Acknowledgments

This project began with and is largely based on many hours of personal conversations with Chicago improvisers, who generously shared their thoughts and expertise on racism in *improv as lived* with a white scholar from Germany. Beyond the substantial contributions their vastly heterogenous perceptions of improv and racism have made to this book, many of the things I heard have impacted me personally and instigated life decisions I would otherwise have made differently. In the meantime, many of them have gone on to great careers. They include: Joel Boyd, Aasia LaShay Bullock, TJ Jagodowski, David Pasquesi, Dewayne Perkins, Warren Phynix Johnson, Derek Schleelein, Dacey Arashiba, Kimberly Michelle Vaughn, Patrick Rowland, and Loreen Targos. I spoke with others as well, but some I could not get hold of again, and some decided not to authorize my use of their material because "times have changed." (Needless to say, the group who denied authorization was homogenously white.) However, all these conversations helped me understand improv discourse better because they *are* that very discourse.

I could not have wished for a better dissertation supervisor and intellectual mentor than Sabine Broeck. Her spirited cooperation and exchange of ideas, always on eye level, her encouragement to think in all directions in terms of genre, her never-ending methodological curiosity, her unpretentious admiration of quality as much as her unflinching and immensely productive derision of pretentiousness and empty talk have made the book what it is. Further, she was faced with a doctoral candidate who was not working within the academy professionally and thus always had other things on his plate as well. Almost more than anything else, I wish to thank her for the trust and patience she had for this project. Plus, she seemed to know exactly when to remind me that this work was something rather than nothing. Without her, this book would not exist in any way, shape, or form.

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Further, my gratitude goes out to my wider examination board – Susan Winnett, Elisabeth Arend, Norbert Schaffeld – and everyone else who attended my

defense for participating in a space specifically designed for my project to resonate. I could have kept conversing for many hours more.

Throughout the process, I have benefited from various interlocuters who have read, listened, and responded to aspects and sections of this study, thus helping me develop the project. Many of them have been organized in the doctoral network Perspektiven in der Kulturanalyse at Bremen University. Of the many wonderful people in that network, Samira Spatzek holds a special place for me. Not only did she put great effort into pointing me in the relevant direction when it came to the theorization of property, but the two of us also had the honor of struggling through Sylvia Wynter's enormous essay "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom" as translators. Other members of the network who have engaged with my project include Mariya Nikolova, Cedric Essi, Courtney Moffett-Bateau, Marius Henderson, and Paula von Gleich, all of whom have in their very different ways helped me move on at different times throughout the project – thank you all!

There are two more people who are not only personally very dear to me but have impacted this study greatly in terms of content. I would have never considered Donald Winnicott as a theorizer of play had it not been for Kiana Ghaffarizad – an adroit academic with admirable personal integrity and a dear friend ever since I started studying at university. The second is my close companion Jörn Grebe, an outstanding psychoanalyst both as scholar and as a practitioner. Numerous conversations with him have been important for me to understand, question, and validate the psychoanalytic dimension that runs through this project.

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This project also could not exist without the help and ongoing encouragement of Andrea Hingst. Her deep-seated conviction that the project was worth bringing to some sort of end, and that it should be made public, helped me through phases of doubt and the desire to surrender.

While I strongly question every belief in individual genius or one person's "contribution" to a field of study, I do believe mistakes are the only things that one can – and must – own. I do both: humbly acknowledging the many immediate influences that have embossed this work and taking full responsibility for all its mistakes and shortcomings. They are entirely mine.

Scholarship is only one way of analyzing and discussing the world as it is, has been, might or might not be imagined. On a regular basis, I had the feeling that in view of other cultural products, my own work was banal and other people have found much better forms to articulate what I discuss. While the list of significant works and artists (past and contemporary) would be too ridiculously long - and any attempt of mine to create such a list as a kind of personal canon too ludicrous - I wish to name a selection here.

Coming from the theater, I am lucky to have had the chance to work with and for Lara-Sophie Milagro, Dela Dabulamanzi, and the entire Afro-German ensemble Label Noir. Their current production about Emmett Till will be groundbreaking for the German theater scene. Another shout-out goes to my friend and colleague Mbene Mwambene. His shows release the energy of affective frictions within various discursive forcefields as a multidimensional performative praxis with interactive storytelling, compelling poetry, unflinching sarcasm, music, and body movement. At one of his shows, I experienced how a carefully-staged 3-minute poetic vignette can do what I do in these 300 pages. I am so very pleased we met!

I also wish to acknowledge Spike Lee's Bamboozled for its impact on my work and person. The movie delineates the entire psychic reality of white people vis-à-vis Blackness in and as popular culture, both within the movie and in its reception. The scene in which Pierre Delacroix asks his writing staff to "tap into your white angst" probably influenced the way I thought about intuition and comedy long before I developed my analysis in this project. For all those who think this book is too long to read, I recommend watching Bamboozled.

Lastly and generally, I thank every Black-racialized person for every single moment they do not hold back on their critiques of whiteness when talking to me. For us white people it is literally unknowable how much energy that costs, and how much risk you run. This labor must never be taken for granted, and yet we rely on it. I recommend this attitude to every other white subject out there: you will not look or feel great, but you will look and feel less like a sluggish bag of psychic mess. Please always remember: us white people make the conversation difficult.