COPAS at Twenty: Interrogating White Supremacy in the United States and Beyond

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Time for a Change

Plenty has changed since the first *COPAS* issue was published twenty years ago. Yet we believe that despite or maybe because of these changes the journal remains true to its original goals of providing a platform for early career scholars to present and discuss their research, allowing for a critical while cooperative exchange among peers and beyond. Taking inventory of *COPAS* on the occasion of its twentieth year of existence, we have decided to address the issue of white supremacy as the topic of our anniversary thematic issue and introduce a very visible change to *COPAS* as well. In doing so, we hope to express the very spirit of the journal, which, as we understand it, is marked by critical self-reflection and the desire to make room for new voices and ideas.

The more the issue on white supremacy before you today took shape, the more urgent we felt the need to change the journal's logo. The old logo, an adaptation of a compass rose, evoked the idea of scholarship as exploration, where research is metaphorically understood as staking out uncharted areas and publishing scholarly work is akin to the discovery and mapping of 'new' territories. While, semantically speaking, exploration is a rather common metaphorical donor field for grasping the meaning of scholarship, this conjunction is neither innocent nor unproblematic—especially when it culminates in choosing a compass rose for a logo. The compass and maps, which commonly feature compass roses, are tools deeply entangled in a violent white supremacist history of European and Euro-American settler colonialism, enslavement, and imperialism, (the legacies of) which continue to shape the world today.[1]

Undoubtedly, the symbols of hegemony continue to exert Euro-American dominance to this day: After all, NATO has a compass rose for a logo and the Mercator projection, the two-dimensional projection of the earth most-commonly used in maps, distorts the image of our

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[1] This also easily begs the question of how Euro-American scholarship has been and continues to be complicit in settler-colonialist, enslavist, and imperialist strivings.

planet much in favor of the global North.[2] This results in the recently sought-after Greenland to appear roughly the size of Africa on a world map, even though the latter is about fourteen times larger. Needless to add that most maps position the global North up top and the South below.

Even though we could easily agree that the old logo had to go, it took some hefty discussions to decide on a new one. In the end we chose the network as the new leading metaphor, because we jointly believe that it is an apt image to visualize the meaning and function of *COPAS*. The journal can be seen as an active part of (sub-)networks in various ways: As an online journal, it is truly part of a global network, making the *COPAS* website an openly accessible hub for scholarly exchange in the field of American Studies. What is more, the individual people who become involved with *COPAS*—be it as readers, reviewers, authors, or (guest) editors—become themselves part of a vast network of (early career) scholars. The articles available on the website also establish links between troves of other texts, thereby pinpointing and shaping networks of debate. In our attempt to work these and related ideas into the new logo, the individual nodes of the network, for example, are deliberately of different sizes and the *COPAS* lettering is intentionally positioned slightly off-center. We leave it to our successors to reassess this design choice after another five, ten, or maybe even twenty years of *COPAS* existence.

History of the Journal: A Brief Narrative Account

COPAS would not exist today if it was not for the bold ideas and moves of two small groups of American Studies postgraduates and for the support they quickly received. The first *COPAS* issue appeared in the year 2000 and contained the conference proceedings of the Postgraduate Forum (PGF) of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS) that had taken place at the University of Regensburg in the fall of 1999. In other words, *COPAS* emerged out of the PGF—a forum that had been founded in 1989 at the Freie Universität Berlin. From its onset, the aim of *COPAS* was not only to make the work of emerging scholars in American Studies in Germany more visible but also to encourage debate and challenge existing methods and ideas (Schneck). Ever since its inception, *COPAS* has been a central platform to bring together these new impulses, promoting them on a national as well as international level.

With its mission to publish the work of emerging Americanists in and beyond Germany, the open access journal was the first of its kind in Germany and received not only a welcoming institutional home at the University of Regensburg but also financial support from the Bavarian American Academy (BAA) during its initial phase. *COPAS* was firmly established at

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[2]   Actually, the Mercator projection visually enlarges the polar regions. But since the continents are located much closer to the polar region in the northern hemisphere, the result is an overall favoring of the global North.

the Regensburger Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik for the first ten years. Due to short-term contracts and the resulting institutional mobility of emerging scholars, though, editors increasingly spread out to other institutions. This 'trend' was furthered by deliberate attempts to diversify the journal's editorial team, which eventually led *COPAS* to branch out from Regensburg and actively involve a growing number of emerging scholars from other German universities. In recent years, editors have hailed from universities in the East, West, North, and South of Germany, have worked at smaller and larger American Studies departments, have come from different socio-economic backgrounds and racialized and gendered positionalities, and have represented manifold research foci. Next to scholars' active involvement with the journal before joining the editorial team,[3] these aspects have most recently served as central parameters in the selection of new members.

In the journal's twenty years of existence, the size of editorial teams has varied from only two or three editors to as much as eight serving editors in times of team transitions. Some of them stayed with *COPAS* only for a year or two, while pursuing their own (post)doctoral research projects, whereas others offered their reviewing, revising, editing, and copyediting skills for up to fourteen years.[4] The majority of serving editors have been women, which does not only reflect the fact that the number of women in literary and cultural studies, and American Studies more specifically, has increased noticeably over the last decades. It may also point to the ways in which editing can be understood as a time-intensive, feminized, almost invisible but important form of care for and in German American Studies.

With this issue, we would like to thank everyone who has cared for and contributed to the success of *COPAS*. Thanks to your work, persistence, and care, *COPAS* has become an indispensable part of American Studies in Germany. In fact, *COPAS* would not have prevailed without the dedicated work of all the editors, reviewers, and contributors. As an initiative by emerging scholars for emerging scholars, *COPAS* has reacted to the changing demands and challenges that many early career scholars face, not least in the form of an increasing competition for jobs and scholarships as well as short-term contracts for part-time jobs that often require full-time commitments. While *COPAS* is, unfortunately, not able to defy the 'publish or perish' culture of today's academia, the journal counters predatory publishing practices and offers free and engaged peer-to-peer feedback. In this respect, *COPAS* is, of course, inspired by the PGF, which is committed to peer support and also celebrates a milestone birthday this year. Its enthusiastic conference organizers-turned-guest editors and presenters-turned-contributors trustfully give their precious time and work in progress into the hands of *COPAS* every year, just as the guest editors and contributors of our thematic issues have done, time and again.

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[3]   Before they joined the *COPAS* editorial team, most of the seventeen editors had published articles with *COPAS* after presenting at one of the PGF conferences and/or had guest-edited the conference proceedings of a PGF conference they had previously co-organized.

[4]   A list of former *COPAS* editors can be found at https://copas.uni-regensburg.de/about/history.

COPAS as an Archive

By now, the journal serves as an archive that—while being necessarily selective and limited—nevertheless allows us to trace some of the main developments of (postgraduate) American Studies in Germany over the last twenty years. Searching this archive for our anniversary issue, we, the current *COPAS* team, decided to not only highlight the thematic breadth of the journal but also consider its research gaps, both of which guided us in our decision to focus on the non-celebratory topic of white supremacy for this issue. Our perusal of the *COPAS* archives, in many cases an inspection of the titles, abstracts, and key words of its over 160 articles for a mention of and critical engagement with whiteness and white supremacy, has been "admittedly and necessarily quick and dirty" but its outcome no less insightful (DuCille 387).[5]

When *COPAS* first started out, issues often consisted only of two or three articles—not least because publishing open access online was still rather unheard-of and the word of a new online journal for early career researchers still had to spread. Yet due to the consistent hard work of editors and authors alike, *COPAS* managed to grow steadily and gained acknowledgment within the field. Thematic issues, such as the present one, were introduced to *COPAS* in 2013 in order to further its publishing repertoire and represent German American postgraduate work beyond the annual PGF conference proceedings.[6] By now, *COPAS* has published twenty volumes with a total of twenty regular issues and five thematic issues on a variety of topics.[7]

Looking at the keywords and titles of articles published in *COPAS*, readers can observe a significant expansion in focus over the years. In earlier years, issues would primarily—yet unmarkedly so—focus on cultural artifacts created by white authors and artists with individual articles discussing African American literature and culture as well. The late 2000s, however, saw new approaches and perspectives appear on the horizon, most of them deriving from within the school of "New American Studies." In their 2007 editorial, entitled "'New American Studies' in Germany? Some Observations from Ground Staff," Gunter Süß

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[5] We take our cue here from Ann DuCille who describes her own method of interrogating the archive of *Novel* in this way and thereby manages to show that the journal "forty or fifty years ago […] missed the literary revolution labeled 'black' and 'woman' and ignored the [US American] nation's second female Nobel laureate" Toni Morrison until the turn of the century (385).

[6] The four special issues that preceded the one at hand address "Sentiment" (2013), "The End as Enjambment" (2015), "Women and Medicine in American Literature and Culture" (2016), and "Dis-eased: Critical Approaches to Disability and Illness in American Studies" (2017).

[7] Today's readers, particularly those interested in Digital Humanities, might enjoy looking at the journal's early issues. Short pieces like Ulrich Miethaner's "The BLUR (Blues Lyrics Collected at the University of Regensburg) Corpus: Blues Lyricism and the African American Literary Tradition" (2001) and Reinhard Prosch's article "'Computer-generated history': Zur paradoxen Dualität von Populärkultur und Zeitgeschichte in Jon Haddocks *Screenshots*" (2005) reflect on the use of digital spaces within the arts and humanities and are, at the same time, important documents themselves that speak of the early promises and fears that digital media held for emerging Americanists at the outset of the new millennium.

and Antje Tober draw on John Carlos Rowe's work in this field in particular and assert that their issue illustrates an unprecedented interest of German Americanists in a diversity of material, considering both its content and form. This growing interest in a variety of topics and material signals, as Süß and Tober conclude, "paradigm shifts [in American Studies] which have gradually taken place during the last forty years and which have intensified during the last decade, partly under the label 'New American Studies.'" For the first time, approaches from Queer Theory and Masculinity Studies enter the journal while, concurrently, two Film Studies articles are the first in *COPAS* history to focus on negotiations of Chinese American as well as Japanese American culture (Bidlingmaier; Laemmerhirt). Furthermore, Blackness, while present as a research object in previous papers, becomes a field of more rigorous investigation. While the journal has always had a focus on Gender Studies, it is only in the late 2000s that the intersections of race and gender as well as of sexuality and gender are increasingly acknowledged and further investigated. This late shift reveals whiteness as an unmarked lens through which Gender Studies, and American Studies for that matter, have often approached their topics.

Focusing heavily on questions of race, the first thematic issue—"Sentiment"—from 2013 includes two intriguing articles, "The Sentimental Eloquence of the Black American Scholar: Ellison's Invisible 'Man Thinking' and Feeling" by Silke Schmidt and "'Free but not Equal': In the Wake of Trayvon Martin—American Anger and Visual Activism" by Imani Wadud, that are among the first publications in *COPAS* to explicitly address questions of white supremacy and name whiteness as a category. While both articles offer valuable input, their recent publication is indicative of the fact that whiteness has and continues to be an understudied research object in German American Studies although—or because—it fundamentally shapes US American culture and American Studies in Germany at large. While the very first discussion of whiteness in *COPAS* was brought forward by Kirsten Raupach in 2002,[8] it took several years for the term to appear again (Bank; Löffler; Dexl). In fact, the words 'white' and 'whiteness' are conspicuously absent throughout most of the journal's publication history. While the 2010s have seen an increase in a variety of fields, from Black Studies to Queer Theory, to Disability Studies, to Age Studies, most publications—while focusing on and deconstructing processes of Othering—have failed to thoroughly analyze constructions of whiteness and their cultural, economic, and political implications. We thus see a pressing need to scrutinize whiteness as a fundamental analytical category in analyses of US American culture, not just in this present but also in future issues.

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[8] It seems important to note here that, with Raupach, a British Studies scholar, specializing in the field of Postcolonial Studies, first brought this awareness of whiteness to *COPAS*.

Naming Whiteness

Striving to continue *COPAS*' tradition as catalyst for critical, new impulses in the larger American Studies community in Germany, this special issue turns to the topic of white supremacy out of a sense of urgency with regard to the marked and unmarked ways in which whiteness shapes the current political climate and our field itself. As Claudia Rankine reminded us at the 2018 meeting of the German Association for American Studies, "to name whiteness is to name dominance." Rankine's call to interrogate whiteness in order to unsettle its epistemological, political, philosophical, and social formations is more than timely when nationalist-populist and outright racist political powers are on the rise in North America and Europe and also impact knowledge production inside and outside academia in manifold forms.

Trained in approaches from cultural studies and Critical Race Theory to New Americanist scholarship, we have been taught to continually engage critically with our object of analysis that is 'America.' From this vantage, we are suspicious of the worn-out national story of American exceptionalism that currently seems to undergo a renaissance and not only so as the refrain of 'make America great again.' Time and again and across a wide political spectrum, we continue to hear recitations of a narrative about 'America' that begins with a vision of egalitarian principles, is structured by a teleological emplotment of constant progression, and ends with emphatic appeals to fully live up to foundational aspirations as the country's vanishing point of narrative and ideological closure.[9]

The premise of this special issue has no such starting or end point. Instead, we understand the national narrative to be moored in genocidal conquest and enslavement. Relying primarily on Black Studies sources, we understand this narrative as a plot of violence that evolves into a race-based formation which reproduces white dominance simultaneously along economic, political, institutional, social, symbolic, physical, affective, and epistemic vectors (Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*; Pease 1-13). This national narrative readily incorporates the history of white European nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration but barricades itself most literally against contemporary immigration of Latinx but also Black and Indigenous people and people of color from middle and South America as well as other parts of the global South. We understand 'white supremacy' as an often-unacknowledged origin story of the United States of America that renders intelligible and legitimate its socio-political order. It is a story that is daily rehearsed on the symbolic and structural level in order to maintain hegemony—from schools, prisons, ICE detention centers, and health care providers to political arenas and various media outlets. This story is

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[9]　The way this story is reiterated exhibits a desire to claim, inscribe, imagine, or restore an innocent version of 'America,' the blueprints of which can be found in colonial narratives of discovery and settlement and its attendant myths of innocent beginnings (see Paul).

always shaped and undergirded by intersecting forces such as hetero-patriarchy, classism, and ableism (Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; Rifkin; Kuppan).

The frequency in which the term 'white supremacy' is currently invoked and refuted demands an explanation of our use here. Over the past years, the term has increasingly appeared in mainstream discourses to describe the rise of Donald Trump to the White House—a rise that made white supremacy's logic and attendant rhetoric legible to a broader audience as a 'new' form of 'crisis.' Along with scholars such as Rankine we find fault with the ongoing discourse of surprise in public and academic analyses of the Trump phenomenon. We do not understand Trump America as new, but within continuities of white supremacy's backlash—or respectively 'whitelash'—against social and legal progress of non-white, queer, and disabled minorities. Preoccupation with the person Trump in fact may be understood as an efficient "serious […] distraction" (Morrison qtd. in Hirsch). This distraction obfuscates the large-scale structural and symbolic continuities of white masculinist and ableist oppression, which, for instance, drives back affirmative action policies under the veil of a putatively race-neutral meritocracy (Bonilla-Silva). Naming these continuities 'white supremacy' is crucial to mark their violent historical pattern. As Robyn Wiegman argues, if segregation law or the KuKluxKlan are the reference points for what counts as white supremacy, white Americans "can now join efforts to undo civil rights reform without recognizing their activities or opinion as participation in the contemporary reconfiguration of white power" (120).

Following Critical Race Theory and New Americanist scholarship, we approach white supremacy as a pervasive formation that comprises institutional, political, economic, social, symbolic, physical, affective, embodied, and epistemic structures. In total, white supremacy and its intersecting forces of ableism, classism, and hetero-patriarchy thus enable, maintain, and naturalize oppression and dominance, which unfold from the violent making of America as colonial modernity and persist through various "permutations" until today (Sexton, "Social Death"; see also Ansley; Pease). Because of the extent and intricacy of this formation, we employ the term 'white supremacy' broadly. Crucially, this is not meant to flatten the distinctions of violence that are routinely enacted to uphold a status quo, ranging from the exclusions and marginalization of non-white knowledges from the center of school or university curricula to the racialized politics of the prison industrial complex. Instead, we do so in the understanding that forms of violence are interrelated to uphold dominance. For us, the historical reach of, for instance, Black enslavement and settler colonialism today extends from masculinist white nationalist rallies and state-enforced racial profiling to various forms of symbolic violence: the psychological and physical effects of ableist, heterosexist, classed, and gendered micro-aggressions of race that are not seen or misrecognized and "breathed in like air" (Sharpe, *Monstrous* 3; cf. Harris-Perry). It is our conviction that we need to attend to all these various dimensions simultaneously, because endlessly repeated racist stereotypes on the level of representation cause social numbing to Black and non-white suffering across prisons, detention centers, internment camps, water crises, hurricane disasters, the Black

Mediterranean, the US-Mexican borderland, torture at Guantánamo, and to the present United States as a settler colonial state that extracts resources at the continued expense of Indigenous, Latinx, and Black lives to safeguard white settler futurity (Sharpe, *In the Wake* 15; Moraga; Rowe and Tuck; Simpson; Teves et al.).

(Dis)Continuities of White Supremacy

Central reference points of white supremacy, such as the histories of settler colonialism, genocide, and enslavement, may appear to lie in the American past, but their afterlives and legacies have continued to contain and undercut liberatory movements of minoritized populations of color till this day. Scholars such as Douglas A. Blackmon, Dylan Rodríguez, and Michelle Alexander have traced structural continuities from enslavement, the convict lease system, sharecropping, and Jim Crow to the racialized mass incarceration of the prison industrial complex in the Post-Civil Rights era. Beyond such carceral and surveilling architectures, white dominance continues to be upheld through racial identity itself as an unacknowledged "way of sorting oneself and others into categories of those who must be protected and those who are, or soon will be, expendable" (Sharpe, "Lose Your Kin"). Frequently, these processes of racial classification have followed eugenic logics and practices that have determined whose body qualifies as a productive citizen worthy of protection by the state (Berlant 43; Mitchell and Snyder 850).[10] For disability studies scholars like Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, this prevalence of eugenic thinking continues to define whom we talk about when we conceptualize the 'human' today (Schwartz Cowan and Garland-Thomson). The idea of the inferior body has and continues to justify practices of racialization, deeply conflating ableism with the upholding of white supremacy (Erevelles 40; Mitchell and Snyder 847). As Jasbir Puar argues in *The Right to Maim*, disability has been used to police and institutionalize racialized bodies from the time of slavery to the current prison.[11] As such, the various facets of whiteness need to be understood as "sources of privilege and protection" from various forms of subordination and subjection (Harris 1721).

Evolving in conjunction with the formation of chattel slavery and practices of settler colonialism in seventeenth-century North America, whiteness was a valuable investment to make (Harris; cf. Lipsitz, Applebaum). Whiteness in North America evolved historically as a racial concept not only in contrast to people racialized as 'Others' (especially enslaved and Indigenous people in the seventeenth and eighteenth century) but also in relation to Catholic as well as Jewish immigrant working-class populations from Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Poland, for instance, who were only gradually integrated into one supraethnic category of whiteness toward the twentieth century (Perry; Ignatiev). Whiteness may no longer be a

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[10]   See Mitchell and Synder for an analysis that fleshes out how the project of white supremacy can be conceptualized as a Western project of eugenics.

[11]   For a disability-centered analysis of the history and presence of eugenics, please see the upcoming special issue "(Re)Considering Eugenics" edited by Simon Strick in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*.

formal precondition for property rights today (Harris 1724) but it has assumed "value as a property in itself, a value encoded in property law and social relations" (Bhandar 7), from prospects of home ownership (Taylor), the freedom of movement, and the choice of residence in the United States, or social and health insurance to encounters with state before the court or the police. This particularly applies to subjects of color whose lives are 'undocumented' or circumscribed by trans and gender non-conforming positions and/or disability (see Rothstein; Roberts; Sharpe, *In the Wake*; Kuppan).

If whiteness emerged as a formal, economic, and affective currency that expanded to incorporate various European immigrant populations across class, gender, and other discriminating axes to uphold dominance over African-descended and Indigenous people (Roediger; Ignatiev), one may identify direct and less direct continuities in the Post-Civil Rights era. Today, various communities of color strive to consolidate a place of belonging and participation in mainstream America by distancing themselves from Blackness and by positioning themselves closer to whiteness in myriad ways. This can also happen in perhaps unexpected arenas, such as the multiracial movement. Proponents of multiracialism often understand the social and formal recognition of 'mixed race' as a powerful unifying act toward dismantling white supremacy by undermining its logic of discrete racial categories, particularly through a reformed census that now allows the identification of multiple racial categories (Root). Yet, critics have called attention to the ways in which the multiracial movement has—often unknowingly—become complicit with white supremacist forces. From this perspective, the modified census is examined as part of a larger, active erosion of Black political force in that it redistributes economic resources to the detriment of the African American community (Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*). And the category 'mixed race' itself is severed from the movement's anti-racist aspirations. On the one hand, claims to 'mixed race' are understood to perform biologistic re-inscriptions of race through a continual rhetoric of mixture, which presupposes pure entities to begin with and conflates the political question of racial definition with the logic of mathematical addition. On the other hand, the category of 'mixed race' is positioned in a "*very* American" tradition (Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Too" 2), where political-economic power is created within the ideology of white supremacy via the differentiation and distancing from Blackness.

In light of ongoing dynamics where socio-economic ascent of some minority groups is tied to the stasis or descent of Black political clout, a range of scholars understand US racial formations primarily as a Black vs. non-black paradigm and put forward 'anti-blackness' as an organizing principle of Western modernity. As both a term and concept, anti-blackness aims to delineate analytically the "forms and functions of [the] violence" induced by chattel slavery (Sexton, "Unclear Word"). It highlights specifically how racism does not work in the same way for every group of color (DiAngelo 89-98), for it explains how "the tacit or explicit use of Blackness [has come] to mark what is undesirable, disposable, and not valued on a sliding scale of humanness, and it includes all of the pleasures and subtle benefits of that marking for those who do it" ("Roundtable on Anti-Blackness").

The (dis)continuities of white supremacy also operate through affect in complicated ways that interweave the symbolic with the structural. White supremacy continues to be, as Michael Epp argues, "perhaps, the most enduring form of public feeling, cultural practice, and political aspiration in the history of the United States" (179)—especially so when non-white representation is (mis)read as power (Garza). Over the last decade, the general diversification of mainstream media culture met with increasing resistance and rage expressed, for instance, against the casting of iconic characters with actors of color—most recently so with the remake of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* with African American singer/actress Halle Bailey as Ariel. What seems to fuel such repeated 'controversies' is an excess of affect that Robin DiAngelo conceptualizes as 'white fragility,' the psychological stress induced when white dominance is made visible and challenged. According to DiAngelo, this stress often leads to a desire to recuperate whiteness as innocent and neutral in a conscious or unconscious effort "to maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy" (2). Such maneuvers also manifest in attempts to sever one's white identity from the structure of white supremacy.

Following historian Carol Anderson, we consider "white rage" over an expanding presence of people of color on screen 'effective,' because it drafts whiteness as a victim under siege and thus powerfully obscures the prevalent structural paradigm of non-white suffering in institutions predominantly under white control. Such affective engagements also eclipse the ongoing national investment in a variety of white supremacist poetics. Unceasing practices of 'Playing Indian' (Deloria) distort and displace Native Americans into figures of a seemingly contained past and conceal their present claims to territorial rights. Popular film depictions of Chinatowns as "spaces of danger, spiritual and moral decadence, and 'otherness'" continue to obscure the role that Chinese Americans have played in the development of the United States while the very term continues to neglect the vast cultural differences and different geographical influences that exist within the denominator 'Asian American' (Bidlingmaier; cf. Lin; Schlund-Vials et al.) The 'afterlife of slavery' (Hartman) manifests itself semiotically not only in enduring performances such as blackface but also in tenacious "controlling images" of African Americans as either fundamentally threatening, subservient, or infantilized and non-autonomous (Collins 70-71). As Toni Morrison writes in *Playing in the Dark*, "[the] master narrative could make any number of adjustments to keep itself intact" (50-51).

A primary reason why such white supremacist structures and semiotics remain in place, Charles Mills claims, is the existence of an often covert "Racial Contract" (3) among white people to maintain dominance. The essential 'clause' of this contract might be to remain ignorant of it or to construct seemingly reasonable explanations for the absence of Black, of color, queer, and disabled bodies in places of power and meaning making. As Tanya Titchkosky illustrates with regard to the university, making reasonable the unreasonable continues to be a major expression of structural violence and academic ableism in contemporary North America (44). The same can certainly be observed in Germany. In many

ways, the disregard of disability in academia correlates directly with the marginalization of non-white bodies and knowledges. From diagnostic categories such as 'dysaesthesia aethiopica' and 'négritude' during times of slavery (Stuckey), the ableist language of "feeblemindedness" in twentieth-century debates on immigration (Strange and Stephen 527), to today's overrepresentation of children of color in settings of 'special education,' white dominance has and continues to be maintained by marking the bodies and minds of people of color as disabled.[12]

Issue Overview

This issue seeks to provide a contribution to the study of whiteness and white supremacy by investigating a variety of its multiple guises, from white supremacist manifestations in white power music and New Hollywood cinema to German academia. The following questions have guided us and our contributors on our way toward this issue (Essi et al.): What does it mean to feel, to sense, and to experience white supremacy? Which emotions does white supremacy engender and how? How does systemic white supremacy construct individuals' affects and how do these affects relate to the distribution of economic, social, and symbolic capital? How do affects of 'white guilt,' 'white power,' and 'white redemption' shape public discourse, legal policies, and the representations of US history? Who writes, interrogates, confronts, and dismantles those (hi)stories of whiteness and how?

In selecting the contributions of this special issue, we attempted to work against a longstanding ethnographic gaze in German scholarship on race where the structure and history of white supremacy is addressed primarily through indirection, i.e. in analyses of cultural forms of expression that are deemed 'ethnographically' representative of non-white life forms. An underlying assumption of such studies often seems to be that literature, film, art, and theory of and about African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx Americans, and other minoritized communities in the United States can only speak for and of themselves, while white cultural production is understood as not racialized and therefore capable of speaking universal truths about the human condition. Committing to "critical vigilance" (Applebaum 3; cf. Yancy) in face of the risk that centering whiteness always implies, the contributors in this special issue were asked to work toward analyses that (a) focus on white actors and institutions, (b) keep the violence of whiteness in view, and (c) employ a mode of scholarly self-positioning that renders transparent from where and how they approach the analysis of white supremacy.

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[12] It is crucial to understand here that, throughout history, Black bodies have not just been described by metaphors of disability but have been disabled through epistemological and physical violence. As Nirmala Erevelles reminds us in *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts*, "the conceptualization of black subjectivity as impaired subjectivity is neither accidental nor should it be conceived of as merely metaphorical" (40).

As a seismograph of German American studies, this *COPAS* issue is also representative of American Studies as a disciplinary field in Post-Holocaust Germany that has been pre-occupied by race, ethnic, as well as religious affiliation and origin while only recently beginning to engage with, for instance, its own historical complicity in colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade (see e.g. Bundeszentrale; Raphael-Hernandez and Wiegmink). At the same time, this issue is put forward as a stance against a lack of critical discussion of whiteness and against a lack of perspectives of people of color based in the German academy. The levels of editorship, article contributions, and peer-reviews have all been shaped by white and BPoC positionalities. Yet, we know that much more needs to happen in Germany and German academia and that our own intervention must be critically reviewed in terms of omissions that reproduce structural exclusions, most prominently so with regard to questions of disability and perspectives on white supremacy beyond a Black-white binary. Thankfully, **Christine Vogt-William** has agreed to be our critical interlocutor. By way of an afterword, she engages with our editorial and introductory work and unflinchingly pushes our conversation forward by contextualizing our efforts in the larger trajectories of German American Studies scholarship on race.

With his article "Identity, Affect, Alliance: Thinking Whiteness Transnationally," **Cord-Heinrich Plinke** offers an intriguing comparative analysis of affect in negotiations of whiteness in the US and Western Europe. In particular, he critically turns to the role that shame plays in US Critical Whiteness Studies and also scrutinizes how shame over the Holocaust silences conversations about racism in Germany, so that white supremacist formations are ultimately reinforced. Plinke asks his white readers to transform individual emotional responses to racism into structural analyses as well as alliances and aptly suggests that 'studying white oppression' might be a more adequate framework for what is usually (mis)labelled as 'Whiteness Studies.'

In "Singing for a White 'City upon a Hill': White Power Music and the Myth of Regeneration Through Violence," **Axelle Germanaz** examines white identity constructions, such as the 'captive' and the 'hunter,' in American white power song lyrics of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Drawing on Richard Slotkin's concept of "the myth of regeneration through violence," Germanaz reveals the figures' relation to American founding myths and debunks their racist ideology.

Rahab Njeri and **Nele Sawalisch** extend our discussion of white supremacy to the space of German academia through a collaborative contribution. They start off with the joint research question 'Why Isn't My Professor Black?' and then depart into two separate autobiographical narratives that offer analyses from the perspective of a black female and a white female scholar in the system. Their narratives are interwoven by a common concern: Along the way, they identify multiple explicit and implicit ways in which the supposedly egalitarian institution of the university can uphold white dominance and exclude or marginalize scholars of color.

In his analysis of US-American countercultural discourse, **Till Kadritzke** brings together Charles Reich's 1970 bestseller *The Greening of America* and Dennis Hopper's cult film *Easy Rider* from 1969. The article convincingly illustrates that both 'texts' played an important role in constructing countercultural subjectivity as rooted in a conscious act of placing oneself in opposition to dominant culture. Consequently, as Kadritzke aptly remarks, "countercultural subjectivity […] excludes those whose identity is interpreted as a social identity to begin with and for whom being at odds with the dominant culture is not merely a question of consciousness" (73). Providing close readings of key scenes of *Easy Rider*, Kadritzke demonstrates that this cult film of the New Hollywood era mirrors Reich's notion of a countercultural self that consciously liberates itself from dominant culture—a notion that conceals socioeconomic and racial differences between political subjects.

Mariya Nikolova zooms in on Don DeLillo, who in the manifold receptions of his literary oeuvre is often framed as a visionary author(ity) offering ethical reflections on contemporary crises. Nikolova challenges such celebratory rhetoric in her article "White Violence and Spectral Blackness in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*." Scrutinizing DeLillo's most recent novel, she shows that the (white) American morality and heroism to be found in his work come at the cost of a politics of exclusion that essentially promotes white supremacy.

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