Narrating the Uncanny: Inconvenient Encounters with "Strangers Within" during the European "Refugee Crisis"

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Abstract
From "Welcome Culture" in 2015 to AnkER Centres since 2018. The open borders of Europe, where refugees were welcomed with open arms, seem like a brief interruption of the narrative of the "Fortress Europe" whose identity is by no means only negotiated at its geographical borders. Through a case study of Bavarian AnkER Centres, we follow shifts in the narration of "Europe". Following Bruno Latour's outline of an actor-network-theory inspired theoretical analysis, we connect our analysis to theoretical figures of neighbouring disciplines, like Sigmund Freud's "uncanny", Julia Kristeva's "strangers to ourselves" and Emmanuel Lévinas' "Other". From that theoretical standpoint on, our analysis reveals the figure of the refugee not only as manifestation of Homo Sacer but also as a "place of negotiation", through which and in confrontation with Europe's identity is constantly re-negotiated, shifted and changed.

Key-Words
AnkER Centres, Uncanny, Asylum, Stranger, Refugee Crisis

1. Introduction

The performativity of narrating the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe not only involves the invocation of an identitarian political moment of Occidentalism, as for example embodied by right-wing populist movements, it also released the spectre of the uncanny: a ghostly image, a misrecognition, a moment of alienation, that to this day haunts the self-valorising assertion of European civilization and disables its self-referential, necropolitical closure. Guilt, shame, unease, anxiety and fear accompany the confrontations with the spectre of the uncanny and are very difficult to erase, even by the most radical of assertions of the sovereignty of the European legacy.

When Europe constitutes itself as a sovereign *Fortress*, what is it that it aims to defend? When identitarian movements legitimate their communal exclusivity in the name of a defence of "our" civilization, what do they claim to value exactly? If the bottom-line of this legitimation is a Nomos of the Earth (Schmitt 1974) that is not any different from any barbarian one, why is it at all required? These pertinent questions point toward a lack, in the Lacanian sense, through which the pathology of (modern) subjectivity

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as at once a sovereign individual and an effect of disciplinary power, has been enabled (Foucault 1977). The pathology is exposed when European civilization is represented as at once superior and at risk; it bounces back as the fear of the stranger and thus as an abject sense of broken selfhood (Kristeva 1994) that can only be reclaimed by necropolitical violence (Mbembe 2019).

Beyond right-wing populism, it manifests itself in milder versions of guilt and unease that co-constitute acts of compassion and sympathy. These are no less pathological, as they too invoke the abject of the stranger within, but they are different in the sense of enabling a *destitutive power* (Agamben 2015), through which the pathology might be encountered within a modality of "weak thought" (Vattimo 1988), that works as an inhibitor of necropolitics and opens up possibilities for more charitable life forms.

2. *Aim and Outline*

By showing select examples – in this case, the Bavarian AnkER Centres[1], that were installed during the summer of 2019 – we aim to sociologically explore practices of compassion not as a normative, idealist project, but as a particular "mode of existence" - Durkheim (1984) called it "solidarity" - that may be more resilient to the incumbent collapse of neoliberal capitalism than the currently more prominent modes of identity politics. We will use our example of the AnkER Centres to highlight the sociological relevance of the "Strangeness Within" as a mode of resistance against the increasingly necropolitical tendencies of the governmentality of immigra-

1 AnkER Centres can be sociologically analysed as manifestations of Agamben's (2002) notion of camps. Even if Agamben's conception of the state of exception was based on the extreme example of concentration camps, which may seem very exaggerated when applied to the Bavarian AnkER-Centres, this mode of thought provides a useful starting point for our sociological theorizing, as it allows for the invocation of exceptionality as a variable rather than an absolute (e.g. Mack/van Loon 2020). Agamben (2002) conceives the "camp" as the *place* where the (political) state of exception manifests itself in physical space, therefore becomes tangible and visible. Not only is the camp a place where something happens, it is also a space that is already part of the happening and cannot be excluded or exchanged, because one needs to take into account not only what happens, who acts and who experiences, but also the material conditions of taking place, including those architecture, structure, security etc. – anything that might make a difference that *matters* (Latour 1987, 2005).

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tion, which threaten to render meaningless the very core of what they proclaim to defend.

First, we introduce our case study. From there we take a broader perspective on the "limits of civilization" in terms of Europe's understanding of "itself". After that, we focus on the mechanisms of the sell-out of the ideals (From Strangers to Parasites: The Desiring Machines of European Identity Politics) and introduce the Freudian "uncanny" as a specific addition to our perspective, which will, in consequence, inform our conclusion for the theoretical analysis of the case study.

3. *Case Study: From "Welcome" to "Repatriation": The Deployment of AnkER Centres to Manage the Refugee Crisis in Germany*

During the summer of 2019, the German government passed an "Orderly Return Law" *(Geordnete-Rückkehr-Gesetz)* to create "incentives" (by cutting social benefits) for refugees to leave Germany and return to their countries of origin. Although this law was not passed without opposition – for example, refugee helpers had taken a clear position against what they dubbed a "get lost law" *(Hau Ab!-Gesetz)*[2] and stressed that it contravened not just the Geneva Convention Relating to the State of Refugees (originally signed in 1951) but also violates the German Constitution itself. The political climate in Germany has already significantly shifted in the direction of greater hostility towards refugees since the inception of the so-called "refugee crisis" (which in Germany had reached its pinnacle in 2015).

AnkER Centres were to play a key role in the turn towards creating the opposite of a "welcome culture" (which was associated with Germany's initial response to the "crisis" (Mack and Van Loon 2020). AnkER Centres first were established in 2018 and were part of Germany's "Masterplan for Migration". AnkER (which also means anchor in German) does not stand for "safe haven", but is an acronym for arrival, communal distribution, decision-making and repatriation *(An(kunft), k(ommunale Verteilung), E(ntscheidung) und R(ückführung))*. The official purpose of the AnkER Centres is to bring together all important decision-makers and representatives of the relevant authorities in one place to speed up asylum processes and reach decisions more expediently. The rhetoric of "bringing together" key actors resonates with the pseudo-academic conception of "governance" as it combines notions of "participation" and "inclusion" in decision-mak-

2 e.g. https://archiv.fluechtlingsrat-bayern.de/are-ingolstadt.html

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ing processes with the sub politics of extra-political scientific and legal expertise in a drive for consensus and efficiency (rather than procedural transparency or democratic accountability).[3] It is clear, that there is only one purpose of those centres: to deport; every aspect of the process of their deployment is aligned to this purpose.

Asylum-seeking refugees are transferred to those centres if they originate from so-called "safe countries" *(sichere Herkunftsländer)* when they only had less than a 50% chance of obtaining actual refugee status in Germany. Hence, when refugees arrive in Germany, the main concern of the authorities is to ascertain their country of origin. If this country is considered a "safe country" the refugee would immediately be transferred to one of the AnkER Centres. A "trend-setting" and already limiting decision that is based on the sole information regarding the place of origin, without considering other factors. If the purpose of these centres is to gather a large number of people who have already been labelled "hopeless cases", they effectively function as part of a strategy of deterrence *(Abschreckungskampagne)*. Moreover, if the living conditions at these centres are deliberately kept at substandard levels, it would further increase the deterring effect.

While the Bavarian government strongly emphasizes the increased efficiency and speed of processing asylum applications during various evaluations of the policy in the years following their deployment, the AnkER Centres themselves have repeatedly been criticised by activists, not least by Medicine sans Frontières, who withdrew from the AnkER Centre Manching/Ingolstadt in autumn 2019 due to the intolerable conditions there (e.g. Ärzteblatt 2019). As the access to those centres for volunteers or social workers is very difficult, information is scarce. The Munich and Bavarian Refugee Council subsequently established an online Blog "Anker Watch"[4], where accounts and information about the situation inside those centres are being collected and archived.

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3 There is also a language shift from the centres, initially called "Reception Centres" *(Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung)* to "Return Centres" *(Rückführungseinrichtung)*. In "Reception Centres", refugees would be registered and waited for further processing of their cases; initially with the promise that perhaps they could stay in Germany. This promise does not ring true for the "Return Centres", where the primary agenda is deportation. In a way, those "Return Centres" or AnkER Centres are anchors: they hinder any movement, until the decision makers (executives of the sovereign power) allow movement. There is but one direction this now allowed movement can take place: leaving Germany and returning to the country of origin.

4 e.g. https://www.anker-watch.de/watch-liste

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The key problem is obvious: Since the argument is that the Centres are mainly for those whose chances of obtaining asylum are very low, there is no real need to support any efforts to integrate those refugees into German society, and therefore there is no need to involve volunteers in the acquisition and development of language skills, socio-cultural orientation or even legal and administrative guidance through the myriad of bureaucratic procedures that constitute the asylum-application process. The fact that activists and volunteers are not welcome in those centres proves that those aspects that were celebrated as core components of Germany's acclaimed "Welcome Culture" in 2015 are now vilified as unwanted interference. Advocating human rights and their necessary anchoring in procedural justice are being deliberately excluded from processing asylum applications. Human rights and procedural justice have become a nuisance. The admission to these AnkER Centres becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: those who are allocated to an AnkER Centre are doomed for deportation. This in itself violates the legal principle of due process, which is constitutionally anchored in German law and supposedly reflects core values of fairness and justice which are supposedly at the heart of European civilization.

The politics behind it are clear: in order to secure re-election, Germany's ruling political parties no longer wished to grant asylum to refugees, barring a few token cases. It is for that reason that application processes have increased in complexity and have become difficult to navigate, even for those with some legal expertise. Moreover, the legal expertise required to ensure one's rights are being protected is often too expensive for those who have already sacrificed most of what they had to be able to come to Europe.

The deterrence thus not only targets refugees but also the involvement of volunteers who engaged themselves as helpers, which resonated quite well with the ethos of the first Reception Centres but not with that of the AnkER Centres. The side effect of the intensity of involvement of volunteers during the earlier stages of the "Refugee Crisis" has been that the bureaucratic myriad surrounding asylum law has forced many to professionalize and accumulate a large amount of expertise to help refugees overcome the obstacles that have been put in place during previous years. Being fully aware that the risk of error is extremely high; since, after all, they mostly were self-thought, many replied more often than not that "lives were at stake" in response to the question "why bother?" (Mack and Van Loon 2020). Topics volunteers and activist would concentrate their documentation on were: counselling, education, social participation, health, children's rights, freedom of expression, protection against discrimination, self-determination, and security. All of those can also be found

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in the declaration of basic human rights which in Germany are explicitly anchored in the constitution. In this respect, the volunteers were merely fulfilling their duty as "patriotic citizens" who insist on articulating the German Constitution to a broad conception of universal human rights.

Regardless of the legal/political cognitive dissonance, the obstacles created to reduce the number of successful applications may have had the reverse effect: Making visible that the appeals to "European Civilization" (e.g. the advocacy of universal human rights) were mostly a thin veneer to cover an underlying notion of community as a particular exclusive identification of entitlement (the privileges of national citizenship). That the latter seems to contradict the former is of course no recent discovery, but nonetheless a painful reminder that the Holocaust is not a mere temporal interruption in the unfolding of the Enlightenment Project (Bauman 1989).

One of the consistent themes that come up again and again is, that after their immediate arrival, refugees are severely limited in their social and geographic mobility. Whereas the phenomenon of flight is associated with the human right to seek protection from harm, their actual sanctuary is based on practices of incrimination and incarceration. By rendering refugees immobile in exchange for a (slim) chance of obtaining asylum, all agency is taken from them. During the first Franconian Asylum Summit in Nuremberg at the beginning of 2019, three refugees reported on how tiring and depressing everyday life behind the walls of the AnkER Centres is, and how it had become more and more meaningless over time. For example: when things break down in the shelters, they are rarely getting fixed. Although some of the residents have the skills to fix broken things themselves, they are not provided with the required tools from the authorities to do so. They are reduced to bare life.

In the Anker-Centres, refugees are not allowed to cook for themselves. They do not have the facilities to prepare their own food, or have refrigerators in their own "home". They are fed through a kitchen and the menu schedule is repeated monthly. They only get a special diet if a doctor confirms their need for it. Vegetarian or vegan meals are mostly not available. The dietary monotony causes especially children to refuse to eat anything, which often leads to deficiencies and health problems. Bare life does not include good health.

The Bavarian Refugee Council states, that even those ordinary tasks, like preparing a meal, would probably help with a structured daily routine,

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but again: this seems to be deemed an unnecessary luxury.[5] Refugees also report the passivity of those working there and those in charge of the centres. In case of complaints about vermin in the food, an illness that needed medical attention, or even in the case of assaults by security personnel, which were in some cases documented on film - the ones responsible refused to respond adequately, even when certain incidents had been reported to the police. Chances were that those reporting the assaults would be punished instead. Bare life does not include protection from harm.

> The people here are frustrated, they get sick. When they came to Germany, people were healthy, but after having to live in this camp for years and months, most of them have mental problems. It's very bad to come to another country, to live there for a year and nine months in a terrible situation, to have nothing to do, not to work, not to have the right to go to another city […] When we came here, we hoped that we could learn something, work and develop, but what we get here is different. We don't learn anything, we don't work, we just sit around, eat and sleep. We are young and educated, we can do more for this country than just sitting around. We could be strength for this country because we have the potential to work. I know many people who don't want to sit around, not just the well-educated. Even less educated people have work experience, so they can do a job after all, because they have the potential. (Bavarian Refugee Council, translated by authors)

A witness cited by the Bavarian Refugee Council Most testifies that most deportations take place at night when the police come armed and with guard dogs and frighten the children and force people out of their beds. There were and still are suicide attempts because of this. People would rather jump out of windows, than face deportation. Bare life still includes living in fear and anxiety.

From the documentation of the Bavarian Refugee Council, the AnkER Watch Blog and the reports heard during the Asylum Summits in Nuremberg 2019, it has become clear that the situation regarding asylum practices in Bavaria has radically changed compared to 2015. Without the help of thousands of volunteers, the relatively successful management of the "Refugee Crisis" of 2015 could not have been possible. On the other hand, it is through the establishment of the AnkER Centres in 2019 that work

5 e.g. https://archiv.fluechtlingsrat-bayern.de/anker-verpflegung.html

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for the volunteers became difficult or even impossible. On the one hand, the help during 2015 was praised and thanked, but now, only a few years later, volunteers supporting refugees are deemed an unwelcome nuisance and are being systematically prevented. The testimonies are not to be treated as exceptions. They express very clearly what AnkER Centres were designed to accomplish: making people feel so miserable about being in Germany, that their resistance can be broken, and they no longer object to deportation. Such a goal can only be achieved "legally" in a state of exception, a situation in which human rights are de facto disabled and disconnected from legal-administrative processes. Yet – at the same time – a residual force amongst refugees and those who have aligned themselves with their plight immunizes them against the deterrence and inspires them to carry on despite everything. This *immunita*s is according to Roberto Esposito the necessary boundary of *communitas* (Langford 2015) and a reminder of the risk of particularism haunting the "unpolitical".

4. The Limits of Civilization

The litmus test for "European civilization" has always been performed at its boundaries (immunitas) and if there is one constant element in most narrations of Europe, it has been the failure to acknowledge all human beings as human beings. There have always been boundaries that enable decision-makers to differentiate between those for whom human rights seem to apply unconditionally and those whose human rights are at least de facto conditional. On that count, the idea that European Civilization is real as such – that is, that its practice corresponds to its idealism - can be dismissed as a fairy tale. The aspirations of universalism that have enabled the narration of European Civilization as benevolent, have always been limited by the particularism of its applications.

Borders are important as they enable the formation of domains – territories – that enable "sovereignty". Border crossings are therefore problematic as a question emerges which dominions are to be taken into account. The late-modern sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1995) emphasized this point when referring to the problem of conceptions of nations as sovereign states: with every imposition of a boundary, there will always remain a residual element that does not belong on either side. Following Simmel (1992 [1908]), he called this "the Stranger". As the category that defies the otherwise exclusive opposition between friend and fiend, which – at least according to Schmitt (1974) - constitutes the foundation of the political, the stranger haunts the symmetrical aesthetics of sovereignty.

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For Bauman, the tragedy of modernity (which we take here as a particular narrative of European Civilization) has been the attempt to eradicate the ambivalence of the stranger, by forcing those that do not belong into a straitjacket of friend versus fiend; that is, by subduing them to one dominion. This desire – of allocating each community to its own distinctive sovereign territory - is still at work in for example the political imaginations associated with the so-called Identitarian Movement.

Boundaries are inevitably connected to community formations, as the "munis" of com-munity is always finite. Following the Austrian proto-sociologist von Ratzenhofen, Albion Woodbury Small (1905) developed his own general theory of sociology on the "historical fact" of scarcity. That is, communities are finite because some resources will always be limited. Competing claims over scarce resources are – sociologically rather than ontologically speaking – the reason why boundaries are always associated with "the real possibility of violence".

It is thus perhaps not surprising that the narrative of European Civilization as expressing the universalist aspirations of enlightenment unfolded in tandem with European colonial rule (Mbembe 2019). Only after the issues of scarce resources (for example over cotton or labour force) had been settled in favour of the leading European nations, and only after those leading European nations settled their internal conflicts regarding their claims over scarce resources by political means rather than warfare (but it is clear that – reversing Clausewitz' famous aphorism - here too, politics is simply war by other means, e.g. Virilio 1993) – was it possible to relabel "Europe" as a global civilizing force.

It may be a tragic consequence of negative dialectics that the current geopolitical global order resembles very little of what European Civilization had promised the rest of the world. For example, attempts to uphold constitutional and representative democracies around the world (the flagship of narratives of European civilization) are almost without exception compromised by other interests, usually related to access to scarce resources, but sometimes also – quite simplistically – to personal interests and whimsical desires of a very small number of powerful individuals. However, it should be clear that the universalist aspirations of European Civilization were from the outset compromised by very particular interests.

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5. *From Strangers to Parasites: The Desiring Machines of European Identity Politics*

The so-called Refugee Crisis is but one example of the "fundamental hypocrisy" of European Civilization. Refugees are treated as "people without history", a loose gathering of individuals who – at some point in time - managed to cross the boundary separating "Europe" from the rest of the world and thereby (as if by magic) imposing themselves within our domains as a specific legal "problem" that also challenges and thereby exposes the limits of civilization.

Because they are mostly people without a collective history, but instead a loose gathering of (opportunistic?) individuals acting on their own interests, there is no real need to frame the Refugee Crisis as part of the negative dialectic of "European Civilization". That is: there is surprisingly little political discourse connecting the export of arms, political corruption, socio-economic austerity, or ecological catastrophes with the import of refugees. As a result of this, it is relatively easy for the official representatives of "European Civilization" to frame the refugee crisis as a humanitarian crisis: a crisis without direct human causality. It merely happens that refugees are making their way towards Europe. In terms of responding to a humanitarian crisis, European Civilization is once again able to claim to be primarily motivated by benevolence.

Benevolence however is not completely inconsequential. For one, it disables a blind invocation of the arbitrary violence of the political: Refugees are neither prima facie friends nor prima facie enemies. Their status is still undetermined: they are strangers. Once within the dominion of European sovereignty, the imposition of the categorical distinction friend versus fiend has to follow procedures: they are bound to laws that still bear the traces of the universalistic aspirations of European Civilization: Unconditional Universal Human Rights. The history of political decisions regarding the treatment of refugees of course not only reveals that human rights are neither unconditional nor universal, but also that the restrictions on the possibility for unconditional, universal human rights have been increased over time. The bottom line of justifications for these restrictions is again firmly rooted in scarcity: Europe cannot afford open borders. The political negotiations within the EU about the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees are almost exclusively framed in a discourse about doing justice to member states in relation to their limited resources, rather than in relation to the human rights of refugees.

It is within this framing of community as having an exclusive claim on scarce resources bound by a territorialized domain, that we should un-

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derstand the fundamental challenge of refugees to practices of "narrating Europe". The refugee becomes what Freud (1970) once called "*das Unheimliche*" - the uncanny. For Freud, the uncanny was a ghost-like reflection of the self, a misrecognition of the self, which – unlike Narcissus whose misrecognition was cursed by the gods and therefore more radical as he mistook his own reflection for a complete stranger - causing a shock. The uncanny invokes "the strangeness within".

Narcissism could be seen as the successful displacement of the strangeness-within. By turning all others into strangers, the narcissist feeds off the emotional turmoil he himself has caused by refusing to recognize others as others but treating them as extensions of himself and thus as means to satisfy his own needs. The uncanny is rather different: the combined shock and its resulting doubt about the "unity of the self" invoke an emotion that narcissist is no longer able to experience: guilt.

The uncanny binds "us" to strangers and functions as a reminder of "our" guilt. Like a scar, it is a performative trauma, an unsettling of sovereign individuality: we are divided, broken, and thus vulnerable. Perhaps it is time to step out of the psychoanalytic framing, however, to understand that the vulnerability that constitutes a collective as "first-person-plural" may not be the exclusive domain of Oedipal desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1977). Instead, we may want to take up the challenge from schizoanalysis (ibid) and resist any form of reducing the desire to overarching meta-narratives.

For example, the desiring machines of nationalism seem to feed on idealizations of European Civilization, but in a parasitical fashion. Nationalist desires want to parade a sense of superiority, derived from a fantastical superego called Europe, but refuse to pay the price in return. The political will to extend a notion of activating human rights not only beyond but also within the borders of Europe has become very low and as we have seen with the AnkER centres in Bavaria, even a European nation which paraded its "Welcome Culture" as a beacon of humanitarian European civilization has now embraced a much more cynical mode of governance aiming to bypass due process in order to placate anti-refugee (and often xenophobic) sentiments. When those advocating human rights and procedural justice are vilified as a kind of "enemy within" and deliberately excluded from participating in integration processes, questions regarding the sustainability of European civilization as an enlightenment process are more than justified.

Indeed, the figure of the refugee as a stranger is being replaced with another figure: the parasite. The parasite is the one who benefits from a relationship with a host, whereas the host is the one who benefits less, if

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at all. This, however, is merely the particular mode of subjection associated with nationalism. In reality, parasitism is not so one-sided. In fact, one could argue that the way in which (e.g. German) nationalism deploys the barbaric practice of the arbitrary separation of friend and foe *whilst* invoking the (allegedly) universal appeal to human rights, for which it needs to welcome the stranger, is merely another version of the parasitism it seeks to condemn. Bare life also has repercussions for sovereign law.

6. *The Uncanny*

Nationalism may be conceived as a fantastical superstructure of oedipal desire. A desire for a reunification of territory and identity, as for example expressed by the Identitarian Movement (Zuquete 2018) can be easily translated into a narrative in which the (prodigal) son returns to the mother despite the repressive efforts by the authoritarian father (e.g. the state as embodied by "corrupt politicians", "perverted judges" and the "lying media"). Of course, this desire for the reunification of *Blut-und-Boden* requires a radical mythologization of history and indeed a very uneasy relationship with past events, such as the Third Reich. However, this is exactly, where the psychoanalytical framing falls short. It fails to account for a multiplicity of desires that cannot be easily subsumed under the heading of the Oedipus Complex without exercising highly radical forms of hermeneutic reductionism. Instead, the transformation of the figure of the stranger as the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*, into the figure of the parasite as the guest who arrives but never leaves, who eats your food and sleeps with your partner, a figure of deception and corruption, becomes the return of the repressed (Serres 2007): you yourself have become the enemy within.

Identity politics, however, consists of a multiplicity of desiring machines, and not all of them are necessarily sexually coded. The very fact that it may be said that some people's "thirst for justice" does not in itself allow us to distinguish between those who advocate and those who oppose universal rights. It does not justify the deployment of the Oedipal fantasy structure as the master narrative as it would accommodate completely oppositional readings and thus explain very little. Those who are being criminalized and interned in AnkER Centres and thereby bear witness to another yet mode barbarity performed in the name of European Civilization can hardly be framed as objects of oedipal desire. Not all those that demand due process are seeking a return to some mythical original unity (romanticizing the refugee), but merely a deferral of judgement, and in

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that time of non-decision, strangers should be allowed to remain strangers but still be recognized and acknowledged as full human beings.

Identity Politics struggle with the temporality of deferral: the time of indecision or non-sovereign time. This is the time of both the parasite and of the stranger. It is also the time of immunity, i.e. of an "exclusionary inclusion" (Esposito quoted in Langford 2015, 5). However, the model of governance that informs the AnkER Centres also deploys the time of immunity, as it is primarily framed at the edges of the legal-political practices of accountability. These Centres become spaces of exception and their legal framing has been de facto immunized against legal challenges. The desiring machines of the identity politics that justify this immunization are geared towards pseudo-judicial radical action and some of these may indeed be affectively modulated by fear, resentment, and hatred, but that does not make them all subservient to the Oedipal fantasy structure.

The exclusionary inclusion of immunitas is therefore also met with resilience as a reminder of the parasitical relationship between the Enlightenment Project and Nationalism that cuts across the phantasy structure of European Civilization and breaks it up. Alliances between advocates of human rights and those bearing witness to the inherent barbarism of asylum-deterrence cannot be silenced by the expansion of self-valorizing identity politics. The uncanny is not a mere epiphenomenon of oedipal desire, but a mode of doubling that can be deployed to map the desiring machines constituting "Europeanicity".

7. Asylum

In modern law, there is no right to asylum. There is just the possibility to *grant* asylum. Thus, individuals cannot claim the right to asylum. However, some Nation-States can and give themselves the possibility (structured, managed, regulated through law and regulations) to grant asylum. Ergo, within these systems, individuals can apply for asylum (e.g. Zeillinger 2016: 2). However, the phenomenon of "asylum" itself has been around longer than modern jurisprudence. Didier Fassin (2013) traces the *practice of asylum* back to antiquity. For example, Greek priests developed asylum to create places where they would be protected from warriors and invaders. The asylum would be declared as a "sacred" place where worldly forces would not apply, or laws, etc. would no longer have any power or could not be enforced as they would be outside of these sacred places. Hence, the sanctuary became a place outside of the secular jurisdiction of sovereign law but still granted immunity by the same sovereign law.

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Outside of the territoriality of sovereign law, the sanctuary is thus a space of exception (ibid: 42f). Sanctuaries were *protected* places and at the same time *protective* places. Later, these sacred places shifted from the religious (sacred) to the social/political (profane). Fassin (ibid: 42) points out that asylum as a phenomenon and practice (rather than as a legal construction) was "conceived as a social and spatial exception – a spatial protection infringing the normal function of human relations and a hospitality obligation". The increase of refugees during the World Wars and again with the (civil) wars in the Middle East and ongoing socio-economical struggles, environmental catastrophes, etc. consequently led to a shift. The practice of asylum could no longer be considered an exception but has been transformed into a legal and political issue.

Didier Fassin (2013) also shows that beyond this literal archaeology of the asylum, "asylum" can be re-contextualized with the idea of "hospitality". This notion of hospitality places the asylum from a place outside the cities into their centre. The hearth in the centre of the house signals the safe place where the guest can be sure of the protection of the host (e.g. Zeillinger 2016: 6). Also, an etymological derivation clarifies this "protecting" notion of "asylum": While "syl" means as much as "to snatch away by force" or "to take away", the preceding "a-" turns the meaning into the opposite: means as much as "not to be affected by the act of violence", to remain "unearthly" and "unharmed" (ibid: 6).

To ensure that the asylum would fulfil its function, those sacred places of asylum would be built as easily accessible places. In the context of "church asylum," for example, stones were erected at property lines, in order to signal the crossing: beyond this stone, there is a sacred place of asylum. Bells, that had to be rung to ask for asylum would be installed, or special seats in churches were declared as such, where asylum seekers were to sit to make their request known. By performing the act of "asking" (not necessary by talking, but performative acts, like crossing, ringing, sitting in a special place…) those seeking asylum would make their request known – on the one hand to those granting them asylum, e.g. the host of the house or the sacred place under the protection of a "higher power" (e.g. as in religious asylum) and on the other hand: to the forces from which those seeking asylum were fleeing, signalling that they have sought protection from their persecution. Peter Zeillinger also points out, that this act is not an act of evading legal consequences or hiding (like exile) – but rather in a positive connotation, it is an act of "reaching (safety)" or "asking-for-something (protection)" (ibid: 6).

One can hardly deny, that the phenomenon of "asylum" today is a political issue, a "matter of concern" in fact, outlined and accompanied,

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amplified by media (dramatics) and right-wing populism, etc. – on the one hand: asylum-supporters that would claim that there is in fact a right to asylum and that this is an inalienable human right that defines the core value of European civilization – on the other hand, the phenomenon as framed by asylum-critics with notions of "scarce resources", "security risks" or "identity risks" to the "host society" thereby mobilizing the figure of the "parasite". However, the confrontation between these two positions exposes the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*. The transformation of European Civilization is itself a parasitical movement: In preventing the due process of asylum, it has defiled the sanctity of the sanctuary.

One crucial point in asylum processes today seems to be the question of credibility. The asylum process is designed in such a way that in the slightest occurrence of a discrepancy, the credibility of the asylum seeker is called into question. Even if it is, for example, inconsistencies in tax information or, more often than that, if the reports about what happened to them before and during the flight are not completely complete and free of contradictions.[6] Small discrepancies can be grounds for rejection. Behind this is the conviction that protection is only granted to those who have earned it, who are innocent, truthful, sincere, honest. They do not have to show that there is a reason why they had to flee, that they fear for their lives because, for example, they are threatened with persecution in their home country because of their religious beliefs or sexual orientation - they have to show that they are sincere people.

In her study Fritsche (2016) cites one particular interesting interview section, where the person claims "I Am Asylum":

> For example, Andrej uses the phrase 'I am asylum' in the interview. A gap-oriented interpretation corrects 'asylum' to 'asylum seeker' and understands the expression as a self-positioning. However, if the linguistically concise passage makes one wonder and - with recourse to other passages in the transcript - is subjected to a more detailed analysis, a reading opens up that emphasizes the identitarian nature of being an asylum seeker, shows how necessary it is to 'be asylum' completely until the conclusion of the procedure; i.e., to adopt all the characteristics associated with the institution of asylum in one's own identity and outwardly directed self-representation. (Fritsche 2016: 185)

6 It should be noted that these are often severely traumatized people who are sent to proceedings, interviews and interrogations without psychotherapeutic support and language barriers are also a known issue through those preceding (e.g. Fritsche 2016: 168, Scherschel 2015: 131).

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If one resists the attempt to reflexively correct the wording and leaves it as it is, a trenchant use of the subject matter becomes apparent. We see a moment of tension between arrival, deportation, invocation (Levinas 2017), protection, and asylum, the "uncanny" (Freud 1970) reveals itself. In between the original notion of asylum, its actual realisation today, and the institution and the experienced situation in the AnkER Centres, a contradictory eeriness emerges, which does not connect to something entirely foreign - the absolute other (Levinas 2017) - but furthermore in a sense – not representing, but presenting a strange form of the self, the – our – very own (Kristeva 1994).

The refugee becomes not only the place of negotiation of ideas and reality, of ideal and realization/possibility, shows not only the borders: territorial borders, which are thought sovereign, but can easily be overcome; but also borders of one's own hospitality, one's own ideals, values, of which Europe is so "proud" - Europe as a union of values (Yes, which values?).

The refugee, however, is, strictly speaking, the performative personification of one's own being: of what Europe is and constitutes. S/he appeals to something pinpoints at the idea of an "us" a "community": not only of Europe but of human life: an appeal to survival. With Levinas (2011), the encounter with Death, the confrontation with the absolute stranger, is what brings to light (in other words: a moment of truth): when what is one's own comes to the fore and is absolute in the first place. Only through the certainty of Death – something that will happen to everyone, with no escape, sometime, anytime, it is inevitable: only then, that what remains becomes relevant, becomes meaningful. The scarcity of time (left) makes it valuable. The fact that life ends makes it valuable, and the fact that protection is requested signals trust and complete surrender to the possibility of death – what therefore imposes responsibility. The rejection, in turn, brings the hollowness (weakness) to light. A gap emerges, between what is imagined and what's realised. And therefore, another state of exception emerges.

The Figure of the Refugee is situated in between colliding interests, imbalances, a product of global disparities. As someone, who was thought to be somewhere, elsewhere, until the so called "refugee crisis", the Refugee was merely an abstract concept for European Citizens; something that existed, somewhere, not *here*. The arrival of thousands of refugees with the trains in September of 2015 in Munich Central Station, at the latest, changed that perspective (for Bavarians) completely. The somewhere elsewhere became *here*. The Refugee, therefore, is one of the more prominent

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realisations of what Latour (2005) calls the "glocal". And despite creeping up unnoticed, the Refugee commands attention.

Similar to Simmel's figure of the Stranger (1992 [1908]), the Refugee, not a theoretical figure, but an empirical product, emerges in between the tension of colliding, often ambivalent and fickle interests and motivations. While Simmel's Stranger binds the contradicting notions of proximity and distance, we also find the Refugee in a similar state of differing tensions. While the Stranger shows the possibility and simultaneity of proximity and distance, combined in "one" place (person), the Refugee on the other hand becomes a place of negotiations between the ideal, the values (of the "us"), and to what end "we" are willing to really live by them – and on the other side, to which extremes we are willing to go when haunted by the desire to become "whole". How much of our ideals are we willing to betray? What means are we willing to deploy? At which point becomes the sell-out unbearable? And then again: What if the point never comes – it turns out, if given the circumstances, the ideals, and values on which we built our European identity – the whole building collapses and turns out to be a complete hypocrisy? This is at stake in the collapse of the protection granted by our "citizenship", as Europeans.

Whatever happens to refugees, can happen to everyone everywhere. It's not a question of "if" but of possibilities ~ who is more or less at risk. One might find comfort in knowing, one's citizenship would protect against such things, one being a human being, therefore having basic human rights, the fact, that one *is* human, should, would, must be enough. But then again: citizenship is granted by existing nation-states. If the nation-state collapses, only basic human rights remain. And the case of the refugee shows how "being a human being" isn't quite enough.

Speaking with Levinas (2011): The Refugee emerges as the Other and by asking the question "who are you?", one brings forth the notion of an "own", that is, the question of how one would construct one's identity. (When existing ideas of nationality, territoriality, belonging to one state, coming from somewhere, sharing history with others, who are more/less similar, etc. – present an "easy" answer, something, a collection of ideas and value systems, already negotiated, accepted, agreed upon, etc. – a seemingly easy solution). With Kristeva (1970), we can look upon the Refugee and furthermore on *how* we meet the Refugee? With the chances of showing the more hidden side of this thought "identity", the "uncanny" of the very own, that which is/was rejected and re-emerges in and with the figure of the other, the stranger, the refugee – that, what is hidden behind walls, the fact, that the ideal of basic human rights, which was thought to be unconditional, is in fact, very conditional and not granted to everyone.

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8. Conclusion

Parasite, stranger, and uncanny are figures haunting the current narratives of European civilization. A sociological analysis of asylum procedures of the AnkER Centres in Bavaria reveals that they are indeed spaces of exception, constituting forms of bare life that no longer recognize the Homo Sacer as a universal condition. This analysis, however, becomes more convincing when it integrates approaches and theoretical figures from neighbouring disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, with the Freudian "uncanny" or philosophy like Kristeva's (1994) "strangers to ourselves" and Levinas' (2011) notion of the "Other". It is not enough to point out that asylum seekers are mistreated, that due process is being circumvented, that politics betray the very foundations of law; it should now be clear that such violations have repercussions for us all.

Our focus was the performative power of narratives, and in this case, the "Narration of Europe", the Fortress, the "Role Model" with Germany at its core, the "trendsetter" of a self-proclaimed "Welcoming Culture", when Germany "showed the world" how Refugees should be welcomed with open arms in 2015 and set an example by doing so (Mack and Van Loon 2020). Our analysis revealed its darker side. One that's meant to be banned behind walls of the space of exception – not the humans, who are imprisoned in the AnkER Centres, waiting for their deportation, but the structures of incrimination without due process, that brought and incarcerated them there.

Europe is not negotiated only at its territorial borders. It's not only the Mediterranean Sea or on the Balkan route, where one can trace those negotiations. There is not one, but many places. And not all of them seem to be solemnly geographical to pinpoint. One could formulate the thesis, that the figure of the refugee itself becomes a "place for negotiations". The new elements in the room here are those of stranger versus parasite and a negative dialectics of parasitism as the uncanny that haunts identity politics. Esposito's triad of the unpolitical-communitas-immunitas (Langford 2015, 1-9) may be of further use when flashing out the uncanny of parasitical identity politics.

In confrontation with the stranger, it is, in fact, our very own "strangeness-within", whose vulnerability has been exposed. Moreover, the way in which the stranger is "managed" (subjected to narrative shifts and political interests, reduced to a mere pawn rendered immobile and unproductive) pinpoints more precisely the *limits* of imagined identities and postulated values that are thought to be the cornerstones of a society/community. The discourse emerging around those controversies – not

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the themes discussed in media, but how people are treated (as human beings) shows furthermore the intensity and struggle within rather than at the borders.

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