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"Why We Fled from Grosny? Nobody Has Asked Us This Question Yet": German Media and Immigration

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Abstract: According to the Ministry of Migration and Refugees (BAMF), close to 750,000 people applied for asylum in Germany in 2016. However, these data do not account for the growing number of refugees who are seeking sanctuary. If they make it to Germany, their legal status is in limbo—sometimes for years—as they await either deportation or the right of residence. Because of this situation, a typically marginalized topic has become ubiquitous in public discourse. One might think that journalism would supply an array of discursive strategies to shape public discourse on immigration and provide a forum to work toward a humanitarian or at least a bureaucratic solution. Yet, by and large, journalists fail to overcome conventional patterns of coverage, which rely on news and opinion texts. Rarely do journalists immerse themselves in the everyday life of refugees in order to provide a more complex perspective beyond the voices of media professionals. This study explores how different forms of narrative journalism can challenge dominant research practices and discursive strategies for reporting on immigration to Western Europe. Three reportages have been selected for analysis: Wolfgang Bauer's "Und vor uns liegt das Glück" [And Happiness Lies Ahead] (*Die Zeit*); Paul Ronzheimer's "Flucht aus der Hölle" [Fleeing from Hell] (*Bild*); and Carolin Emcke's "Willkommen in Deutschland" [Welcome to Germany] (*Die Zeit*). These examples of narrative journalism provide a framework for a textual analysis that sheds light on journalists' approaches in researching and representing the situation of immigrants on their odyssey to Western Europe.

Keywords: migration – corporate media – reportage – ethics – narrative techniques

The so-called refugee crisis has made front-page news in media across Europe since 2014. This study explores how different forms of narrative journalism can challenge the dominant research practices and discursive strategies for reporting on immigration to Western Europe, focusing on three case studies that illustrate different discursive strategies and research practices. The aim is two-fold: first, to find out how journalists' specific research practices influence the configuration of narrative forms; and second, to determine the extent to which different discursive strategies are used to provide an alternative story about the situation of immigrants.

The study is structured as follows. First, inconsistencies in German corporate media coverage of the "immigration wave" since August 2015 are addressed, followed by a detailed overview of the reportage articles.[1] The next section establishes analytical categories based on the theoretical backdrop of a critical ethical narratology. These provide a framework for the ensuing textual analysis of the three examples of reportage, to illuminate the journalists' approaches in researching and representing the situation of immigrants on their odyssey to Western Europe. The study concludes with a contrastive discussion and summary.

Coverage of Immigration in German Media

An extensive quantitative content analysis conducted by Michael Haller and the Hamburg Journalism school, analyzing media coverage on immigration for thirteen months, from February 2015 to March 2016, shows a sharp rise in reporting on migration to Western Europe, from July to September 2015, when migration on the Balkan route was at its peak. While the topic was already being covered in German media, by the summer of 2015 it had started to dominate public discourse.[2] The researchers found that corporate media—public broadcasting, national newspapers, and magazines—followed a similar thematic agenda. During August and September, German media promoted what Haller describes as a "conceited welcoming culture," in which media coverage on the topic was overwhelmingly positive and critical voices were absent.[3] The findings suggested journalists and politicians cooperated to shape public discourse on immigration to Germany. In retrospect, this coverage did not do justice to the complexity of the topic and did not help alleviate anxieties about the future of the country among parts of the German public. What can be observed since early 2016, Haller found, is a shift from one extreme to the other[4]: The pre-2016 media frame of a welcoming culture had changed to a skeptical, somewhat reactionary frame defined by themes of national and economic security.[5]

Contrasting these positions, Haller asks how public knowledge, opinions, and attitudes about issues such as immigration to Western Europe are shaped through the media. The researchers conclude that media coverage of such weighty issues should be founded in journalistic knowledge drawn from experience and expertise, rather than relying on second-hand information, such as material issued by press agencies and state institutions. In order to solve existing deficits in media coverage about refugees, Haller suggests broadening the repertoire of discursive forms so journalists can make appropriate claims about the situation and address relevant questions of political action.[6] In this context, it is worthwhile to turn attention to journalistic genres such as *reportage*, defined as reporting that relies on personal experience, in-depth research, different perspectives, and an authentic journalistic voice to overcome social boundaries and engage readers emotionally.[7] Reportage is a journalistic form that presents a mix of discursive strategies and research practices that differ substantially from standard reporting and better enable journalists and readers to approach the issue of immigration to Western Europe.

Reportage Sample

The present investigation selected three articles for analysis: Wolfgang Bauer's "Und vor uns liegt das Glück" [And Happiness Lies Ahead], published in *Die Zeit*; Paul Ronzheimer's "Flucht aus der Hölle" [Fleeing from Hell], published in *Bild*; and Carolin Emcke's "Willkommen in Deutschland" [Welcome to Germany], published in *Die Zeit*.[8]

The use of narrative strategies in reporting was the primary criterion for the choice of texts. Historically, the popular press is a media form that promotes innovative forms of storytelling.[9] This motivated the choice of "Fleeing from Hell," a story published in Germany's leading tabloid *Bild* in August 2015.[10] Ronzheimer's reportage is a cross-media series in which he reports from the infamous Balkan route where he accompanies a group of Syrian refugees on their journey from Greece to the German border. Part of the reporting was accomplished via Periscope, a live-streaming application, which was followed by 77,000 viewers at times.[11] Video material and text elements were then combined to produce a multimedia story for *Bild* online, which Ronzheimer boldly labeled a "Periscoportage."[12] Additionally, an in-depth report was published in various print issues.[13]

To compare how different forms of reportage may challenge media discourse on migration and crisis, quality media that promote opportunities for narrative journalism were also surveyed. Thus, two examples were selected from the prestigious weekly *Die Zeit*: Carolin Emcke's "Welcome to Germany"[14] and Wolfgang Bauer's "And Happiness Lies Ahead."[15] The latter's reportage might be classified as a journalistic stunt. While U.S. journalism

has a vital history of this approach to reporting (recent prominent examples being Ted Conover's lengthy report on working in a cattle processing plant for *Harper's* magazine and Shane Bauer's even lengthier report on working in a private prison for *Mother Jones*),[16] in Germany an investigative practice only fully emerged in the 1970s. Its most famous representative is the reporter Günter Wallraff,[17] who became renowned for his undercover reporting as a Turkish itinerant laborer, an editor at *Bild*, and passed himself as a Somalian (!) in East Germany.[18] For his *Bild* story Wolfgang Bauer and photographer Stanislav Krupar posed as refugees and tried to secure a place on a boat that would take them from Alexandria, Egypt, to Italy in April 2014. Carolin Emcke, more conventionally, wrote about the experiences of different groups of refugees and their struggle to claim their right of residence in Germany in late 2013.

Besides a common topic, a unifying characteristic of these three journalistic texts is that the narratives are based on personal experience. Although the reporters use different researching and reporting strategies, their stories are primarily based on anecdotal evidence and do not rely heavily on secondary sources. Due to the lengthy involvement with their respective projects, all three reporters are immersed in their subjects. An in-depth analysis of the narratives will illustrate how their choices of immersion translate into different discursive strategies that express the reporters' recognition of ethical complications in representing the situation of refugees through the eyes of Western journalists.

Ronzheimer, Emcke, and Bauer draw from vastly different biographical and professional backgrounds to compose their stories. One could say that Ronzheimer is a next-generation journalist. Despite his young age (thirty), he is already reporter-in-chief at *Bild*. After attending the publishing house's journalism school, the Axel Springer Akademie, his reporting at *Bild* began amid controversy. During the financial crisis in Greece he handed out drachmas, Greek's pre-Euro currency, at protests in Athens and fired up the crowd.[19] Taking criticism for such actions, Ronzheimer has refrained since then from using such provocative techniques in his reporting. Instead, one of Ronzheimer's trademarks has become the use of social media as a reporting tool. Whether he reports from the trenches around besieged Mosul, in northern Iraq, or from the Maidan in Kiev during the 2014 revolution in Ukraine, he uses Facebook and Twitter to communicate directly with followers.

In contrast, Bauer, born in 1970, did not start out as a journalist but as a soldier in the German Bundeswehr. After his contract was finished, he attended university and studied Islam and history. Since 1994, he has been a freelance journalist for national magazines, such as *Geo* and *Focus*.[20] Since 2010, he has worked for *Die Zeit*. He was awarded the prestigious Henri-

Nannen-Preis for his documentary *Das Leben nach der Hölle* [Life after Hell], about women and children kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria.[21]

Finally, Emcke is one of the most distinguished writers in Germany. Born in 1967, she studied philosophy in Frankfurt and Harvard and obtained her Ph.D. with a work on collective identities.[22] Critics herald her ability to be empathic and reflective in her reportage without being declamatory.[23] Between 1998 and 2013 she worked extensively in global conflict areas in the Near East, Colombia, and Afghanistan. Her journalistic works' overall theme is that of individual trauma and a critique of collective identity. Emcke publishes in *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, among others.[24]

Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Categories

The discussion of the reportage sample is founded in critical ethical narratology,[25] which argues that readers ascribe not only aesthetic value to narrative art but also "aesthetically value cognitive aspects of a work, such as the insight afforded or its expression of emotions."[26] Phelan identifies four "ethical *positions*" of interest, namely those of:

1. Characters in relation to each other and to the situations they face;
2. Narrator(s) in relation to the characters and to the narratee(s);
3. The implied author in relation to the characters, the narrator(s), and the implied and actual audiences;
4. Actual audience members (and the ethical beliefs they bring to the reading experience) in response to the first three ethical positions.[27]

Berning's theory asks which elements shape a text as a representation of reality and how conditions are created for readers to carry out any form of moral-intellectual reflection of the material that the stories present.[28] These "multi-layered intersections of narrative and moral values"[29] are of particular interest with respect to nonfiction narratives.[30] One aim of an in-depth narrative analysis of journalistic texts is to reveal how these texts figure as a foil for ethical and professional judgments of their authors and how these judgments are conveyed to readers.

In order to render the discursive strategies and ethical dimensions of a text intelligible, critical ethical narratology relies on analyzing the core categories of narrative: narrative situation, narrative time, character-spaces, and narrative bodies.[31] The analysis focuses not only on the *story* ("what is told") but on the *plot* ("how a story is told"), and aims to describe the *configuration* of situational narrative characteristics.[32] Arguably these core categories of narrative apply to all media texts and genres.[33]

The analysis of the *narrative situation* deals with questions of perspective, focusing on the relation of the narrator to the story-world evoked in a text

and the story's epistemic and emotional *focalizer*.[34] The concept of *focalization* "expresses the ratio of knowledge between the narrator and the characters."[35] With respect to reportage texts this perspective is helpful, as we can assume that the narrator of a reportage text and the author of the text are identical.[36] Therefore, the relative position of the narrator to the story, as a (central) protagonist, for example, reveals something about the ethical and professional aspects that lead to producing such a text. Further, an analysis of the narrator's language highlights attitudes toward the narrated events. Certain metaphors indicate the dominant ideological frame of the narrator.[37]

The concept of *narrative time* differentiates between *story time* and *plot time*, that is, the time-span of story events versus the presentation of this time-span through plot.[38] Plot time concerns the order in which the story is told, including the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards, changes in narrative speed, and iterative elements such as the recurrent presentation of specific events. The interplay of story time and plot time is analyzed with respect to the duration, order, and frequency of story events.[39] These analytical dimensions of narrative time help to describe the overall plot structure more precisely.

The narratological dimension of character-space elaborates the concepts of narrative space and narrative situation and highlights that the two are juxtaposed.[40] *Character-space* defines the sphere of action for characters.[41] This sphere of action can be analyzed by drawing on the difference between frame-space and thematized space. *Frame-space* defines the setting where action takes place.[42] On the other hand, *thematized space* is an "object of presentation itself,"[43] where space is not only a descriptive setting for character action but also a functional dimension where relations of characters or their inner conflicts are represented. Thematized space thereby may have a symbolic quality. It fulfills a story function and may mirror a narrator's attitudes or values toward the characters and emphasize their struggles and transgressions.[44]

The category of *narrative bodies* includes the role of body in narrative and addresses the complexity of representing characters adequately in nonfiction narrative.[45] The concept moves beyond the established narratological categories of characterization (say, the question of round or flat character profiles), and asks how the body is implemented as a story component through elements like plot and space. In contextualizing the mode of characterization this way the varying psychological, physiological, and social features of characters gain relevance for analysis. Furthermore, the concept may reveal how different conceptions of the corporeal are constructed by taking into account the general attitudes and ideologies of a narrative perspective.[46]

"Fleeing from Hell"

The perspective of the reporter determines the narrative situation. In his Periscoportage, Paul Ronzheimer is either directly present or provides voice-over commentary and descriptions. Although he interacts with characters, interviewing some of them to gain information, it becomes clear that he knows less than they do about the situation. By asking questions and letting refugees explain the process of fleeing, he relies on the refugees themselves as his primary source of information. He makes this transparent in his reporting. The viewer frequently depends on Ronzheimer as a mediator to develop an understanding of what is happening, which makes him the focal point of the story. It also prevents his readers (or viewers) from taking on the perspectives of other characters. This narrative strategy affects the creation of character-spaces and the representation of narrative bodies.

The narrator's value judgments are explicit, as Ronzheimer suggests he is imbued with a distinct moral authority. Halfway through the Periscoportage, he stops to explain why he believes it is important to accompany the refugees on their trek and assures his audience that *Bild* will keep providing refugees with a voice. At the end he describes his own feelings, claiming that the past twelve days en route to Germany constituted one of the most challenging situations of his career: "There are moments in the life of even the most experienced reporter when he doubts his own decisions."[47] Overall, Ronzheimer attempts to provide an authentic representation of the dangers and hardships of the refugees' situation to a German public. The video format helps establish a more direct connection with his audience in this context. For instance, when the Periscoportage ends with a shot of Ronzheimer in the dark, he is looking tired. He sighs, gives a thumbs-up, and thanks his viewers.

Narrative time is chronological in Ronzheimer's reportage. As he travels with the refugees, events are narrated only once and from his perspective.[48] The online print reportage, however, begins with a flashback to the refugees' past in Syria, as it was told to him when the Syrians met him at the camp on the Greek island of Kos.[49] Narrative speed is mostly accelerated as he sums up many events for his viewers. The manipulation of narrative time mirrors the refugees' progress and setbacks on their trek. The chronological storytelling engages users who follow Ronzheimer via Periscope, but also mirrors the idea of a journey.

Character-spaces determine an important narrative feature of Ronzheimer's reporting. First, the frame-space in which the action unfolds in time is used to create complications. The characteristics of the setting (the frame-space) are a corollary of his chronological reporting. The raiding of the trek by police in a field in Hungary, or a thunderstorm that hinders their progress, are

characteristics of frame-space. On the other hand, character-space is also thematized. This is evident as the changing setting and the increasing proximity to Germany mark the stages of the group's progress "from Hell." This progress mirrors their hopes and fears: Getting caught in Hungary is repeatedly addressed as the worst-case scenario, and the country becomes a symbolic place for reactionary European refugee policies. Furthermore, thematized space functions to reveal social relations between characters: for example, when Ronzheimer films a group of terrified refugees running away from police, whom the journalist does not have to fear in the same way. A social distance also becomes visible when the refugees are not allowed in a hostel in Serbia. Here the reporter steps up as a mediator and persuades the owners of the hostel to accommodate the refugees. This interference transgresses his journalistic role as neutral observer, but also underscores that his frequent value judgments are sustained by his actions.

The depiction of narrative bodies is a result of the reporter's perspective. The video reportage begins with the reporter introducing himself to the group: "I'm from Germany; my name is Paul and you are from Aleppo and now we are here together." With this introduction Ronzheimer emphasizes how far apart they are, not only geographically but also socially. He focuses the characterization on Feras, a handsome Syrian who has just married and who wants to study and learn German. By singling out Feras as the central narrative body in this group of refugees, he reproduces the stereotype of the well-educated, socially compatible Syrian, which is appealing to the reporter's German audience. He furthers this appeal by highlighting the relationship between Feras and other protagonists who fall ill or have trouble keeping up. Establishing the narrative bodies and highlighting their social relations in such ways is effective, because the group of refugees appears less a faceless mass than a tightly functioning community. This portrayal of characters makes the reporter's claims that he cares for those who are fleeing to Germany more authentic.

The results of the narrative analysis have to be considered with respect to the constraints of the tabloid medium. *Bild*'s tendency to simplify complex issues determines the essential style of Ronzheimer's reportage in the tabloid medium. Thus, "Fleeing from Hell" can be classified as a form of sensational immersion reporting. He emphasizes drama and conventional symbolism (like the teddy bear, left behind by the group in the mud, etc.) and puts the reporter at the center of the narrative. Yet the development of character-spaces and narrative bodies underscores the reporter's positive value judgments. Clearly he does not represent the refugees as deviant, nor does he evoke an image of the refugee as threat. In this regard, his reporting diverges from

Bild's standard editorial treatment of the issue. This might be possible because he is writing within the dominantly positive media discourse on immigration during the months of August and September 2015, a discourse with which the tabloid had otherwise complied.[50] However, readers cannot conclusively judge whether Ronzheimer's value claims are authentic. He claims to give a factual account of his experience, which is underscored by video material, but we do not know whether the reporter really stayed with the refugees throughout the entire journey, or where he slept, or how he traveled.

"And Happiness Lies Ahead"

Wolfgang Bauer's undercover method of reporting creates the least possible distance between the journalists (Bauer and photographer Stanislav Krupar) and their subjects. The journalists are the emotional and epistemic focalizers of the story. They also suffer psychological and physical abuse by human traffickers, for example, as they "were driven into the sea with clubs."[51] Unlike Ronzheimer, Bauer is fully immersed in the role of refugee and experiences the hardships of fleeing first-hand. Surprisingly, for a stunt-reportage, after the story begins with a conventional first-person narrative, the narrator is mostly silent, generally preferring to remain invisible as the story progresses. Throughout the text the reporter uses his own voice only in a few instances to clarify his situation.

After the group has been kidnapped, Bauer writes, "We, the reporters, are in a very delicate position now. What will the kidnappers do, if they discover who we really are?" In another instance Bauer confesses, "We were naïve," when he realizes that the dangers of fleeing are not limited to the crossing of the sea.

By making transparent his own fears in such instances, he manages to make the reporters appear to be more than silent observers. It is only when the group is finally on the boat that the loss of professional distance becomes fully apparent.

Bauer writes, "For the first time we believe that we have made it. We, the reporters, can barely separate our feelings from those of the refugees."

Arguably, this strategy of covert narration, which, combined with a limited epistemic perspective of the reporters, is what allows the story to resonate so well with readers. It makes the journalists accessible, possibly even reliable, narrators.

Bauer develops a story structure that keeps readers in suspense about the outcome of the situation. Therefore, narrative time is non-chronological and the story begins with the climactic scene of boarding the ships. A flashback to "one week before the day that we were driven into the sea with clubs" then

leads to the chronological unfolding of events. At the end, the story returns to the initial scene of boarding the ships to finally inform readers about its outcome. This "cliffhanger" strategy encourages the reader to stick with the piece to the end and serves to reinforce the intensity of Bauer's experience. Bauer also varies the narrative pace to provide atmospheric detail. For instance, when the group is captured he uses ellipses and time compression to describe the situation. This mirrors the repetitiveness of the days when they are kept prisoners of the Alexandria mob. On the other hand, the confusing events of the beach scene, when the group is boarding a boat that is supposed to take them to Italy, seem to be told simultaneously in real time. Narrating in the present tense, he is able to further capture a sense of immediacy.

Bauer's accounts of character are developed in a way that is similar to Ronzheimer's reportage. The frame-space constitutes a setting for action to unfold—the city of Alexandria, where most of the reportage takes place; the beach; and the island where the human traffickers dump the group. These settings are described in detail—providing a view from the apartment where the group stays before being kidnapped, for example—which adds precision to Bauer's accounts. The sea becomes an overarching theme, with Bauer seeing it as a symbolic space, at once the Mediterranean as Europe's cradle but also a divide between a happier future and the grim present. The title, "And Happiness Lies Ahead," underlines this theme. The sea also reflects the characters' fears, as Bauer writes: "We suddenly see, not more than fifty meters away, what we had anticipated for weeks, what we had feared for weeks. The sea. Glowing in the last sunlight at dusk." Further, the sea functions as a divide between characters. Bauer conveys this in a scene where a mother and her child are separated:

> Her mother wades through the waves; she lifts her arms out of the water. She calls to the boat which the men are steering toward the open sea. The backpack with the insulin drifts in the surf. Often families are separated boarding the ships. Often children reach Italy without their parents. Once on the ship, there is no going back.[52]

Within this somewhat conventional character-space, narrative bodies are more carefully developed than in Ronzheimer's piece. More than one central character is established. Bauer describes their physical traits and their psychological profiles. By calling attention to their clothing, the music they listen to, and their diet, the reporter positions the refugees as part of the Syrian upper middle class. This suggests that many of those fleeing to Germany are actually the economic and cultural elite of Syria. The reporter's descriptions hint at the fact that many who flee to Germany are also quite westernized. This strategy to build characters is similar to that used in "Fleeing from Hell." However,

Bauer's focus on the psychological state of the men and women in this group further highlights their vulnerability. He substantiates this claim by noting the pills they need, or emphasizing the shock when a child's insulin drops into the ocean. Generally this makes clear that Bauer pays more attention to detail than did Ronzheimer, which makes his value judgments more plausible and, furthermore, gives voice to his protagonists' value judgments. Without reportorial explanation, which is typical for "Fleeing from Hell," Bauer lets a Syrian man explain why he pays attention to his appearance: "In Italy I don't want to look like a crook," he says. Despite language barriers, Bauer attempts to let the protagonists speak for themselves. This is possible because Bauer relies on his Syrian friend Amar, his original contact man and translator.[53] Amar's work enables Bauer to use interview techniques more extensively than did Ronzheimer. He can give his characters voice, which makes his own judgments more plausible for readers as it sharpens the realistic representation of the Syrian refugees.

Compared to Ronzheimer's reporting strategy, "And Happiness Lies Ahead" can be classified as investigative immersion reporting. Rather than assuming the explanatory role of the reporter, Bauer uses interview techniques to develop narrative bodies and character-spaces in fewer broad-brush descriptions. The fact that the journalist was undercover means he could not possibly simulate his experience of the situation, as Ronzheimer did. This makes the reportage a more reliable piece to represent the situation of refugees. It has to be taken into account, however, that the journalistic stunt needs intense preparation and could only be carried out by relying on the resources of a newspaper such as *Die Zeit.*[54]

Although "And Happiness Lies Ahead" has a viable strategy of reporting on the migration crisis, Bauer's approach is not without ethical problems. Only Amar and his family know that Bauer and Krupar are journalists.[55] Generally, if a journalist has not revealed his identity to anyone, the publication of his story invades the privacy of the refugees. Also, it is unclear to what extent the refugees have given consent to Bauer's reporting or were allowed the option of confidentiality. Bauer's professional responsibility is further compromised if we assume that the reporter can, when danger approaches, drop his disguise as a migrant and profess his true identity as a Western journalist, which Bauer did when he found himself in prison following the failed flight attempt.

"Welcome to Germany"

In contrast to Bauer's film-like drama, narrative time in Carolin Emcke's reportage[56] is structured by the months she and her team spent with various groups of refugees in German refugee shelters. Her research period was substantial, lasting from April 2013 to January 2014. Emcke narrates the events

in present tense and in chronological order—no flashbacks or flash-forwards occur—which means that this simpler narrative structure does not create the usual dramatic tension. There is no *in medias res*, for instance.

Like Bauer, Emcke establishes a "we" narrative, including her team as an integral part of the perspective. As the primary narrator, she is a protagonist of the story and participates in the action. However, this participation is different from both Ronzheimer's and Bauer's. Emcke is an external focalizer who establishes the narration in a more ambivalent way than, say, Ronzheimer's. She demonstrates this ambivalence when she makes transparent the awkwardness of trying to communicate with the refugees. While getting to know two central protagonists, a young couple from Grosny in the Chechen Republic, Emcke shows how multifarious the backgrounds of refugees can be. In this way she challenges our stereotypical ideas about why people flee their homes. The reporter shows the reader that too often such questions remain unasked:

> "Why we fled from Grosny?" Kheda Dovletmurzaeva, 27, looks at the Russian translator in disbelief. She sits upright at the small wood table in the unheated visitors' room and hesitates. Since yesterday her husband Beslan, 26, and she have been refusing to eat, but nobody has noticed because barely anyone speaks Russian. Or not with them. Or not since yesterday morning. . . . "Since we are here, nobody has asked us this question yet."[57]

Emcke makes clear that reporters' best intentions are fruitless if communication fails. Whenever the team has a chance, they help the refugees communicate with German authorities. "Finally our translator, who waits outside, is allowed to translate the questions," Emcke writes. "If we hadn't been there by chance, the hearing would have been cancelled." Because the reporter encounters so many situations of speechlessness, she makes these situations central to the narrative of "Welcome to Germany." As Emcke sits down to listen to the refugees in the shelter, she portrays fragile human beings:

> It's December 10th, and it is the third interview in which the young carpenter from Damascus tries to tell his story. Again and again he stops as the fleeing is not over yet because, properly speaking, he fled not once but eight times and because every single one failed so horribly that he cannot tell it all at once. "Eight times I almost died, but I did not want to give up until I arrived in Germany," says he, "now I am here, now I can die."[58]

While the repeated telling of events intensifies the protagonists' struggle to find words, Emcke often reports only once events that happened numerous times. The daily schedule of several refugees is described to give an insight into their dismal life in Germany, the supposedly happier place. "Ghayeb Youssuf, 31, has every day structured in little pieces. He gets up every morning at 7, as if he had slept; he eats breakfast at 7.30, as if he were hungry."

Through descriptive reduction Emcke arguably attempts to maintain a dignified distance from the people she portrays.

The reporter also reflects her professional role in the narrative. When her team visits Kheda and Beslan, who have meanwhile been deported to Poland, the reporter is emotionally torn. "Here we are, in Europe's periphery with this young couple whom nobody wants to accommodate, and receive a lesson in hospitality and dignity. . . . On the drive back to Berlin we remain quiet. The remaining half of Kheda's cake lies properly wrapped on the backseat." The little detail of the cake wrapped on the backseat, provided by two people who barely have enough to feed themselves, reveals Emcke's two conflicting voices: One is professional, where the reporter is obliged to follow up on sources and finish her story; the other is more private and addresses the dilemma of being ashamed by her inability to make the couple's situation better. The conflicting voices also become audible when the narrator functions in an explanatory role. Addressing the refugees' trauma, she writes, "The end of escape is not arrival. At the end of an escape, escape repeats itself as a curse. On uneventful days in the shelter, past horrors become present, like numb-frozen feet that start hurting in the warm water after the cold is survived. In sleepless nights escape becomes a curse." The longer Emcke works on her story, it seems, the more she departs from her role as a professional journalist. She concludes the story by conceding, "What they all need is not another story about despair like this one, but a proper immigration law that at least implies a refugee really could be somebody fleeing from something."

In contrast to Ronzheimer and Bauer, Emcke rarely establishes proper character-spaces within a narrative setting. An explanation could be that the aforementioned reporters were actually acting within a dynamic setting. In Emcke's case, however, the setting of the refugee shelter, the primary frame-space, is a static environment; what little action occurs is deadening and repetitive. She describes it prosaically, mentioning pictures of drawings on the wall or the food served to the refugees. The shelter is a microcosm where Europe's reality is conveyed as a faceless bureaucracy. Emcke contrasts events in different places to emphasize that the shelter is just a backdrop to the larger humanitarian drama:

> It is November 18; in Berlin, coalition negotiations are still taking place, the refugee relief organization of the United Nations (UNHCR) reports that intense fighting around Aleppo and Damascus caused a new wave of refugees and in Room 126 of Building 5 in Eisenhüttenstadt three Kurds talk about their fleeing to Europe from war in Syria.[59]

The reflective strength of "Welcome to Germany" is underscored by its philosophical theme. Unlike Ronzheimer and Bauer, who establish a thema-

tized space rather conventionally, Emcke uses a metaphor to challenge our dominant perspective on refugees in Germany. The narrative is bracketed by this metaphor. The report begins:

> This is a story about proximity and distance. About a journey to the periphery, to the margins, where those are housed whose suffering mustn't be approachable. . . . This is a story about what happens, if you travel the scope of the circle and lose your distance. . . . If bit by bit not the margins come into perspective but the center, the inner circle: us.[60]

Emcke then ends her report with a conclusive note that sums up her experience with different refugees by pointing out that:

> Different kinds of invisibility exist. Some people are not seen because they hide, some are not seen because they live in areas where no one ever goes, on the periphery, and some are not seen because one looks away or through them. What is becoming visible, if you go to the margins and travel the scope of the circle, is not them, but us.[61]

The metaphor reminds us that our firm position, which we assume to occupy collectively as citizens of Germany, must be subject to reflection. Emcke's reportage does this, but not with the high-handedness that often characterizes the somewhat moralistic voice of the professional reporter. Instead, by leaving room for her own conflicted voice, she does not exclude herself from questioning a collective identity that is defined by proximity and distance that are social, not geographic.

Conclusion

"Welcome to Germany," "And Happiness Lies Ahead," and "Fleeing from Hell" offer different strategies to present the story of immigration to Germany and, as literary journalism, provide alternative readings of the refugee crisis. The reports convey a complex topic to readers who have grown increasingly distrustful of media coverage and journalism's various agendas.[62] The use of an authentic voice, relatable characters, comprehensible narrative structure, and symbolism enables reporters to convey a different perspective on migration to Western Europe. These narrative strategies contribute to forming readers' value judgments and accomplish a moral-intellectual probing of the issue that other genres cannot fully accomplish. The analyses of the journalists' reportage argue that their goals are to create transparency and empathy. Transparency is created because the reporters do not leave readers in the dark about how they have gained access to the information they present. Empathy is created because it becomes clear what kind of choices are available for establishing a relationship between us—journalists and readers—and them, the refugees seeking a better future in Europe. Each

text offers different choices to explore this relationship.

Ronzheimer provides a rather broad-brush perspective on the situation of refugees so the reporting works within the limits of a tabloid. He thus establishes an alternative to the discursive strategies of a tabloid. "Fleeing from Hell" can be contrasted, for example, with *Bild* reporting from Idomeni, such as "Dr. X the medic who knows refugees' nightmares" that—as the title already suggests—panders to the newspaper's strategy of cheap sensationalism.[63] Possibly Ronzheimer was sensitized by the backlash against his early reporting from Greece in 2009. In an interview with *Die Zeit* he commented on his more recent value judgments. He claimed that *Bild* has to be especially sensitive to morally charged issues because "we are in the spotlight and people are quick to judge us."[64] By filing follow-up reports on Feras's situation in Germany, Ronzheimer engages his readers repeatedly with original narrative.[65] Through consistent personalization (a mainstay of the popular press), audience interest is maintained more easily, but it also strengthens the value judgment that *Bild* will keep providing a voice to refugees.

While sensational immersion reporting brings the reporter into the spotlight and adds little to help the public reassess their attitudes toward refugees, Bauer and Emcke offer more nuanced approaches to the issue. Although Bauer uses discursive strategies of sensational reporting with regard to narrative elements such as dramatic structure and narrative space, his investigative immersion reporting gives readers a chance to reflect on the situation of fleeing to Europe, and provides an emotionally more engaging perspective than Ronzheimer's sensational piece. Bauer gives readers the chance to reflect on the issue from a personal perspective. This may be a more effective way of addressing the issue than impersonal reports, which dutifully record the growing numbers of drowned refugees in the Mediterranean. Emcke, on the other hand, offers a form of literary reportage where the reporter does not take center stage but still lets readers understand the pitfalls of reporting on such a delicate issue. Providing the marginalized with a voice and reflecting her own role as a professional journalist, she manages to reveal the humanitarian implications of not acting decisively on the issue of migration to Western Europe. It is characteristic for the reporters of the quality press to be more nuanced in their personal reflections than the tabloid reporter. However, this is not to say that their reporting is without its professional and ethical dilemmas.

Consequently, it is possible to argue that all three reportages add *viability* to journalistic coverage. On a systemic, macro-level these forms of narrative reporting increase the variability of themes in mass media. On an individual, micro-level such texts increase the trustworthiness of journalistic com-

municators and also offer useful information to readers.[66] Unlike the staple news content or standard journalistic commentary, reportage is a genre that takes many forms, while its journalistic function remains stable and offers an authentic representation of reality. The genre thus provides communicative solutions to prevailing communicative problems in society.[67] If reportage becomes more prevalent as a discursive alternative, journalistic media will become more immune to shifts in popular opinion because this form of journalism fosters more reflective approaches to covering an issue. The increasing viability of narrative journalism as a generic form may help to convey complex information to readers more effectively. It may even alleviate the crisis in the overall social system of journalism and information societies.[68]

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Notes

[1] Note that the term *reportage* is used to refer to the more intense reporting that is the focus of this study and must be differentiated from the common approaches to reporting used by, for example, German corporate media.

[2] Haller, *Die "Flüchtlingskrise" in den Medien,* 84. See also Haller, "Flüchtlingsberichterstattung."

[3] Haller, *Die "Flüchtlingskrise" in den Medien,* 132–39.

[4] Haller, 87–90. The events in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015, where hundreds of women were sexually assaulted by mostly immigrants, were arguably a watershed moment in German media coverage. See McGuinness, "Germany Shocked by Cologne New Year Gang Assaults on Women."

[5] Haller, *Die "Flüchtlingskrise" in den Medien,* 85–90; Haller, "Flüchtlingsberichterstattung." Further empirical evidence can be found in Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore, *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU.*

[6] Haller, "Flüchtlingsberichterstattung."

[7] Gehr, "Reportage," 166–86.

[8] Reportage article title and quote translations mine.

[9] Schudson, *Discovering the News*; Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture.*

[10] Ronzheimer, "Live-Übertragung einer Flucht aus der Hölle," hereafter referred to as "Flucht aus der Hölle" [Fleeing from Hell] (translation mine).

[11] Winterbauer, "Periscoportage."

[12] Winterbauer, para. 1.

[13] See, for example, Ronzheimer, and Thelen, "Ein Leben ohne Heimat. Flucht aus der Hölle nach Europa. Bild begleitet vier syrische Flüchtlinge auf ihrem langen, gefährlichen Weg zu uns. Teil 1"; Ronzheimer, Thelen, and King, "Bild begleitet junge Syrer auf ihrem gefährlichen Weg nach Europa. Flucht nach Deutschland, Teil 2: Von Athen nach Gevgelija."

[14] Emcke, "Willkommen in Deutschland" [Welcome to Germany], (translation mine).

[15] Bauer, "Und vor uns liegt das Glück" [And Happiness Lies Ahead], (translation mine).

[16] Conover, "The Way of All Flesh"; Bauer, "My Four Months as a Private Prison Guard." Conover and Shane Bauer's works are actually closer to immersion reporting proper, since neither journalist sought to deceive anyone in capturing the story.

[17] Eberwein, "Literarischer Journalismus: Theorie–Traditionen–Gegenwart." This is not to say that a rich history of stunt-reporting in the German-speaking press, especially in Austria at the beginning of the twentieth century, did not exist; see Haas, *Empirischer Journalismus,* 243–56.

[18] Braun, *Günter Wallraff* (my emphasis).

[19] Gaede, "Ich arbeite auf der dunklen Seite: Der Boulevardjournalist."

[20] Bauer, "Vita."

[21] Die Zeit, "Auszeichnung für zwei Beiträge des *Zeit Magazins.*"

[22] Emcke, "Zur Person."

[23] Hueck, "Worte für Unfassbares finden," para. 17.

[24] Emcke, "Zur Person."

[25] Berning, "Theoretical Framework," *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology,* 12–46; see also Nünning, "Towards a Cultural and Historical Narratology," 345–73; Kieran, "In Defence of the Ethical Evaluation of Narrative Art," 26–38; and Phelan, "Narrative Ethics."

[26] Kieran, "In Defence of the Ethical Evaluation of Narrative Art," 29.

[27] Phelan, "Narrative Ethics," sec. 2.1, para. 6.

[28] Berning, "Theoretical Framework," *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology,* 44–46.

[29] Phelan, "Narrative Ethics," sec. 2.1, para. 7.

[30] See, for example, Tulloch, "Ethics, Trust and the First Person in the Narration of Long-form Journalism"; Greenberg, "The Ethics of Narrative: A Return to the Source."

[31] Berning, "Theoretical Framework," *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology*, 46.

[32] Lahn and Meister, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, 101–02 (translation mine; italics added).

[33] Berning, *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology*, 56.

[34] Lahn and Meister, "Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse," 104–9.

[35] Berning, *Narrative Means to Journalistic Ends*, 28; see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 189–94.

[36] Berning, *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology*, 59.

[37] Lahn and Meister, "Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse," 111–14.

[38] Lahn and Meister, 136.

[39] Berning, *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology*, 72–73.

[40] Berning, 61.

[41] Lahn and Meister, "Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse," 248.

[42] Bal, *Narratology*, 136.

[43] Bal, 139.

[44] Bridgeman, "Time and Space," 60–63.

[45] Berning, "Theoretical Framework," *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology*, 62.

[46] Lahn and Meister, "Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse," 235–46.

[47] Ronzheimer, "Fleeing from Hell." Unless stated otherwise, the observations and quotes in this section refer to or are from this source (translations mine).

[48] This is certainly also due to the technical constraints of live streaming.

[49] Ronzheimer and Thelen, "Ein Leben ohne Heimat."

[50] Nardelli, "This Is How Germany Fought Back"; see also Haller, "Flüchtlingsberichterstattung."

[51] Bauer, "Und vor uns liegt das Glück" [And Happiness Lies Ahead], para. 6. Unless stated otherwise, the observations and quotes in this section refer to or are from this source (translations mine).

[52] Bauer, para. 34.

[53] Bauer and his photographer could go undercover as refugees from the Caucasus and accompany the group of Syrian refugees because the reporter had established a contact with Amar when reporting for *Die Zeit* from Syria. See Bauer, "Journalist und Grenzgänger."

[54] Bauer, "Journalist und Grenzgänger."

[55] Bauer, *Über das Meer*, 8.

[56] Emcke, "Willkommen in Deutschland" [Welcome to Germany]. Unless stated otherwise, the observations and quotes in this section refer to or are from this source (translations mine).

[57] Emcke, para. 6.

[58] Emcke, para. 29.

[59] Emcke, para. 21.

[60] Emcke, para. 1.

[61] Emcke, para. 43.

[62] Hackel-de Latour, " 'Lügenpresse!?' " 123–25.

[63] Mühlbauer and Weiss, "Der Arzt, der die Albträume der Flüchtlinge kennt."

[64] Ronzheimer quoted in Gaede, "Ich arbeite auf der dunklen Seite: Der Boulevardjournalist," 2 (translation mine).

[65] Ronzheimer, Thelen and Pauly. "Happy End für Flüchtling Feras"; see also Ronzheimer, "First Job: @FirasRachid Works Now as Cashier."

[66] Weischenberg, "Die Medien und die Köpfe," 135–36.

[67] Günthner and Knoblauch, " 'Forms Are the Food of Faith'," 696.

[68] Eberwein, "Literarischer Journalismus," 190–94.

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