Voicing our concerns: Attempts at Decentring German Theatre and Performance Studies

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In 2021, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we came together to found the New Critical Theatre Studies network (https://www.nktw.info/en/), a research network that aims to draw attention to the lack of postcolonial, decolonial, and critical race theory in the field of German Theatre and Performance Studies (GTPS). The network emerged out of our shared academic-activist practices both in the classroom and beyond, driven by a collective experience of frustration with the field's disavowal of harmful colonial and racist legacies. The discussions that we have been having in our network, the questions we find ourselves returning to, and the experiences we share and analyse prompted us to voice our thoughts and concerns regarding GTPS in a more systematic way with this paper.

This article sets out to clarify what it means to decentre GTPS from a Western-centric focus and proposes some methodological solutions to achieve this goal. By GTPS, we understand a specific German-speaking tradition and contemporary academic discipline of researching, disseminating, and teaching about theatre and performance practices that, importantly, exceed the geographical confines of the Federal Republic of Germany. A dominant narrative of the discipline's history—dating back to dramaturgs and scholars such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Max Herrmann, who led the first academic department for theatre studies in Germany—centres on an understanding of performance as event. Works that belong to this hegemonic scholarly tradition, namely Erika Fischer-Lichte's study *Transformative Power of Performance* (2004) and Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999), champion a performative turn that would shift the discipline away from its originally literature-centred focus. Our concern with these works lies in their lack of engagement with

colonial history and the question of race in the field, as well as their disavowal of a decades-long tradition of works produced by women of colour, feminists, and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) researchers and activists who have actively worked on decentring the discipline from a German-speaking context. We therefore take issue with the overwhelming *whiteness* of the majority of GTPS curricula, the short-sightedness of dominant debates and research methodologies in the field, as well as with the persisting and significant oversights that have shaped the field in the past twenty years.[1]

This article takes the form of a conversation and brings together the voices of four differently positioned GTPS scholars, based in different parts of the world and working within predominantly *white* institutions and social contexts. Our decision to adopt this format serves to highlight the necessarily collective nature of research and the ongoing—potentially never-ending—political struggle towards decentring hegemonic disciplinary narratives. We understand our knowledge to be embodied and situated in the geopolitical and epistemological contexts in which we live and from which we write. Therefore, before attending to a consideration of the current, global academic state of GTPS, we first deem it necessary to address our respective positionalities. By doing so, we simultaneously draw attention to some of the discipline's issues, such as the limiting infrastructure of its Chair system and the omission of decolonial discourses, practices, and theories, as well as the lack of racial literacy and methodologies to engage with the question of race and the continuing colonial legacies in GTPS. Consequently, we discuss the material, epistemological, and aesthetic consequences of the above for German theatre makers of colour. Furthermore, by drawing from specific examples in our own pedagogic practices, we envision what a decentring practice might entail beyond a mere additive logic of inclusion within an established canon and curriculum. To conclude, we share some of the heuristic potentials of such decentring practice and hopes for the future of the field.

Positioning

We understand the practice of situating our knowledge, positions, and privileges as part of decentring work.

Ann-Christine: I grew up in a small town in North-Western Germany and was the first member of my family to attend university. Coming from a non-academic family, my experience of higher education required some adjustments and was sometimes accompanied by a feeling of alienation. However, I am conscious of my privilege as a *white*, middle-class, female, cis-gender, able-bodied German researcher within an institution that systemically marginalises and racialises non-*white* researchers. At the

time of writing this article, I have the (questionable) privilege of being able to move between my home in Glasgow and Switzerland where I hold a fixed-term postdoc position, while I simultaneously acknowledge the neoliberal pressures on early-career researchers to stay flexible and mobile across borders and the limitations that this requirement often puts on racialised academics or researchers with the "wrong" passport.

Azadeh: I am a former refugee who grew up in Germany without citizenship (and therefore without citizens' rights) until my eighteenth birthday. I have been racialised, shamed, policed, and marginalised by *white* Germans for as long as I can remember. One of the most traumatising incidents I experienced within academia was when a *white*, female German theatre scholar attacked me after a conference on race and migration by asking for my passport. She then told me I should shut my mouth when it comes to experiences of migration because I had a German passport. I have since then dreamt of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea as if this dream would make her validate my lived experience. I often feel unsafe whenever I enter academic spaces. Within GTPS, I am currently one of the very few non-*white* scholars who could carry on working in academia beyond a PhD. German society's answer to the lack of scholars of colour is to frame it as a social issue: there is a widespread perception that migrants, refugees, and their descendants belong to lower classes and, therefore, both as a group and as individuals, that they are unable to gain access to higher education. Germany has never been good at concealing its racist and classist biases and gatekeeping within the education system affects marginalised and racialised subjects from a very early age.

Anika: "Who is my research benefiting and who is it harming today?" I ask myself this question daily to evaluate and hold myself, my actions, and my work accountable. I am a *white*, able-bodied, atheist, thirty-year-old cis-female from Germany, and, at the time of writing this article, I am working on a fixed-term postdoc contract at Aarhus University, Denmark, among other *white*, cisgender, able-bodied Danish colleagues. In this particular situatedness, I owe my continuous self-education on decentring practices to BIPOC artists, scholars, and activists in the Nordic countries: Aaiún Nin, Awa Konaté, Choco Guilène, Deise Faria Nunes, Dina El Kaisy Friemuth, Jeanette Ehlers, La Vaughn Belle, Lesley-Ann Brown, Marronage, Mica Oh, Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed, Phyllis Akinyi, Pia Arke, Temi Odumosu, and The Union, among many others.

Lisa: I currently hold two part-time and fixed-term early-career positions at the universities of Amsterdam and Munich, while balancing life as a first-time mum. I was born in the countryside of northern Germany, close to the sea, and my ancestors have all been diasporic *white* German settlers along the shores of the Baltic Sea (Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Denmark). Early on, this background complicated my understanding of

national identity, cultural heritage, and belonging and, most likely, informed my deep interest in German history and its intimate entanglements with colonial, racist, and antisemitic histories.

What is the Current Academic State of GTPS?

Azadeh: Let me begin our conversation on the current state of GTPS by summarising the most common argument that is frequently used to justify the shortcomings in our field: the scarcity of chairs and departments.[2] Indeed, compared with other countries, there are fewer GTPS departments in Germany at institutions such as FU Berlin, UdK Berlin, LMU Munich, JGU Mainz, RU Bochum, JLU Giessen, Uni Leipzig, HfBK Hamburg, University of Hamburg, Goethe-University Frankfurt, University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, University of Hildesheim, University of Bayreuth, University of Cologne, as well as the German-speaking departments in Vienna (Austria) and Bern (Switzerland).

These limitations are also motivated by a generalist idea of academia and knowledge production, namely the belief that every chair should potentially be able to research and teach any topic related to Theatre and Performance studies. Such a generalist approach disguises the geopolitics of knowledge production. Academia is predicated on the belief that everyone is potentially able to publish on any subject matter and working from lived experience continues to be perceived as undermining an ideal, "neutral" scholarly perspective.

There is not one chair designated to performance cultures outside Europe, nor is there a chair dedicated to postcolonial/decolonial/critical race theories. In fact, the concept of race is still urgently in need of address within our field. It is often either ignored or excluded, or, worse, mentioned as an area that the scholar is not able (or comfortable) to engage with. Instead, references to alterity discourses within academic intuitions serve to even further disguise racist phenomena and their consequences. Significantly well-funded research projects such as "Global Theatre Histories" (LMU Munich) or "Interweaving Performance Cultures" (FU Berlin) have promised to address issues, such as intercultural performance, global theatre economics, and the proliferation of colonial aesthetics. Yet, so far they have not meaningfully engaged with race and the specificity of the field's colonial history.

Lisa: A good example for the omissions Azadeh is describing in relation to colonial history is the amount of historiographical literature on theatre's modernity that does not bear any mention of Germany's colonial past (Balme, Fischer-Lichte and Grätzel; Marx; Brauneck). Much of the research on nineteenth-century theatre history reads as if theatre as an aesthetic medium was a) a European phenomenon, and b) a European phenomenon that emerged untouched by colonialism, its ideologies, hegemonies, and

racialising forms of representation. In the German context, these omissions are particularly astonishing as the German nation-state (1871) and the German colonial empire (1884) officially formed, with only a decade between them, around the same period.

The temporal proximity of these two events would already invite a deeper analysis of the impact that colonialism might have had on the formation of Germany as a *Kulturnation,* with theatre as its main form of cultural expression. In addition, the number of references to theatre in colonial archives—such as accounts of performances in the colonies by German soldiers and settlers, police agents, and ethnographers—point to a meaningful correlation between early German theatre research and the colonial project. The extent to which our contemporary understanding of theatre and our concept of spectatorship in relation to subjectivity might be informed by these entangled histories of colonialism and theatre is still widely under-researched in the German academic context. The recurring scandals in German municipal theatres concerning racist and racialising representational practices point to the visceral, material, and epistemological consequences of this lack of historical awareness.

Ann-Christine: This leads me to think about the significant lack of analytical tools to recognise and expose racialised discourses, tropes, and practices that were at our disposal when my generation studied both historical and contemporary theatre forms in the first decade of the twenty-first century. One significant part of my academic training entailed learning the methodology for performance analysis—the only methodology that theatre studies, a discipline that borrowed from a variety of fields, can call its own.

While the performative turn has influenced GTPS significantly, with performance analysis widening its approaches from purely semiotic to phenomenological ones, the accompanying dogma of the subjectivity of the performance experience and its validity to academic analysis regretfully did not place an emphasis on the necessity to reflect on one's own racialised identity or, in the case of the unmarked category of *whiteness*, a lack thereof.

This is directly related to what Lisa mentioned relative to the recurring scandals in the German municipal theatre scene. *White* artists, staff members, and critics are lacking the awareness, terminology, and analytical tools to engage with the racialised history and present of theatre production. Therefore, artists, staff members, and academics of colour repeatedly become the target of racist speech, offences, and discrimination.

Anika: During my education and experiences inside and outside the "teaching machine" (Spivak, 3), ethnicity and diversity have often been used as nominal

scapegoats to refrain from structurally engaging with racial discriminations, thereby marking "Otherness" as something performative as opposed to something that has actual material consequences. The concept of "Otherness" has often been employed by my *white* teachers from an unmarked position in a highly problematic way.

Considering Ann-Christine's remarks, I want to emphasise the lack of analytical tools for reckoning with power structures and the ways in which *whiteness* as a hegemonic structure affects theatre production, reception, and research. I see the potential for decentring in drawing from international works. I found it incredibly helpful in my teaching to apply intersectional theory as a tool to rethink and teach performance analysis, as well as Daphne P. Lei's notion of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre and Anamik Saha's systemic analyses of race and cultural production, owing to Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall's foundational works.

To clarify this, I shall share another anecdote. When I was studying for my MA in Theatre Studies at the Johannes-Gutenberg University in Mainz, I met my colleague and dear friend Elizaveta Olijnyk. She had just moved to Germany from Ukraine and, poignantly, during that time, she had made some witty observations about what she perceived "German identity" to be. She told me that she found it profoundly disturbing to take a public bus and witness people who would decidedly sit apart from each other. To her, it was normal to enter into a bus, look for other passengers, and sit next to them in bodily proximity, perhaps even to engage in conversation. This observation opened new, tangible perspectives onto German societal organisation for me, and, perhaps as a consequence, also on the critical and pedagogic removal of physical proximity. During that time, Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory about theatre's transformative power and the spectators' bodily co-presence were also quintessential to GTPS education.[3]

Ann-Christine: That anecdote is very telling, I think. It absolutely points to the discrepancy between our discipline's emphasis on embodiment and, as you say, physical co-presence, while at the same time, the discipline's academic praxis remains very much confined to the realm of theory, analysis, and written or verbal exchange. It is important to understand that GTPS, in contrast to many departments in English-speaking countries, typically does not offer practice-based seminars or promote practice-as-research methods as viable tools in academic research. In turn, this visceral methodological deficit then creates a lack of visceral understanding and competence in dealing with the more-than-theoretically-experienced legacies of colonial epistemic violence and racial exclusions.

What are the Material, Epistemological, and Aesthetic Consequences of the Lack of Decolonial Discourses, Practices, and Theories in GTPS for

German Theatre Makers of Colour?

Azadeh: Before I was able to secure a place within German academia that is now enabling me to undertake research—specifically on marginalised and racialised artists—and teach about artistic knowledge production outside hegemonic spaces, I was doing the same as part of my activist work. I was part of several groups of artists, scholars, and theatre practitioners who staged interventions and protests, and exposed the ongoing injustices (exclusion, marginalisation, racialisation, and discrimination) that were being perpetuated in theatres, art institutions, and theatre studies. We have been called names—"the stage police" was one of the nicer ones—and our critique has been deemed as invalid and irrelevant because we were seen as BIPOC (and *white* ally) activists who did not "speak" to the theoretical frame of GTPS.

A decade later, these activist groups and their critiques are now being acknowledged as foundational to contemporary discourses on race, racism, and colonial traces that are finally being had within GTPS. Crucially, I would argue that the most significant epistemic and aesthetic shifts of the past two decades have not been stimulated by any of the established GTPS scholars, but by those marginalised and racialised artists and practitioners who have coined new terms, such as "postmigrant theatre," to talk about non-*white* theatre productions and performances, who staged interventions against the *white* gaze on stage, or just appropriated existing discourse to expose their injustices and shift the narrative.

Lisa: In our book *Theaterwissenschaft postkolonial/dekolonial* (2022), we interviewed several German theatre makers of colour on their views regarding the lack of engagement with postcolonial and decolonial theories and discourses in GTPS. Almost all of them expressed discontent with the current state of theatre critique in German media, which they consider to be directly related to what is taught (and not taught) at university. Simone Dede Ayivi, one of the artists we interviewed, mentioned a positive review of her performance *Queens* (2017) in which the journalist complimented the "traditional African costume" she had used in her performance (90). The costumes, however, were neither "traditional" nor particularly "African," but rather referenced Afro-Futurism and Black pop-culture. Ayivi noted that she would have preferred a bad review that got the references right over a positive review that was so obviously oblivious to her performance's form and content.

Many artists of colour describe a similar disappointment with theatre reviewers in Germany who either completely ignore their performances, or are unable to engage with their art in its full complexity owing to a lack of knowledge. What surfaced from the interviews is a widespread wish for *white* theatre critics to make a bigger effort and broaden their own frame of references, to stay curious about those performances

that might appear opaque to them, and—to put it in a nutshell—to read up on postcolonial approaches.

Anika: In addition to that, (re-)traumatisation and lack of allyship and resources also play a part in the perpetuation of colonial violence in academia. I shall share another anecdote, which I hope gestures towards the all-encompassing work of decentring that should address not only the topics and theories that are studied and taught but also the affective skills that are necessary to engage with specific experiences of trauma, war, and colonisation.

I witnessed my colleague Elizaveta's traumatic response to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, and her desperate desire to participate in the Maidan protests. At the same time, I realised how both myself and her supervisors at that time had no resources or skills to engage with a student going through trauma that resulted from colonisation (Reznikova). As a result, this issue was generally ignored by academic staff, and I was simply able to meet with her for brief moments between her cafeteria, campus, and classroom runs, to check-in with her and listen to her thoughts on the matter.

This is not, as Ann-Christine Simke (2022) importantly made clear in another contribution, about putting the blame on individual lecturers or teachers, but rather about problematising the lack of competence to engage with experiences of marginalisation and trauma, and the lack of systemic support for active allyship. Ultimately, this speaks to the harmful practice of uncoupling university education from ongoing political struggles and the tendency to believe that such struggles matter only once they are manifested in the theory produced by the Global North (Moosavi, 332).

What Does Decentring Research and Classrooms Entail?

Anika: As Leon Moosavi points out, to decentre is not "a simple task" (332) and perhaps it is not even possible. Decentring can be perceived as a multifaceted, deeply unsettling, ongoing process, during which dominant *white* researchers, such as myself, pose a number of risks to marginalised colleagues and students: of appropriation, essentialisation, tokenisation, and the reinscription of colonial violence. I often remind myself and colleagues that decentring is about actively positioning yourself within a movement, conversation, and fights that have been going on for decades in the so-called Global South—and also in Germany—driven by marginalised people who have, however, often been silenced or ignored by a predominantly *white* academic setting (Moosavi, 332). Azadeh has importantly focused her research and activist work on giving a platform to marginalised struggles, such as the experiences of womxn of

colour, and to histories of intersectional alliances against oppression in the German theatre context (i.e. Sharifi).

Our attempts to envision, commit to, and enact a decentring of GTPS acknowledge the importance of teaching practices, student engagement, and the consideration of what happens in classrooms, putting into question what we even consider to be a classroom in the first place. Importantly, this does not simply mean adherence to an "additive logic" that aims to diversify texts on curricula and exam lists, providing "new things to think about," as Sruti Bala puts it succinctly with reference to Gayatri Spivak (335). Radical pedagogical practices and experiences, while often undertaken by precariously employed academics such as ourselves, help to enliven collective political struggles and can be sites for heightened reflection on the unlearning of racist practices.

Such (un)learnings are messy: they are about sitting with one's discomfort and insecurity and they demand a careful positioning of teachers, as well as students. In my role as teacher/learner in predominantly *white* classrooms, I often face what Fatima El-Tayeb has called the "unspeakability of race" (185). To identify and have a language to name one's structural advantages, as well as the power structures that we find ourselves battling against or succumbing to, is a powerful and necessary tool for empowering students and for doing the work of decentring across intersecting oppressions. The violent crux lies specifically in the problematic assumption that "wherever whiteness is only an implicit category, it is less central to a people's identity" (El-Tayeb, 185). El-Tayeb traces this in the particular use of the German language that has been shying away from the use of the historically charged term 'racism' in favour of xenophobia. In our collective effort to decentre methodologies in GTPS, I am indebted to and feel deep gratitude for the work of Fatima El-Tayeb and feminist womxn of colour who have been working fiercely on developing a critical German vocabulary to tackle the silence around race and racism in public discourse (including, among many others, Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz/Ayim and Dagmar Schultz; Hito Steyerl and Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodriguez; Maureen Maisha Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche and Susan Arndt; María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan; Natasha Kelly; Lisa Liepsch, Julian Warner and Mathias Pees).

Because decentring means more than a mere additive logic—and includes experiences such as trauma, witnessing trauma, vulnerability, discomfort, empowerment, and messiness in encounters with students (and/or artists, activists, allies, accomplices)— it bears a "visceral logic" too (Khanna; Menakem; Marschall). Working to subvert deeply entrenched racist and colonial structures also means working on the psyche and emotions—i.e. training the vagus nerve when facing the defensiveness of *white* students and colleagues against engagement with race (Kilomba). Equally, in her

manifesto for decentring Theatre and Performance Studies in the UK, Swati Arora calls on her colleagues (and others, i.e. us) to recognise that pedagogy is political and to focus on "embodied learning at the core of the discipline" (17), rather than merely adding new material to reading and exam lists, as doing so would only reinforce the classification of certain forms of knowledge as secondary or peripheral.

Ann-Christine: Yes, this implicit knowledge hierarchy is still really ingrained in the minds of a lot students! I remember an incident that, to my surprise, reminded me of this lingering epistemological hierarchy. I designed a course about intersectional curating and performance analysis, and instead of asking students for a written assignment, I asked them to critically engage with theatre institutions in their area and to curate a hypothetical but feasible festival programme that would be intentionally intersectional, inclusive, and critical. This exercise was designed to invite them to think carefully about their own situatedness in their local theatre scene, about the demographic that was being represented, and, of course, who and whose stories were missing and how these stories related to themselves. My aim was to get students to think about their own positionality, the aesthetics and ethics of curating, and to find practical answers to the critical questions we had been asking during the seminar. Most students responded positively to this task. However, I also received responses that considered this task less academically valid, leading to one student leaving the seminar. This brought home to me that the university setting in German-speaking countries still implicitly favours certain kinds of knowledge production, and excludes or invalidates others.

What are the Untapped Heuristic Potentials of the Field of GTPS? What Are Our Hopes for the Future of the Field?

Azadeh: One of the most urgent aspects to attend to in our field is the lack of BIPOC lecturers and professors. Students also demand a radically diverse education that would require further complication of the existing canon. GTPS is still unable to grapple with the complexity of performances produced by marginalised and racialised artists. Such inability is accompanied by a lack of self-reflexivity in the discipline that should be held accountable for its epistemic violence, as well as its methodological and theoretical oversights.

Lisa: Our methodologies and epistemologies have to be radically changed. Postcolonial and decolonial approaches should reach across all parts of our curricula. It is not sufficient to have one or two elective seminars in which we teach postcolonial theatre, after which students go on to learn in another seminar that, for instance, ancient Greece is the cradle of human culture. We do not have to do away with Enlightenment thinkers entirely, but there is a necessity to historicise their concepts

more strongly, especially with regard to the aspect of race, in order to foreground the epistemic violence that they produced.

Ann-Christine: I agree with Lisa. Postcolonial and decolonial approaches need to be firmly implemented in the basic curriculum of Theatre Studies that, typically, consists of foundational courses on performance analysis, theatre historiography, and theory, as well as aesthetics. Embedding postcolonial and decolonial approaches in these "pillars" of theatre studies training would equip a future generation of scholars with the theoretical, rhetorical, and embodied tools to deal with the diverse and heterogeneous past, present, and future of GTPS. We should also mention some positive developments relative to the increase in general social awareness around these issues, which will hopefully continue to expand and have an impact in our field.

Anika: Certainly. For example, in 2019, the theatre director Julia Wissert—who, in 2020, was also elected the first Afro-German head of a state theatre in Germany—established a legal anti-racist clause for theatre workers, following the years-long fight for such an anti-racist clause by the performance collective Technocandy. In 2022, the May Ayim Fonds was also created, the first German foundation engaged in furthering the political empowerment of Black, African, and Afrodiasporic communities in Germany. In the same year, the German government appointed Reem Alabali-Radovan as its very first *Anti-Rassismusbeauftragte*n* (commissioner for anti-racism).

Another important initiative was the publication of the first *Afrozensus* in December 2021, a first-of-its-kind statistical survey that aims to make Black lived realities in Germany, including Afrodiasporic and postcolonial conditions, visible through empirical means. The *Afrozensus* is a response against the historical disavowal of Black lived experience by institutional structures, and aims to counter such negligence with a comprehensive collection of data about Black lived realities *by* Black scholars, including studies by ADEFRA, ISD, and the research network Black European Studies (Aikins, et al. 24). Maisha Auma and Saraya Gomis write in their preface to the *Afrozensus*, "German Institutions fail to recognise Afrodiasporic knowledge production." However, "these non-state resources and knowledge hold power and constitute a polyphonic archive" (12; translated by the author). The data assembled and analysed in the *Afrozensus* make visible the systematic exclusion, discrimination, and anti-Black racism experienced by Black, African, and Afrodiasporic people in Germany, as well as their self-empowerment, solidarity, and self-determination. These few examples show how an intergenerational alliance of BIPOC artists and students can successfully build new infrastructure to voice intersectional politics and demand equal rights, representation, and recognition.

Azadeh: I began our conversation by expressing the trauma and violence I have experienced in German social and institutional settings, but I want to end with what gives me hope and what is the most joyful element of my academic life: the students! I have been teaching as a guest lecturer over the years in many German departments, and I have met many fierce and politically engaged students in my classrooms. They are vigilant, and they want to engage with ideas, tools, and theories that help them understand and engage with systemic violence. In my own pedagogical approach, I—as many of us—am guided by bell hooks' visionary approach to the classroom and Audre Lorde's belief that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (110).

My latest teaching experience in 2021 allowed me to witness and support the outrage of students against the German justice system that had allowed a perpetrator of sexual violence to return to the same university at which he had committed his crimes. Over the course of the year, the students formed alliances across different departments, arranged weekly meetings, created a support group for the victims, and asked for allyship from faculty members and other university staff. They demanded (and were granted by the university) the establishment of workshops with anti-racist activists and educators on sexual violence prevention. When the perpetrator returned to the university, they made sure that information of the ethics of consent was plastered all over the building, and, since then, they have kept a tight support group to ensure that the victims feel safe.

I was not only deeply moved by the students' initiatives, but also reminded of Sara Ahmed's work on the "non performativity" of institutional speech acts, as well as the figure of the feminist killjoy (104). While Ahmed ultimately chose to no longer be part of the institution, we still are hopeful. By this, I do not mean hopeful in an utterly optimist and joyful way, but rather I view hope as a daily, intentional practice, as we have learned from Mariame Kaba, an organizer, educator, and curator who is actively engaged in movements for racial, gender, and transformative justice (Sonenstein and Wilson, n.p.). With this in mind, our network's effort to decentre GTPS through decolonial approaches is just the beginning of a research and pedagogical practice that must be nurtured day by day.

Notes

[1] We have chosen to italicise the term *white* to mark *whiteness* as dominant, as it is otherwise assumed as an invisible and unmarked social structure within a German context. In this sense, the term does not mirror the fictions that present it as a "neutral" denomination or racist accounts of biological essence. We mark the term

white as a meaningful yet unstable signifier, which holds many differences across cultural contexts and social situations. *Whiteness* describes the pervasively unmarked and invisibilised dominating social, political, material, and discursive structures. For critical whiteness studies in the German-speaking context, see, for example, Eggers, Kilomba, Piesche, and Arndt.

[2] In German universities, tenured professors who occupy so-called "chairs" arguably hold a lot of power in academic, structural, and intellectual debates within their field. Every GTPS department has at least one chair (but the number can go up to five), and every chair is assigned to a different subject (i.e. Theatre History). In contrast to the Anglo-American system, the chair is permanent and does not rotate. Every chair acts as the leader of a research group to which researchers, lecturers, postdocs, and graduate students are assigned. Chairs hold the power to make decisive administrative choices and micromanage their own research budget, rather than negotiating joint departmental resources. They can hire their own research and administrative assistants. Thus, with a chair comes relative freedom in research agenda and sustained material resources, and it is important to add that, in terms of labour-regulation, chairs are nearly untouchable.

[3] We would like to clarify that we do not subscribe to the existing dichotomy between *white* enlightenment (mind) and black visceral experience (body). Our criticism of the lack of visceral research methodologies in GTPS is aiming at expanding the toolkit of research methodologies to account for all kinds of bodily experiences and phenomena.

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