

The Case of Literary Journalism: Rethinking Fictionality, Narrativity, and Imagination



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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the genre of *literary journalism/reportage* against a background of earlier assumptions on *fictionality*. At a local level in nonfiction, fictionality can be expressed through invented stories and scenarios that create a contrast to the global, nonfictive context. However, fictionality can also be expressed through stylistic devices that traditionally have been associated with narrative fiction. A local contrast may appear, but only if the genre in itself is not narrative. If the focus is on the nonfictional and narrative genre of literary journalism/reportage, there will be no contrast. Here, the rhetoric will work just like in narrative fiction and should be considered to be part of the *features of narrativity*. Furthermore, the concept *imagination* should be perceived in close relation to Monika Fludernik's understanding of narrative as experience. The conclusion is a call to partly rethink existing connections between fictionality, narrativity, and imagination in order to better understand the narrative nature of reportage.

KEYWORDS: literary journalism, reportage, fictionality, narrativity, imagination

Many narratologists have compared fictional and nonfictional narratives. Some of them, like Käte Hamburger and Dorrit Cohn, have emphasized linguistic and structural qualities in a fictional narrative as an argument for claiming elementary differences between the two categories (Hamburger 64–73, 81–82; Cohn, “Signposts”). Others, like John Searle, have adopted a more pragmatic position, arguing that it is the purpose of the sender that determines the character of the text (59).

Gradually, the division between these two approaches has dissolved, and in recent decades, a rhetorical framework has emerged. It highlights

fictionality as a rhetorical mode that is not limited to fiction and is defined as “intentionally signaled invention in communication” (Zetterberg Gjerlevsen part 1). At a local level in nonfiction, fictionality is expressed through invented stories and scenarios as well as thought experiments and hypotheses (Skov Nielsen et al. 62), but it is also expressed through other kinds of features that traditionally have been associated with fiction (Dawson 80). The communicative purpose behind and rhetorical effects of these strategies have been examined in different kinds of genres. In examples from political speeches (Skov Nielsen et al.), a pub joke (Walsh 397), and corporate storytelling (Krogh Hansen & Lundholt), researchers have pointed out how elements characterized by invention create an obvious contrast between a nonfictional context of information at a global level and the signaled invention emanating from fictionality at a local level.

However, the analysis becomes more complex when dealing with a nonfictional genre like *literary journalism/reportage*—which in its narrative parts is similar to fictional narratives—and features signaling uncertainty or ambiguity rather than invention.¹ In this essay, I question which theoretical point of departure would be best suited to describe the purposes behind and effects of fictionality at a local level in literary journalism in relation to similar rhetorical strategies in fictional narratives. The interplay between rhetoric and reference is thus problematized in order to distinguish nuances other than those associated with invention.

THE REPORTAGE AS A NARRATIVE TRADITION IN ITS OWN RIGHT

If we trace the roots of classical newspaper reportage, it turns out that this narrative genre emerged in parallel with the realistic novel. Many well-known authors contributed to newspapers as reporters during the first half of the nineteenth century; several of them were at the same time central to the breakthrough of the realistic novel, like Charles Dickens and Honoré de Balzac. Whether they were writing literature or journalism, they moved around among ordinary people in the larger cities, observing everything that came their way. Britt Hultén emphasizes how

a naturalist like Émile Zola worked a few decades later like a reporter, documenting authentic environments by always being equipped with a notebook and a pen (10).

In the early newspaper reportage, accordingly, the reporter was present at real places as a *witness*. He then wrote down his observations so that a witnessing position followed into the text's scenic elements, where it was transformed into *mimetic representation*, an external "eyewitness perspective," and carefully selected environmental details (Aare 55–57).

However, more complex narrative techniques can also be found in older reportages. These can be *free indirect discourse* and other kinds of internal perspectives in the third person (when readers get inside views of a character's thoughts and feelings in the third person, pointed out by Hamburger as characterizing fiction; see Hamburger 81–82) and *epic preterite* (when verbs in the preterite tense are disconnected from their strict function of signaling pastness; see Hamburger 64–73). Accordingly, it is an often-repeated misunderstanding that these and other "literary" devices within literary journalism are a consequence of so-called *fictionalization* during American *new journalism* in the 1960s, that is, that they are a consequence of the borrowing of narrative techniques from literary realism. For example, I have found that Egon Erwin Kisch, known as Europe's first modern reporter, used this kind of rhetoric already in 1913 (Aare 211–14).

With that in mind, I ask what would happen if we considered the genre of literary journalism/reportage to be a tradition in its own right, a tradition that develops from its own conventions for narrating. What are the effects of narrativity, rhetoric, and style in this genre, and what conclusions can be drawn when comparing these kinds of texts at a local level and on equal (intra-textual) terms with fictional narratives?

To illustrate the continuity within the tradition, I will give two Swedish examples from the 1910s and highlight stylistic devices that are often associated with fiction. In the next two sections, I will relate them to the discussion of fictionality. The first example is from a reportage book by Ester Blenda Nordström. She was an investigative journalist who sometimes worked undercover. The quoted reportage depicts a period when Nordström took a job as a schoolteacher in Lapland, in the north of

Sweden. She shared the living conditions of a group of Sami (the indigenous population of this area):

Five kilometers away the herd had stopped—if one listened really intensely and everything was quiet, one could hear the dogs barking from there, and at night the camp was full of farmhands and guards who came home for a visit. It was a party, there was life, there was happiness, and laughter. [...] *Now, everything revolved* solely around the herd. Was it fat, was it healthy, were there many calves born, did they all survive, had none frozen to death? *Would they be sorted tomorrow?* Did the females have a lot of milk? *Would the wind blow from the right direction the next few days*, so that it was not hard to keep the animals around the camp? The reindeer of course always run with the wind – *if the wind was* from Norway, so the guards had a hard time keeping them from running inward again. It must be quiet and still, so the sorting *was done the way it should!* *Tomorrow was the sorting—of course. And the day after tomorrow and the day after that, and so many days you could gather the herd.* (256–57, my emphasis)

Initially, the reporter makes herself one of the collective, which is subsumed under the pronoun “one.” The first lines provide background information and a description of the atmosphere (“It was a party”). This is followed by a long passage in free indirect discourse, where a series of rhetorical questions express the group’s common thoughts before the herd’s return. The questions capture what is relevant for the Sami to know and get close to their premises and reality. However, I also interpret it as if the narrator includes *the experiencing reporter* in the thoughts.² On the one hand, the initial “one” guides the reader in such a direction; on the other hand, “of course” in “The reindeer of course always run with the wind” signals that after several months with the Sami, the reporter feels familiar with them and their experiences.

There are several examples of fictional preterite (see my emphasis). These expressions for the present and the future combined with the preterite tense reinforce the effect of the initial, mimetic representation by offering the reader to share the experiencing characters’ here and now.

The quoted passage could moreover be interpreted as a type of *reflectorization*, Monika Fludernik's term for a linguistically created technique, also called "pseudo-oral," where the narrator uses one or several characters' possible choice of words to express a kind of "general meaning" that seems to "echo" in the narrator's voice (178–79). This interpretation is supported by the fact that no experiencing reporter can be distinguished by an "I," and the reflections in the paragraph are not attributed to any other individual character. Instead, they could be understood as the general meaning of the Sami collective, which is expressed through the narrator's voice.

Further, it is possible to interpret the initial "if one listened really intensely and everything was quiet one could" as *hypothetical focalization*, with David Herman's terminology (322), here in indirect form. This type of narration serves as a kind of invitation to the reader's imagination: "It *could* be like this. Imagine that. . ."

A contemporaneous example comes from Gustaf Hellström, who was both a foreign correspondent in London and Paris, among other places, and a novelist who described social issues and environments that he encountered as a reporter. In his reportage from France during World War I, the perspective is sometimes that of the reporter as an eyewitness. However, it is also possible to find perspectives that belong to individuals or French people as a group and that seem to be "embedded" in the narrator's voice:

The war has come to Paris's doorstep. Until recently, it was all surreal. The thundering cannons and the machine guns were so far away, the bloodbath's phases playing out on the border, and between Paris and there were daily marches. One knew that one of the greatest human slaughters in the history of war was going on up there at Charleroi and Mons. One knew that one's husband's, brother's, or son's life was at stake, that trenches were filled with bodies and cannons rolled over them like the macadam on a country road. But still—no one had seen the dead and the wounded had not yet come back. (40)

In the episode, it is *the narrating reporter* who initially empathizes with the remaining Parisians as a group.³ The reporter is probably included in “One knew that one of;” at the same time as the pronoun “one” enables the reader to feel included and empathize with those who are directly affected by the war.

However, empathy is driven a step further, when “one” is likewise used for the group where an experiencing reporter is not included (wives, sisters, mothers). It could be said that the narrator, through a thought experiment and implicitly conveyed compassion, invites the reader to imagine the situation of a French soldier’s wife, sister, or mother. What would it be like to be the one waiting in uncertainty? The thought is expressed hypothetically, but without presenting any of Herman’s linguistic criteria for hypothetical focalization. Instead, this can be perceived as a style close to reflectorization; this is what “one,” that is, every woman in Paris, knew at the time. It is interesting to note that Fludernik associates this kind of narration with a “specific post-modernist style,” which was established more than fifty years after Nordström’s visit to Lapland and Hellström’s residence in France (178).

FICTIONALITY AS A RHETORICAL MODE IN LITERARY JOURNALISM AND NARRATIVE FICTION

The discussion of narration within nonfiction is often reduced to questions about truthfulness. In “Ten Theses about Fictionality,” the point of departure is instead *fictionality*. Skov Nielsen et al. treat the concept, also named *fictive discourse*, as a rhetorical communicative mode that can be found in both fiction and nonfiction and include “invented stories and scenarios [. . .] also what-if-projections, if-only-regrets, thought experiments and hypothesis of all kinds” (62). Dawson expands the scope by including figures of speech, dialogue, and representation of thought, that is, most kinds of features that traditionally have been associated with fiction (79–80).

When it comes to nonfictive discourse, Skov Nielsen et al. distinguish between a global level (the text as a whole is not invented) and

a local level (a fictional narrative may contain true information about real places, persons, or events, 67–68). However, they do not problematize the function of fictive discourse at a local level. If features associated with fictionality are added locally, as rhetoric, their effect within nonfiction will sometimes depend on extra-textual references and sometimes on both extra-textual and intra-textual references, but within fiction they will always depend on intra-textual references.

Let us take a closer look at the claims from Skov Nielsen et al. They illustrate their argumentation with examples where irony, in the form of a joke (a speech to journalists by Barack Obama), and hypothetical expressions, in the form of a metaphorical dream (Martin Luther King's famous speech, *I Have a Dream*), are considered fictive discourse. They argue that the audiences are fully aware that these parts should not be interpreted as literally true but as a means to communicate a message (62).

Here, it is important to investigate the basis for conclusions about what is invented. When Obama says that Steven Spielberg has produced a new movie called *Obama*, we need extra-textual information to conclude that his statement is invented. But what would be the case if the narrator tells a joke in a *fictional* narrative? This would be a kind of locally situated "fictionality within fiction," which is something that Skov Nielsen et al. do not discuss. However, when we understand something as irony, the same relativization will be the result as in nonfiction; then, the narrator's message should not be interpreted literally. Accordingly, to understand a sentence as irony within fiction, we need to know what is true with reference to the fictional world. In other words, we need intra-textual information. The construction is the same as in Obama's joke, although the utterances are made—in whole or in part—within different systems of truth production.

Obama's joke and King's vision are ingredients in nonnarrative genres, while literary journalism is a primarily narrative genre. Even when considering rhetoric and style as borrowed techniques, it is obvious that a reportage is the expression of a coherent narrative. Here, relevant background information is mostly given within the text in the more informing parts or intertwined with the scenes. Consequently, fictionality in the scenic and narrated parts of a reportage can be interpreted

with help from intra-textual references since the necessary extra-textual information needed for the interpretation coincides in most cases with intra-textually given information. My conclusion is that locally situated fictionality in a reportage can be compared to constructions of locally situated fictionality within narrative fiction. In both genres, devices like different kinds of hypotheses, irony, and metaphors need a reference to be interpreted as false (irony, a dream) or symbolic (metaphors) or as uncertain and ambiguous (e.g., hypotheses from the narrator containing words like “might,” “could,” “if,” or “possibly”).

At least in the last case, David Herman’s model of *hypothetical focalization* will help to highlight connections between what the narrator expresses, on the one hand, and different degrees of certainty and possibility according to intra-textual facts, on the other (310–11). Sometimes, it is of importance that a scenario is invented in relation to what is intra-textually known; sometimes a message of uncertainty is primarily rhetorical or stylistic. Admittedly, Skov Nielsen et al. talk about “degrees of fictionality” in nonfiction, that is, more or less invention. However, they add: “fictionality resides in context rather than text” (67). I interpret this to mean that a referential relationship is always needed to some kind of facts. In other words, *the relationship between rhetoric and reference conditions fictionality*. If this relationship can be related to intra-textual facts in both a reportage and a novel, we can conclude that fictionality is created on similar conditions in the two genres.

This raises an important question: do we need the concept of fictionality at all to describe what is at stake in the narrative parts of a reportage? I claim that *narrativity* is a more productive tool to describe narrative, rhetorical, and stylistic techniques in literary journalism and likewise to perform comparisons with the same techniques in narrative fiction.

Let us return to the second quote by Hellström. Here it is once again:

The war has come to Paris’s doorstep. Until recently, it was all surreal. *The thundering cannons and the machine guns* were so far away, *the bloodbath’s phases playing out on the border*, and between Paris and there were day marches. One knew that one of the greatest

human slaughters in the history of war was going on up there at Charleroi and Mons. One knew that one's husband's, brother's, or son's life was at stake, that *trenches were filled with bodies and cannons rolled over them like the macadam on a country road*. But still—no one had seen the dead and the wounded had not yet come back. (40, my emphasis)

This is not a scene, yet both sounds and visions of the war are represented with concrete details (see my emphasis). However, it is rendered hypothetically and in context as something the remaining Parisians have *not* heard or seen (“were so far away,” “no one had seen,” “had not yet come back”). We can also recall the example by Nordström, where a hypothetical construction is found in “if one listened really intensely and everything was quiet, one could hear.” According to Skov Nielsen et al., both of these cases would be examples of fictionality in the form of an invented scenario (Hellström) and a what-if projection (Nordström). The same could be said about the device close to reflectorization in the quote by Hellström (“One knew that one's husband's, brother's, or son's life was at stake”), which could be included in the category of thought experiments.

These examples bring up the question of how we should perceive “fiction” in “fictionality.” The definition “intentional use of invented stories and scenarios” (Skov Nielsen et al. 62) indicates that something not true is narrated to serve communicational purposes of the sender. In the case of Obama's joke, we understand that his mentioning of a film by Spielberg should be perceived as irony, that is, as not true. In fact, it is part of the point that we should perceive it as invented. In the case of King's speech, we understand that the metaphorical dream is an ideologically colored aim or vision, not a description of reality. In my two examples, however, the point is the opposite. Here, the narrator invites the reader *to imagine something as real*. In the example of Hellström, imagine what is taking place some “day marches” from Paris; imagine the battlefield, and that you are one of the waiting wives, daughters, or mothers. In the example of Nordström, imagine that you are on site with the Sami waiting for the reindeer to return to the Sami village.

In these reportages, it is the sender's intention to convey concreteness into the thought experiments in what is hypothetically offered to the reader: Imagine that this is the reality for those concerned! However, the hypothetical form in itself is of importance. In reality, Hellström *did* visit the battlefield, and in a later reportage, he also told the readers his observations on the spot. Nordström *did* experience the return of the reindeer. Yet, in the quoted passages, the readers are primarily invited to share the depicted characters' thoughts and feelings *in the moment*, or, more correctly, *to share the narrator's, and through the narrator the characters', imagination of something as real*.

Thus, it is the subjective and personal picture that matters, not an objective report of facts like in a news article. Ambiguity is involved, but not as a matter of truthfulness/falsehood but as a means to make the story more complex—exactly as would be the case in a similar fictional narrative. Accordingly, I argue that the concept fictionality does not fully capture what is at stake here. Instead, I suggest that we consider these features as manifestations of narrativity.

NARRATIVITY IN LITERARY JOURNALISM

Within journalism, reportage/literary journalism is the genre that has narrative characteristics, even though a reportage also entails informative parts. While a news article states what has happened as something already completed, the narrative parts of a reportage depict events step by step, either based on *the deictic center* of the experiencing characters, that is, with *mimetic representation* or what I call *diegetically narrating representation* (as opposed to *diegetically informing representation*, which characterizes the style in news articles; see Aare 74). This enables all kinds of stylistic and rhetorical devices that exist in fictional narratives. Here, I give two additional examples.

In *German Autumn*, a series of reportages from post-war Germany in 1946, Stig Dagerman, also a fictional writer, uses figurative language to communicate a multifaceted message. One example: "A black procession of nuns, one of the world's most proper sights, shows up against one of the most improper: a lecherous ruin with clinging pipes and

gallows-like rafters" (117–18).⁴ The ruin is described as "lecherous," a word that captures the full lust for life that opposes the nuns' sacred vows of chastity. Moreover, the ruin has "clinging" pipes, as if it wants to hang on to something, and rafters that recall an execution. In this juxtaposition, (lecherous) life is set against (the execution's) death, hope (the pipes) against hopelessness (the rafters), and piety (the nuns) against impiety (the ruin). Here, as elsewhere, a certain gravity imbues Dagerman's figurative language, seemingly highlighting the atmosphere of suffering and hopelessness in post-war Germany. However, its linguistic levity stands in stark contrast to this somber impression. The result becomes a paradoxical kind of gray expressiveness, as depressing as it is elevating.

Certainly, this is rhetoric as well as style, but is it fictionality? Well, neither more nor less than figurative language of the same kind would be in a novel about post-war Germany. The relationship between reference and rhetoric would be the same at a local level in the text. In both cases, this is a means for the narrator to communicate ambiguity and a certain atmosphere. The information value is of little interest.

Another example comes from *Balkan Express*, a series of reportages where Slavenka Drakulić depicts her experiences from the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. One of the reportages tells a story about how the experiencing reporter tries to interview a woman who has been raped.

First, I did not want to meet her, the raped woman. The mere thought of visiting the refugee camp in Karlovac to interview her made my body stiff. It was as if I instinctively understood that what had happened to N. F. in some indirect way affected my life, my own body.

[...]

Now, we are sitting in a hotel room in Karlovac. The room is small, with a low roof and windows just under that cannot be opened, almost like a prison cell. It's cold. Or maybe not, but we are still sitting hunched up as if we were waiting to be hit. She, on the edge of a made bed; me, on the edge of a chair. I perceive that something has already been transferred from her to me, the frost that comes from the inside, the self-extinction, the silence that is difficult to break. I

do not know how this discussion about her rape will be started. She is waiting and smoking. She knows that it is impossible to have a discussion about such a thing. The whole thing is absurd. (168)

At the beginning of the quote, the narrating reporter reflects in the preterite tense on how the experiencing reporter felt before the interview. Then the tense changes to the present tense, and a scene that is internally focalized by the reporter. A description of the room where the interview takes place is interspersed with a representation of the experiencing reporter's feelings.

The scene may seem *consonant*, focusing on the situation at the moment. However, a small gap opens up toward the narrating reporter's afterward: "It's cold. Or maybe not . . ." Here, the narrator at another time is trying to remember the moment, and maybe she remembers incorrectly. Was the cold external or internal? Such an interpretation is supported by a temporal tension that is prominent throughout the reportage book as a whole. It is as if the narrator is trying to sharpen the focus in order to be able to see the past clearly.

Together with the first paragraph's introductory "First," in "First, I didn't want," and the next paragraph's introductory "Now," the impression of a time-dependent *dissonance* is reinforced. This has its equivalent in the emotional change the reader can imagine that the experiencing reporter will undergo in her relationship with the woman: "First," the reporter on the spot does not want to meet the woman. "Now," she sits in a room and notices how the woman's experience is transmitted wordlessly. The reader is waiting for the third, a further step in the change. The reportage really ends with an "in the end": "*I'm afraid of being alone*, N. says in the end. At that moment, the distance between us is so small that it becomes almost imperceptible" (174).

What is created here is a kind of empathy in a character in two steps. Drakulić uses the experiencing reporter as a link to highlight an experience that she herself lacks: to be raped during a war. Like in the example by Dagerman, the central point is not what actually happens in the depicted scene. Instead, a multifaceted message is conveyed implicitly, with the help of a complex narrative technique.

The purpose of all discussed narrative devices in this essay is to express feelings, moods, and complexity—messages between the lines at a local level in the text—simply to express something more than what can be concluded in terms of the criterion true/false. In each case, rhetoric and style make the reportage richer and more complex, more ambiguous than is possible in a news article with its stricter form. To reduce all this to a question of more or less invention may cause many nuances to get lost in the special nature of a reportage, and probably the most important ones.

NO DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Skov Nielsen et al. note: “Signaling or assuming a fictive communicative intent entails an attitude toward the communicated information that is different from attitudes toward nonfictive discourse” (67). This statement is based more on a certain relationship to reference than a certain rhetoric or style. However, in the narrative parts of a reportage, the narrator does not signal anything at all about contextual truth versus falsehood, that is, about extra-textual references. In the parts where the narrator communicates facts (diegetically informing representation), the message, of course, is that the reader should regard the statements as facts referring to reality. Furthermore, narrative parts should be understood as nonfictive at a global level as well. Here, however, it is the genre itself that indicates the overall intent of the sender. This is in line with Searle’s view on what decides the ontological status of a narrative (59). At a local level in a reportage, I argue that the only thing indicated by the narrator is a *narrative* attitude; the rhetoric is used to communicate events, feelings, and thoughts step by step.

A concept that does not distinguish between different purposes for a text is Anders Pettersson’s “The experience inviting use of language” (606–10). It denotes stylistic devices that invite the reader to share the characters’ experiences in fictional as well as nonfictional narratives. Pettersson gives two nonfictional examples: the form of representation in a speech by Winston Churchill and Svetlana Alexievich’s documentary novels, also referred to as literary journalism. He emphasizes that the narrative technique *experience-inviting* is effective in fictional narratives

but can also be used to combine a literary style with factual content. This is in line with my thinking when I use narrativity as a unifying concept for rhetorical and stylistic devices at a local level in both fictional and nonfictional narratives.

In an essay in *Style*, Richard Walsh regards “invented” as a misleading choice of words in connection with fictionality at a local level (412–17). Instead, he distinguishes between a “direct” and an “indirect” meaning. Certainly, this approach would make it possible to discuss the function of both rhetorical and stylistic devices on more equal terms in fictional and nonfictional narratives. Yet, a question remains: direct or indirect in relation to what? To solve this problem, Walsh argues that fictionality is “circumstantial” and could be related to different levels in the narrative as well as to different historical and cultural contexts. Likewise, he stresses that “when we recognise in context that an utterance is exploiting the communicative resource of fictionality, we look to grasp its point without the expectation that it will be straightforwardly informative” (412).

He exemplifies this with the ending of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*: “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (Woolf 213; Walsh 412). These final sentences entail lots of hidden meanings that are not apparent from the explicitly conveyed information. Here, Walsh gives what I miss in the essay by Skov Nielsen et al., namely an example of fictionality at a local level within fiction (412–13). He notes that it is possible to trace a rhetorical intention that has nothing to do with the novel’s generic status as fiction and thus with fictionality at a global level. This is really interesting, and it opens up the possibility to compare narration at a local level in fiction and nonfiction. Walsh problematizes the relationship between the given information in the quote from Woolf’s novel, that is, the truthfulness with reference to the *fictional* world (this woman is Clarissa), and the interpretation of the statement: “Woolf’s final sentence invites and rewards the effort to realise aspects of its communicative point independent of informative relevance” (413). I argue that this analysis has much in common with my analysis of the reportage by Drakulić. In both cases, *the rhetorical importance dominates over the referential*.

However, when Walsh compares this example with nonfiction, he claims that “local irruptions of fictionality are common-place in

nonfictional discursive contexts where they are *clearly subordinate* to the overall priority of informative relevance” (413, my emphasis). In other words, the hidden meanings that could be interpreted from rhetoric and style in a reportage should be subordinate to the question of verifiability.

Once again, here it is central to distinguish between nonnarrative and narrative nonfiction. Walsh’s statement is relevant when it comes to genres like speeches, where elements of fictionality can be perceived as just “irruptions,” but does not suit literary journalism as well since the features that are associated with both fictionality and narrativity are integrated parts of the text and usually can be interpreted with the help of intra-textual references. As I have already argued, a journalistic writer–reader contract ensures the reader that a reportage as a whole is not invented. In local parts with mimetic representation or diegetically narrating representation, exactly the same rhetorical mode is involved as in the sentences from *Mrs. Dalloway*. Given that we treat the genres on equal terms—or that we do not know if a narrative is fictional or nonfictional—this will be the consequence of the circumstantial reading, advised by Walsh. For example, in the earlier quote from Dagerman’s *German Autumn*, the actual information (the reporter witnesses nuns passing by a ruin) is of low interest. It is the figurative description of the scene that renders the passage its multifaceted meaning.

To summarize, if we use the concept narrativity for diverse rhetorical and stylistic features in a reportage as well as in a fictional narrative, we can abide by the form of the text without taking into consideration if the content is invented or not. When we need to differentiate between kinds of journalism, this would be clarifying, since it is the narrative form, and not truthfulness, that distinguishes literary journalism/reportage from news journalism. If we use the concept fictionality, it would be productive to focus on the interplay between rhetoric and intra-textual references as the main rule.

NARRATIVITY AS SOMETHING IMAGINED

So far, I have recurrently touched on questions about imagination. It would be relevant here to explicitly say something about imagination and its potential connection to literary journalism.

In a chapter in the anthology *Narrative Factuality*, Marie-Laure Ryan defines “fictions” as “objects of imagining” and “facts” as “objects of belief” (81). But why not assume a double reader attitude (and corresponding sender intention) for a reportage, to imagine *and* believe? In other words, to acquire knowledge at a global level in the text and imagine by following the characters and the events at a local level. This is in line with what Kendall L. Walton finds through his theory of *Make Believe*. With *new journalism* by Normal Mailer as an example, he argues that nonfictive content can be represented in a form that invites the reader to imagine (93–94).

To read a reportage, as I see it, is to be transferred to the “here and now” of the characters. The narrativity in a reportage (mimetic representation and diegetically narrating representation) opens a door to the reader’s imagination. Something has happened in reality, and the reader is invited to imagine *how* it happened, what could be seen and heard at the place, and share the thoughts and feelings of the people who were present. To enable this, the writing reporter can use all kinds of narrative techniques that can be found in fictional narratives.

Skov Nielsen et al. interpret the famous speech by Martin Luther King: “Here, today’s dream is imagined as tomorrow’s reality” (68). However, a reportage may invite the reader to imagine *today’s* reality as well. The narrative form in itself entails such an invitation: Imagine that you are this specific soldier or civilian in Ukraine, this specific nurse during the coronavirus pandemic, and this specific inhabitant in a town destroyed by fires. In other words, “imagine what actually happened” instead of “imagine what could have happened.” The magazine editor Lincoln Steffens, who belonged to the first generation of investigative journalists in the United States, expressed that it is a reporter’s duty “to get the news so completely and to report it so humanly that the reader will see himself in the other fellow’s place” (317). Thus, the writing reporter should enable the reader’s empathy and immersion, that is, her imagination.

Admittedly, Skov Nielsen et al. do not reserve imagination exclusively for fiction. On the contrary, it is a main point in their essay that fictionality at a local level in nonfiction can also be linked to imagination: “The use of fictionality depends on a capacity to invent which offers its

audience an invitation to imagine and interpret. [. . .] Fictive discourse invites the reader or listener to imagine something” (63–64). Yet, I cannot see that the link between imagination and invention is necessary. Rather, a writing reporter uses certain narrative techniques in order to make the picture more complex than is possible in a news article, to fill in more layers of colors.

In her essay “The Role of Imagination in Literary Journalism,” Lindsay Morton discusses imagination as an instrument for the writing reporter: “As a creative faculty, imagination synthesizes material reality in the form of symbols, images, and figures to create *meaning beyond that produced by verifiable facts*” (105, my emphasis). In other words, Morton uses the word “imagination” to highlight the qualities in a reportage that are not primarily connected to its information value.

Skov Nielsen et al. end their essay by pointing out connections between fictionality and basic dimensions of human life: “fictionality in both domains [. . .] offer[s] us imaginary perspectives, but our interpretive engagement with them is continuous with the more direct ways we make sense of our lives and world, and can heavily influence the terms—ethical, emotional, ideological—in which we do so” (71). This indicates a wider context where fictionality is related to imagination but moreover to our ways of engaging with the real world. However, if we change “fictionality” in the quote to “narrativity” or “the art of narrative,” we can easily relate the statement to Fludernik’s cognitively oriented *Natural Narratology*, especially the concept *experientiality* (28–30). Narrative or narrativity, then, is about people who undergo experiences, and narrativity helps us process our own experiences and the experiences of others. You could say that narrative is the representation of human experience. This view links people’s ways of experiencing, comprehending, and imagining to fictional narratives but also to the genre of literary journalism/reportage, that is, narratives about real people’s actual lives. With this kind of approach, the narrative form can be regarded as just as powerful and working the same, regardless of whether the narrative is literally true, possible to imagine as true, or seemingly completely invented. In all three cases, it is narrativity that activates our ability to imagine

and, in the next step, helps us empathize with others and make the world comprehensible.

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NOTES

1. I will use the terms *literary journalism* and *reportage* interchangeably. The word *reportage* will be used like in a European context, where it designates the genre as well as a single text.
2. *The experiencing reporter* is comparable to *the experiencing self*; see (Cohn, *Transparent Minds* 143).
3. *The narrating reporter* is comparable to *the narrating self*; see (Cohn, *Transparent Minds* 143).
4. In the English translation, the Swedish word “liderlig” (“lecherous”) has been changed to “lewd,” which does not capture the meaning from the original.

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