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**How to Do Things with no Words: Autopoietic Structures of
Literary Speechlessness and Death in Terézia Mora's *Das Ungeheuer* and
Franz Kafka's *Ein Traum***

Terézia Mora's *Das Ungeheuer* ('The Monster'; publ. 2013) and Franz Kafka's *Ein Traum* ('A Dream'; publ. 1917) both are aesthetical, narrative experiments to deal with the specific speechlessness of a dying or dead narrator. These works show that death doesn't automatically mean speechlessness, just as life doesn't automatically mean the ability to speak, which also stresses the distinction between unspeakable and unspoken things. My approach discusses the autopoietical sense which is produced by threatening the communicative and representational structures in the texts. For my argument, I combine attempts using systems theory and narratology to discuss the structures of speechlessness and the unspeakable in *Das Ungeheuer*. In following a distinction between diegesis, narrative/linguistic form, and poietical sense, I highlight the polyfocalization and narrative *Nachträglichkeit* (belatedness) in *Ein Traum*. In discussing these readings together, it is shown that the motive of the empty grave performs and produces the structures of speechlessness in both texts.

1. Introduction¹

How does a narration deal with it when its narrator is going to die, dies, or has died? Few paradigms challenge systematical and narratological explanations more than death. Death is a semiotic fallout, the ultimate, final speechlessness, and the end of the individual, speaking of 'I' as its own subject. Death is then a specific, aesthetic paradox: On the one hand, "in a specific semiotic sense, dying appears to be a total signifier – without a signified; and exactly the other way around, death appears as a signified without a signifier" (Hansen-Löve 2007: 7). According to this,

dying as the termination of life can be represented, death as the end itself cannot. Death is no content: blackout. [...] The fiction of the end is just as much the end of fiction itself.²

On the other hand,

death, as the *absolute end* of an individual, is an empty, only word-like idea, which does not correspond with any experience [Erfahrung], even in the radical fear of death [Angst vor dem Tode]. There is no such experience of 'Nothing,' not even in fear; it can only be felt as a fading away, a reduction of Being [Seinsabnahme].³

1 All English translations, if not stated otherwise, are my own.
 2 „Das Sterben als zu Ende gehen des Lebens läßt sich darstellen, nicht der Tod als das Ende selbst. Tod ist kein Inhalt: Blackout [...]. Die Fiktion des Endes ist auch das Ende der Fiktion“ (Hart Nibbrig 1989: 9).
 3 "Der Tod als *absolute Ende* des Menschen dagegen ist eine inhaltlose, nur worthafte Idee, der selbst in der äußersten Beängstigung vor dem Tode keine Erfahrung entspricht. Es gibt keine Erfahrung vom 'Nichts', auch nicht in der Angst, die nur ein 'Schwinden', eine Seinsabnahme fühlbar macht." (Landsberg 2009: 51f.) This argument is obviously inspired by a Heideggerian

So death, in aesthetical and narrative representation, is a signifier without a signified and cannot be represented within its structures; for mimetic representation, death is only a signified, representational, "word-like" idea; paradoxically, these positions seem to put together a meaningful idea of death.

Literary texts, however, are aesthetic experiments to explore *and* create the literary output, the *poiesis*⁴ of such representational, paradoxical concepts – to show *and* perform an instability of semiotics as well as narratological categories such as voice, consciousness, language, and fiction when it comes to death. I thereby argue that dying or dead narrators *are specifically able to speak*, although their speech is scarred by speechlessness in the face of death. In this structure, the narrator then becomes the crucial point of literary self-reflection and the agent of unspeakability. On the very line between life and death, speech and speechlessness, the narrator stands

in the center of the impossibility of representation, as *on* the threshold [to death] [...] the [narrative] perspective has completely different conditions than *after* the transition. Precisely this death-paradox transforms from an extreme or marginal point to the crucial point of (re-)presentation and the very center of a general apophatic art which deals as a negative aesthetic, analogous to negative theology, with the question also pointed out by Derrida: How not to speak?⁵

In this central outline by Aage Hansen-Löve, the term "thanatopoetics" aims to describe motives and structures of the unspeakability of death, to point out a somehow dialectic, particular poietic, paradoxical, 'thanato-logical' sense of how not to speak,

vocabulary of a "Being-towards-death" ["Sein-zum-Tode"] (cf. Heidegger 1984¹⁵: 235–267; standard English translations relate to this pagination).

- 4 The term *poiesis* (Ancient Greek: ποιητική *poietike*, to *poiein* 'making') originally leads to the idea of scientific or educational making, building something, or a specific theory of art production. The concept of this 'art of production' goes back to Aristotle who differentiates *poiesis* from *practice*. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes three forms of life: in accordance to lust (*hedone*), as practice (*bios praktikos/politikos*), and as theory of the philosopher (*bios theoretikos*). *Poiesis* is hereby differentiated by its inherent goal in an act of producing something, whereas *practice* (also as moral virtue) has its goal in itself. Therefore, *poiesis* is the production of something which lies beyond the act of production itself; *practice* is the execution/enforcement of an act. *Poiesis* also describes God's creation in discourses of early Christianity and the *New Testament* (as *creatio ex nihilo, ex deo, ex materia* – or *productio*; God himself is then *poietes*). Modifications of the term, such as *poetic* and *poetry*, show their common, conceptual origin (cf. Cürsgen 2012: 11–26).
- 5 "[I]m Mittelpunkt steht die Unmöglichkeit der Darstellung, da vor der Schwelle [des Todes] [...] perspektivisch völlig andere Bedingungen herrschen als nach ihrer Überschreitung. Genau dieses Todes-Paradoxon wird jedoch vom Extrem- oder Marginalpunkt zum Angelpunkt von Dar- wie Vorstellbarkeit überhaupt und rückt somit ins Zentrum einer allgemeinen Kunst-Apophatik, die als Negative Ästhetik analog zur Negativen Theologie jene auch bei Derrida auf den Punkt gebrachte Frage behandelt: Wie nicht sprechen?" (Hansen-Löve 2007: 8, my italics). Hansen-Löve refers to Derrida (1987).

how to do things with no words. Terézia Mora's novel *Das Ungeheuer* ("The Monster") from 2013 and Franz Kafka's short narration *Ein Traum* (*A Dream*; 1971) from 1917 deal with just such a 'deadly' speechlessness of their narrators. In these works, death doesn't automatically mean speechlessness, just as life doesn't automatically mean the ability to speak. The communicative and representational structures are threatened by death, but in "doing what they tell" (Jahraus 2003: 463) within their inner structures, these texts make speechlessness speak in an autopoietic sense – *they do things with no words*.

Combining approaches from systems theory and narratology, I want first to discuss the autopoietic structures of speechlessness and the unspeakable in *Das Ungeheuer*. Secondly, in following a distinction between diegesis, narrative form, and poetical sense, I then want to describe the polyfocalization and narrative belatedness in *Ein Traum*. The third and closing point will discuss those readings together, assuming that the metaphor of the empty grave performs and produces the structures of speechlessness in both texts.

2. Saying Something in *not* Saying Something: Terézia Mora's

Das Ungeheuer

The novel by Terézia Mora is visibly divided into two plots, separated by a horizontal line in the middle of the pages. The upper plot is the internally focalized narration by and of socially isolated Darius, who is on a restless mission to bury his wife, Flora, who killed herself as she had been suffering heavily from depression. The lower part of the book, when not blank, presents her diary, which Darius found on her computer after her death. It incarnates Flora as an additional, narrative, autonomous voice throughout the novel with and without words. Her part stands in no proper relation to the continuous upper plot and is only sometimes explicitly reviewed by Darius – her enunciations often appear as asynchronic footnotes. This impression is also enforced by the textual line. The textual separation not only refers to matters of interpretation within the diegesis, but also autoreferentially to the textuality of the reading process: how exactly is one to read these parts – simultaneously, or one after the other? Two bookmarks, also materializing the two different voices of the text, leave the last choice to the reader.

Flora's fragmental diary contains, besides a poetic insight into her thoughts, joyous and painful anecdotes, depressive episodes, childhood memories, scientific articles, cooking recipes, and Dadaistic passages. The text data was translated to Darius from Hungarian, Flora's mother tongue, by a friend. This also implies the motive of poetic transition, a literal "trans-lation"⁶ between life and death. Darius though, 'works'⁷ with a print-out version of Flora's texts. As the (diegetic) author of the lower text, Flora transforms increasingly from the imaginary human, psychological consciousness, to a virtual voice and to a "paper being" (Barthes 1977: 111) for the logoc-claiming upper part, from subject to object, from memory and imagination to text. Her representation oscillates between the idea of her former self, the idea of a sterile, digital, virtual voice with no body, and the fact of the concrete textual body (the diegetic print-out as well as the text of the novel for the implicit reader). This structure is recursively repeated in the motive of cremation, which turns Flora's corpse from actual flesh to sheer substance; her silent (sterile, clean, holy) ashes accompany Darius' mournful journey along on Flora's traces in Eastern Europe to find the rightful place, a memorial, to bury them. According to Jacques Derrida, there is a semantic correlation between speechlessness and ashes:

on the semantic level, ashes are the representation of a trace which does not keep what it testifies to, but is there 'to tell nothing', more of a remembrance or the fading or destruction than a memory of something [...] [because] exactly what the ashes stand for cannot be reconstructed.⁸

Flora, however, goes beyond the non-reconstructable trace of herself and haunts the novel, rather like a Derridean specter (cf. Derrida 2012: 4–7), being both a present and absent body of text and a consciousness. Her spectral, ontologically indifferent re-turning especially manifests on the textual level of the book – Flora still is an opaque, paradox voice even when her part in the book is blank. This text with no

6 As both a transition and a translation, a "Über-setzen [...] von der Grenze zwischen Leben und Tod" (Karpenstein-Eßbach 2006: 250).

7 Compare Freud (1969: 445) for this mournful work.

8 "[A]uf semantischer Ebene, [steht] 'Asche' für eine Spur, die nicht bewahrt, wovon sie zeugt, die da ist, 'um nichts zu sagen', ein Eingedenken mehr des Verlöschens oder der Zerstörung als ein Gedächtnis von etwas [...] weil das, wovon die Asche übrigbleibt, nicht zu rekonstruieren ist" (Busch 2008: 113). Busch refers to Derrida (1991: 35-37): "The text [Cinders] therefore provides insight into Derrida's very own version of 'How not to speak' by means of an obvious, but unintended secrecy. Further and foremost, this is the production of a pathically experienced speaking which testifies to what is non-reconstructable" In German: "Der Text gibt also Aufschluss über Derridas eigene Version des 'Wie-nicht-sprechens' im Sinne einer offensichtlichen, aber unintendierten Geheimhaltung. Darüber hinaus und vordringlich ist er die Inszenierung eines pathisch widerfahrenden Sprechens, das von demjenigen zeugt, was Unrekonstruierbar [sic!] bleibt" (Busch 2008: 113).

words, analogous to the semiotic concept of the impossible representation of death, are memorized and produced by the line throughout the book. This functional line is also addressed autoreferentially, as an acquaintance assures Darius: "There is a border. Between the living and the dead there is a border."⁹ The yet unburied dead and the diary nevertheless perpetuate this line and the logocentric *Diesseits* (phonetically, literally, poetically, and metaphysically: *this side*) of both text and diegesis from beyond.

When Darius discovers the diary, he admits: "I did not know that you were doing *something like that*."¹⁰ The sheer existence of the diary not only reveals on the diegetic level that self-blaming Darius didn't know his wife's thoughts. It shows more generally that a lack of words and a lack of communication are two different things, and their structures work codependently on the diegetic and textual level for further meaning: On the one hand, the textual diary refers to Flora's now absence of words (after death), textually indicated by the blank pages. They produce and perform a negative aesthetic of death and a somehow silent reproach as they keep incarnating Flora's spectral absent voice on the diegetic and textual level. The blank pages are specifically saying something in *not* saying something. The textuality can reach (cf. Clam 2008: 26) and influence the uttered diegetic world with this negative aesthetic. Its productive, sense-making function for the diegetic level is carried out by the textual line. The textual representation of Flora's silence enforces means of further interpretation for the diegesis. So even with no words, it is possible to do things: to represent them as a communicative, performative act, connect them to the communicative acts of the diegesis and to further refer to this silence via referential language. On the other hand, as Darius recursively remembers, life with Flora, before her suicide, had not been in complete silence. It is obvious though that Darius and Flora ended meaningful, interpretative, and connected communication even *before* her suicide, as Darius needs to research the diary – after discovering it at all – for an insight of his wife. While she was still alive, there were spoken words, but no communication. Flora's and Darius' narrative worlds had no connection. Darius refers to his lacking: "But I was too inattentive. [...] Sorry."¹¹ The simple, literary fact (the textual line) *that* there were many things Flora didn't say becomes more

9 "Da verläuft eine Grenze. Zwischen den Lebenden und Toten verläuft eine Grenze" (Mora 2013: 647).

10 "Ich wusste nicht, dass du *so etwas hier* machst" (Mora 2013: 84, my italics).

11 "Aber ich war zu unaufmerksam. [...] Entschuldige" (Mora 2013: 75).

important than *what* is hidden in the diary. Flora's narrative self is communicating *now*, after death, if only by the (empty) textuality of a departed voice.¹² In this "secularization of the author", Flora is still somehow participating *on this side*, because in speaking from beyond the line between life and death, her spectral silence paradoxically points out the 'here' and 'now' of all speaking and writing – and of language (cf. Deutschmann 2001: 419).

Not only a blank part, but also blank spaces (*Leerstellen*¹³) within the narration generate a specific sense for the diegesis as a negative, communicative structure. Darius resigns himself to this fact: "She made the last entry one and a half years before her death. Of all, about the end you know nothing. This is what is inseparable. *Átomo*."¹⁴ Missing knowledge and the lack of words are hereby parallelized with the physical, inseparable entity of the atom. But the "*átomo*" becomes an active part of a molecular, poietic structure. For Flora's self-censored speechlessness, Darius' voice functions as an observational distinction; Darius' ignorance or non-knowledge of his wife however, is juxtaposed by Flora's autoreferential voice. This molecular structure of paraleptic and paraliptic narration¹⁵ which deals with the blank spaces and missing knowledge of each of the narrator's voices, is produced by the textuality and performed within the narrative itself, and therefore indicates that (literary) communication always includes form *and* content (cf. Jahraus 2003: 463–467¹⁶). Darius refers *especially* to the missing references in Flora's diary.

12 In a rather extended sense, this distinction can be described as the Derridean "visor-effect" (Derrida 2012: 7f.). What is hidden behind it can never be known, only a certain, asynchronic manifestation can be experienced: "Exit the Ghost, Enter the Ghost." (ibid.: xix) Simultaneously to the diegetic specter and the functionality of the textual line – as 'Exit Flora, Enter Flora' – the (textual) visor sometimes enforces the empty promise for a look for what is under the visor. But her secret has no signified: "Warum kann ihr Geheimnis nicht komplizierter sein als das: sie hat schwache Nerven?" / "Why can her secret not be more complicated than this: she has weak nerves?" (Mora 2013: 651).

13 Wolfgang Iser distinguishes between a blank space (*Leerstelle*) of a text and negation: by means of reader-response criticism, a *Leerstelle* denotes a semantic uncertainty within a text which enforces matters of interpretation as the combination of elements within the text without being explicitly articulated. Those blank spaces are essential for the effect of the text (cf. Iser 1970: 14–23).

14 "Die letzte Eintragung hat sie anderthalb Jahre vor ihrem Tod gemacht. Gerade über das Ende weißt du nichts. Das ist das, was unteilbar ist. *Átomo*" (Mora 2013: 649).

15 I follow in this distinction Gérard Genette: A *paralepsis* describes a narration which switches suddenly (without an explicit narrative operation from an external to an internal focalization; further, it describes a specific, impossible knowledge of a narrator, which he cannot obtain due to his internal focalization (cf. Genette 1980: 195–197). A *paralipsis* describes a narration where knowledge is left out although the internally focalized narrator ought to have it (cf. ibid.: 51f., 195–197, 205, 210). *Paralepsis* and *paralipsis* are, according to Genette, an "infraction of the [narrative] code" (ibid.: 195) which functions especially in being an infraction, in an autopoietic understanding of literary structures as outlined, to create a specific, apophatic sense.

16 With a discussion of Roman Jakobson's concept of the linguistic functions.

When he states, "[t]elling nothing (about abortion or suicide attempt) also happens. Happens often".¹⁷ This proposition, although paradoxical, 'makes sense'. Darius is the external narrative point for missing references of the blank spaces within Flora's internal narration. In being not semiotic, substantial references, but ones that refer to the blank spaces of the text itself, they appear as autoreferentialities. They specifically show a general semantic promise of any reference (or of referential language): of simply referring *to* something. Referring *to* something is a differentiation of *not* otherwise referring to something else. In making such a difference by simply *referring to*, this is, rearticulated within systems theory, producing *and* performing sense. This concept leads to the idea of *autopoiesis* (cf. Luhmann 1995: 20–33).¹⁸ In the modification within literary theory, this term is able to describe a spoken, uttered speechlessness as always paradoxical or metaphorical for (narrative) referential functions. How to do things with no words, especially in literary texts, might be an on-going problem for the theory of speech acts,¹⁹ but not for an autopoietic understanding of speechlessness:

The unspeakability of truth, the unavailability of sense [becomes] the very object and principle of speech. [...] Those are texts which speak of their own truth and thereby undergo the status of truth of their own propositions and thereby make truth accessible at all. And this very effect, also known from the problem of paradoxes, can be rearticulated as the category of sense.²⁰

Paradoxically, speechlessness can be represented or performed in the language through the reference to its own absence of reference, to its referentiality in its mere,

17 "Dass (von Abtreibung und Selbstmordversuch) nichts erzählt wird, kommt auch vor. Kommt häufig vor" (Mora 2013: 84).

18 *Autopoiesis* is the universal idea of systems theory, a self-stabilizing process of a communicative system, which produces the sense (in making and communicating differentiations) of itself and every element within the system within itself, and is therefore autonomous – e.g., organisms, consciousnesses ("Bewusstseine") (Luhmann 1995: 34), or functional social systems). A non-autonomous system which cannot produce sense out of itself would therefore be *allopoietic* (machines or biological viruses). By means of a scientific approach towards literature (although Luhmann has a specific problem describing literature as a system – for a survey of this problem (cf. Kretzschmar 1997, Stanitzek 1992: 651f.) – this is interrelated with hermeneutic approaches, the textual interpretation (as the literal urge 'to make sense').

19 "Part of the difficulty is that a fictional text is fictional only as a whole: each separate sentence has exactly the same form as a 'true' sentence, which is what makes the problem of irony, or the poet's 'lies', according to Plato, or (to take a more specific instance), the problem of 'voice' in free indirect speech [...] so difficult to analyse. It is also what caused Austin [...] to exclude all fiction from his philosophical analysis of the performative, although all his examples are (necessarily) fictions" (Brooke-Rose 1990: 290).

20 "[D]ie Unsagbarkeit der Wahrheit bzw. die Unverfügbarkeit von Sinn [wird] Gegenstand und Prinzip der Rede [...]. Es sind Texte, die über ihre eigene Wahrheit sprechen und damit den Wahrheitsstatus ihrer eigenen Aussagen unterlaufen, aber genau deswegen Wahrheit überhaupt erst greifbar werden lassen. Und genau dieser aus dem Paradoxieproblem bekannte Effekt läßt sich auch mit der Kategorie des Sinns reformulieren" (Jahraus 2003: 471f.).

empty form. When the missing of sense becomes the object and very principle of the speech, the text, and the immanent fictional world, this produces sense out of itself and offers at the same time a recursive explanation for its inner structures: it makes sense that there is no sense, in doing something with no words. This auto-poietic sense-making has no specific authority as a 'creator' or producer (cf. Bunia 2007: 107f.); just like the arbitrariness of signs, the differentiations of references and the structural distance between the signifier and the signified imply a heterogeneity of a literary text and its intrinsic sense rather than a created, homogenous, privileged sense.²¹ This autopoiesis of sense becomes apparent when Flora's specific absent presence vanishes and re-appears not only on the textual level but in disturbing the order of the narration *diesselts*:

He looked to the passenger seat. She was looking out of the window, in the twilight he could not see much more of her than her dark hair. Sorry, but this is a little bit creepy. Turn on a light, spread the shadows differently. But before he could have found any switch with his shaky hands, the sensor decided that dusk had come and automatically turned on the lights at the front and on the dashboard, and she vanished.²²

Neither Darius nor Flora are homogenous, mimetic, and logocentric "consciousnesses" (Luhmann 1995: 34) but rather a narrative representation: Darius dissolves between homo- and heterodiegetic person, internal and external focalization, he even addresses the dead Flora directly and sees her. In the gaze of Orpheus (cf. Blanchot 1968: 179–184),²³ Flora disappears towards the blank space of death as she is only the presence of a reference of a former substantial. Such a reference of Flora remains silent – "She does not answer. Just sits there."²⁴ – but is still able to transit into an ordered place, although this presence has nothing in common with the (fictitious) I-narrating, human, conscious entity of the diary. Even the textuality

21 In the post-structuralist understanding of semiotics, most influentially stressed by Barthes (cf. 1970).

22 "Er sah zum Beifahrersitz. Sie sah beim Fenster hinaus, in der Abenddämmerung sah er nicht mehr von ihr als ihr dunkles Haar. Entschuldige, aber das ist ein wenig gruselig. Ein Licht anmachen, die Schatten anders verteilen. Aber bevor er mit zittrigen Fingern irgendeinen Schalter gefunden hätte, stellte der Sensor fest, dass die Dämmerung nun ausreichend fortgeschritten war, und schaltete automatisch die Außen- und Armaturenbrettbeleuchtung an, und sie verschwand" (Mora 2013: 75f.).

23 This term relates to Greek mythology of the artist Orpheus, who wants to rescue his beloved, dead Eurydice, from the Underworld; after finally negotiating her free from Hades, he breaks the one condition of her release, not to look at her while she follows him on their way up to the world. He eventually does and Eurydice fades away, back to the Beyond. Blanchot characterizes with this term the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and Stéphane Mallarmé as a poetic creation: "Writing begins with the gaze of Orpheus" (Blanchot 1968: 184) as it too follows the absence, follows death into the open space of art and literature.

24 "Sie antwortet nicht. Sitzt nur da" (Mora 2013: 101).

is harmed by this presence: ghost-handedly, the line between 'here' and 'there', life and death, copies into Darius' part, negating the creator of all creators: Darius says, "Nothing which cannot be removed, even if you could, but no, rather renounce your place, you cannot fall deeper than in God's hand on the ground."²⁵ Who or what is performing *this* line, an experienceable, present, textual 'now'? Again, in an auto-poietic sense, this sheer presence of a negation generates a communicational sense with no words, "makes itself" (Bunia 2007: 108). This wordless, secularized (cf. Deutschmann 2001: 419) communication of a narrative (non-human) consciousness conforms vividly with Walter Benjamin's suspicion that *any* narrator borrows his authority from death (cf. Benjamin 1977: 450). The not yet buried Flora, beyond the distinction of life and death, has *already re-turned*²⁶ into the *Diesseits* – of text, of language, of diegesis. In this oscillation between gone and not-yet-gone, speakable and unspeakable, language speaks itself out.

3. Belatedness and Polyfocalization: Franz Kafka's *Ein Traum*

The oscillation of a narrative voice and self-making sense correlates with the idea of a particular polyfocalization of a text. In making sense out of the unspeakable, in making speechlessness speak, a narrative asynchrony of speechlessness is implied and connects with the idea of a narrative belatedness. Franz Kafka's narrative *Ein Traum* gives a vivid account of this structure and helps to point out further characteristics of autopoietic structures of literary speechlessness. The protagonist Joseph K. is dreaming that he is on a walk leading him to a cemetery. There, everything and everyone seems to be already waiting for him. Once appearing there, gravediggers "scarcely" start their work when a third figure, identified by K. "immediately as an artist", "at once", (Kafka 1971: 399) as soon as he sees K., starts writing onto a gravestone above the fresh grave:

"[H]ere lies –" Every letter was clear and beautifully made, deeply incised and of the purest gold. When he had inscribed these two words he looked at K. over his shoulder; K., who was very eager to know how the inscription would go, paid hardly any attention to the man but was intent only on the stone. And in fact the man turned *again to continue writing*, but he could not go on, *something was hindering him*, he let the pencil sink and *once more* turned toward K. *This time K. looked back at him* and noted

25 "Nichts, was man nicht entfernen könnte, wenn man denn könnte, aber nein, lieber gleich auf seinen Platz verzichten, tiefer als in Gottes Hand auf den Boden kannst du nicht fallen" (Mora 2013: 74).

26 The stress of the *re-turn* of Flora's specter follows up on Derrida's outline of the asynchrony of the absent presence of the specter, whose time is "out of joint" (Derrida 2012: 1), its return somehow certain and uncertain.

that he was *deeply embarrassed and yet unable to explain himself*. All his earlier *vivacity* had vanished. That made K. feel embarrassed, too; they exchanged helpless glances; there was some dreadful misunderstanding between them which neither could resolve. [...] The artist waited until K. had calmed down and then decided, since there was no help for it, *just to go on with the inscription*. (Kafka 1971: 400, my italics)²⁷

K., the artist, and the narration are obviously dealing with an indifferent speechlessness which refers to something that has already been there, a certainty which desperately needs to be written further (or, literally, to be *on-written*) but is not yet known. The diegetic figures seem to be motivated by this in their (gestural) communication, whereas the extradiegetic narrator, curiously enough, does not clarify anything. The substance of the hindering is unspeakable and cannot be articulated, only acted out, and implies a certain asynchrony between what is not being said and what is narrated. It becomes clear that the reason for having no words relates somehow to the references of the prepared grave and the unspeakability of death, a meaningful significance for something which is already there. German philologist Joseph Vogl characterizes Kafka's narrative style generally as belated, as it lacks standard, narrative essentials such as functional communication, orality, and synchronicity of observing and telling. Kafka's works seem to disorder these in favor of a specific performative description, articulated by an indifferent "fourth person" (cf. Vogl 1994) of the text. This person and its narrative voice have no communicative utterance or subjective narration, but it in fact motivates the whole narration. This speechless voice is manifested by an inner heterogeneity of narrative focalization and is interfering with the illusionary homogeneity of a mimetic (human, logocentric) narrator, in the sense of a (conscious) voice which first sees the world and then tells about it (cf. *ibid.*: 748). The narrative of *Ein Traum* is only seemingly focalized on the diegetic figure K.; and finally, K. understands his function, enforced by the artist, towards the end of the narration:

The first small stroke that he made was *a relief* to K., but the artist obviously achieved it only with the greatest reluctance; [...] It was a J, it was almost finished, and at that

27 "Hier ruht –' Jeder Buchstabe erschien rein und schön, tief geritzt und in vollkommenem Gold. Als er die zwei Worte geschrieben hatte, sah er nach K. zurück; K., der sehr begierig auf das Fortschreiten der Inschrift war, kümmerte sich kaum um den Mann, sondern blickte nur auf den Stein. Tatsächlich setzte der Mann wieder zum Weiterschreiben an, aber er konnte nicht, *es bestand irgendein Hindernis*, er ließ den Bleistift sinken und drehte sich wieder nach K. um. *Nun sah auch K. den Künstler an* und merkte, daß dieser *in großer Verlegenheit war, aber die Ursache dessen nicht sagen konnte*. Alle seine frühere Lebhaftigkeit war verschwunden. Auch K. geriet dadurch in Verlegenheit; sie wechselten hilflose Blicke; es lag ein häßliches Mißverständnis vor, das keiner auflösen konnte. [...] Der Künstler wartete, bis K. sich beruhigt hatte, und entschloß sich dann, *da er keinen andern Ausweg fand, dennoch zum Weiterschreiben*" (Kafka 1970: 165, my italics).

moment the artist stamped angrily on the grave mound with one foot so that the soil all around flew up in the air. *At long last K. understood him*; it was *too late* to start apologizing now; with all his fingers he dug into the earth, which offered almost no resistance; *everything seemed prepared beforehand*; a thin crust of earth had been constructed only for the look of the thing; immediately beneath it a great hole opened out, with steep sides, into which K. sank, wafted onto his back by a gentle current. And while he was already being received into impenetrable depths, his head still straining upwards on his neck, his own name raced across the stone above him in great flourishes. *Enchanted* by the sight, he woke up. (Kafka 1971: 400f., my italics)²⁸

"Here lies" was still written easily as a preparation of the topographic form, the empty grave; but K. is questioning its referentiality with his simple presence. The artist has somehow already understood the functional referentiality, but has yet no words for this: the empty grave needs K. as its reference. That K. has anything to decide in this, that he actually 'means' something, is "seemingly" so because "everything seemed prepared beforehand". "At long last", *finally*, K. understands this meaningful *art*, which forces him to a sort of suicide. Being a depersonalizing act beyond words (cf. Stark 1998: 142), this suicide relates to the autopoiesis of the narration. The autoreferentiality of content (K.) and form (grave) as the ordering, depictive, and referential relation between (dead) things and words (cf. Vogl 1994: 748), is a belated, "enchanted" understanding of meaning. The referentiality of this meaning, in words like "endlich" ("at long last") and "nur zum Schein" ("seemingly"), is unclear and can neither be aligned to K. nor the artist. Its specific sense is constituted by the narrative perspective, an additional focalization which isn't bound to a personal or impersonal voice but crucially enforces the sense-making process of the narration. It wants to unify the content/K. and form/grave to finish the already prepared, yet missing words: *Here lies – Joseph K.* Again, there is a specific belatedness, as the inscription can only be finished *after* K. lies down. Despite those written words, the initial enforcement behind this articulation remains hidden. There are no words for what K. needs to "*understand*" so urgently until it

28 "Der erste kleine Strich, den er machte, war für K. eine Erlösung, der Künstler brachte ihn aber offenbar nur mit dem äußersten Widerstreben zustande; [...] Es war ein J, fast war es schon beendet, da stampfte der Künstler wütend mit einem Fuß in den Grabhügel hinein, daß die Erde ringsum in die Höhe flog. *Endlich verstand ihn K.*; ihn abzubitten war *keine Zeit mehr*; mit allen Fingern grub er in die Erde, die fast keinen Widerstand leistete; *alles schien vorbereitet; nur zum Schein* war eine dünne Erdkruste aufgerichtet; gleich hinter ihr öffnete sich mit abschüssigen Wänden ein großes Loch, in das K., von einer sanften Strömung auf den Rücken gedreht, versank. Während er aber unten, den Kopf im Genick noch aufgerichtet, schon von der undurchdringlichen Tiefe aufgenommen wurde, jagte oben sein Name mit mächtigen Zieraten über den Stein. *Entzückt* von diesem Anblick erwachte er" (Kafka 1970: 165f., my italics).

is almost "*too late*", but this utterance still becomes the sense-making "Archimedean point" leading to death, into the empty grave, in leading also the whole narration as a speechless and yet sense-making "fourth person" and voice:

because the Archimedean point, the center of an I and the vanishing point of a perspective are only motivated by their shift into a narration. Therefore, nothing is clarified by a 'narrator'. There is no communicative instance between narrating and narration.²⁹

4. Conclusion: The Empty Grave and Autopoietic Structures of Literary Speechlessness

So far, the analysis of speechlessness in both texts came to the following understanding: the absence of words in literary texts can signify speechlessness. Narration and textuality, content and form, produce and perform a reference which refers to itself. This autoreferentiality is effect and cause of the autopoietic structures of saying something in not saying something and of a polyfocalized and belated narration articulating sense-making – fundamental operations of the text. Finally, I want to specify some structural aspects of the metaphor of the empty grave which can be found in both texts to illustrate this understanding of literary speechlessness further.

The speechlessness and the exposition of meaningful acting in both Mora's and Kafka's text begin with a grave which is *yet* empty: Darius goes on a journey to bury his wife's ashes while researching her (literal) traces and reading her diary; K. and the artist have a gestural dispute caused by a serious misunderstanding – in both cases, the empty grave seems to need to be 'filled', as Flora and K. are obviously disturbing some kind of powerful order of the *Diesseits*, of language, text, and narration. This authority is not explicitly articulated, as its reference lies in the sense-making processes of the text itself to act out speechlessness, to make it speak (cf. Clam 2008: 32–34). This is comparable to a self-fulfilling prophecy: K. feels the force to complete the empty grave; he does it, because it is there. The autoreferentiality – as simply referring *to* something – is creating sense by simply fulfilling a sense, which started with a missing sense. In Mora's novel, Darius is looking for a meaningful place to rest the ashes of his wife in peace – the process is motivated

²⁹ "[E]ben weil der archimedische Punkt, das Zentrum eines Ichs und der Fluchtpunkt einer Perspektive nur in Verschiebung zu sich selbst die Erzählung motiviert. Nichts wird also durch einen 'Erzähler' geklärt. Zwischen Erzähltem und Erzählung gibt es keine Instanz der Vermittlung" (Vogl 1994: 750).

in knowing that the ashes, the things, must *be* somewhere, in a meaningful order (cf. Stockhammer 2005: 9f.).

However, the actions of writing, speaking, and narrating death always come a little too late: Darius' mournful journey comes *after* Flora's death, and her diary is also discovered *too late* to perhaps save her from committing suicide; K. understands (almost) *too late* what part he fulfills at the already-prepared grave – the inscription on the gravestone can only be finished *after* he lies in the ground. This belatedness and the sense-making processes imply the phantasm of narrative actions being synchronous with the moment of death – the phantasm of a "total narration" (Hansen-Löwe 2007: 39), the impossible, the unspeakable. Death, the "absolute metaphor" (Macho 1987: 184) of such a phantasm, is replaced by the *cryptic* metaphor of the empty grave:³⁰ the existential, semiotic, belated disorder is offset by the order of the grave, as in "Trauerarbeit",³¹ a work of mourning. It is an especially semiotic, essential work following (*after*) the loss of a beloved object, where the mortal form of a deceased, speechless entity is identified, and its place is located in the knowledge that this reference remains stable. The grave can do this in the deictic and semantic *re*-presentation, in naming and locating the deceased. Most important is its autoreferentiality, therefore, *where* the dead object lies (cf. Stockhammer 2005: 10; Derrida 2012: 9) – the reality of *what* lies there in the ground has no relieving manner, as the (threatening, disgusting) corpse is usually hidden, buried in the ground. This topography of the grave aligns to the metaphors of critical ideas of representational language, where the sign either harmfully substitutes the object which is missing (the letters are somehow 'killing' it) or the sign thankfully postpones the reality of the object which can be deadly, hurtful, or threatening (cf. Hansen-Löwe 1996: 186f.). Language itself therefore internalized the belated distinction between life and death, speech and speechlessness. The topography of the grave represents this representational order of language in both texts, of signified, signifier and meaningful sign.

Comparing both texts in their structures of speechlessness, they differ in their aesthetical productivity: Once, in Kafka's work, the content (the body) is *yet* missing, in Mora's novel the form (the grave) is *yet* missing. In Kafka's work, the sense

30 For the cryptical dis-order of the grave in regard to narratology see Haubrich (2015: 107–114).

31 In the ontologically indifferent yet very topographic sense of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (2012: 9f.), the term loosely follows Sigmund Freud (1969). In contrast, Freud's term highlights the psychological process of 'Trauerarbeit', where the subject has to declare the lost object dead (cf. Freud 1969: 445).

is self-fulfilled by the power of the art and it is finally possible to write down: *Here lies Joseph K.* In Mora's novel though, *Here lies Flora* is still missing. But this aesthetical text has already set up the promise to self- fulfill this by the textual line. The mourning is promised to be over – until then, the line substitutes the function of the grave, locating the missed and missing words beyond the line of life and death. This autopoietic structure of sense-making somehow positively "denaturalizes" (Vogl 1994: 747) speechlessness along the empty grave, as both literature und the grave leave 'Nothing' but writing (cf. Jahraus 2003: 387f.). Literary speechlessness therefore produces and requests work, not resignation, to turn no sense into sense and make speechlessness speak.

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