

Acknowledgements

After nearly four years of researching, reflecting on, and writing about disparagement, deprecation, and humiliation, I am deeply grateful to those people around me who protected and maintained my intellectual and personal well-being and balance. This book would not have been possible, much less completed without immense and highly appreciated help – in academia *and* ‘real life.’ These few lines cannot pay you back in the least – but let me start anyway.

I want to thank, first and foremost, my dissertation advisers. I’m deeply indebted to Katja Kanzler, who played a decisive role in motivating me to pursue a PhD in the first place. Participating in her lectures and seminars encouraged me to go after my interests in popular culture. I was incredibly grateful when she admitted me as a PhD student and trusted me to stand my ground in the Special Research Unit. She is an incredibly constructive supervisor, extending helping hands with invaluable advice, unwavering guidance, and insatiable knowledge. I am more than thankful for the extraordinarily formative experiences and adventures that were made possible by working for and with Katja.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Holger Kersten. His relentless support of and interest in this project has greatly inspired my research. He has a true gift for attentively pointing out productive suggestions that helped me hone the contours of this study. I am in awe of his belief in a kinder, more sincere, and compassionate academic world, and I am similarly grateful to have experienced his sentiments.

I was fortunate enough to be a part of and be supported by two scholarly communities – American Studies Leipzig and the Special Research Unit “Invectivity. Constellations and Dynamics of Disparagement” located at TU Dresden and funded by the German Research Foundation. After the administrative move to Leipzig University, I was kindly welcomed with open arms and minds. Special thanks to everyone involved in the colloquium for

taking the energy and time to regularly think about and support this project. The utter respect and kindness that accompanied every single piece of advice, every idea, and every critical question was deeply appreciated and has yet to be matched by any other scholarly context. I am incredibly grateful to have been a part of this team, especially along the brilliant minds of Michaela Beck, Sophie Spieler, Claudia Müller, Katja Schmieder, Annika Schadewaldt, Mascha Lange, and Anne Krenz.

I also owe large parts of my sanity to Sebastian Herrmann and Stefan Schubert. Their critical eyes, thoughtful comments, and ability and intent to find kind motivational words to keep me going were and are genuinely appreciated. Without their support and encouragement, the reasonably sound completion of my dissertation and this book would not have been possible. My sincere thanks go to both of them – for their friendship and faith throughout the years.

Furthermore, I am very grateful that I was able to call the Collaborative Research Center my academic home. In addition to providing a highly fruitful academic environment and making it possible for me to go on incredibly formative research stays abroad, I have found like-minded, magnificent people I am deeply thankful to call my friends. Particularly, I want to thank my friend Gesine Wegner for her mentorship, especially during the last two years. Although I tried paying her back with baked goodies, I will forever be in her debt for her guidance and friendship, and for all the time she took out of her incredibly busy schedule to listen to my thoughts, ideas, and anxieties. In difficult moments, she tirelessly and selflessly worked to restore my confidence and pride. Thank you, Gesine!

Thank you to Anne Krenz, my dear friend who prophesized this exact moment nearly ten years ago, not possibly knowing that we'd end up as 'Beirow'-buddies. Her marvelous and sharp mind, her constructive advice, and her kind heart taught me so much, in- and outside of academia. Thank you to Franziska Teckentrup for the joy and kindness she has brought to the office and my heart. I am so grateful for her unwavering support and her friendly and caring ear when I needed one. It was a great pleasure working opposite each other, jammed doors and everything. I want to thank Jan Siegemund for being the person who first and unknowingly stilled my anxieties when we started working together over four years ago. Now, his adventurous and kindhearted spirit does not only enrich my world, it makes him an excellent Skat player and, more importantly, friend. Many thanks to Hanna Degener for her friendship and her consistent belief in my abilities

and talent. Her determination and work ethic inspire me daily. Thank you to Clemens Pleul, whose friendship and support helped me cross the finishing line. I would also like to extend my deep gratitude to Benjamin Hahn, whose attentive eye and sharp mind helped to bring my dissertation, and ultimately this book, to a successful end. I also had the great pleasure of working with Sonja Engel, Georg Imgraben, Daniel Spiering, Philipp Buchallik, Felix Prautzsch, Gabriel Deinzer, and Julius Nordheim. They tremendously helped to create an enjoyable and cordial atmosphere at work. There is one person, however, who first and foremost kept things running smoothly at the Special Research Unit: the incomparable Doris Allstaedt. There was not one question she couldn't answer, not one concern too small or big for her, not one obstacle she couldn't clear. More importantly, though, she sincerely cares for the people around her. We all owe her so much. So, thank you, Doris – the unsung heroine of the SFB 1285.

There are, of course, many people outside of the academic bubble who have supported me during these years and that have ensured the completion and success of this project. They are the ones who made all the difference. Thank you to Mirjam Frotscher, Ulrike Kohn, and, again, Gesine Wegner. Without them and our support group for GIFs everything American, I would've been lost in these absurd times. I also wouldn't want to sit in front of a TV until five in the morning watching the Oscars with anyone else. Thank you to Maria Kirsch, a life-long friend and supporter. Thank you for talking me into sleeping in a tent in 'Bear Country.' I am extremely grateful for your unwavering belief in me when I couldn't believe in myself. I owe you more than you can possibly imagine. Thank you to José Kerschner for sticking with me during the good and bad times for more than 20 years, for being my partner in crime (shows), and for keeping me grounded. Thank you to Katharina Flemming for stumbling into my life and staying, for your patience and kindness, for the profound joy and love you show me every day, for being the formidable person you are, and for being there for me, always. Thanks should also go to Helenie Mende, Desiré Wunner, Marie Petersilie, Tresi Kuhn, Vika Felde, Dorit Mehlhorn, Theresa Bennert-Vinzing, Sandra Erdmann, Andreas Mierisch-Rädel, and Lee McGill. Your friendship made me the person who I am today, and I will be eternally grateful for that. Furthermore, I would like to express my deepest appreciation of and thanks to my parents. They have believed in, nurtured, and supported me in everything I do.

Lastly, I want to thank myself. For doing the work. For always showing up.
For staying. I'm effin' proud of you, love.