Finances Officer CLLiP Programmes (Cultures, Literatures, Linguistics, Politics). In 2018, Prof. Dr. Pablo Valdivia was awarded "Lecturer of the Year" Faculty of Arts (University of Groningen).

Ruby de Vos
Ruby de Vos is a PhD candidate at the University of Groningen, where she is working on her dissertation on toxic embodiment in contemporary art and literature. She has published on nuclear aesthetics, legibility, and female monstrosity. In 2019, she was a resident at Hospitalfield (Arbroath, Scotland) and in 2020 she will be a visiting scholar at the Posthumanities Hub (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm).