

PORTRAYAL BY INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTION: PERSONA MEETS PERSONA IN JOURNALISTIC PROFILING

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ABSTRACT

A close reading of three different profiles of Danish-Palestinian poet Yahya Hassan (1995-2020) showcases how interactions between journalists and subjects may become a mutual performative challenge and how, on such occasions, the personas of both parties may serve as a multi-layered journalistic resource in both an ethical and aesthetic sense. Applying the concept of “rhetorical maneuvers” (Phillips 2006) to describe reporters’ uses of an understated ‘first-person minor’ versus a demonstratively responsive ‘first-person major’ perspective (Phillips 2019), we highlight a principle that may reorient interview situations that are tense or out of control. The principle entails continuous shifts of subject form that are potentially inappropriate but enable both contextual transparency and a distinct textual structure or narrative style. By considering the mutual constitution and reconstitution of personas as rhetorical maneuvering we hope first to expand the analytical perspective of persona studies at the level of form while also, secondly, motivating journalists to explore the relational and interactive aspects of persona performances as a resource for occasional, productive disruption of their professional practice.

KEY WORDS

Journalism; Profiles; Persona; Yahya Hassan; Denmark

INTRODUCTION

While character sketches have a long literary history, we currently live in a veritable Age of the Profile, argue Joseph and Keeble (2016, p. 1), who refer to interview-based biographical stories as the “archetypical manifestation” of an all-dominating “‘people/human interest bias’ in contemporary media” (2016, p. x). While the production of such profiles typically involves personal interaction between a journalist and the person being profiled, the encounter as such may not eventually form part of the story; indeed, it would seem obvious that a journalist ought not to steal the limelight in a profile piece. Not rarely, however, journalists do find reason to intrude in the first-person singular, putting the meeting of personas to the forefront and letting the interaction between interviewer and subject become integral to the portrayal. When and how such two-persona media performances might become productive in terms of both the ethics and aesthetics of profiling, is the fundamental question driving the present study in which we take a close look at three different written profiles of the Danish-Palestinian poet Yahya Hassan (1995-2020) who became notorious for challenging representatives of the press to reorient their professional performance.

Hassan was intensely outspoken – in his poetry as well as in media appearances – about his background in a deprived, immigrant community with an abusive father and a criminal record that continued to grow alongside his literary career. Consequently, Hassan came to represent not only literary and intellectual celebrity, but also an uncompromising streetwise attitude that transcended conventional logics of journalistic beats and news angles as well as relations between journalists and subjects. At the latter level, Yahya Hassan would sometimes be earnest, reflective, and argumentative, sometimes polemical and playful, even flirtatious, and occasionally rude or ill-tempered. “I am an intellectual criminal. Remember that! Write that!” he insists in his characteristically assertive manner when interviewed over the phone from a forensic mental health ward prior to his death at age 24 just five months later (Krasnik 2019b).

Such journalist-subject encounters have sometimes been portrayed as a dance (Joseph 2016, p. 213; Mygind 2014), or sometimes as a conflict or struggle for control (Joseph & Keeble 2016, p. i). For this study, we have selected three Hassan profiles from Danish media in which the interpersonal relation and dynamic become part of the story, and we adopt the concept of *rhetorical maneuvers* (Phillips 2006) when describing the mutual constitution and reconstitution of personas as performed at the textual level. Hassan’s sometimes transgressive persona performances challenged journalists to improvise and develop *theirs* in order to meet the challenge in a personally and professionally defensible manner that may still, as we shall see, become transgressive too. This rhetorical maneuvering implies that profilers flip through their respective back catalogue of personas or subject forms, making abrupt shifts to expose the constraints of their position and also to develop the narrative structure and style of their stories. We hope to show how this ‘flipping’ proves a remarkable resource for profiling as a journalistic form, making the most of what Phillips refers to as the “productive tension between the multiplicity of the subject and the singularity of the subject position” (Phillips 2006, p. 310). We may note that even if profiling Hassan was a both challenging and prestigious job, our study is not concerned with the development of individual journalist personas and careers, at least not this time around (cf. Isager 2016; Moestrup 2021; see also Rønlev & Bengtsson 2020). Instead, we suggest that rhetorical maneuvering deserves attention as a resource for journalism practice in terms both of professional ethics and textual aesthetics while proving a productive focus point in a further diversified field of persona studies beyond the sphere of journalism.

Each of the three profiles of Hassan selected for this study are occasioned by a celebration of Hassan’s literary achievements at different stages of his career and under different circumstances. One is a rhetorically refined portrayal of Hassan on a promotion tour, featured in the Danish men’s magazine *Euroman* (Surrugue 2014), while the other two are more tentative and personal: a resistant and allegedly failed encounter with the poet written up for a national literary supplement *Weekendavisen Bøger* alongside an award speech for Hassan (Mygind 2014), and finally the aforementioned profile of Hassan five years later, based on a series of hectic phone calls and advertised on the entire front page of the same newspaper *Weekendavisen*’s main section (Krasnik 2019a; podcast edition 2019b).¹ Before presenting our analysis, however, we will provide some background for the case study and introduce the theoretical framework in more detail.

BACKGROUND: YAHYA HASSAN

Yahya Hassan’s first collection of poetry, *Yahya Hassan* (2013), is based on autobiographical material that includes scenes of domestic violence on the background of Hassan’s parents’ immigration to Denmark via Lebanon as stateless Palestinians. The volume was a major event on the Danish literary scene, praised for its literary merits while debated intensely for

its depictions of social benefit fraud and religious hypocrisy in Islamic immigrant communities as well as its implied criticism of Danish social and integration policy. An immediate success among critics as well as readers, *Yahya Hassan* ended up being the most sold debut poetry collection in Denmark to date. A follow-up volume titled simply *Yahya Hassan 2* was published in 2019 to renewed critical acclaim. Both volumes were written in all capital letters with no punctuation, a style that became iconic for Yahya Hassan's insistent public voice.

A number of spectacular events drew media attention in the years in between. One was Hassan's relationship with an educator at an institution for juvenile delinquents who published an auto-fictional novel of her own about their affair (Østergaard 2014); another was Hassan's try at a political career in a new party, the National Party (Nationalpartiet), that was put to a stop when Hassan was arrested for drug-driving; and yet another was an assault on Hassan at the Copenhagen Central Station by a Danish-Palestinian man who was convicted for terrorism and out on parole. Throughout this time, Hassan received death threats and was periodically under protection by the Danish Intelligence and Security Service. In order to keep a low profile immediately after his first appearances on national media, Hassan moved in with reporter and chief editor Martin Krasnik and his family for a couple of months. Strict security measures were taken during his numerous readings and talks at schools, libraries, and other public venues across and beyond Denmark in the following years. When one library had to cancel for safety reasons, politicians across the political spectrum stepped in to defend Hassan's freedom of speech and the event was rescheduled under security precautions that included an aircraft operating ban in the area. In 2016 Hassan received a prison sentence for a shooting episode, and again in 2018 he was charged with no less than 40 offenses, including threats and theft, and was held in preventive custody in a psychiatric ward. In April of 2020, Yahya Hassan was found dead in his apartment; the cause of death has not been revealed.

Some of these events were dealt with in Hassan's poetry too, making his literary persona hard to delineate. Throughout his approximately 7-year-long literary career, his public persona developed through multiple media performances, both in profiles in representational media (Marshall 2013) where Hassan, as we shall see, often sought to claim authorial control, and in presentational media (Marshall 2013) where Hassan's social media presence gradually developed into a transgressive persona characterized by drug abuse, criminality, and decreasing mental well-being. Public interest in his story was great, and while his literary merits remained undisputed, there seemed to be no way to stick to the routines of a cultural journalistic beat when portraying him.

THEORY: PROFILES, PERSONA PERFORMANCE, RHETORICAL MANEUVERS

With their edited volume *Profile Pieces* from 2016, Joseph and Keeble wanted to submit profile writing – its history, theory, and practice – to closer critical inquiry, taking it seriously as more than “public relations exercises or ... ‘soft journalism’” as they put it (2016, p. i). In the preface, they refer quite specifically to the idea of the profile interview as a “contested space [for multi-layered interaction] that has applications beyond the subject of celebrated individuals” (2016, p. i). We second that as we zoom in on the mutual constitution and reconstitution of personas in the three Hassan profiles and quite literally address the ways that the multiple layers of both the journalist and the poet persona unfold on the page.

The more general question of introducing the journalist persona into a text has been theorized by Kidder and Todd (2013) and developed by Phillips (2019) in terms of deploying an understated, observing “first-person minor” or a more dominant, autobiographical “first-person major” perspective (Phillips 2019, p. 385-86). As an example of use of the first-person

minor in which the reporter intrudes only when exchanges with the profiled person add essential information, Phillips brings up a canonized profile piece by Lillian Ross on Ernest Hemingway, “How Do You Like It Now Gentlemen?” from *The New Yorker* in 1950. Ross’ portrait is tellingly subtitled “The Moods of Ernest Hemingway” which indicates her professional reasons to introduce herself into the text: she serves, as Phillips put it, as a “guardian of normalcy” on behalf of the readership to counterbalance the eccentric, somewhat self-deluding manners of the aging celebrity writer (Phillips 2019, p. 390). At the other, more spectacular end of this spectrum of authorial presence, Phillips places figures like Nellie Bly (1864-1922) and Hunter S. Thompson (1937-2005) who are known for their ‘stunt’ and ‘Gonzo’ journalism, respectively. Both become protagonists in their stories that arguably still remain journalistic rather than autobiographical since the reporters’ responses to events serve to reflect or portray the subcultures they are covering rather than their own personalities (Phillips 2019, p. 388, 391). We will be adopting these concepts of first-person minor and major to discuss the ways that the three Danish profilers, Stéphanie Surrugue, Johanne Mygind, and Martin Krasnik, describe their respective interactions with Yahya Hassan. As we shall see, Hassan’s persona performances make it almost indefensible for his profilers to choose other than a first-person major form even if one of them, Surrugue, does not.

Ultimately, we will recommend thinking of these persona performances not in terms of a more or less dominant or entertaining presence, but of more or less *multi-layered* presence on the page. To this end, we introduce rhetorical maneuvering (Phillips 2006) as, firstly, a *performative* principle that may guide a profiler’s practice by making the “showing of the doing” (Schechner 2013) of profiling felt and transparent in an ethical sense (Bech-Karlsen 2007), and, secondly, a *formal* principle that may structure a profile piece to make this performative principle present to readers in style. While we are inspired by Auslander’s conceptualization of the performing persona (Auslander 2015), in our study, we are refocusing Auslander’s ideas on how contexts constitute personas to a concern with the mutual constitution of personas. While in Auslander’s contextual approach the persona is read as an instrument working within a given performance (see Moestrup 2021), we suggest that it is productive to pay further attention to the performative space that is interpersonal and relational.

The performative nature of profiling is discussed also by Joseph (2016) who, however, suggests to think of performativity in relative terms. Both Phillips (2019, p. 388-89) and Joseph are concerned with ways for journalistic narrators to facilitate empathy with their subjects, but while Phillips discusses degrees of presence, Joseph focuses on degrees of performativity, in profile pieces specifically. She suggests a spectrum model that includes ritualized and strategic identity performances at one end and unfeigned responses, ‘raw’ acts of witnessing and advocacy of trauma narratives, at the other. In between those poles, Joseph places the celebrity profile as driven by a level of mutual and acknowledged opportunism between profiler and profiled (Joseph 2016; see also Lee 2019, p. 246-49). Phillips deploys narratological concepts to capture levels of reflection that enable reader empathy; in short, she argues (with reference to Aare 2016) that narrative dissonance is productive in the sense that an immediate, internally focalized first-person major perspective turns into a more open space for reflection and empathy when combined with retrospective narration (Phillips 2019, p. 389). Joseph, on her part, questions celebrity profiles as not legitimately deserving of public interest. Instead, her main concern as both a practitioner and scholar of journalistic profiling is on trauma narratives and the peculiar ways that the deliberate identity performances of more mainstream profile pieces may be suspended or stripped raw in the name of authentic, empathetic advocacy when trauma victims rather than celebrities are interviewed and profiled (Joseph 2016, p. 214-17).

In the case of Hassan and his profilers, however, Joseph's spectrum seems to collapse since several of these relations are at work on one and the same occasion. Hassan was basically recognized as a celebrity as well as victim of trauma, and his persona transformations that sometimes happened from one minute to the next, challenged journalists to explore their own repertoire of personas in a way that did indeed suspend identity performances but only to reveal and develop different ones. While the profilers are reinforcing the celebrity status of Hassan in the mere act of doing profiles of him, they must, on the one hand, keep ready to resist the "mechanisms of publicity" (Lee 2019, p. 246) and counter blatant opportunism. On the other hand, they need to respond to Hassan's positioning as a trauma victim and do so, as we shall see, by trying on, for instance, the subjectivities of a caring supporter and ally or a concerned social worker, parent, or friend. This particular dynamic is well captured, we propose, by the notion of rhetorical maneuvers, i.e. a continuous, potentially inappropriate shifting of perspective that adds new dimensions to the spectrum models of both presence and performativity while multiplying the levels of narrative dissonance.

The rhetorical maneuver is introduced as a way of "speaking out of place" (Phillips 2006, p. 315). While subjects may be positioned as students and teachers, for instance, they may still choose to "mis-name" their selves, as Phillips puts it, and violate the constraints of a given position by adopting subject forms that belong to different subject positions (Phillips 2006, p. 316). When a rhetorical maneuver is considered "inappropriate" it means simply that a given subject form is deployed even though it is not prescribed by the context. Phillips offers an everyday example: if a student says not just, "My essay will be late" but "My essay will be late because my girlfriend and I worry that she might be pregnant", it challenges the teacher to relate to the student as also a father-to-be and obviously complicates or simply expands the potential spectrum of the teacher's available subject forms when responding (2006, p. 317-18).

A dynamic much like this is set in motion by the quoted lines that serve as titles for the three selected profiles of Yahya Hassan to which we now turn. Each of them highlights a statement from the poet, and together they indicate a spectrum from informal or blunt to more reflective or philosophical subject forms that invites a complex response on the part of the journalist and readers: "These days I don't get much writing done except for horny text messages to beautiful girls" (Surrugue 2014), "There is no such thing as recognition. There is just staging" (Mygind 2014), and, finally, "I was fed up with being the integration showpiece [or more literally 'prize wog' (Da. *præmieperker*)]" (Krasnik 2019a). While all three profiles might have been (to echo Lillian Ross) subtitled 'The Moods of Yahya Hassan', they respond to Hassan's rhetorical maneuvers in very different manners.

ANALYSIS: THREE ENCOUNTERS WITH YAHYA HASSAN ON THE PAGE

1. Rhetorical Maneuvering as Coolly Observed versus Performed in Passion

Both of the profile pieces from 2014 are occasioned by a celebration of Yahya Hassan's literary achievements. One is from a 250th Special Issue of the monthly *Euroman* in which Hassan is featured on the cover as one out of three "Danish boys and men who [by way of their talent and ambition] will be shaping society in the coming years" (Surrugue 2014; Stenbach 2014); the other is published in the literary supplement of the weekly *Weekendavisen* when Hassan won the paper's prestigious literary award of that year (Mygind 2014). At this early stage in Hassan's career, he is already notorious for unpredictable interactions with the press – including episodes of walking out on interviewers – which both profiles explicitly address, not only by giving examples, but making this issue inform the very structure of their pieces.

As for Surrugue, who is immersed on a promotion tour to Finland with Hassan, his publisher, and security guards, large parts of her text are structured to reflect Hassan's rhetorical maneuvering. Indeed, encounters with other people serve as a humorous narrative arc, starting off with Hassan flirting with an airline hostess on the plane to Helsinki and culminating in a prolonged, central scene from the destination that is set off by the following cliffhanger:

Danish journalists [may] become nervous at the mere prospect of interviewing Yahya Hassan who doesn't play in any way by either written or unwritten rules.

Few Finnish journalists are aware of this. Yet. (Surrugue 2014)

Surrugue is not a participant in the scene. Instead, she observes and reports with careful use of comic contrast, euphemism, and informal language how her Finnish colleagues line up for interviews with Hassan on par with the princess' suitors in Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale of "Jack the Dullard" to the shared amusement of Hassan, Surrugue, and the implied reader. While Hassan is commenting passionately on the immigration situation in Denmark versus Sweden, he suddenly remarks that there is no smoke detector in the room and that he may light a cigarette. He is friendly (one journalist "looks like he wants to either hug Yahya Hassan or light a cigarette himself ... [The sympathy seems mutual]") and then hostile (another journalist gets no response, and witnessing their interaction is described like "watching a car crash in slow motion") (Surrugue 2014). In one instance, Surrugue seems to have unlimited access to Hassan's mind as he plots a rhetorical maneuver in the middle of an interview with a reporter from the Finnish women's magazine *Me Naiset*: "He finds her questions [about women and interior decoration] stupid to the extent that they are actually funny. But he does not tell her. Instead he decides to tease the reporter by firing up his charm. As in all the way up." (Surrugue 2014). Surrugue sides with Hassan in distancing herself fully from this particular reporter by observing, in conclusion, how the woman giggles and "doesn't look like she knows what hit her" (Surrugue 2014).

In Eason's terms (see Phillips 2019, p. 390), Surrugue is practicing ethnographic realism in the vein of Lillian Ross by offering the *Euroman* readership an exclusive account of life behind the scenes. This life is presented as an "object of display," with the reporter and the reader seeing that object with an assumed, shared set of values" (Phillips 2019, p. 390). Accordingly, Surrugue remains in an understated first-person minor that largely supports Hassan's persona performance when reporting, for instance, that Hassan is not just keeping a number of people waiting in the morning, but that he is "late, the rockstar way" (Surrugue 2014).

That Surrugue herself is consistently performing an on-top-of-things attitude is reflected in her careful depictions of the layers of *Hassan's* persona. Her composure is reflected in her succinct use of oxymorons like "the 19-year-old star writer" as well as in more extended versions of the same trope:

A year ago he looked mainly like a trouble maker. Hoodie, leather jacket, defiant look, cigarette or joint in mouth, fuck that, fuck you.

But look at him now: Through the bustle of the airport he slides like another busy business man; impeccable grey suit, shiny black shoes ...

On a closer look however, the image falls apart. The breast pin showing the Palestinian flag. The hair band pacifying a long, black mane of curls. And the two inconspicuous men keeping remarkably close to him. ...

[T]he social workers once taking care of the youth criminal Yahya Hassan have become intelligence officers looking after the young author Yahya Hassan. (Surrugue 2014)

In this manner, Surrugue describes how the ‘former Hassan’ (the traumatized, socially deprived criminal teenager of minority background) is not actually former or transformed but stays enfolded in the repertoire of the ‘new Hassan’ (the celebrity, a rich and famous literary star). This is further emphasized in the photos that accompany the profile and depict, for instance, Hassan dressed in a fancy suit and blue shirt eating a cheap fast-food meal. So while continuously suggesting that ‘the image might fall apart’ to paraphrase the passage above, Surrugue insists on keeping the oxymoron intact, i.e. putting the seeming contradictions of his subject forms on display and revelling in it. Tensions are kept unresolved and unquestioned which seems to be exactly what Hassan is inviting her to do by happily parading his rhetorical maneuvering as a special skill:

“You have to take them as they need to be taken,” Hassan shouts loudly down the hallway.

It is somewhat unclear whether he means journalists or women.

“The one from the ladies’ magazine, she needed to be charmed. The one before her, needed to be met with a stoneface,” he says laughingly and lights up a cigarette in the middle of the publisher’s building out of sheer enthusiasm. (Surrugue 2014)

Generally, Surrugue conveys how she is particularly well equipped to profile Yahya Hassan, not by responding to his maneuvers through repositionings of her own, but by keeping cool-under-immersion, tracking and even imitating Hassan’s maneuvering as a way of granting her readers backstage access to his full repertoire of subject forms. It is worth noting, that Hassan’s rhetorical maneuvers are often decidedly inappropriate – unexpected, not called for – as the definition goes. And while Surrugue may expose the maneuvers for aesthetic value as well as for profiling purposes, she plays along and *supports* them too, inviting readers to be amused, where she might perhaps have put up some resistance and attempted to negotiate what transgressions of decorum and of professional standards to allow for on her watch.

To resist, however, is what her fellow freelance profiler, Johanne Mygind, decides to do when performing the part of unfortunate interviewer-suitor when lining up for an audience with the celebrity poet. Mygind is exposed to the full force of Hassan’s moods in a one-on-one encounter in the kitchen of her private home and responds, as we shall see, by almost desperate rhetorical maneuvering that explores her own repertoire of subject forms. Unlike Surrugue, she reports on her meeting with Hassan in the first-person major, exposing her personal and professional struggle to win his trust or even catch his interest.

The interview is occasioned by Hassan winning the Weekendavisen Book Award for 2013, and Mygind puts up resistance from the beginning of their interaction as Hassan adopts the subject form of a demanding celebrity persona by calling her back late only to insist that the interview takes place immediately. Mygind resists by claiming her subject form both as a parent and a professional: “I was at the daycare and had one more stop to make at the kindergarten, and there had to be limits as to how much I was going to kowtow to an award winner” (Mygind 2014, p. 8). This does not exactly serve to set a productive line of maneuverings in motion, and, in contrast to the smooth, festive award speech printed on the front cover of the same literary supplement, the interview is abrupt in its syntax marking a hostile atmosphere. When they finally meet the dialogue between Hassan and Mygind hardly qualifies as a dialogue:

- *Okay, not family, not integration, not Islam, not literature, what have we got left?*
“The future?”
 – *Oh yes, the future. What have you got to say about that?*
“Nothing.” (Mygind 2014, p. 9)

Rather than keeping a literary focus, the piece changes and is soon driven by rhetorical maneuvers on Mygind’s part from reporter to mother to teacher of interview methods to critic of media coverage, and on to the specific, vulnerable role of freelancer-not-able-to-deliver-what’s-expected. Some of her maneuvers are addressed to readers only and performed by way of inner monologue as if sharing her sense of professional humiliation out of Hassan’s hearing range (“Yahya Hassan makes me feel like a social worker encountering a particularly sullen young criminal ... who does not get that I mean well”, Mygind 2014, p. 8) or fighting for our professional respect (“When I teach interview techniques, I usually say ... but this ...”, Mygind 2014, p. 8). Others are directed to Hassan as attempts to change the scene and enable dialogue: “Then he gives an order: ‘For this interview piece, don’t describe neither clothes nor mood or anything.’ I smile. I don’t know whether or not he is serious. I tell him I’m a freelancer ...” (Mygind 2014, p. 9). Mygind touches on the same oxymoronic nature of Hassan’s persona that Surrugue does, but takes the ambiguity much more seriously or personally, describing it as a challenge to her persona performance and confusing to her professional maneuvering: “I don’t know whether I am dancing around with a genius or with a 18-year old brat who picked up a couple of new concepts at the Academy of Creative Writing.” (Mygind 2014, p. 9)

She insists on Hassan having other subject forms available to him and reminds him, for instance, of his poet persona which he immediately resists:

- “I do suppose a poet has a knack for recognizing what makes a good scene?”*
“Not really, I’m not a filmmaker. I don’t know whether or not I’m a poet either, just because I wrote a collection of poetry. I may become a money man.” Now he gives me a daring look. I smile again like I imagine a social worker might smile. (Mygind 2014, p. 9)

In terms of transgressions, the so-called emotional turn in journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen 2020) has steadily expanded the boundaries for professional decorum. Certainly, Mygind continuously notes – showing the doing of profiling process – how Hassan makes her *feel*: “I smile. I don’t know if he is serious”; “It feels as if I have got a hold of him now. I can’t help but wishing that it is because he likes me”; “I have lost the ability to assess his statements because I am so thankful that he is speaking to me” (Mygind 2014, p. 9). Addressing the reader in confidence may come across as rude to Hassan. Still, some of these responses are also analytical or reflective, and serve at least as attempts to support her professional ethos. At one point, however, her emotion and positioning turn into aggression, and she employs language that is quite clearly inappropriate by professional standards:

- He looks at my kitchen bulletin board ... newspaper clippings, bills, and pictures of my kids. A study in middle-class normalcy. The kind we state in columns and comments that every child deserves. ... But now, in my own home, I’m not sure that’s what Yahya Hassan wants. I feel like he is pissing all over my middle-class values.* (Mygind 2014, p. 9)

With Mygind's first-person major form, we see a rapid, tentative rhetorical maneuvering performed in dialogue with Hassan and by continuous reflections on the uncomfortable attempts to change the constellation and subject positionings. So, again, rhetorical maneuvering becomes the driving narrative principle: in this case, a decidedly scrambling, narrative principle as Mygind performs an almost gonzo-like overreaction to the circumstances that serves as an attempt to resist the discrediting position she is offered. A broken aesthetic is established that may not direct empathy away from the journalist towards the profiled subject as a profile should (cf. Phillips 2019; Joseph 2016) but which serves, at least, to reveal the constraints the journalist is dealing with on this particular occasion.

By responding to inappropriate subject forms, and testing a variety of alternative and still more inappropriate subject forms herself, Mygind makes the negotiation of control of the interview space much more ambivalent than what we saw in the Finnish scenario. The spectrum of her persona performance expands, for better or worse, and makes it hard for readers to identify with her without some discomfort or pause for reflection. This way of 'showing the doing' of profiling serves also to conspicuously underline the constructed nature of print journalism. In a live interview Hassan might be able to claim and keep authorial control; in writing, the profiler has the final word. Hassan decides which bits and pieces to offer the profiler and may resist responding to her changing positionings and invitations, but at the end of the day, it is Mygind who decides how to frame the mutual constitution of their personas. By way of her somewhat inappropriate rhetorical maneuvering, however, she ensures that readers will actually notice this exercise of power and, hopefully, feel encouraged or provoked to position *themselves* in relation to Hassan as they see fit under the circumstances.

2. Rhetorical Maneuvering as Personal-Professional Shapeshifting

Five years after Surrugue and Mygind's encounters with Yahya Hassan, his personal situation had changed dramatically; he is hospitalized, but his second volume of poems is ready for publication, a situation that pushes the combination of a celebrity and trauma victim profile to an extreme in our third and last example. The piece appears after a longer period where Hassan has been partly controlling his own media story and partly unavailable to the press while serving a prison sentence. Under these circumstances, an interview-based profile by Martin Krasnik, chief editor and also closely acquainted with Hassan, counts as a veritable scoop, and Hassan is given a significant amount of space in the Nov. 8th 2019 edition of *Weekendavisen*. A large drawing of him is printed on the front page alongside a quote from the profile saying "I am one of the greatest poets alive but this wog [Da. *perker*] has had enough" (*Weekendavisen* 2019, p. 1). A new poem by Hassan is featured on the front page of the literary supplement which includes the four-page profile, including a page featuring imagery and several provocative updates from Hassan's Facebook profile. Again, the challenge for the profiler is to handle the oxymoronic persona – that Hassan himself invokes by proclaiming himself a superior poet and an unruly 'wog' – in a manner that is both ethically and aesthetically proper for the occasion.

Krasnik's profile piece is narratively paced by the institutional limitations imposed on the interview. It takes place via telephone calls to and from the forensic mental ward at Aarhus University Hospital wherein Krasnik and Hassan are only able to talk for a limited number of minutes at a time. These context-creating constraints are addressed explicitly with sentences such as "the social worker is here now, I will call you later," and "It's over now. I will call you later. Have some proper questions ready" (Krasnik 2019a, p. 5). Hassan makes several demands like these on Krasnik as an attempt to take control of the profile piece, giving professional directions to his profiler as he did with Mygind. With Krasnik, Hassan

orders specific bits of content that he wants his profiler to include which involves a change of subject form on Hassan's part from PR conscious poet, "I am an intellectual criminal. Remember that! Write that!", to an almost desperately affectionate family member, "You have to write that I love my mother, my brother and I love my family. It's important to include that I love my family. (...) You have to underline that. Promise me." (Krasnik 2019a, p. 5)

Krasnik navigates these requests by rhetorical maneuvering, alternating between a number of subjectivities. His past history of interviewing and privately hosting Hassan makes patches of common ground and subject forms available to him while also making a level of transparency mandatory in order to ensure professional accountability. Krasnik's shapeshifter strategy gets as personal, if much less emotional, than Mygind's. That said, in terms of editorial power, Krasnik offers an additional level of transparency by producing a podcast version of the interview (2019b) in which longer parts of the interview are reproduced and Hassan can be heard unremediated by Krasnik's pen. And these parts do in fact display a significantly higher emotional intensity in the interaction than the printed version does, if also less variation of style and pace and less space for reflection.

Here we focus on the printed version in which, first of all, Krasnik performs the persona of Hassan's trusted friend repeating the well-known story of how Hassan ended up staying at Krasnik's home, "smoking his weed [Hassan's own] in the backyard. Playing PlayStation with my son" (Krasnik 2019a, p. 2). This particular maneuver and the ensuing information count as a way to demonstrate transparency in his professional work, and beyond that, it serves to establish Krasnik's ethos as a profiler with a unique relationship and exclusive access to the celebrity poet. He performs the trusted friend persona or advocate when fulfilling, for instance, the wishes or demands of Hassan by quoting his directions and by being remarkable informal, even blunt when opening the conversation by stating his surprise: "I am so glad you are alive ... I imagined you would have run into a bullet or a baseball bat" (Krasnik 2019a, p. 2). At other stages in the conversation, the age difference allows Krasnik to reposition himself as a kind of father figure showing his concern by way of a reprimand: "Why didn't you pull out earlier? Didn't I tell you to go away for a few months."

While being highly responsive to Hassan's repositionings in the phone call passages of the written text, Krasnik demonstrates closer control of his own subject forms when performing the roles of a curious reporter and, in turn, professional literary critic or connoisseur. This happens as he introduces Hassan's new and still unreleased collection of poems, again a feature that underlines his exclusive access. Krasnik admits to reading the poems, first, for autobiographical, factual information, simply to discover what has happened to Hassan in the past few years. Later in the interview, he comments and discusses their literary merits and demonstrates his cultural capital as a both sensitive and knowledgeable reader of poetry: "Black, cruel, wild, violent, uncomfortable, beautiful, absurd, but also completely irrefutably him, his energy, his chanting restlessness, his language," and "The second part of the collection is called HUNTING SEASON. There is a touch of dark humour in it. Halfdan Rasmussen [humorous Danish household poet] meets Tarantino," (Krasnik 2019a, p. 2).

Krasnik's continuous shapeshifting from personal to professional becomes *his* way of handling Hassan's unpredictable behaviour and preserving the oxymoron, so to say, as he introduces readers to both Hassan the currently disturbed patient and, in interposed passages, Hassan the poet in his own right. Moreover, the maneuvering works as an aesthetic strategy that provides variation and substance to a piece that would otherwise be based on bits and pieces of telephone interviews. Indeed, the hectic, interrupted dialogues is reminiscent of Mygind's article including allusions to interfering with Krasnik's private life: "[Hassan] calls

at 7:36PM while I'm putting the kids to sleep" (Krasnik 2019a, p. 5). In addition to invoking here again, Krasnik's actual father persona, Krasnik highlights the backstage conditions of putting this particular profile together. Krasnik, too, is 'showing the doing' of profiling as Schechner phrased it (Schechner 2013), and developing a shapeshifter strategy of his own on the basis of his particular personal history.

PERFORMING THE MANEUVERING: PERSONAS TURNING INAPPROPRIATE BUT SHOWING US WHY

By way of conclusion, it is tempting to follow the narrative logic of Goldilocks and the Three Bears and congratulate Martin Krasnik on striking just the right balance between the coolness of Stéphanie Surrugue and the emotional scrambling of Johanne Mygind in the discipline of profiling Yahya Hassan by personal interaction. Rhetorical maneuvers, however, are inappropriate by definition, and there are good reasons to question Krasnik's encounter with the poet persona: How does one legitimately perform the part of friend in a piece of journalism? And when is it ever appropriate to invoke one's parental persona and reprimand someone in a published interview?

We hope, instead, to have presented and developed rhetorical maneuvering (Phillips 2006) as a way for profilers to not only demonstrate a responsive approach to subjects but also possibly change the dynamics in a tense journalist-source encounter or at least make a demonstrative attempt. Importantly, as we saw in Mygind and Krasnik's stories, rhetorical maneuvering may disrupt conventional patterns of identification in relation also to the reader and provoke reflection on the constraints and dynamics of the profiling practice. This feature is not striking in Surrugue's use of the first-person minor. On the contrary, the rhetorical maneuvers in her piece are witnessed from the perspective of the unaffected fly on the wall, and readers are positioned safely and stably alongside Surrugue herself as observers, alienated instead from other characters in the story. Still, all three profilers realize the potential of turning rhetorical maneuvering as such into a narrative principle that gives each article an aesthetic quality that is unique, reflects their subject's special character, and serves to turn these profile pieces into genuine examples of literary journalism.

At the level of persona studies, we have refocused Auslander's conception of how contexts constitute personas (Auslander 2015) to a concern with the mutual constitution of personas in media performances in which journalists – by introducing their first-person major (as in the case of Mygind and Krasnik) – performatively point to the showing of the doing (Schechner 2013) of profiling on special occasions. While subscribing to Auslander's reading of personas as an instrument working within a given performance, we suggest it is productive to pay extra attention to the performative space that is interpersonal and specific to journalistic profiles in which a tricky or tense occasion may call for profilers to explore their spectrum of subject forms and respond with deliberate creativity to disruptions of their persona performances.

By way of rhetorical maneuvering in the performative interpersonal space, first-person profiling puts a condensed version of journalist-source-relations to the foreground, exposing the fragile social dynamics of professional work and the limits and successes of journalistic encounters. First-person major performances may stand in the way of audience identification in a traditional journalistic sense or of reader empathy as a key value in literary journalism more generally (Phillips 2019) and profiling specifically (Joseph 2016). Still, we argue that the interactions do perform a productive, tentative identification process in the rhetorical sense of a temporary and partial recognition of community that enables coordinated thought and action in public matters (Burke 1969). Rhetorical maneuvering may be

considered an exemplary practice in the sense of a flipping through of potential previous subject forms that may produce poses that are unfit for the occasion but are still warranted, on special occasions, as worthy of a try. As an ethical principle, it recognizes the multiplicity of personas as well as the professional and personal obligations and responsiveness of both journalist and subject. It may be deployed when subject positions become limiting and uncomfortable in order to add narrative structure, pace, variation and, in fact, a variety of perspectives within the otherwise often limiting first-person singular. In sum, the varied, performative attempts of seeking identification and cooperation – the showing of the rhetorical maneuverings – qualify as instructive and creative instruments of portrayal, even as they sometimes, and sometimes spectacularly, fail.

END NOTES

1. All three profiles are originally published in Danish. English translations are by Isager and Moestrup.

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