# Conclusions

The aim of this study was to specify how *affective humor* works by unleashing touching spaces in (literary) texts, how it thereby touches us by addressing various issues, and what its affective economy explicitly and implicitly evokes in such spaces and (con-)texts. I have conceived touching spaces as poetologically invoked lines of allusions and insights that (literary) texts within their dynamics and economies of meaning-production evoke in different ways through the rhetoric of affectively charged humor. Touching spaces are thus composed of *affective humor* that is based on dialogic elements.

In order to enable an understanding of this poetologically generated momentum, I looked at three different entangled facets that such humorously induced spaces encompass. These are the work of humor that is rhetorically unleashed in ›texts‹, the affectivity that is thereby set into being and the question of how we have to perceive ›touch‹. Two other central points that accompanied these questions have been, on the one hand, the entanglement of texts and contexts, of language and discourse within different historically driven material effects that interlace fiction and ›reality‹ and give meaning to language as well as the materiality of the things around us. Following from this, on the other hand, bodies are also seen as inscribed with and marked by historically conditioned chains of signification that determine to an extent how humor, affectivity, and touch can be perceived and who is ›allowed‹ to touch upon them, which amounts to the question of the politics of signification and thus of subjectivity in the (*re*)production of meaning. To trace this dynamic between the performance of humor in the context of the sayable, and the performative, aberrant, and often subversive side of the ›un-sayable‹ in the meanings produced in such instances, I also looked at the idea of performativity that (literary) texts rhetorically produce in their humorous performance. Following the discussion of this first theoretical and conceptual section, the second part of this study proceeded to a thematic and imagological close reading of the representational schema in the two exemplary novels, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2001) and Dany Laferrière's *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008). Within the scope of a narratological analysis that illuminates layers of subjectivity invoked at the meta- and infra-narrative levels of the literary texts, I focused on the instances that generate these layers, the rhetorical and affective dynamics, and the processing of spaces of touch in the two novels. This allowed me to see *how* mainstream

normative meanings were negotiated in the literary spaces and *what* (other) meanings emerged from these *re*inscribed instances.

*Humor*, affectivity as well as the question of touch encompass a complex and wide range of debates in literary theory, as the manifold understandings, definitions, and uses of *humor* in the different theoretical and philosophical approaches show. But the main claim with regard to the work of *humor* is its at times consciously and sometimes implicit function as a critique and a praxis of resistance, especially so in feminist, queer, Jewish, Black, and postcolonial theory. *Humor* can also be seen as a challenge to philosophy per se and even discussed *as* philosophy, understood within a complex economy of the tragic sites of ›life‹, and of insights and experiences of survival and marginalization that may even exceed the tragic.

*Humor* thus is conceived as a *tonality* with different nuances and specters that can be explored in the work of language and how it is engendered through different forms of performativity, ›irony‹, and rhetoricality, often as an allegorical, poetic surplus or as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick may call it, as *weak theory*, in *periperformative* spaces and *besides*, which shed light on instances of witnessing at the margins of actual performatives that are challenged.

My exploration of humor as ›irony‹ as a figure of speech and a frequently discussed term in literary theory revealed ›irony‹ as a parabasis and a phenomenon of incongruency; ›irony‹ turned out to be an incongruous humorous tonality and an intervening, performative invention in thought and language with a pensive and epistemological amplitude. A rhetorical consideration of humor shows how humor works in the text. Rhetoric is thereby understood as a deconstructivist phenomenon, also evoked in the term ›rhetoricality‹ that emphasizes the different, often paradoxical, undecidable meanings that are invoked in (con-)texts. The function of rhetoric within poetological sentiments, senses, and affective meanings, and its trait as a thread of the aesthetic and epistemological components of a text through which meanings are generated, determine humor as a poetological and affective endeavor. Humor can thus be understood as an affective rhetoric and poetological tool performed within the text. This property of *affective humor* gives way to *the poetics of non-knowledge and power-lessness* as a pivotal, ambiguous ingredient in the texture of humorous texts and utterances.

Following a Spinozian approach to affectivity, feminist, postcolonial, and constructivist understandings, as well as a psychoanalytic understanding of affectivity as *a mechanism of regulation* in the self, the functionality of affectivity is understood as a nodal point of psychic discursive and sensual negotiations in the self, which are related to the sociopolitical texture and interrelational, processual questions of subjectivity and materiality that are also part of and manifest themselves in literary texts in the economy of discursive signifying processes and power dynamics. Thus, *humor* can be further regarded as a poetological tool that regulates discursively and sensually evoked *affectivity* and also encompasses epistemological threads. *Affective humor* can then be seen as a rhetoric of deconstruction that is engendered within the poetology of the text, in dialogue with historically determined discursively set, and materialized parameters, giving way to liberating, thought-provoking, and transformative processes in the realm of non-knowledge and power-lessness. Its epistemology is that of an allusive, allegorical poetics that questions ›knowledge‹ and ›power‹ rather than to affirm specific meanings by carving out space for

other possibilities in thinking as forms of empowerment and (self-)critical epistemologies in the making. *Affective humor* is thus a rhetoric that is dialogic as it induces an open space in the texture of meaning production and field of signification, inviting other responses and possibilities to understand/ing and intervening in any established form of alleged ›knowledge‹ and ›power‹.

*Affective humor* thus *touches* upon signification and thought, opening up a field to the *weak*, allusive, and unenforcing epistemology of non-knowledge and power-lessness.

In determining the idea of touch, my main focus remained on the work of Jacques Derrida. *Touch* according to this reading not only encompasses explicit and implicit forms but also compliance with unwritten ›laws‹ that regulate the discursive un/touchability of conceived and conventionalized norms, regimes, and boundaries of ›knowledge‹ and ›power‹, and of what can or cannot be touched, the question *who* can touch on what and in which ways, and the limits of touch, of what is seen as sociopolitically sacred and what as outlawed, and in both senses thus untouchable. Derrida's address of touch also exposes the limits and limitations of philosophical thinking, and where the literary space of touch begins, which in his reading entails the everyday encounter as well as (critical) thinking that the one in fact can give rise to the other. Derrida's display of this discussion also reveals the performance and performative work of touch. For Derrida, *humor* is a site of touch, understood as an abstract sense of discursively tackled issues, but also, and, at the same time, as imbued within the body. Following these approaches, I understand the work of touch in *affective humor* as discursive and bodily processes of disassembling and deconstruction that can be expressed in ›laughter‹ or crying and as *brokenness*. The faculty of touch is an *ur*-mark, an imprint within the body-soul and the responding and responsive ability in the relation of a self to an other, which forbids and allows to touch. *Affective humor* opens such a space for an other in the heart and the mind through signification in language and discourse by dealing with the economy of this un/touch/ability.

The touch of *affective humor* is a dispersal that shows itself in the bodily effect of shock and commotion, seen in the complex affectivity of pleasure and pain; not only can this process evoke ›laughter‹ as a tonality of humor, a physical response, and *Grenzerfahrung*; but it is also a bodily evoked parabasis that rattles any fixating, authority-related meaning and thought. This touch of *affective humor* shows a space of encounter on unequal grounds in which a discursively inferiorized subjectivity undermines the discursive and sociopolitical lines of power. In this sense, the touch of *affective humor* can be conceived as the effect of a humorous tonality from a position of marginality that outdoes conventionalized and inferiorizing meanings, which configure and place subjectivities within discourse by evaluating those places of subject-formation; in the touch of *affective humor* and its excessive tonality, discourse, and self-understandings, as well as the economy of ›self and other‹ are shifted to another field where meaning must be sought anew. Touching spaces in *affective humor* thus describe a poetological machinery that gives structure to meaning by opening it in deconstructive forms. Along these lines, literature's ability to touch (upon) meanings in implicit and explicit, tender and violent senses can be shown, as well as its manifold possibilities to *re*signify and *re*negotiate conventionalized, epistemological, and sociopolitical meanings in different ways. The empowering, playful, pleasurable, and tragic sides of *affective humor* in the work of literature, its signification pro-

cesses, and intervention in discourse can thus be seen. These touching spaces unleashed by *affective humor* are subject-related and interventionist, speaking back with ›soft‹ epistemological *rea*rticulations that show *who* speaks and *how* humor is thereby used in *which* ways. Subjectivity can be considered and evinced by the indication of the narratological instances of authorial, narrating, and addressing voices, as well as the sociopolitical figuration of the characters within the metaleptical and infra-structural spaces of texts in-between the diegetic and extra-diegetic tracks of their poetological meaning production. It is these traces of touch that are of significance for the humorously invoked angle of the evoked meanings, and revealing as they advert to conventionalized formations of subjectivity, as well as to counter-formations of subjectivity that displace signification-configurations in discourse and are therefore relevant for the processing of the parabasic trait of *affective humor*.

The different deployment of humorous poetics in novels touch on painful as well as pleasurable, joyful as well as tragic moments by the invocation of incongruent images and meanings, which deconstruct familiar, unquestioned, and normalized notions. The affective economy and humorous rhetoric of *White Teeth* indeed reveal what Zadie Smith has described as the *ethical space* in the novel as such spaces of touch, in the muddle of non-knowledge and power-lessness. In this way, an ethically informed negotiation *for* values in the not-knowing and power-less psychic errantry of memories, and experiences, and decisions show themselves in the agency and performance of the characters, however riddled these may be, which heighten the humorous aptitudes of the novel. This *clueless muddle* of non-knowledge and power-lessness that emerges as the text touches upon and traces these threads of historically driven, textured texts also reveals the *affective and ethical traits* and aspects of meaning and sense-making as unresolved, *open ends* offered as dialogic sites within and beyond its diegetic *life-worlds*.

In this way, the touching spaces of the always ambiguous affective humorous tone invites for further pondering on the meanings of the text.

These subconscious voices, and the preferences and experiences of a ›real author‹, as well as the evocation of an ›implied author‹ can be further traced in the acts and utterances of the characters, as well as the narrator. These voices and tonalities represent and give impetus and orientation to the epistemo*logical* directions, the humorous tonalities the novels are running to. This does not mean that *affective humor* or the epistemic *un*folding that a novel offers is monolithic or one-voiced but that the *subjectivity* of the writing subject pervades the signification economy that the novel attempts to set into work. *White Teeth* sets out to unfold meanings within processes of signification from marginalized positions: The novel shows how meanings are *attouched* to each other and are aesthetically packaged. The *life-worlds* that the novel invokes through *humor* can be further read as an ongoing process *in touch*. *Life-worlds* depict the world as a historically conditioned, spatially situated, and fundamentally *experienced life-context*, which is constitutive for the formation of subjectivity and bodily inscriptions, and the way we learn to ›know‹. *Life-worlds* signify processes of ›selfing‹ and othering in the formation of subjectivities in interrelated ways. It therefore is central to my understanding of how novels work and how spaces of touch are created in the rhetoric of *affective humor*.

The deconstructive rhetoric of *affective humor* and its ability to *touch* and generate dialogic instances and touching spaces show *processes of becoming* rather than of fixed mean-

ings. They deal with the material and sociopolitical chasms of different and differently referenced communities. In this way an »intensely, stifling human quality of the novel« (Forster [1927] 2005, 39), as a form of ethical touch, ensues. The novel's authorial subjectivity creates a frame *to look at* the wor(l)d pleasurably (painlessness not guaranteed) in a different way. While representing and repeating discursive images with the deconstructive rhetoric of *affective humor*, the novel opens up a different space for imagining self and other. The exploration of the fixated gaze against an understanding of its Fanonian problematization can be seen and understood as a liberating, deconstructive emblem of these effects. Fixed ›national identities‹ as well as mainstream historiography can be negotiated: »La discursivité de l'histoire coloniale« that contributes to such dominant ›myths‹ »ce qui est mis en relief« (Fendler 2007, 170).

It is affirmed in this questioning humorous way that no context is reducible to how it is represented in mainstream discourse. The touch of *affective humor* is also induced from ›a position of witnessing‹ that goes beyond its immediate ›presence‹ and invites a response, asking for a third party to decide. The affectivity of the humorous rhetoric plays thus with the pleasure of the unfinished. It plays at the liminal of not-knowing and power-lessness as ›the gift that keeps on giving‹, always implying a future. History is in this way touched upon, is liberated, symbolizing and evoking the possibilities of other narratives.

Touching spaces decompose normalized images and formulas. Non-knowledge and power-lessness emerge as incomplete, but forgiving and empowering, rather than as blaming instances, which may unleash something like *hope* beyond the immediacy of novels.

It is consigned to the subjectivity of the ›implied audience‹ (how) to deal with it. The novel generates a reflective economy of signification that triggers imagination. Wondering through time and its inner and outer textuality, the humorous tonality touches on possible memories within an affectivity that is allegorical, ›ironic‹, and that disrupts discourse and common images.

Connections between language, discourse, and the fictional texts, as well as the material effects of meanings, are thus discussed.

With this study I hope to have pursued three lines of thought. On the one hand, the study deployed a literary poetological insight for theorizing rather than for taking ›theory‹ or ›philosophical acumen‹ as a starting point to think and read ›literature‹. On the other hand, it questioned conventionalized ideas about humor, *re*instating humor instead as a complex rhetoric of *contemplation* that must also be seen as an affective and sensuous act. Furthermore, it questioned boundaries between ›philosophy‹/›theory‹ and literature. In the same vein, it brought to the fore, I hope, the notion of *subjectivity* as a more nuanced category of basic reading that has to be further explored. This seems important and meaningful with respect to intersectionally informed readings and writings, and with reference to the notion of *autobiography*, which would also pay attention to the mark of singularity within understandings of subjectivity – and not only when it comes to the works we analyze, but also the analysis of works.

The novels of course come with their own limits as they operate within what Derrida calls ›institutionalized literature‹ and structures of power and inscription. And it remains

an open question how other forms of literature, perhaps less well known or in other languages, are to be understood as spaces of touch and *affective humor*, and how they may inscribe *humor*, or how any other form of affectivity constructs spaces of touch to elicit insight.

Touching spaces in text/ure/s can be envisioned as spaces of contemplation in manifold senses, immanent to thought, images, and imagination, but coming from the place of an other, and relating the self in affective and sensual ways to such an other. They are aesthetic as well as ethical traces, which can hold a grip on passers by and (*re*)orient their wo*andering* and errantry. This other can be an encounter with momentum, with a memory, with someone else, with a sight, with a piece of literature, with a text, or, as is the case with Derrida in *On Touching* (1993, 2000), and bell hooks in *all about love* (2000) with a sentence on a wall in a metropolitan space.

The other is the one who angles and orients the self to itself and its traces.

This is in fact what happens in the process of reading and especially so in literary texts, as these texts do not come with the eagerness to persuade nor to seek ›truth‹.

I hope to have shown that (literary) texts unlock a wide field of not-knowing and power-lessness. What may appear as *weak* opens up other avenues of thought. This is the ethical quest of the literary, poetic work. It is a poetological quest that is accompanied by the unfinished work of non-knowledge and power-lessness. In this way, (literary) texts also open up a relation to the subjectivity that resides in their authorial rims, which can be deduced from the work.

What writes itself in the text out of the texture of a past-present as *affective humor* in (con-)texts can be conceived of as -›*preaffectivity*‹. We perceive sens(e)uality not only as an ›actively‹ (after-)*affect and sensing* but also as ›passively‹ *being touched* (by *the other*) in different ways. This shuttle between actively acquiring sense-making and passively being impacted, inscribed by a dynamic of a relation between inner and outer forms of affectivity is important to consider, I think, as affectivity is not a (more or less) conscious *process*, but also something that *happens* to one, it is an impression-expression within various threads that conveys a bodily dialogue within the self as well as between the self and the ›world‹. Senses are understood hereby as a more undefinable form of *tangency* that preempts the actual sensations of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, as well as sense-making. *Affective humor* as such a sensation of *tangency*, maybe a conglomeration, part cognitive, of *being touched* somewhere within the (unconscious) ›self‹, gives way to the ›rise‹ or shift of the senses, in both meanings. It is in the moment of *being touched* that a process of affectivity may change and challenge our perceptions, *re*directing them towards other forms of ›understanding‹.

*Affective humor*, taken not only as a rhetoric and (deconstructive) writing style, but also as performativity, opens different shades and specters of sense-making and reflects the many layers of texts. It entails the potential to show the limitations and exclusions in and of thought within time/history, and the way our ›reality‹ and its conceptions are weaved within an outer material space as well as within language.

*Affective humor* thus also involves various forms of intelligibility, the transfer of ›knowledge‹ beyond the structures and signifiers of the ›reality‹ in which we live, and in this way can engender spaces of touch, instant instances that map out equality and the ethics of the clandestine, the secret, and the vulnerable.

Since *humor* is often understood as an ›easily digestible‹ mode of affectivity and a form of expression of joyous play, the barrier between approximate solitude and surrender that makes any touch possible is regarded as low-threshold and not read as a thread. *Humor* thus allows spaces of touch to emerge and to unfold rather easily. This can happen in an explicitly sensual way (through a brief contact, a smile, a glance, skin contact), but also by an indirect touch through words (e.g. a verse, a sentence, quotation, a description, a view) that can also have a sensual effect. Yet it is only in the written text, especially in literary texts, where both instances of touch culminate. This happens when we ›see‹ a stirring scene as it ›takes place‹, and is performed while we read a text (and still reflect upon it already in the process of reading). In its post-reflected, suspended form, *humor* operates in a text as that, which is in fact not written, as a trace of lack in writing that retains the suspense of ›truth‹-striving/driving through which contradictions and aporias may be revealed and thereby deconstruct meaning, wor(l)ds, futures.

As an overarching rhetorical and performative tonality *affective humor* encompasses various forms. This is especially the case with novels, which often entail diverse statements, and utterances, and viewpoints within the story-level, as well as within the narrative discourse, and on a meta-narrative level. The rhetoric of the humorous, then, can encompass different levels of the text. It can include the narrative instance that structures the rhetoric of the humorous tonality of the text. It can encompass a relational structure that links the characters to each other as well as to the narrator within the diegetic level. In this function of the internal structure, it also involves and generates the place of an ›implied audience‹. It can also prefigure and involve a meta-level of the text (that speaks to the outside of the text).

*Affective humor* in this way is a praxis of *de*signification within language. *De*signification does not mean that no meaning is ensued but rather that the thread of meanings that an utterance, sentence, word, idiom might entail are opened up in order to give way to *the possibility* of other insights.

Inherent in the self as a potential (*pre*)affectivity, *affective humor* intrudes and touches language/performance and enters the performative space of emergence, which produces another view, the impossibility of a possibility.

*Affective humor* is affective in two senses: It affects the meaning of things, it does something with them, and it is endowed with an affectivity that opens up a machinery of scrutiny. It comes with a pay-off that can both encompass pleasure and pain. Pleasure it is as it frees the self from meaning, and its severity. It is painful as it hurts to be freed from the illusion of stability. *Affective humor* is violent as it works like a bomb in sentences, destroying metaphors and metonymies, signifiers and discourses. It is a rhetoric that denies its own possibility and undermines its own validity. Although it may have different ›degrees‹ and ›depths‹, these cannot be categorized according to different genres or forms. It is thus not possible to give a hierarchical account of how (*affective*) *humor* works along its various tones. Rather, *affective humor* works within the content and the context, and is part of a performative writing-reading/rhetoric that operates in the place of deconstruction. It thereby rips apart the knot of signification, leaving behind a gap in which the specter of the other *re*emerges. Although *affective humor* is violent in the above sense, it does not force itself as it is masqueraded as a ›joke‹, as fun, as pleasure, as melancholy from where it also gets its seductive attraction and allure. It is bound to

the effects of ›power‹, to the trace of effacement, and dismantles them. Although it has therefore an empowering quality, it also undermines it as it does not erect any ›truth‹ and does not substantiate any other ›power‹ while touching upon the signifiers of ›truth‹ and ›power‹, incorporating and ›rebranding‹ them.

The poetics of *affective humor* must also be conceived in a non-verbal form of (or basis for) dialogue, as it begins when the things we believe we know, presuppositions and ›truths‹, are disassembled and break up. This lays the ground for another beginning, a turning point where an other thinking can set in, and the materiality of our perceptions can change according to a new view. Although non-programmatic, *affective humor* makes time for space and space for time so that further thinking can be enabled. The limits of *affective humor* begin when it comes as a one-dimensional site. Touch must be presupposed as the underpinning of any *affective humor* – otherwise it becomes *false humor* with all its limitations. *Affective humor* can only materialize if a form of touch is somehow indicated on the sur/face of its (unintended) efficacy.

»Word and thing and thought, in fact, never become one« (Spivak [1967] 1976, xvi); this is the movement of *affective humor* as a rhetoric of deconstruction, it signals *Abbrüche* and ruptures, it signals *Ausbrüche*, and *Aufbrüche*: its deferred movements are not linear but kaleidoscopic, spatial as well as temporal and loaded with a paradoxical, aporetic affectivity. It affirms escapes, eruptions, and outbreaks, departures, awakenings, crackings, and cracks, break-ups, starts and raisings while in its other, free hand, it still holds the prior, the previous, the *beforehand*, the antecedent, both o/Others, working itself along texturing. *Affective humor* co-operates with the trace, tracking and following behind the words and allusions. But *affective humor* comprises more than language and rhetoric as such eruptions and departures, it also encompasses sensuality, sensitivity, and the senses, and while it touches upon all those, it sets meanings into being. *Affective humor* shows how thought, life, and death are all parts of this process of the trace and the traces we leave behind and form anew in many different directions. *Affective humor*, in such a sense, shows that deconstruction is only possible if it comes from the other. It always leaves space for an other to destroy what one has just said, not as such, but from the outskirts of disempowered and thus power-less positions. It shows that deconstruction is embedded in an economy of endless ›democratization‹, in the infinite space of non-knowledge, and that ›power‹, too, must always be figured as a bare, void place of power-lessness that can never be captured. Whatever and whoever occupies such a place called ›power‹ can only show its limitations and the limitations of its powers. A *humor* that comes from positions of ›power‹, remains a ›power‹-form, and therefore cannot be a site *of* deconstruction but *for* deconstruction. It thus signals *false humor*, a mask of alleged supremacy.

*Affective humor*, as an other touch, is a sublation that does not come from any dialectics but follows the doom of its own claims in a spherical, anti-dialectical form. In *affective humor*, however, as a resonance of deconstruction from the site of the other, all meanings seem sublated (*aufgehoben*) simultaneously, to be unpacked and *re*worked later. *Affective humor* departs from any form of linearity to reform itself anew, in next, unforeseeable steps. The poetics of *affective humor* is, above all, a structure. It is built and perceived in different shades of suffering, put into procedures of healing. While it listens to the tragic, it shows it a starry night, reflecting a forlorn wild flower drenched in rain. Its *erupting* and *awakening* movements express the ›face‹ and meanings of *infinite* affirmations from

within crumbled and corroded textures. Its affirmation and disposition are that of non-knowledge and power-lessness that keep their secrets and sighs.

In all these senses, then, *affective humor* opens up a space of touch and may be especially at work within literature, and instances of literariness and their performative sites. *Affective humor* signals an (impregnable) quality of otherness in relation to ›philosophy‹ as the ›power‹ and determining authority of reasoning. It stands in relation to ›knowledge‹ and the control of philosophy as well as to the free and open, flowery and wide field of non-knowledge and powerlessness that is imbued in language and *life-worlds*. In this sense, *affective humor* as a sign of literariness at the rims and margins of ›philosophy‹ and ›literature‹ could be seen in a relation not dissimilar to that of Narcissus (philosophy) and Echo (literature):

> »Two lectures here seem to echo one another. They perhaps answer one another, just as Echo might have feigned to repeat the last syllable of Narcissus in order to say something else or, really, in order to sign at that very instant in her own name, and so take back the initiative of answering or responding in a responsible way, thus disobeying a sovereign injunction and outsmarting the tyranny of a jealous goddess. Echo thus lets be heard by whoever wants to hear it, by whoever might love hearing it, something other than what she seems to be saying. Although she repeats, without simulacrum, what she has just heard, another simulacrum slips in to make her response something more than a mere reiteration. She says in an inaugural fashion, she declares her love, and calls for the first time, all the while repeating the ›Come!‹ of Narcissus, all the while echoing narcisstic words. She overflows with love; her love overflows the calls of Narcissus, whose fall or whose sending she seems simply to reproduce. […] If I seem to be insisting a bit too much on these *Metamorphoses*, it is because everything in this famous scene turns around a call to come (à venir). And because, at the intersection of repetition and the unforeseeable, in this place where, each time anew, by turns (*tour à tour*) and each time once and for all, one does not see coming what remains to come, the to come turns out to be the most insistent theme of this book. ›Veni!‹ says Narcissus; ›Come!‹ ›Come!‹ answers Echo. Of herself and on her own.« (Derrida 2005 a, xi–xii)

It is unsettling that Derrida begins *Rogues – Two Essays on Reason* (2005 a) with the narrative of Narcissus and Echo – a drama of ›love‹ – a drama *for* ›love‹? A drama of failing to hear, of ignoring (not ignorance), of not-knowing and power-lessness, a failure to see oneself, a failure to see the other, a failure to sense oneself and the other, a failure of touch within the outward and inward procedures, yet the space where the myth chooses to remain in the end, is not failure, but the multilayered and infinite – unfinished – economy of non-knowledge and power-lessness.

And Derrida actually begins this writing with Echo. Echoing Echo, Derrida speaks of something to come, of the act, the (a)waiting of the event that may bring ›democracy‹. ›Democracy‹ appears here not as a given nor as a (European) historical achievement. It appears rather as structured by the call of the one who seems not to be able to speak, it is Echo's call and she* calls with all her* ›love‹ in the hope that it might echo back; in contrast to Narcissus, who wants to hear himself* (according to common belief at least), Echo is waiting for a resonance, she* is waiting for an *echo*. It is not she* herself* that she* awaits. She* is already, through her* voice, a parted and sliced other. What she* is waiting

for is *an other echo*, an *echo* of her* de(-parted) *echo* that is not the same as her* utterance. She* is always already a reverberation, a doubling or multiplicity that does not seem to have an ›origin‹. She* is waiting for a response, for the dialogization of the dialogues she* permanently is lovingly echoing. Although Echo just seems to repeat, she* is waiting for the Other to respond to her* (›love‹?); she* hears and listens and tries to understand, but she* is always heard as the Other's echo. Her* words seem not to resonate anything beyond the ›known‹, and they are returned back to her* instead of being held, instead of being believed. Echo is the *echo* of the wor(l)d that cannot belief itself, a wor(l)d that wants to be different from itself and wants to be seen in its differences. Narcissus allegorizes that hope as much as Echo does. They are both two sides of the same wor(l)d, who try to understand the wor(l)d, their own hurt textures, looking for themselves in it, trying to find themselves in the o/Other, in order to find the right wor(l)d. Haunting each other forever, their story seems to prevail. And forever is a long time, and there is a chance, in this long time, that things change, make a detour in which Narcissus and Echo may face each other. There may be thus some hope in such a search within repetitions that tries to go beyond itself, as both do.

So far, though, Echo waits for the Other to respond to the other bent in her* unheard, repeated utterances. But as her* call finds no resonance, bouncing back to her*, she* turns around to see herself*, to see where the calls come from, to point a finger at her* inner self, to touch it, and finally, to sense something other and *hear* her* own echo, which it is no longer as it escapes her* mouth toward the woods, the hills, where it is set free in the resonating freedom that the mountains will always reverberate back to her*.

It is in this book that Derrida speaks of the *khora*, renaming it as a spacing, an interval (Derrida 2005 a, xiv) that takes place in between the two lectures, the interval between the utterances, which takes the shape, in hindsight, of a neverending, eternal haunt for dialogue between Narcissus and Echo. *Khora*, this ›taking-place‹, is »[n]o politics, no ethics«, and no ›law‹ can be »deduced from this thought. To be sure, nothing can be done (*faire*) with it. And so, one would have nothing to do with it. But should we then conclude that this thought leaves no trace on what is to be done – for example in the politics, the ethics, or the law to come?« (Derrida 2005 a, xv).

*Khora* may not be a single large space, but a space for im/possible forms of contact that may forever invite to dialogicity, between ›you‹ and ›I‹, between ›us‹. Its interval-character may suggest that we think of it as *khoras* within *khoras*, like flower bulbs or little sand waves that all are different and yet belong together, like an infinite story. *Affective humor*, with all its dispersing affectivity, can be depicted as such a touching space within the *khora* of language that itself generates other little *khoras* in which, not imperatively but possibly, things can change; its dispersing expressions create utterances that disrupt and, at the same time, begin dialogues, touch each other without necessarily becoming one, and yet something may echo out of their emergence, the Echo of narcissistic vowels, which may be what Echo wants to finally resonate and also return to the wor(l)d, a transformed Echo, an Echo of Echo that Narcissus wants to hear, the Echo of the other in his heart that he cannot *recognize* though.

Maybe, then, literature, within the evaluated economy of language, is such a self-produced *khora*, a place and a taking place that gives rather than it takes, it rather *de*- and *re*constructs itself permanently, like Echo's repetitions. Within this bigger *khora*

that literature forms, *affective humor* emerges as a rhythmic interval that moulds its own rhetorically engineered, poetological *khora*. It is a *khora* in which the dialogic character of language shows itself, unfolding slowly the incessant arrays of non-knowledge and power-lessness. Echo appears as a lost voice, audible but unheard, often ignored in discourse and language. Literature, often through the affectivity of humor, touches upon and echoes the various meanings that such missed utterances carry. Echo longs for something, for ›love‹, perhaps for admission, but it is a call for admission that also promises change.

This echoing is what happens within the structure of the meta-critical novels as an effect of *affective humor* within the *khora* of literature, which brings about inviting touching spaces within the seams and margins of the text. These seams and margins are all spaces for the possibility of touch, for a chiasm-*croisé* in which embodied-subjectivity is enclosed in the (abstraction, worldliness, and flesh) of language and discourse like the endless fold Merleau-Ponty describes. While the margins of the text are those passages in-between the seams of the instances of the ›implied author‹, the ›implied audience‹, and the possibility of a ›real audience‹, the fringes of the text are held together not only by the narration and its techniques of showing and telling, and the touching lines between the narrator and the ›implied author‹, but also in-between the diegetic lines that bind the characters and position them to each other.

It is a double echo that both produces and reiterates in its murmur the power of Echo. On the one hand, this echoing of Echo replicates Narcissus in terms of the symbolic order of a time-space and its related discourses of power. On the other hand, in its echo, it also inevitably *produces* an other discourse, an other language, that of power-lessness, which is Echo's power. It is a duplicity, a reiteration and, at the same time, another reverberation. In-between this reiteratung doubleness of Echo's voice, there may be the possibility of the impossible experience of *affective humor* as an ethics, an (*un*compulsive) openness to otherness. Its ethical dimension also lies in its dialogical trait. It is always in a process, at work, in the relatedness of the self to the other, to discourse, to a wor(l)d outside of her* self. This relatedness is reproduced and opened up in another guise within the performative space in the texture of the novelistic text but may echo beyond it. Its ethical endeavor, moreover, lies in the destabilizing proportions of dominant significations – which are not always linked to pleasure but also to pain. As an ethical, *dialogical*, instance, *affective humor* offers a double possibility – of another encounter of the self and the other, and the possibility of an another reading. In this sense, *affective humor* cannot be assigned and predicted formalistically. It is rather a singular act of and within the text and the texture of experience that means different things in different contexts and to different subjectivities. This singularity not only comprises uniqueness but also echoes the singularity of the experience of the other, as well as the experience of the self as singular. It is the touch of difference that induces sameness. Equality in difference. It may be worthwhile, then, to consider the spaces where *affective humor* touches as a poetics of non-knowledge (*NichtWissen*) and power-lessness (*OhnMacht*), as an infinite rainbow loop of a future ethics that may one day appear and remain in the wor(l)d, affecting other potentialities and possibilities of togetherness . . .