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Institute of English and American Studies | American Studies with a Focus on Diversity Studies

# *manifesto* NOW!

Purposes and Effects of an Escalating  
Form in the US and Beyond

International Conference

22-24 July  
2024



Study Center, ADA

Archiv der Avantgarden – Egidio Marzona

Blockhaus, Große Meißner Straße 19, 01097 Dresden

for more information visit [tu-dresden.de/diversity-studies/manifesto](https://tu-dresden.de/diversity-studies/manifesto)



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This event is part of the research project "The Upsurge of the Manifesto in Contemporary Debates on Diversity in the United States," funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG, project no. 501505288). We thank the DFG for making this event possible. Additionally, the conference is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the state of Saxony as part of the Strategy of Excellence of the federal and state governments. Finally, many thanks to the Archiv der Avantgarden – Egidio Marzona (ADA) of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections) for hosting this event!

## Greetings

Dear conference participants,

We are excited to welcome you to the international conference *manifestoNOW! Purposes and Effects of an Escalating Form in the US and Beyond!* The conference aims to offer a forum for the exchange of ideas on the polarizing genre of the manifesto, featuring researchers from Canada, Germany, India, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United States. There has been a boom in recent years of sociopolitical and cultural-critical manifestos published in the United States—as well as on the international stage—which is constituted by a broad spectrum of voices. While these recent manifestos are highly diverse in thematic outlook, what they seem to share is their advocacy for fundamental change, the disruptive mode in which their often controversial demands are expressed, and the highly dynamic public engagement of their authors. We look forward to discussing the manifest and latent functions of the manifesto from different vantage points and to contributing to a re-assessment of this escalating form by engaging in foundational interdisciplinary and transnational research in changing and interactive discussion formats.



**New!**

**manifesto NOW! | TU Dresden | main venue: ADA Blockhaus, Große Meißner Straße 19 | July 22-24 2024 | Conference Program**

22/07/2024		23/07/2024		24/07/2024	
09.00 am		09.00 am	registration	09.00 am	registration
09.30 am		09.30 am	<b>session 2</b>	09.30 am	<b>session 4</b>
10:30 am		10:30 am	coffee break	10:30 am	coffee break
11:00 am		11:00 am	<b>Bookperformance</b>	11:00 am	<b>session 5</b>
12:00 noon		12:00 noon	lunch	12:00 noon	lunch
01:00 pm	registration	01:00 pm	<b>session 3</b>	01.30 pm	<b>session 6</b>
02:00 pm	greetings by Prof. Carsten Junker & Dr. Rudolf Fischer				
02.30 pm		02.30 pm	coffee break	02.30 pm	coffee break
03:00 pm	<b>panel 1</b>	03:00 pm	<b>panel 2</b>	03:00 pm	<b>keynote 2</b>
04.30 pm	coffee break	04.30 pm	coffee break	04.30 pm	coffee break
05.00 pm	<b>session 1</b>	05.00 pm	<b>keynote 1</b>	05.00 pm	<b>panel 3</b>
06.00 pm	tour through the <u>current exhibition of the ADA</u> by curator Przemysław Strożek				
06.45 pm	reception	06.30 pm	walk to dinner	06.30 pm	walk to dinner
08.00 pm	dinner (tables reserved)	06.45 pm	dinner (tables reserved)	07.30 pm	dinner (tables reserved)
		8.45 pm	<b>Film screening: <i>Manifesto</i>. Directed by Julian Rosenfeldt, 2018. Phase IV e. V., Königsbrücker Straße 54</b>		

## Keynotes

### 1) Anson Koch-Rein (UNCSA, USA): “Trans Abstraction: A Photographic Manifesto”

We are in a moment of trans hypervisibility and political scapegoating in the US, UK, Germany, and other places. At the same time, the promise of recognition through visibility continues to dominate liberal trans rights discourse. This tension between visibility as a source of both representation and vulnerability shapes trans photography, which has long challenged exoticizing and medico-legal archives with rich (self-)portraiture and affirming Selfie Aesthetics (Nicole Erin Morse) but is also rife with danger in the age of electronic image inundation. In response, scholars, artists, activists, and everyday social media users have begun to identify “the visibility trap” (Kate Redburn) and to apply “pressure to the assumption of representation’s utility” (æryka jourdaine hollis o’neil). This presentation will focus on photography as a place where these urgent trans concerns over visibility as a trap meet abstraction’s suspicion of representation.

Starting from art historian David J. Getsy’s influential “ten theses” manifesto on queer abstraction, I will highlight trans abstraction as a form of photographic resistance. Unlike other forms of abstract art (including Getsy’s focus on sculpture), photographic abstraction is contested because of its reliance on some link to referentiality, to an existing object in time, even if that may not be the subject of the photograph. This contested status of abstract photography opens it to interesting parallels with trans experience. Founding Trans Studies scholar Jay Prosser argued in the late 1990s about figurative photography’s location that, “[o]ccupying similar ground between referentiality and representation, transsexuality might be conceived as a

parallel ‘form’.” What are the theoretical implications and political promises of this parallel between trans experience and photography when it comes to abstraction? Looking at examples from trans artists and drawing on artistic research, together we will experiment with the possibilities of a photographic manifesto of trans abstraction.

**Anson Koch-Rein** is Assistant Professor in the Division of Liberal Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, a public arts conservatory in Winston-Salem. He holds a Magister from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and a PhD from Emory University’s Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts with a certificate in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. He co-edited the “Representing Trans” special issue of the *European Journal of English Studies*. His writing has appeared in *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *Literature Interpretation Theory*, and anthologies including *Becoming TransGerman*, *TransGothic in Literature and Culture*, and *Monsters and Monstrosity in Media*.

## **2) Patrice Douglas (UC Berkeley, USA): “Liberate Assata”**

This talk engages *Assata: An Autobiography* by former Black Liberation Army (BLA) operative and political exile Assata Shakur. The argument presented will consider how Black political autobiography deploys personal narratives as a form of manifesto. Specifically, this talk will focus on how Shakur develops psychologically and politically as both a Black revolutionary and a Black revolutionary woman. To achieve this, I will first examine the political messages shared throughout *Assata* then contextualize her frameworks by turning to her experiences with blatant sexualization as a runaway teen in New York City. Her story compels attention to what Frantz Fanon famously described as the psychopathology of the



Negro. But it also compels us to think through the way Shakur experiences Blackness in relation to her gender. Where Fanon might collapse the Negro into the Negro male, the Black revolutionary woman for Shakur blurs the assumed gender of Blackness. I am placing Shakur and Fanon in conversation to consider the distinctions between their theories of Black enmeshment with the white world. At the same time, it is critical to consider how the Fanonian theory of psychopathology lends itself to the psychopolitics deployed by Shakur. Psychopathology in this respect homes in on the Black psyche—where Black desire and fantasy emanate from—as a space that is always subjected to or awaiting white imposition and occupation. Recognizing the fixedness of this condition elicits for Shakur a desire and impetus to undo it. As a psychopolitical text, *Assata* describes the hypocrisy and irrationality of Black conditioning while also offering multiple modalities of counteraction and thought. The text itself is an architecture of response where poetry, communiques, personal narrative, descriptive and prescriptive gestures bring into focus the absolute necessity of Black revolutionary action by embracing a mixed genre approach to expressing the depths of Black suffering and the dreamwork necessary to unravel it.

**Patrice D. Douglass** is an Assistant Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Previously she was an Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. Her current research interests include Black feminist theory, transatlantic slavery, gender and sexual violence, and political philosophy. In 2021, she was the recipient of the Institute for Citizens and Scholars’ Career Enhancement Fellowship. Her forthcoming book manuscript, *Engendering Blackness: The Ontology of Sexual*

*Violence* (Stanford University Press, 2025) examines the relationship between sexual violence and modern racial slavery and finds it not only inseparable but also fundamental to the structural predicaments facing Blackness.



## Performance

### **Çiğdem Mirol (U Gent, BEL): “Bookperformance Manifesto: A Meta View On Life Through Literature and Arts”**

Comprising 7 items, “Bookperformance Manifesto” is a meta understanding of life through literature and arts. It is an outcome of my MA thesis which focused on self-reflexive narratives that can well be considered as artistic performances urging active reader involvement in both the structure and story of the book.

Based on this manifesto, I do write literary books that I call *Bookperformance* while I do artistic performances that I also call *Bookperformance*. So, what is established in theory through the manifesto also reveals itself in practice through fixed yet multi-modelled forms of texts on page as well as flexible and multilingual forms of acts on stage. In both cases, what is created is always and only co-created in its nature. This highlights the constantly shifting thus shared authority between the writer and the reader/the audience in the creation process. Currently, I work on the sound-based visual alphabet of *Bookperformance* which is expressed through my paintings. I'm also working on a PhD dissertation that builds upon my MA and is focused on the possible historical contextualization of *Bookperformance*. With this in mind, I delve into some books

from authors such as Cervantes, Nietzsche, Stein and Joyce as well as contemporary examples of literary works that show various ways of how books with self-reflexive narratives are also artistic performances.

As part of this international conference, I will introduce the practical theory, comprising human orientations and textual resonance, on which *Bookperformance* builds. This will be followed by a multilingual and co-created *Bookperformance* event. All conference attendees and guests are welcome to join. Afterwards, we will also hold a Q&A session on both the theory and the practice of *Bookperformance*.

**Çiğdem Mirol** is a PhD Candidate in Literary Studies, Arts & Philosophy in the context of “Authorship as Performance” project at UGENT in Belgium. Her PhD research is the theoretical construction and historical contextualization of *Bookperformance*. She is also a writer, performance artist and painter. Her artistic and literary practice is the *Bookperformance*. Here is her official website: [www.bookperformance.com](http://www.bookperformance.com) and official Instagram account: @bookperformance



## Group Panels

### **1) Breanne Fahs (Arizona State U, USA) & Julian Hanna (Tilburg U, NLD): “The Return of the Radical? A Discussion on Manifestos in the 2020s”**

At its best, manifesto writing generates radical new ideas by freeing us from careful speech in times of crisis. Wearing the mask of the manifesto’s performative authority, speakers take on symbolic power and freedom to express powerful emotions like anger and outrage and to invest themselves with authority (real or invented). Manifestos help us imagine and build alternatives, or resist dominant futures. They help us to think outside of business as usual, to yearn, to strive, to invent, to destroy. Where there is a need for urgent action and a dramatic change of course, manifestos can ignite and inspire.

Manifestos also come with significant baggage, including a history of violence - a tendency to ‘lose your patience and sharpen your wings to conquer’, in the words of Tristan Tzara. The essential dichotomy in all revolutionary manifestos lies between the desire to overthrow and to impose authority. Jenny Holzer summed up the manifesto as a form caught between two extreme tendencies: ‘the scary side where it’s an inflamed rant to no good end, and then the positive side, when it’s the most deeply felt description of how the world should be.’ Might this tension also invest manifestos with their unique and world-smashing potential? Can the more dangerous side of manifestos be mitigated by their potential as a tool for liberation and change?

In this conversation, we will attempt to articulate and confront some burning questions for the manifesto in the 2020s. How should we think about its history? How should we theorise the return and reinvention of this radical form in the (post)digital age? How can the manifesto serve as a useful intervention in the

social / political / artistic / academic realm? How can we use, teach, and encourage this 'escalating form' - and is it wise or responsible to do so in these times of crisis and division? What are the manifesto's latest mutations, how is it being co-opted, and what comes next?

**Breanne Fahs** is both a Professor of Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State University and a practicing clinical psychologist with over twenty years of clinical experience. She specializes in writing about feminism, women's sexuality, critical body studies, and political activism. She has published over 80 articles in feminist, social science, and humanities journals, has published in wide-reaching publications like the *Boston Review*, and has been reviewed, interviewed, and discussed in prestigious publications like the *New York Times*, *Dissent*, *The Paris Review*, *N+1*, *The Guardian*, *Out Magazine*, and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, among others. She has authored six books: *Performing Sex*, *Valerie Solanas*, *Out for Blood*, *Firebrand Feminism*, *Women, Sex, and Madness: Notes from the Edge*, and, most recently, *Unshaved*. She has also edited or coedited four books: *The Moral Panics of Sexuality*, *Transforming Contagion*, *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies*, currently with over 2.3 million downloads on its open-access platform), and *Burn It Down! Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*, which was reviewed glowingly by the *New York Times* and was chosen as a *New York Times* notable book. She is also the founder and director of the Feminist Research on Gender and Sexuality Group at Arizona State University

**Julian Hanna** is Associate Professor of Culture Studies at Tilburg University in The Netherlands. His research focuses on critical intersections between culture, politics, and technology. He is a co-founder of the [Futures of Europe](#) collective, which has

created several editions of two card games — MANIFESTO! and PROVOCATION! — for activists and educators. His most recent book is *The Manifesto Handbook: 95 Theses on an Incendiary Form* (Zero Books, 2020), which builds on almost two decades of research on manifestos and avant-garde movements. His forthcoming book, *Island*, will be published by Bloomsbury in September 2024.

## **2) Galia Yanoshevsky (Bar-Ilan U, ISR) & Nana Ariel (Tel Aviv U, ISR): “From Declaration to Manifesto: Contracting the Declaration of Independence”**

As a reaction to the judicial overhaul imposed by the right-wing Israeli government in 2022, crowds took to the streets in unprecedented demonstrations on a weekly basis, which lasted nearly a year and persisted after October 7th. The Israeli flag, which prior to the demonstrations was used mainly by nationalists, was reclaimed by the demonstrators, and became the symbol of resistance. In addition, a few months into the protest, attempts to restrict the power of the judicial branch resulted in the resurfacing of Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence, which in the absence of a constitution, is the only valid social contract available. In fact, within weeks, the Declaration was contracted to the struggle as reproductions of its scroll became a viable artefact and visual symbol in the demonstrations' space, taking on various forms.

While there may be doubt whether declarations of independence can be considered as manifestos, there is room for exploring the ways in which the different performances of the Declaration's scroll contributed to a change in its status. From a foundational text scripted by the government's future members, it became a manifesto, a new contract played out by the people. It was posted in the public space, covering entire

buildings, carried as signs during the demonstrations' marches, and signed as a petition, by citizens adding to the original signatures.

What do the performances of the declaration as a manifesto do? Do they reaffirm old claims, or do they make new ones? Do they change the text's status from an institutional one to an anti-institutional document, reclaiming thus the foundational sources of Israel's democracy? These questions and others will be raised during our talk. Through them, we will examine the fuzzy boundaries of the manifesto genre and its functions in social struggles against tyrannic tendencies today.

**Galia Yanoshevsky** is a French literature and Discourse analysis scholar investigating the frontiers and interaction between literary and media discourse and between poetic and disposable texts. Her books (*Les discours du Nouveau Roman* 2006 and *L'entretien littéraire* 2018) follow authors' endeavors in the media. In 2009 she published two seminal articles on the manifesto genre, the contours of which she continues to explore. In recent years she has been studying collective memory through multimodal discourses such as tourist guidebooks and national photobooks. She currently leads a digital humanities project, archiving heritage photobooks of Israel in searchable form.

**Nana Ariel** (PhD) is a scholar in rhetoric, literature, and learning, and a senior faculty member at the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University. Her research spans modernist rhetoric, manifestos and material cultures, conventionality in discourse, and the learning sciences. Her book, *Manifestos: Restless Writings on the Brink of the 21st Century*, about manifestos in the context of Hebrew culture, was published in 2018 (Bar Ilan University Press). Her forthcoming book with

Oxford University Press, co-authored with Dr. Dana Riesenfeld, is titled *Here We Go Again: Clichés from Modernity to AI*.

### **3) Pierre Héli-Monot & David Bebnowski (LMU München, DEU): “The Arts of Autonomy: Pamphleteering, Popular Philology, and the Public Sphere: 1988-2018”**

The ERC project “The Arts of Autonomy: Pamphleteering, Popular Philology, and the Public Sphere” studies how short-form radical writing makes contemporary social history. Concise, massively ideological texts have long been perceived as constitutive of the development and transformation of opinion and policy in the public sphere. At least since the early Enlightenment, the pamphlet has been at the forefront of major philosophical, social, and political transformations, including processes of democratization and dedemocratization, colonization and decolonization, the universalization of civil and civic rights, the enforcement of political or territorial autonomy, and the critique of labor exploitation. We use philological critique and Digital Humanities methods to understand how militant texts enforce normative changes in Western societies. In this panel, we will discuss key findings of our project. Pierre-Héli Monot will explain the concepts and methods at the core of the project and present his upcoming monograph. David Bebnowski will give insights into his ongoing research on feminist pamphleteering in Germany and the US, as well on the interplay of pressure and the press. Sakina Shakil Gröppmaier will present understandings from her study of pamphleteering in contemporary territorialist movements in the UK, Catalonia, and California. We are looking forward to an engaging discussion with all participants.



**“The Arts of Autonomy: Pamphleteering, Popular Philology, and the Public Sphere: 1988-2018”** is a research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and based at the Amerika-Institut at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.

**Pierre-Héli Monot**, born in Lausanne, Switzerland, is a literary historian and Professor at the Amerika-Institut of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany. Since 2020, he has been the Principal Investigator of the project.

**David Bebnowski**, born in Wolfsburg, Germany, is a historian and a Postdoc at the Amerika-Institut of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany and has been a member of the project since 2021.



## Paper Sessions

### Session 1

#### **1) Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha (Institute of Language Studies and Research, Kolkata and Kazi Nazrul U, IND): “Provincializing the Canon: Small Voice Manifestos from the Non-West”**

Manifestos, as a genre, usually bear a formal and theoretical aura, in that way they are cerebral and epistemically sophisticated. All celebrated early twentieth century Avant Garde or philosophical manifestos are known for their specialized intellectual effervescence and pioneering style which is complex and defamiliarizing, invoking a challenge to reified or ordinary modes of cognition. Put differently, manifestos, as a category, so far have mostly been crafted by the artistically or intellectually elite who had the privileged modern wherewithal to think, draft and circulate that text among peer groups or intellectual circles who could then disseminate and reproduce that draft through strategic or ideological propagation. The manifesto boom in recent years can perhaps be seen marking a departure in this practice, hinting at a possible democratization of the manifesto-making process. Previously only an Antonio Gramsci could authentically theorize a manifesto for the subaltern, or the Subaltern Studies Historians as an intellectual collective could manifesto-ise the category of the precariat so that the subaltern could “speak”. The manifesto world has also largely been dominated by the Western academia, all well-known manifestos are mostly Anglophonic, preventing us to think beyond the Euro-American template to accommodate the loose structure and norm-deviant contents of the small voiced, vernacular non-European manifestos. Borrowing Dipesh Chakrabarty’s idea of “provincializing Europe”, this paper argues for postcolonial thoughts and historical difference in manifesto-making in non-

western locations. Empirically, I look into Vernacular Vaisnav Sahajiya Texts (medieval and early modern), the Dalit Panthers Manifesto (1973), The Rohit Vemula Act (2016) and the Indigenous Pathalgadi movement Stone Inscriptions (2017) or the Earth Democracy manifesto of Vandana Shiva (2015) as instances of indigenous or subaltern manifestos which are written by heterodox practitioners, ordinary people, outcastes, farmers or aboriginal tribal groups. These manifestos were not printed or published by any mainstream publisher and they never made it into the academic circle except for the fact that postcolonial scholars have engaged with them while launching their critique of state sovereignty and its retention of colonial legacy. I would discuss how these manifestos belong to a different genre of vernacular modernity, claiming their legitimate place within the larger rubric of global intellectual history.

**Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha**, currently Professor (full time position), School of Translation and Cultural Studies, Institute of Language Studies and Research (ILSR), Calcutta, India, is also Professor (full time position), Department of English, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, India. His areas of research include World Literature in English, Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies, New Xenophobia and Social Justice, and Subaltern Studies. His teaching career spans more than two decades and he has previously taught at Sidho Kanho Birsha University, Central University of Orissa and Malda Women's College, University of Gour Banga, India, since 2003.



## **Session 2**

### **1) Karyn Hollis (Villanova U, USA): “Manifesting on Amazon: A Corpus Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Contemporary Manifesto Bestsellers”**

My research will address the first question in the conference call for papers: “What themes and discursive realms does the present manifesto boom engage?” To analyze current popular manifesto trends in terms of topics, reader attitudes, genre, social issues, and ideological content, I will use computer-assisted analysis to explore a large corpus of the titles as well as the reader reviews of book length manifestos for sale on Amazon.

My study will rely on corpus linguistics tools and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a combined approach that provides both quantitative and qualitative insights into the shared values and assumptions among manifesto publishers, authors, and readers. Relying on Foucault for theoretical framing, my analysis will reveal the subtle ways in which many popular manifestos offered up by Amazon construct a neoliberal subject ready to consume and commodify for personal gain.

Indeed, my preliminary research shows that too many popular manifestos are fostering a selfregulating subject similar to those constructed in self-help guides. On top of that, these manifestos also deliver an individual who is mostly white, male, heterosexual, and Euro-American. Using CDA offers a methodology which centers on uncovering ideologies, power imbalances, gender inequalities and the like and can work with big corpora of data to produce insights.

A search for “manifestos” on the Amazon website, turns up over 950 titles with a word count of over 7,000. As for user reviews of these same books, the corpora will include well over 100,000 words. I will draw on the work of Fairclough, Van Dijk, David

Harvey, and Wodak to show how manifestos directed at the individual reader reflect and contribute to the discourse which naturalizes US corporate hegemony and exploitation.

Finally, although they constitute a minority of the manifestos, I will also describe a counter discourse among the manifestos that pushes back against the construction of neoliberal subjectivity.

**Karyn Hollis**, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the English Department and the Global Interdisciplinary Studies Department at Villanova University where she directs the Cultural Studies Program. Besides her interest in manifestos, her research projects include a discursive analysis of Cuban civics textbooks. She has published *Liberating Voices: Writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers* (2004), which was supported by a year-long research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She has also authored two anthologies with Silvia Nagy-Zekmi, Ph.D., entitled, *Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals In and Out of Academe*, and *Global Academe: Engaging Intellectual Discourse*. She has published articles in several anthologies and in journals such as *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, and *The Writing Instructor*.

## **2) Natalie Erkel (RU Bochum, DEU): "Black Political and Black Arts Manifestos as Infrastructure"**

"[T]o write a manifesto is to announce one's participation, however discursive, in a history of struggle against oppressive forces. The form must be understood therefore as more than 'plain talk': the

manifesto is a complex, convention-laden, ideologically inflected genre" (Lyon, *Manifestos: Provocations of the Modern* 10).

This presentation brings together three aspects: infrastructure, manifestos (Black Power, Black Arts) and Afrofuturism. It builds on Laura Bieger's (Ruhr University Bochum) conceptualization of "literature as infrastructure." In *Rethinking Infrastructure Across the Humanities* (2023), Pinnix et al. point out that the concept of infrastructure has expanded from transportation and power systems to educational and governmental services. Over the past decade, scholars from various fields have illustrated the adaptability of the term infrastructure. Anthropologist Brian Larkin defines infrastructures as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas, and allow for their exchange over spaces" (329). While the semantic meaning of the term "infrastructure" has expanded, there usually is a public dimension to our contemporary conception of infrastructure. Instead of a technical understanding of infrastructure, I follow a praxeological understanding of infrastructure. Building on Bieger's conceptualization of literature and genre as infrastructure, I argue that the manifesto genre can be read as infrastructure.

In *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (2005), Martin Puchner argues that while "[s]cattered texts had been called manifestos for centuries, [...] Marx and Engels's *Manifesto* gathered these texts into a distinct genre" (1). In a way, the *Communist Manifesto* represents the infrastructure for all subsequent manifestos worldwide including some Black Arts and Black political manifestos. I will primarily focus on contemporary Black Arts manifestos, namely D. Scott Miller's "AFROSURREAL MANIFESTO: Black is the New black—a 21st

Century Manifesto” (2009), Reynaldo Anderson’s “AFROFUTURISM 2.0 & THE BLACK SPECULATIVE ARTS MOVEMENT: Notes on a Manifesto” (2016) and Martine Syms’ “The Mundane Afro futurist Manifesto” (2013).

**Natalie Erkel** is a PhD student and research assistant (“wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin”) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB). She completed her Master of Education in French and English and her Master of Arts in North American Studies and English Language, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Göttingen. She also spent two years abroad studying French, English and comparative literature in Tours, France and at the UNAM in Mexico City, Mexico. In Göttingen, she taught classes on English didactics, American cultural history, short stories and academic writing. In Bochum, she has taught classes titled “Cultural History and Rhetoric: Feminism in the U.S.,” “Women’s Writing in the 19th and 20th Century,” and “Feminist Utopias and Dystopias.” In the summer term 2024, she is teaching a class titled “Contemporary Science Fiction” and a class titled “Manifestos.” Her research interests include feminism, gender studies, African-American literature, utopias, dystopias and science fiction.



### Session 3

#### 1) Anna Pauder (TU Dresden, DEU): “Odorous Enemies, Delectable Feasts, and the Din of Battle: *A Sensory History Manifesto* and Opportunities for Civil War Historiography”

Leading sensory historian Mark Smith has long stressed that any meaningful scholarly engagement with the past requires historians to attend to the sensate. *A Sensory History Manifesto* embodies the author’s most candid call to historiographical action—a rallying cry for historians of all fields to integrate studies of the sensate into their work.

This paper examines Smith’s text as an academic manifesto. In so doing, it focuses on the genre-specific workings and practical merits of Smith’s “modest manifesto” (Smith) for historical inquiry based on the text’s application to a case study of white women’s experiences in the sensory Civil War South as relayed in their wartime life writing. Incorporating the sensate in explorations of Confederate nationalism as understood by its white female upper class reveals how these women not merely theoretically conceived of their country as politically, economically, and ideologically distinct but how their Confederate subjectivity was sensed in all its olfactory, aural, gustatory, haptic, and visual dimensions.

*A Sensory History Manifesto* combines genre elements of the academic essay with (expected) conventions inherent in the manifesto form into a particular kind of academic manifesto. At the same time, this paper argues while Smith’s text functions as a vessel to promote change in historiographical work (Hanna 11), its tone is neither particularly urgent nor provocative. Although *A Sensory History Manifesto* projects a definitive agenda, offers alternatives to current scholarly practices, and invites its audience to exact the professional change it calls for, it also falls short in exploring the genre’s full performative



potential. Instead of merely applying the manifesto label to a largely traditional justificatory type of scholarly writing, the academic manifesto may offer a form that invites the fusion of public and academic audiences, allowing for emotional provocation that is traditionally outside the sphere of historiographical writing yet powerful in advancing the discipline. This raises further questions about the future of scientific communication and the marketability of genre expectations.

Hanna, Julian. *The Manifesto Handbook: 95 Theses on an Incendiary Form*. Collective Ink, 2020.

Smith, Mark. *A Sensory History Manifesto*. Pennsylvania State UP, 2021.

**Anna Pauder** is a PhD candidate in American Studies at TU Dresden where she completed her MA with a thesis on discursive manifestations of femininity in the Salem Witch Trials. In part, this work was published as “Malevolent Mothers and Distracted Children: Maternity as a Discursive Construct during the Salem Witch Trials” in the anthology *GenderGraduateProjects* VI. In her current project, she explores the ways in which white southern women used music as a discursive reference tool in order to co-create, modify, and perpetuate Confederate nationalism in their life writing of the Civil War. In the future, she is eager to investigate the nexus between Lost Cause mythology, white southern women’s life writing, and music in fashioning a particular sense of the Confederate South still prevalent in the American cultural imaginary today.

## **2) Adriane Meusch (U Bayreuth, DEU) and Tilman Schumacher (FSU Jena, DEU): “Presentation of an Ongoing Research Project: The Film Manifesto as an Aesthetic-political Intervention”**

In their 100-year history, film manifestos have understood film as a “weapon” in the political struggle, emphasizing the reach of the mass medium and its internationality as well as the importance of technical innovations such as digitalization. In a global context, film manifestos are taking position on areas such as film aesthetics, politics and distribution, gender issues, and racism while fundamentally emphasizing the relationship between film and society.

The DFG-funded research project *The Film Manifesto. History, Aesthetics and Mediality of an Activist Form* (2022-25), a cooperation between the University of Bayreuth and Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, defines film manifestos as seismographs for socio-political and media-political crises. The traditional text genre acts as a catalyst for discourse and is reflecting what the film medium can achieve in the future. The project examines how differently film manifestos address their audience and what functions they take on. At the beginning of the 20th century, for example, it can be observed that formats of (exclusionary) self-expression dominate, while participatory formats have gained popularity in the last decades with the rise of the internet. In addition, film manifestos are rather transnational and less Eurocentric – drafting new alternative cinema cultures in opposition to the hegemony of the Hollywood studio system.

The aim of our presentation is to present selected results and questions and to share challenges we face in our historical-systematic research. We will also introduce a keywording system that we have developed, which is intended to represent

the versatility of written film manifestos. The keywording aims to classify the pool of texts we work with and systematize the reading process. Keywording makes it possible to link texts with similar traits – for example, we can compare manifestos that have a collective authorship and pursue a similar goal, such as the formation of a new movement.

**Adriane Meusch**, M.A., works for the DFG-funded research project *The Film Manifesto. History, Aesthetics and Mediality of an Activist Form* (April 2022 - March 2025) in the department of media studies at the University of Bayreuth. Her doctoral research is focusing on feminist film manifestos from the 70s and 80s, with a particular interest in their transnational, institutional and collective contexts. Her essay “Gestures of Solidarity – Feminist Film Manifestos and Collective Authorship” was published in the book *In the Company of Others* released by the feminist film festival *Remake. Frankfurter Frauen Film Tage* 2023.

**Tilman Schumacher**, M.A., works for the DFG-funded research project *The Film Manifesto. History, Aesthetics and Mediality of an Activist Form* (April 2022 - March 2025) in the department of film studies and art history at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. His doctoral thesis deals with a historical-systematic typology of the film manifesto. In 2024, his essay “Das Filmmanifest und das avantgardistische Projekt. Texteinsätze der historischen sowie Nachkriegs- und Post-Avantgarde im globalen Kontext” will be published in the anthology *Globalizing the Avant-Garde* by De Gruyter.

### **3) Maria Wiegel (U Köln, DEU): “Theorizing the “Clusterf\*\*k” while Manifesting the Present: The Metamodern Manifesto as a Mediator between Past, Present, and Future”**

Robin van den Akker and Julien Kloeg write in their article “The Metamodern Condition: Populism and the New Universal, or As If An Sich and As If Für Sich” (2020), that “we rapidly move towards a clusterfuck of world-historical proportions – hidden around the bend, as it were in which wealth is concentrated at the top 1 per cent of the pyramid, while rising sea levels and super storms crumble its base, where the rest of us reside in highly precarious conditions” (64). Their description of the present and future is grim and implies a material reality of what is often theorized about in the academic and cultural industries. Van den Akker is known for his work on metamodernism, a term he coined together with Timotheus Vermeulen in 2009 when they started a blog project with the aim to contextualize the present and explore what comes after postmodernism. What started as an academic project soon found interested artists, such as Luke Turner who published his “Metamodernist // Manifesto” in 2011. Why, however, does someone write a manifesto based on a cultural theory? What is the purpose of such a manifesto? What does it contribute to the metamodern project? In my talk I would like to explore what a manifesto does to a project, or even a movement. I argue that Turner’s manifesto is less part of such a new movement. Rather it is something that *manifests* metamodernism as a new cultural epoch. Turner’s attempt at a manifesto *manifests* metamodernism in the realm of not only academia, but also the actual art world that academia is writing about. I believe that asking those questions and examining a manifesto in relation to the movement it aims to manifest, will help us in

understanding how we can conceptualize, historicize, and better understand the contemporary.

**Maria Wiegel** is a PhD candidate in North American Studies at the University of Cologne. Her current research focuses on the contemporary metamodern historical novel, set in the 1960s and published after 9/11. She is especially interested in paranoia, surveillance, cultural memory studies, and metamodernism. Her writings and reports have appeared in *Critical Intertexts*, *Food, Fatness and Fitness*, *HSozKult*, *zeitgeschichteonline*, the *Journal of the History of Ideas Blog*, *COPAS: Reading in American Studies*, and the collective volume *Encountering Pennywise: Critical Perspectives on Stephen King's IT*.



## Session 4

### **1) Jawhar Cholakkathodi (U Calicut, IND): “Mapping the Creative Dissent in Contemporary India: Knowledge Swaraj and People’s Manifesto in the Grassroots Mobilization”**

This paper is an attempt to understand the context of production, context of reception and the context of circulation of two manifestos released in the last one and half decades. Both *Knowledge Swaraj* and *People’s Manifesto* try to address the pressing challenges faced by India in the contemporary time. *‘Knowledge Swaraj: An Indian Manifesto on Science and Technology’* (2011) is a ground breaking manifesto published in the year

2011 by a group of scholars, policy analysts and activists associated with the Knowledge in Civil Society (KICS) Trust in India. The KICS promotes dialogues on issues relating to science and democracy in global and local context. This manifesto offered an insight to explore the new social contract between science and sustainable development in India. *Editions science et bien commun* took initiative to take this manifesto into transnational communities. They translated *Knowledge Swaraj* into French and circulated to a wider audience in the French speaking global south.

'*People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable, and Sustainable*' (India 2019, 2024) is another Manifesto released by *Vikalp Sangam*. *Vikalp Sangam* is a collective of more than 85 grass root movements and organizations. The *People's Manifesto* highlighted the importance of acknowledging the diversity and pluralism of cultures, knowledge, faiths, and ecological conditions in the contemporary time, especially in the context of the development of far right politics and ideology.

The commonality between these two Manifestos is that both of them are initiatives of civil society actors and grass root movements. In the post independent India in each election mainstream political organizations used to come up with Manifestos and face general elections.

But these two Manifestos are different in its forms and contents. These two Manifestos addressed the question of cognitive justice and the plurality of knowledge in contemporary society. Both Manifestos address issues that contemporary India faces such as political authoritarianism, social exclusion and violence, environmental degradation etc. and tries to mobilize people for political activism and social advocacy.

This paper will explore the form, content and uses of these two Manifestos and look at how it helped in the political

mobilization and grassroots activism. I will use the framework of Diversity Studies to understand and engage with the themes and discursive realms of these two manifestos.

**Jawhar Cholakkathi** completed his doctoral research at the University of Hyderabad, India and worked as Assistant Professor of Sociology, School of Distance Education, University of Calicut. In his PhD research, he tries to understand civic engagement with the governance of Agro-biotechnology in the context of India. In his pre-PhD work he wrote a dissertation on the People's Science Movement and their engagement with the public. He presented research papers in different international and national conferences and seminars.

## **2) Molina Klingler (JMU Würzburg, DEU): Environmentalism and Manifest[o] Knowledge: The "Eco-Manifesto" Calls for Action**

Knowledge brings responsibility. In face of the challenges in times of the Anthropocene, scholars engaged in environmental topics are increasingly driven to take action. Therefore, in recent years, the field of ecocriticism has witnessed the emergence of what I call contemporary "eco manifestos." The awareness of ecological calamities among creative writers as well as ecocritics has led to the recognition that new and untraditional forms of writing are necessary to effect change. Traditional theoretical works, science books, and monographs, while informative, often fall short in bringing about the transformative change needed to address the complex challenges of the Anthropocene. Concurrently, other experimental forms of eco-writing, such as ecopoetry, have also gained momentum. As the Anthropocene and the digital era have rekindled discussions about form in eco-literature, the eco manifesto has emerged as a genre that encapsulates this new ethos. In this paper, I will

mainly examine texts authored by Donna Haraway, which represent paradigmatic and yet exceptional instances of this genre. Looking at various manifestary texts, I will explore the intricate relationship between science, knowledge and (a possibly inscribed failure of a call to) political action.

**Molina Klingler** is a PhD student at the University of Würzburg (JMU). She graduated from the JMU and the University of Eastern Illinois with an M.A. in American Studies/German Studies and a teaching degree. Currently, she is a doctoral fellowship recipient of the Heinrich-Böll Stiftung, and she works as lecturer and assistant to the executive director of the German Association for American Studies. Her PhD project “The Unalienable Right of Life: Multispecies Democracy and Speculative Writing” is located in the field of American Studies and the Environmental Humanities. It explores the relation between the literary imagination, knowledge and environmental policy and politics, and law from an ecocritical perspective.



## Session 5

### **1) Aleksandra Julia Malinowska (U Warsaw, POL): “Valerie Solanas is not Joking: Eloquent Rage as Enabler of Clarity in the *SCUM Manifesto*”**

Valerie Solanas and her infamous *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) have been a troubling object of feminist enquiry ever since the



author tried to kill Andy Warhol at his New York City Factory in 1968. Although a declared anti-feminist herself, Solanas became a point of rupture within the women's liberation movement at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, and has since been assigned an icon status and got absorbed into a number of feminist anthologies. In this paper, I trace both the historical and recently renewed feminist interest in Solanas' life and work, both continuously marked by a hesitance to embrace her scandalous *SCUM Manifesto* as a serious call to arms. In the paper, I challenge the popular feminist reception of *SCUM Manifesto* (largely of the interpretation that it is a clever, provocative piece of satire) and offer an alternative, literal close reading of the text that centers the questions of rage, madness and violence, especially considering the utility of these keywords for feminist political organizing. I analyze the manifesto alongside Brittney Cooper's framework of "eloquent rage" (2018) and illustrate how Solanas uses rage and violence as rhetorical strategies for maximum clarity of argument, both in terms of structure and content. I conclude that unless the women's movement embraces the *SCUM Manifesto*, with all the violence it implies, the movement's central question will remain unanswered; the question being whether feminist use of violence or respectability is the more effective strategy for social transformation.

**Aleksandra Julia Malinowska** (she/her) is a PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw Doctoral School of Humanities. Her PhD project entitled "Affective Poetics: Manifestos and Women's Rhetorical Strategies 1970-2020" is funded by the National Science Centre, Poland. She has also worked on another project funded by the Centre entitled "Queer Theory in Transit. Reception, Translation, and Production in Polish and German

Contexts.” Aleksandra Julia Malinowska is an active member of the Student Chapter of the Gender/Sexuality Research Group affiliated with the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw.

## **2) Judith Schreier (HU Berlin, DEU): “From the *Fat Liberation Manifesto* to *You Have the Right to Remain Fat: A Manifesto: The Transformation of Fat Activist Manifestos*”**

In 1973, the *Fat Liberation Manifesto* was published and spread by a radical fat activist group, the Fat Underground – one of the first ones of their kind, staying close to a more traditional manifest format, including bullet points and an apparent reference to the communist manifesto. The Fat Underground called for change in the medical complex, in the fitness industry, and overall, for a distinct structural change; until today, the *Fat Liberation Manifesto* is cited by many fat activists worldwide despite its strong ties to U.S. politics. In recent years, other manifestos have been published by fat activists: for example, *You Have the Right to Remain Fat: A Manifesto* by Virgie Tovar (2018) and *Fat Off, Fat On: A Big Bitch Manifesto* by Clarkisha Kent (2023). Both of these publications are fleshed-out memoirs, part of the so-called memoir boom, and do not follow the bullet point format of the *Fat Liberation Manifesto*. In these manifestos, the manifesto character exists on a different level: it is moved to an individual level, and the writers manifest their existence in fat and otherwise marginalized bodies in a society that rejects these bodies. Tovar’s publication, different from Kent’s book, has autotheoretical elements and has, as the title suggests, an educational and empowering perspective and wants to support other fat individuals to happily exist in their bodies, for instance, by

referencing studies regarding the pitfalls of dieting. Manifestos and fat activism in the U.S., thus, have a longstanding history. Still, the function of the manifestos seems to have changed and moved from a structural level to a more individual level that promotes self-love, mirroring the development of fat activism and the famous and muchdiscussed body positivity.

**Judith Schreier** is a Ph.D. student at Humboldt University of Berlin after completing her M.A. in American Studies at the University of Leipzig in 2021. She holds a position as a research assistant in the Department of Gender and Media at FernUniversität Hagen and holds a Ph.D. scholarship from the Hans Böckler Foundation. She received her B.A. in American Studies and German as a Foreign Language from Leipzig University in 2017 and has studied abroad at Stockholm University and HWS Colleges, Geneva, USA. Her main research interest lies in the representation of 'deviant' bodies, such as fat and queer bodies, in American popular culture, and she further enjoys thinking about feminist narratology, (writing) poetry, and social media. While studying at Leipzig, she was a member of the editorial team of *aspeers* 11.



## Session 6

### 1) Lee A. Flamand (RU Bochum, DEU): “(No Global) Climate Futures: Post-Ecological Anarcho-pessimism, Wild Freedom, and Apocalyptic Beauty in Desert”

*Desert* (anonymous, 2011) is a post-ecological anarchist manifesto which eschews both revolutionary utopianism and environmentalist optimism. It disavows attachment to the hope for global salvation from climate change as an expression of what Lauren Berlant would have termed “cruel optimism.” Despite this pessimistic appraisal, *Desert* is not a work of crass nihilism; it views disillusionment as liberating, allowing us to imagine how new forms of “wild freedom” may yet bloom amongst the devastations of climate catastrophe.

In the essay’s rhetorical economy, “desert” is polysemic: it refers to the “wastelands” left in the hubristic wake of state-sponsored capitalist plunder; the vibrant, living ecologies of tundra and dunes; political practices of desertion; and divestment from hope-against-all-odds fantasies in which global environmentalist movements, technocratic “solutioneering,” or anarchist revolution deliver us at the eleventh hour.

I read *Desert* as social science theory-fiction for an ambivalent future. It fuses the sensibilities of ecocriticism, anarchist theory, climate forecasting, exodus narratives, political anthropology, and speculative fiction (especially à la Ursula Le Guin and Octavia Butler). The changing weather patterns and shifting geographical terrains of a rapidly warming planet scramble and blur the lines between wilderness, frontier, and civilization, spurring a proliferation of desert-spaces. *Desert* asks us to imagine—

and inhabit—these new frontiers as the immediate, localized stages upon which indigenous and emergent forms of potentially liberating lifeways and sustainable social arrangements struggle to escape the thralls of increasingly fragile, and thus evermore repressive, capitalist security states.

**Lee A. Flamand**, PhD, is Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter (Post-Doctoral Research Associate) in American Studies at Ruhr University Bochum. He holds degrees from the University of California, Berkeley and Freie Universität Berlin and is the author of *American Mass Incarceration and Post-Network Quality Television: Captivating Aspirations* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

## **2) Jennifer Cowe (U of British Columbia, CAN): “Ruling Over the Ashes: Cascadian Bioregionalism, Manifesto Overlap and the Ideological Battle for Nature”**

The Pacific Northwest (also known as Cascadia) is a socially progressive region that is rich in natural beauty and activism. This area has a long history of environmental activism going back to the 1960s; an activism that has traditionally included a strong commitment to green anarchism and social justice. This hippy/hipster stereotype of the region on both sides of the border has led to a sense of separateness from the rest of both America and Canada respectively, leading to fringe group calls for separatism through a variety of manifestos designed to bypass mainstream political debate/parties. The concept of bioregionalism has allowed this debate to be opened up to

include the alt-right or more specifically groups that have become known as green fascists.

This paper aims to explore how bioregionalism as an ideology is utilized by both the progressive left and alt-right political groups to frame a 'crisis' in the region and how action must be taken to 'save' the region from 'outsiders'. I will do this by exploring the manifesto overlap between the Cascadia Department of Bioregion and The Cascadian National Party and various alt-right groups (both active and dormant) including The Northwest Territorial Imperative, True Cascadia and The Pine Tree Party.

I will attempt to connect the longstanding countercultural history of the region to the effectiveness of manifestos as a way to transmit activism and center authenticity in the period of 'fake news'.

**Jennifer Cowe** is a lecturer in the School of Journalism, Writing and Media at the University of British Columbia. She is the author of the monograph *Killing the Buddha: Henry Miller's Long Journey to Satori* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2020). She has published articles and reviews in: *The European Journal of American Studies*, *Cercles: Revue Pluridisciplinaire du Monde Anglophone*, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, *Journal of American Studies*, *Journal of the Institute of Historical Research*, and *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*. Research interests include nostalgia/memory studies, twentieth century American literature/history, green anarchism and Henry Miller.





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