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From Bethlehem, according to the Promise – or Rather from Nazareth?

Narrative and History in John's Gospel

Unter Einbeziehung der neueren Entwicklungen in der Geschichtstheorie sowie unter Berücksichtigung neuerer narratologischer Zugänge zur Darstellung von Fiktion und Faktualität in Erzähltexten des historiographischen Diskurses nimmt der Beitrag die im Johannesevangelium erkennbare Einschreibung der Jesusgeschichte in die antike Zeitgeschichte als eine Form der narrativen Historiographie in den Blick. Fiktionale Elemente und narrative Strategien der Authentifizierung sind der historiographischen Erzählung und Geschichtsdeutung inhärent, der im vierten Evangelium erkennbare Anspruch auf historische Referenzialität verweist auf den Anspruch der Vermittlung diskursiver Wahrheit. Der Beitrag möchte aufzeigen, wie mithilfe narratologischer Methodik und unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Formen und Funktionen literarischer Authentifizierungsstrategien das im Johannesevangelium vertretene Geschichtsverständnis differenziert werden kann.

Keywords: Gospel of John, (construction of) history, historiography, narrative, narratology, fiction, factuality

1 The Gospel of John as Theological and Historiographical Narrative

In his *Historia ecclesiastica* Eusebius refers to Clement of Alexandria concerning the order in which the gospels were written. Clement testifies that “last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had [already] been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his students, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel (πνευματικὸν εὐαγγέλιον).”¹ Ever since, the Fourth Gospel has tended to be neglected as a source in historical Jesus research. The theological scope of John's Gospel points to a symbolic

1 *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7 (GCS 6/2): Τὸν μέντοι Ἰωάννην ἔσχατον, συνιδόντα ὅτι τὰ σωματικὰ ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις δεδήλωται, προτραπέντα ὑπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων, πνεύματι θεοφορηθέντα πνευματικὸν ποιῆσαι εὐαγγέλιον (trans. adapted from *NPNF*² 1.261).

interpretation of many historical details and leads to the assumption that the material in the text is both ahistorical and inaccurate. Hence, John is misleading in the quest for the historical Jesus.² This notion, which dominated research on the Gospel of John until at least the nineteenth century, seems in some instances to have been tacitly accepted as part of the impetus of the current trends in Johannine studies that focus on narratology and the literary nature of the Gospel text.³

There are also voices, however, that stress the historical dimension of the Fourth Gospel: The works of exegetes like Erwin R. Goodenough, Charles H. Dodd, Rudolf Bultmann and Franz Mußner constitute major milestones concerning the perception of the historicity of the Fourth Gospel.⁴ More recently Richard Bauckham, Paul N. Anderson, Urban C. von Wahlde as well as Andreas J. Köstenberger and Jean Zumstein have analyzed the textual indicators of New Testament historiography in the Gospel of John and have emphasized the importance of the concise and precise historical references as well as the symbolic use of those references in the Fourth Gospel.

Anderson⁵ and von Wahlde⁶ have focused on the historical plausibility and reliability of Johannine references. While Anderson's particular inter-

2 E.g., F.C. Baur or D.F. Strauß, cf. U.C. von Wahlde, "Archaeology and John's Gospel," in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. J. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, Mich., 2006), 523–586, here 524; cf. also N. Krieger, "Fiktive Orte der Johannestaufe," *ZNW* 45 (1954), 121–123.

3 Cf., e.g., H. Thyen's commentary, or approaches to the Gospel within the genre of the ancient novel (J.-A. Brant).

4 Cf. P.N. Anderson, "Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John: Implications for Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology," in *Jesus and Archaeology* (see n. 2), 587–618, here 594f.

5 Cf. Anderson, "Aspects of Historicity" (see n. 4). Cf. also the publications of the "John, Jesus, and History Project": P.N. Anderson, F. Just, and T. Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 1: *Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (SBL Symposium Series 44; Atlanta, 2007); vol. 2: *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (SBL.ECLS 2; Atlanta, 2009), in which the Gospel of John is considered a historically reliable source of equal standing to the Synoptics and the historical referentiality in John's text is analyzed particularly with regard to extra-textual references, which are then examined and tested with the help of archaeology. Cf. also P.N. Anderson, "Das 'John, Jesus, and History'-Projekt," *ZNT* 23 (2009), 12–26. Cf. especially in this respect M.M. Thompson, "The 'Spiritual Gospel': How John the Theologian Writes History," in *Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, 103–107, here 103f.: Thompson applies this to the Gospel of John in acknowledging that "John and its early interpreters apparently thought that interpretation disclosed rather than veiled the meaning of history." She proposes, however, that "there is no way of getting into the 'spiritual' meaning of history through purely historical methods" – the interpreter must rather look at the Gospel text as history in narrative and theologically-interpreted form and ask, "whether John's theology might not also tell us something about Jesus" – i. e., historical and historiographical aspects have to be looked for in John's theological account.

est focuses on the historical reliability of the Gospel text with a view to the quest for the historical Jesus, von Wahlde attempts to determine “what is historical, accurate, and specific in the Gospel and what is genuinely late, anachronistic, and symbolic.”⁷ He states that the elements of historiography employed in the Gospel suggest that the “intrinsic historicity and accuracy”⁸ of Johannine historical references allow for an evaluation of the reliability of the text.⁹

Bauckham’s approach is to consider “whether this Gospel presents itself as historiography, whether it would have appeared as historiography to competent contemporary readers” – a question he presents as the “prior question to that of historical reliability.”¹⁰ In his examination, Bauckham lists topographical and chronological references in the Fourth Gospel as well as other literary aspects usually attributed to historiography (e.g., chronology, selectivity, narrative asides, eyewitness testimony, discourses and dialogues).

In his contribution entitled “The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions”¹¹ Köstenberger stresses, in particular, the dependence of John’s Gospel upon Jewish and Old Testament historiography. He lists literary elements, which the Evangelist employs in accordance with ancient historiographical and biographical texts, including both text-internal aspects like the thematic spectrum (important acts and works, death and consequences, etc.), the emphasis and specific presentation of central elements of the narrative (heroes), and style and language, as well as text-external aspects like structure, order, scope, introduction, and closing remark. Köstenberger concludes that the Fourth Gospel took up the literary conventions of ancient historiography in order to facilitate its reception with particular recipients.¹²

6 Cf. von Wahlde, “Archaeology and John’s Gospel” (see n. 2).

7 Von Wahlde, “Archaeology and John’s Gospel” (see n. 2), 583.

8 Von Wahlde, “Archaeology and John’s Gospel” (see n. 2), 583.

9 Cf. in this respect also C.L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill., 2001), 56f., and C. Bennema, “The Historical Reliability of the Gospel of John,” *Foundations* 67 (2014), 4–25.

10 R. Bauckham, “Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John,” in *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids, Mich., 2007), 93–112, here 94.

11 Cf. A.J. Köstenberger, “The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions,” in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. S.E. Porter and A.W. Pitts; TENTS 9; Leiden, 2013), 435–462.

12 Similar approaches have been applied to the Synoptic Gospels: Clare K. Rothschild identified four literary techniques of historiographical rhetoric in Luke-Acts (patterns

Zumstein proposes that the Fourth Gospel be understood as literary historiography (“histoire poétique”), as its presentation of history constitutes a pneumatological “relecture” of past events effected through the use of fictionalizing techniques and with the addition of fictive passages.¹³ In the course of this “relecture,” the historical frame of reference shifts in that past events are interpreted from a post-Easter perspective. The shift of the frame of reference through the author’s interpretation, for example, when Jesus’s miracles are presented as signs or the passion narrative as triumphant progress, is then described as a fictionalization of the historical report.¹⁴ Through such a “relecture,” history is expressly subjected to a process of (re)interpretation and construction. However, the Gospel’s claim to convey “truth” and to be a factual presentation of a Jesus story does not seem to be overthrown by the refusal to align with conventions of ancient historiography.

In fact, “genre bending” has to be considered as general practice in ancient literature. Harold W. Attridge argues that the Gospel of John intentionally bends the conventions of ancient historiography and biography in order to convey the Jesus story in a more meaningful way. It is precisely through a dramatized narrative and the use of conceptual artistry that the reader experiences transformative insights into the deeper truth of the

of recurrence, prediction, the verb *δεῖ*, exaggeration) which indicate that the author was familiar with literary conventions of ancient historiography and adapted them for the requirements of his recipients, cf. C.K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT 2/175; Tübingen, 2004). Eve-Marie Becker’s monograph demonstrates how the Gospel of Mark can be read within the literary conventions of ancient historiography by comparing it with ancient historiographers (Polybius, Artapanus, Sallust, Nicolaus of Damascus, Josephus, and Tacitus). Cf. E.-M. Becker, *Das Markusevangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie* (WUNT 194; Tübingen, 2006).

- 13 Cf. J. Zumstein, “Der irdische Jesus im Johannesevangelium,” in *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (2nd ed.; Zurich, 2004), 62–77; cf. also id., *Das Johannesevangelium* (KEK 2; Göttingen, 2016), 37: “Unter Fiktion ist [...] die Art und Weise zu verstehen, in der der Erzähler sein Material auswählt und es in Erzählform bringt, indem er es an einen bestimmten Platz in der erzählten Geschichte stellt, indem er es hervorhebt, entfaltet, umformuliert oder interpretiert. Eine historische Darstellung, die immer ein Konstrukt ist, kommt nicht umhin, Geschichte und Fiktion miteinander zu verflechten. Im Gebiet der Geschichtsschreibung entstammt die Fiktion also nicht primär der Phantasie, sondern gehört in den Bereich der Interpretation.”
- 14 Cf. also E.-M. Becker, “John 13 as Counter-Memory: How the Fourth Gospel Revises Early Christian Historiography,” in *The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic* (ed. K.B. Larsen; *Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica* 3; Göttingen, 2015), 269–281, who argues with regard to John 13:1–20 that John can be read with Michel Foucault as a “counter-memory” “which aims to intentionally transform and manipulate the literary memory designed by Mark and Luke” (*ibid.*, 273).

gospel story.¹⁵ “The key task for a contemporary reader is [...] to trace the arc of the bending.”¹⁶ Therefore the most promising way to analyze the way John works in order to convey the Jesus story is not by defining analogies between the Gospel text and ancient literary conventions but rather by describing the literary methods and strategies through which the Fourth Gospel expresses and establishes its claim to convey a meaningful Jesus (hi)story.

This article will suggest an approach to the narrative of John’s Gospel that allows the reader to discern how strategies of authentication are employed in the text in order to (re)construct and hence (re)create history in John’s distinctive telling of the Jesus story. I will *firstly* trace the development of the understanding of history and historiography following the lead of the “linguistic turn” (2); *secondly*, I will locate ancient historiography within the framework of narratology, fiction, and factuality (3); and *thirdly*, I will demonstrate in an exemplary manner how to identify literary strategies within John’s Gospel which are employed to authenticate the events presented and corroborate the readers’ perception of the Gospel text as factual narrative (4).

2 A New or Re-Newed Understanding of History

In the nineteenth and until the middle of the twentieth century historicism was the predominant movement in the study of history.¹⁷ At the same time, however, Leopold von Ranke’s well-known dictum, that the task of historiography is to show the past “as it actually was,”¹⁸ can in its essence already be found in ancient literature. The writings of Polybius repeatedly voice criticism concerning those ancient historiographers, who embellish their presentation of history with exaggerated or entirely fictitious repa-

15 H.W. Attridge, “Genre Matters,” in *Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic* (see n. 14), 27–46.

16 Attridge, “Genre Matters” (see n. 15), 31.

17 Cf. the more extensive discussion in S. Luther, “Jesus was a man, ... but Christ was a fiction”: Authentizitätskonstruktion in der antiken narrative Historiographie am Beispiel lukanischer Gleichniserzählungen,” in *Wie Geschichten Geschichte schreiben: Frühchristliche Literatur im Spannungsfeld von Faktualität und Fiktionalität* (ed. S. Luther et al.; WUNT 2/395; Tübingen, 2015), 181–208, here 184–192.

18 Cf. *Leopold von Ranke’s Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 33/34: *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (2nd ed.; Leipzig, 1874), VI: “Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beygemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß sagen, wie es eigentlich gewesen.”

τεία or παραδοξολογία.¹⁹ In the second century AD, Lucian of Samosata seems to present in his work *De historia conscribenda* (*Hist. conscr.*) an understanding of pragmatic historiography in the tradition of Thucydides.²⁰ Lucian emphasizes the distinction between historiography and encomium (*Hist. conscr.* 7) and, more fundamentally, between historiography and poetry (ποιητική, *Hist. conscr.* 8): although poetry is free to present matters in the way the author chooses, even with the help of fictional elements, historiography has to present the past “as it was” without the use of fictional elements and with the purpose of allowing an understanding of the present and enabling (political) decisions and actions in the present (cf. *Hist. conscr.* 42). Although Lucian criticizes the use of fictional passages in historiographical texts and stresses the historical referentiality of historiography, he is not opposed to rhetorical and stylistic devices, if they serve the presentation of the past (cf. *Hist. conscr.* 7 and 10).²¹ Lucian’s protest against the way his contemporaries wrote historiography offers a glimpse of the historiographical conventions of antiquity and reveals that the fictional mode of narrative was always part of the comprehension of reality in antiquity.²² Herodotus employs mythical, fictional elements in historiography, and Cicero and Quintilian highlight the importance of ἐνάργεια, of representation and visualization of the past in order to create

19 Cf. E. Plümacher, “Τερατεία: Fiktion und Wunder in der hellenistisch-römischen Geschichtsschreibung und in der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Geschichte und Geschichten: Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte und zu den Johannesakten* (ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker; WUNT 170; Tübingen, 2004), 33–83, here 45.

20 Cf. Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 39. Cf. here especially the contrasting approach by C.K. Rothschild, “Irony and Truth: The Value of *De Historia Conscribenda* for Understanding Hellenistic and Early Roman Period Historiographical Method,” in *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und frühchristlicher Historiographie* (ed. J. Frey et al.; BZNW 162; Berlin, 2009), 277–291, who reads Lucian from the perspective of irony.

21 Cf. M. Bauspiess, “Die Pragmatik der Geschichte: Der Metadiskurs zur Geschichtsschreibung in neutestamentlicher Zeit und die Diskussion nach dem ‘linguistic turn,’” in *Wie Geschichten Geschichte schreiben* (see n. 17), 363–390; Lucian’s conception of history has often been regarded as representative for historiography in New Testament times, cf. D. Marguerat, “Wie historisch ist die Apostelgeschichte?” *ZNT* 18 (2006), 44–51, here 48; J. Schröter, “Zur Stellung der Apostelgeschichte im Kontext der antiken Historiographie,” in *Apostelgeschichte im Kontext* (see n. 20), 26–47; however, this position has also been challenged: cf. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts* (see n. 12). Cf. more generally M. Bauspiess, *Geschichte und Erkenntnis im Lukanischen Doppelwerk: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu einer christlichen Perspektive auf Geschichte* (ABIG 42; Leipzig, 2012), here 514–520.

22 Cf. K. Backhaus, “Spielräume der Wahrheit: Zur Konstruktivität in der hellenistisch-römischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen: Zur Konstruktivität in Geschichtstheorie und Exegese* (ed. K. Backhaus and G. Häfner; BThSt 86; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2007), 1–29, here 3–5.

the impression that the readers are eyewitnesses. It is the firm allegiance to the overall sense of the historical past (“Gesamtsinn,” ἡ ξύμπασα γνώμη), which legitimizes the application of fictional elements and narratological methods in historiography.²³ Ancient historiography often adopts a novelistic character.²⁴ Through narrative construction, historical facts are situated within a historiographical narrative, which aims to provide an explanation for past reality and to endow brute facts with meaning. Historiography intends not only to convey knowledge about the past, it also intends to convince, to regale, to move, and to transfix the reader. According to Aristotle, historiographers and poets are distinguished in that the former reports what has happened, i. e., specific details and events, whereas the latter reports what might happen at any time and in any place, i. e., the more general view (*Poet.* 1451b). Hence, poetry is more philosophical and more genuine (σπουδαιότερος) than historiography, in that it looks to the more general truths, but like historiography it provides access to truth and reality. The fictional elements of poetry therefore do not reduce the truth content, but present reality in a different way – not as mimetic reconstruction or precise representation of past events, but through conscious fictional construction.²⁵ These examples are proof enough to suggest that in ancient literature fiction is not generally set against historiography; rather, fictional elements, narrative strategies, rhetoric, etc. are used to create a certain form of literary historiography, that accepts “fiction” in the (re)construction of past reality as long as it is adequately employed.²⁶ While historiography always contained elements of fiction, the distinction between fictionality and factuality in the presentation of the past has always been difficult to determine.²⁷ Hence, as Ruben Zimmermann points out, “the linguistic and stylistic constructivism of historiog-

23 Cf. Backhaus, “Spielräume der Wahrheit” (see n. 22), 11. “Eine imaginative Konkretisierung [...] tat dem Wahrheitsanspruch im geheimen Einvernehmen mit dem Leser keinen Abbruch, sondern erdete ihn. Das ist keine Rekonstruktion und auch keine glatte Konstruktion. Eher könnte man von *rhetorischer Reimagination* sprechen” (ibid., 12).

24 Cf. Backhaus, “Spielräume der Wahrheit” (see n. 22), 14–20.

25 Cf. W. Rösler, “Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität in der Antike,” *Poetica* 12 (1980), 283–319.

26 Cf. D. Dormeyer, “Pragmatische und pathetische Geschichtsschreibung in der griechischen Historiographie, im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament,” in *Historiographie und Biographie im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (ed. T. Schmeller; NTOA 69; Göttingen, 2009), 1–33.

27 Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 1.263–269, who distinguishes between truth (ἀλήθεια), invention (πλάσμα), and lies (ψευδῆ) and criticizes the lack of objective criteria of factuality; cf. G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, 1994), 10f.

raphy is not an invention of the late twentieth century, but is also applicable to ancient historiographers.”²⁸

These precursors of postmodern thought in antiquity find their modern counterpart in narratologists and historians influenced by the “linguistic turn” – like Gérard Genette,²⁹ Arthur C. Danto,³⁰ Hayden White,³¹ Paul Ricœur³² as well as Frank Ankersmit,³³ Jörn Rüsen,³⁴ Chris Lorenz,³⁵ Lucian Hölscher,³⁶ and Hans-Jürgen Goertz.³⁷ The postmodern debate in the study of history stresses the constructive and narrative form in which we have access – the only access – to the historical past and questions the clear divide between historiography and poetry as commonly understood in historicist historiography.³⁸ In his seminal

28 R. Zimmermann, “History as Text” (unpublished manuscript); cf. id., “Phantastische Tatsachenberichte?! Wundererzählungen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Historiographie und Phantastik,” in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Geschichtliche, literarische und rezeptionsorientierte Aspekte* (ed. B. Kollmann and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 339; Tübingen, 2014), 469–494, here 476–483.

29 Cf., e.g., G. Genette, “Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative,” in *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 755–774.

30 Cf. A.C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York, 1985).

31 Cf. H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1975); id., *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978); id., *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987); id., “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” in *The Literature of Fact* (ed. A. Fletcher; New York, 1976), 21–44.

32 Cf. P. Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* (3 vols.; Chicago, 1984–1988); trans. of *Temps et récit* (3 vols.; Paris, 1983–1985).

33 Cf. F. Ankersmit, *Knowing and Telling Time: The Anglo-Saxon Debate* (Middletown, Conn., 1986); id., *Historical Representation* (Stanford, 2001).

34 Cf. J. Rüsen, “Historisches Erzählen,” in *Zerbrechende Zeit: Über den Sinn der Geschichte* (Cologne, 2001), 43–105.

35 Lorenz has pointed out that historical facts are never directly accessible but are only available through texts that already involve interpretation and that we only have access to the past through language, never directly, but always via the indirect representation and perspective of a speaker’s position. Cf. C. Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie* (Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur 13; Cologne, 1997), 17–22.

36 Hölscher emphasized the constructive character of historical events, highlighting that a historically relevant proposition is always embedded in interpretation so that facts and their interpretation are always closely linked. Cf. L. Hölscher, “Ereignis,” in *Lexikon Geschichtswissenschaft* (ed. S. Jordan; Stuttgart, 2002), 72 f. Cf. also R. Zimmermann, “Geschichtstheorien und Neues Testament: Gedächtnis, Diskurs, Kultur und Narration in der historiographischen Diskussion,” *EC* 4 (2011), 417–444, here 432 f.

37 Cf. H.-J. Goertz, *Unsichere Geschichte: Zur Theorie historischer Referenzialität* (Stuttgart, 2001).

38 Cf., e.g., Zimmermann, “Geschichtstheorien” (see n. 36); J. Schröter, “Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft jenseits des Historismus: Neuere Entwicklungen in der Geschichts-

work *Metahistory*, White proposes that historiography is never an objective representation of the past and that all historical representations are “verbal fictions,” thus emphasizing the analogy between historiography and poetry in their being both fictional, subjective constructions of a past reality represented within a narrative framework. White claims that facts do not exist independently and that all claims to factuality are merely fiction or “fictions of factual representations.”³⁹ As others have pointed out, however, this perspective must not lead to an elimination of the differences between factuality and fictionality, between historiography and poetry.⁴⁰ Although events are, from the outset, presented through a narrative structure and only become events and “historical facts” through historical experience⁴¹ in the course of the narrative of human life⁴² and their transformation into language,⁴³ narrative must not be equated with fiction.⁴⁴ History is always only available in narrative form, historical narrative always incorporates fictional elements, but historical narrative is not *per definitionem* fiction.⁴⁵

theorie und ihre Bedeutung für die Exegese urchristlicher Schriften,” *TLZ* 128 (2003), 855–866.

39 Cf. the essay with this title in H. White, *The Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), 121–134.

40 Cf. A. Nünning, “‘Verbal Fictions?’ Kritische Überlegungen und narratologische Alternativen zu Hayden Whites Einebnung des Gegensatzes zwischen Historiographie und Literatur,” *LWJ* 40 (1999), 351–380, here 353f. For explicit criticism of White’s position, cf. *ibid.*, 364–368.

41 Cf. F.R. Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford, 2005), 9.

42 Cf. T.R. Wolf, “Leben in Geschichte(n): Zur Hermeneutik des historisch-narrativen Subjekts,” in *Historisierte Subjekte – Subjektivierte Historie: Zur Verfügbarkeit und Unverfügbarkeit von Geschichte* (ed. S. Deines et al.; Berlin, 2003), 47–61, here 56–60.

43 Cf. S. Otto, “Können Tatsachen sprechen? Überlegungen zur Darstellbarkeit historischer Fakten,” in *Sprache der Geschichte* (ed. J. Trabant; Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 62; Munich, 2005), 65–74.

44 Cf. Zimmermann, “Geschichtstheorien” (see n. 36), 428, who points out that the logical conclusion from White’s position is that “Historische Erzählungen sind immer auch fiktionale Erzählungen, indem sie den historischen Stoff mit den Mitteln der Narrativität zur Darstellung bringen.”

45 Cf. here also Bauspiess, “Pragmatik der Geschichte” (see n. 21).

3 Historical Narratives within the Framework of Narratology, Factuality, and Fiction

Several publications in the past few years have attempted to specify the distinctive narratology of historiographical discourse.⁴⁶ The basis of all these approaches is the common acknowledgement of the constructive character of history, which leads to the assumption that historiographical texts create structures and produce literary and narratological effects within texts and thus construct history. Historiographical narrative, however, does not equal fiction. When historiography is considered from a narratological perspective, the methodology for the analysis of fictional texts can be applied to historiography, but it needs to be expanded considerably in order to do justice to the pragmatic claim to historical referentiality. Dorrit Cohn has pointed out that it is exactly this claim of historical referentiality that needs to come into focus.⁴⁷ Whereas the identification of fictional narrative is based on a variety of indicators of fictionality, historiographical texts should be identifiable through “signals of reality” (“Wirklichkeitssignale”).⁴⁸ Unfortunately, however, a paucity of studies in the latter field means that careful consideration of this issues remains a scholarly *desideratum*.⁴⁹ The prevalent focus on narratology in the study of history has been increasingly criticized, for narrative theories of historiography often entail an emphasis on fictional elements with a neglect of historical referentiality and the relationship between literature and extra-textual historical reality.⁵⁰ Yet, historiographical narrative is characterized by a pragmatic claim to historical referentiality, that is, to an extra-linguis-

46 Cf. S. Jaeger, “Erzählen im historiographischen Diskurs,” in *Wirklichkeitserzählungen: Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens* (ed. C. Klein and M. Martínez; Stuttgart, 2009), 110–135, here 118–128; cf. also the references to further literature in Luther, “Jesus was a man” (see n. 17), 190–192.

47 Cf. D. Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore, 1999), here 109–131; cf. also id., “Signposts of Fictionality,” *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 775–804; id., “Historisches und literarisches Erzählen: Narratologische Kennzeichen der Fiktionalität,” *Sprachkunst: Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft* 26 (1995), 105–112, here 108.

48 R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), here 285; cf. also id., “Fiktion und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit,” *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 3 (2007), 39–54.

49 Cf. Luther, “Jesus was a man” (see n. 17), 192–200; ead., “Erdichtete Wahrheit oder bezugte Fiktion? Realitäts- und Fiktionalitätsindikatoren in frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen – eine Problemanzeige,” in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* (see n. 28), 345–368, here 347–360.

50 Cf. G. Häfner, “Konstruktion und Referenz: Impulse aus der neueren geschichtstheoretischen Diskussion,” in *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen* (see n. 22), 67–96, here 89.

tic historical reality and not to a constructed fictional world. Narrative within the historiographical discourse is regarded as the vehicle between historical knowledge and historical explanation or creation of meaning on the one hand and historiographical literary representation on the other hand.⁵¹

The work of Cohn,⁵² Genette,⁵³ Ansgar Nünning,⁵⁴ Monika Fludernik,⁵⁵ Frank Zipfel,⁵⁶ Irmgard Nickel-Bacon, Norbert Groeben, and Margrit Schreier⁵⁷ and others, which are rooted in the debate on indicators of fictionality, may allow inferences concerning indicators of factuality or reality signals. John Searle⁵⁸ and Genette,⁵⁹ but also Albrecht Koschorke⁶⁰ and others, however, rightly argued that these criteria are not generally and necessarily applicable to the distinction between fiction and non-fiction.

- 51 A narrative can be identified when historical facts, events, and situations are related to each other within a time sequence. Cf. A. Munslow, "Narrative," in *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (ed. A. Munslow; 2nd ed.; London, 2006), 169–174, here 169f.; cf. also S. Jaeger, "Erzähltheorie und Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär* (ed. V. and A. Nünning; Trier, 2002), 237–263, here 237.
- 52 Cf. Cohn, "Historisches und literarisches Erzählen" (see n. 47); id., "Signposts of Fictionality" (see n. 47). Cf. also A. Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences, Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston, 1982); K. Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung* (3rd ed.; Stuttgart, 1977).
- 53 Cf. G. Genette, *Fiktion und Diktion* (Munich, 1992), 83. For a distinction between textual (intra-textual) and paratextual (extra-textual) signals of fictionality, cf. id., *Seuils* (Paris, 1987).
- 54 Cf. A. Nünning, "How to Distinguish between Fictional and Factual Narratives: Narratological and Systemtheoretical Suggestions," in *Fact and Fiction in Narrative: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (ed. L.-A. Skalin; Örebro Studies in Literary History and Criticism 4; Örebro, 2005), 21–56; id., "Fiktionalitätssignale," in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie* (ed. A. Nünning; 4th ed.; Stuttgart, 2008), 202–203.
- 55 Cf. M. Fludernik, "Fiction vs. Non-Fiction: Narratological Differentiations," in *Erzählen und Erzähltheorie im 20. Jahrhundert* (ed. J. Helbig; Heidelberg, 2001), 85–103.
- 56 Cf. F. Zipfel, *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität: Analysen zur Fiktion in der Literatur und zum Fiktionsbegriff in der Literaturwissenschaft* (Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft 2; Berlin, 2001).
- 57 Cf. I. Nickel-Bacon, N. Groeben, and M. Schreier, "Fiktionssignale Pragmatisch: Ein medienübergreifendes Modell zur Unterscheidung von Fiktion(en) und Realität(en)," *Poetica: Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* 32 (2000), 267–299.
- 58 Cf. J.R. Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6 (1975), 319–332, here 325.
- 59 Cf. G. Genette, "Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative," *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 755–774, here 772f.
- 60 Cf. A. Koschorke, *Wahrheit und Erfindung: Grundzüge einer Allgemeinen Erzähltheorie* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012). As language does not possess "intrinsische Realitätszeichen" (ibid., 332), the same is true for narrative: "bis auf wenige, noch dazu unzuverlässige Marker funktionieren Erzählungen auf gleiche Weise, ob ihre Gegenstände nun vorhanden oder erfunden sind" (ibid., 333).

tion. They claim that there are no syntactic, semantic, or narratological characteristics of a text which identify it as fictional or non-fictional. While characteristics of fictional literature often also apply to non-fictional literature, definite signals of reality (or factuality) cannot be established. Although fictional texts may simulate factuality and referentiality, non-fictional texts may use fictionalizing literary techniques like interior monologue and indirect discourse. Hence it is not possible to define clear-cut literary criteria to distinguish between fictional and non-fictional texts. This position can be considered as generally accepted in current research in literary studies.⁶¹

As texts rarely occur in a pure form ("Reinform") of fictional or non-fictional narrative, Per Krogh Hansen proposes abandoning the clear-cut distinction between fact and fiction and instead advances a continuum model which allows for the grading of texts on a scale between the two poles of fact and fiction and then to classify them according to their specific degree of fictionality or factuality.⁶² Taking up this approach regarding the discourse on fictivity, fictionality, and factuality, Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel established new categories in analysing narrative texts: based on the literary theory of Genette, whose literary analysis focuses basically on the "How" and the "What" of a narrative, they differentiate between fictional vs. factual (thus describing the pragmatic status of speech) and between real vs. fictive (relating to the ontological status, the historical referentiality, of the content of speech).⁶³ Building upon this paradigm, Martínez and Christian Klein have proposed a model of varying degrees of authenticity or fictionality.⁶⁴ The categories of narratives claim-

61 Cf. Fludernik, "Fiction vs. Non-Fiction" (see n. 55), 94f.

62 Cf. P.K. Hansen, "When Facts Become Fiction: On Extra-Textual Unreliable Narration," in *Fact and Fiction in Narrative* (see n. 54), 283–307, here 289f.; analogous, but with respect to miracle narratives, is the discussion in R. Zimmermann, "Frühchristliche Wundererzählungen – eine Hinführung," in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, vol. 1: *Die Wunder Jesu* (ed. R. Zimmermann et al.; Gütersloh, 2012), 5–67, here 38. Cf. in this context T. Todorov, *Einführung in die fantastische Literatur* (Berlin, 2013); M. Frenschkowski, "Phantastik," *HWRh* 10 (2011), 886–900, here 888. For elements of the fantastic in ancient literature, cf. G. Kloss, "Mythos und Realität: Paradoxe Phantastik in antiken Texten," in *Fremde Wirklichkeiten: Literarische Phantastik und antike Literatur* (ed. N. Hömke and M. Baumbach; Kalliope 6; Heidelberg, 2006), 143–159. With reference to early Christian literature, cf. M. Frenschkowski, "Vision als Imagination: Beobachtungen zum differenzierten Wirklichkeitsanspruch frühchristlicher Visionsliteratur," *ibid.*, 339–366.

63 Cf. M. Martínez and M. Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie* (9th ed.; Munich, 2012), 15f. This distinction is based on Zipfel, *Fiktion* (see n. 56).

64 Cf. C. Klein and M. Martínez, *Wirklichkeitserzählungen: Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens* (Stuttgart, 2009), 4f.; cf. also M. Martínez, "Zur Ein-

ing to depict reality are based on a distinction between authenticity and authenticating narrative strategies.⁶⁵ The basic classification criterion is the claim expressed in the text: (1) factual narratives with fictionalizing narrative strategies, (2) factual narratives with fictive contents, (3) fictional narratives with factual contents and (4) fictional narratives with factual mode of speech.⁶⁶

When talking about historiography in the Gospel of John, this scheme suggests that we are talking about either category (1), factual texts with fictionalizing literary strategies, or category (2), factual narratives with fictive content. The Gospel text presents itself as a narration of historical events, a narrative of historical reality (“Wirklichkeitserzählung”)⁶⁷ and hence as narrative historiography.⁶⁸ It is a text with a decisive claim to historical referentiality, even as it employs narrative methodology and strategies and, at times, incorporates fictional elements and passages. It is “text-as-history” narrative with the specific characteristic of historical referentiality.⁶⁹ In sum: whereas it is not possible to determine on the textual level whether the contents are historical or fictive,⁷⁰ the claim to factuality can be detected and analyzed in the text through a close reading of the indicators of historical referentiality. What has to come into focus in more detail in the following is how this claim to historical referentiality is manifest in this

führung: Authentizität und Medialität in künstlerischen Darstellungen des Holocaust,” in *Der Holocaust und die Künste: Medialität und Authentizität von Holocaust-Darstellungen in Literatur, Film, Video, Malerei, Denkmälern, Comic und Musik* (ed. M. Martínez; Bielefeld, 2004), 7–21.

65 Cf. A. Weixler, “Authentisches erzählen – authentisches Erzählen: Über Authentizität als Zuschreibungsphänomen und Pakt,” in *Authentisches Erzählen: Produktion, Narration, Rezeption* (ed. A. Weixler; Narratologia 33; Berlin, 2012), 1–32, here 25.

66 Cf. Klein and Martínez, *Wirklichkeitserzählungen* (see n. 64), 4f.

67 Klein and Martínez identify three types of narratives of historical reality: descriptive narratives (about things that have happened, e.g., historiography), normative narratives (about things that are to happen), and predictive narratives (about things that will happen). Narratives of historical reality, however, often consist of a combination of those three types, cf. Klein and Martínez, *Wirklichkeitserzählungen* (see n. 64), 6f.

68 However, as Stephan Jaeger shows, it is reality-narrative on a second level, according to Ricoeur’s “Mimesis II,” as it is narrative (as historical discourse) about or based on narratives (narrative sources), cf. Jaeger, “Erzählen im historiographischen Diskurs” (see n. 46), 132.

69 Cf. A. Munslow, *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke, 2007). Cf. also Zimmermann, “Frühchristliche Wundererzählungen” (see n. 62), 32–40.

70 Cf. M. Ebner, “Die Exorzismen Jesu als Testfall für die historische Rückfrage: Die Herausforderung des linguistic turn als Chance für die exegetische Wissenschaft,” in *Jesus – Gestalt und Gestaltungen: Rezeption des Galiläers in Wissenschaft, Kirche und Gesellschaft; Festschrift für Gerd Theißen zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. P. von Gemünden et al.; Göttingen, 2013), 477–498.

Gospel text and how it is employed as an *authenticating narrative strategy*.⁷¹

Authenticity is often generated in a text by using literary strategies characteristic for fictional literature, for example, for simulating referentiality to extra-textual reality through poetic mimesis.⁷² This is the case when fictional texts not only simulate reality, but also express a claim to convey – for example, historical – truth. Textual signals and the prior knowledge of the reader have to go hand in hand in order to render the presentation of information in a text authentic in the reader's eye.⁷³ With a view to the literary – or more generally the artistic – creation and perception of authenticity,⁷⁴ Stefanie Kreuzer has detected a paradigm change in the fact that authenticity is not conceived of as a mimetic, accurate reproduction of extra-fictional "reality," but rather as a deliberate artistic strategy.⁷⁵ She postulates that authenticity is always a construct, a subjective expression of the perception of reality; therefore, the main focus in the arts is not on attempting to reproduce reality as truthfully as possible, but rather on employing artistic techniques which aim at an approximation of the perception of reality and function as strategies of constructing or staging authenticity.⁷⁶

- 71 "Wird der erzähltheoretisch-ontologische Status uneindeutig – etwa indem in faktualen Gattungen der Konstruktionscharakter durchscheint oder in fiktionalen Gattungen der Anspruch eines authentischen Erzählens erhoben wird –, tritt die Frage nach der diskursiven Authentizität auf den Plan" (Weixler, "Authentisches erzählen" [see n. 65], 19).
- 72 Cf. J. Ilgner, "Ut veduta poesis: Topographisches Erzählen als Authentizitätsstrategie im historischen Roman," in *Authentisches Erzählen* (see n. 65), 197–212, here 202f. To the categories suggested by Martínez and Scheffel she adds another one: "In Anlehnung an die dort vorgeschlagenen vier Kategorien faktual-fiktionaler Narration lässt sich topographisches Erzählen als Subform *fiktionalen Erzählens mit faktuellem Inhalt und faktualisierenden Verfahren* plausibilisieren, das jedoch *fiktionalen Geltungsanspruch* besitzt" (ibid., 201).
- 73 Cf. Ilgner, "Ut veduta poesis" (see n. 72), 198, and Weixler, "Authentisches erzählen" (see n. 65), 23: "Authentizität ist ein zielgruppen-spezifisches Zuschreibungsphänomen." Cf. also M. Wiefarn, *Authentifizierungen: Studien zu Formen der Text- und Selbstidentifikation* (Literatur. Kultur. Theorie 3; Würzburg, 2010).
- 74 Cf. E. Fischer-Lichte and I. Pflug (eds.), *Inszenierung von Authentizität*, vol. 1 (2nd ed.; Tübingen, 2007); E.U. Pirker et al. (eds.), *Echte Geschichte: Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen* (Bielefeld, 2010).
- 75 Cf. S. Kreuzer, "Künstl(er)i(s)che Strategien von Authentizitätskonstruktion: Beispiele aus Literatur, Film und bildender Kunst," in *Fiktionen von Wirklichkeit: Authentizität zwischen Materialität und Konstruktion* (ed. W. Funk and L. Krämer; Bielefeld, 2011), 179–204, here 181 and 201.
- 76 Cf. Kreuzer, "Authentizitätskonstruktion" (see n. 75), 181. Kreuzer distinguishes between five different levels in the artistic simulation of authenticity, cf. ibid., 182–184.

It must therefore be emphasized that historiographical texts are *narrative factual texts* and have to be analyzed with *narratological methods*. At the same time, the main characteristic of historiographical factual texts is their *claim of (real or fictive) referentiality to a historical reality*. Hence, with a view to the methods for analysing factual texts, special attention must be paid to the claim of historical referentiality and the ways in which this referentiality is presented, created or authenticated in the texts.⁷⁷

4 Topographical Referentiality: Bethlehem, or Rather Nazareth?

John's Gospel uses referentiality to historical places, situations, traditions, and persons in order to integrate the Jesus story into contemporary history. In this way, the historical figure of Jesus is simultaneously rooted in his historical context and functions as a reference point for the parallel theological time line underlying the Gospel narrative, which runs from creation to incarnation and the historical involvement in the κόσμος to eternity. The Jesus narrative is rooted through referentiality in the historical figure of Jesus and hence in history.

Moreover, historical referentiality is employed to enhance and validate as well as to overthrow statements or to demand new, critical evaluation of statements from the reader. Enhancement and validation is ensured, for example, through repeated internal referentiality in the form of anaphoric and cataphoric references: the Gospel of John employs cataphoric references, for example, in the prophetic statement concerning the denial (John 13:38) and the references to Jesus's death in the farewell discourses, which serve as an affirmation of events that follow later in the course of the narrative. In ancient historiography prophecies and *vaticinia ex eventu* are popular literary strategies that verify the historical authenticity of events.

An anaphoric reference can be found in John 4:46: Ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅπου ἐποίησεν τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον. The text describes the village of Kana as being situated in the historical topography of Galilee (cf. also John 2:1, 11), but at the same time connects this location

⁷⁷ For the task of analysing the specifics of historiographical narrative, cf. J. Schönert, "Zum Status und zur disziplinären Reichweite von Narratologie," in *Geschichtsdarstellung: Medien – Methoden – Strategien* (ed. V. Borsò and C. Kann; Cologne, 2004), 131–143, here 140–143.

with an event narrated earlier, Jesus's miraculous turning of water into wine. With regard to the function of referentiality, the prominent element to which reference is made is the miracle and not the fact that Jesus was invited to the wedding feast or that he generally stayed in Cana. The correlation of Cana with two distinct attributes, firstly the undisputed localization of Cana within the historical geographical region of Galilee and secondly the reference to the previously narrated miracle story, serve the purpose of mutual affirmation as both attributes are presented with a claim to factuality and historical referentiality. Although the first sign in John 2:1–11 is already presented to the reader in the form of a factual narrative, the repeated reference in John 4:46 serves as an additional validation of the miraculous act.⁷⁸

Though the Fourth Gospel offers a number of concise topographical references, detailed descriptions of historical places (ekphrasis), however, do not occur. Studies on the topographical and geographical information given in the Gospel confirm the accuracy and reliability and conclude, that the evangelist was actually familiar with the historical topography and geography.⁷⁹ Although John offers a similar spectrum of topographical references as the Synoptic Gospels, he also has some specific references that can only be found in his narrative.⁸⁰ In the concise topographical data of John's Gospel, Bauckham detects a claim on the part of the text to be read as a historiographical text and stresses that "all events in John's Gospel are located, and most are located quite precisely – in a named town, village, or even more specifically. They are placed not just in Galilee, but more precisely in Cana or Capernaum; not just in Jerusalem but at the pool of Bethesda near the Sheep Gate; not just in the temple but even in Solomon's Portico."⁸¹ Although there are exceptions (e.g., John 6:1–3; 21:1), John locates his narrative in specific historical places – in contradistinction to the Synoptic Gospels, which often have references to a certain village (e.g., Luke 10:38), an unspecified house (Mark 2:1–12), or synagogue

78 Cf. also "Bethany beyond Jordan" (John 1:28; 10:40), where the strategy of repeated reference is again employed.

79 Cf. C. Koester, "Topography and Theology in the Gospel of John," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See* (ed. A.B. Beck; Grand Rapids, Mich., 1995), 436–448, here 436; I. Broer, "Knowledge of Palestine in the Fourth Gospel?," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (ed. R.T. Fortna and T. Thatcher; Louisville, Ky., 2011), 83–90.

80 Cf. Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics" (see n. 10), 98: places mentioned in total: Matthew 35, Mark 30, Luke 30, John 31; places unique to the respective Gospel: Matthew 8, Mark 2, Luke 5, John 17.

81 Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics" (see n. 10), 99.

(Matt 12:9–14).⁸² Based on the use of detailed topographical references, the Gospel of John may be compared with other historiographical works of antiquity. Topographical referentiality serves to inscribe the narrative into the historical context; extra-textual referentiality which is supported by other ancient sources in particular fulfills this purpose.

Another literary strategy employed in the Gospel narrative is the repeated recurrence of the topographical reference of Nazareth with the aim of overthrowing previous statements and demanding a new, critical evaluation of statements known to the reader.⁸³ In John 1:43–51 the calling of two disciples, Philipp and Nathanael, is narrated. Jesus first calls Philipp to follow him, Philipp in turn finds Nathanael and reports: ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφῆται εὐρήκαμεν, Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ (“we have found him of whom Moses has written in the law and the prophets, Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Nazareth,” v. 45). Nathanael replies: ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι; (“what good can come out of Nazareth?” v. 46). This latter critical statement seems to be focused on the notion that an insignificant, small town like Nazareth was not deemed fit to produce the Messiah.⁸⁴ If this pericope is paralleled with the previous calling of Andrew and Peter, the confession of Philipp of Jesus being “him of whom Moses has written in the law and the prophets” is paralleled with Peter’s confession of Jesus in v. 41, the confession of Jesus as the Messiah (εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν). Philipp’s statement, which identifies Jesus as the son of Joseph from Nazareth, does not in the least call the paternity of Joseph or the descent of Jesus into question. The doubts expressed by Nathanael concerning the origin of the alleged Messiah, are overcome in the course of the narrative by Jesus’s miraculous foreknowledge, which lead to Nathanael’s confession: ῥαββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (v. 49).

John’s Gospel narrates the story of the Messiah Jesus. Therefore, it is of great importance for the narrative to witness to Jesus’s messianic identity and for this reason several other passages offer references to this identity. In John 7:25 f. the question of the topographical descent is referred to once

⁸² Cf. Bauckham, “Historiographical Characteristics” (see n. 10), 99. Cf. also S. Luther, “Space,” in *How John Works: Storytelling in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. D. Estes and R. Sheridan; RBS 86; Atlanta, 2016), 59–77.

⁸³ Cf. A.M. Lamari, “Making Meaning: Cross-References and Their Interpretation in Thucydides’ Sicilian Narrative,” in *Thucydides Between History and Literature* (ed. A. Tsakmakis and M. Tamiolaki; Trends in Classics 17; Berlin, 2013), 287–307.

⁸⁴ Cf. M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kap. 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg, 2009), 192.

again: some people in Jerusalem are wondering, whether Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. John 1:41, where the term “Messiah” is translated as “Christ” seems to suggest that the Gospel narrative uses both terms as parallels: εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνεζόμενον χριστός. In John 7:27 the uncertainty concerning the question of Jesus’s origin is voiced explicitly: “but we know, where he is from. But when the Christ comes, no one will know, where he is from” (ἀλλὰ τοῦτον οἶδαμεν πόθεν ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ χριστός ὅταν ἔρχηται οὐδεὶς γινώσκει πόθεν ἐστίν). Here the discussion of the narrative characters comes to a tentative end, but the uncertainty concerning Jesus’s origin, as voiced in John 6:42, is considered a criterion for excluding him from being conceived of as Messiah.

In John 7:40–44 the subject is addressed once again: the people discuss who Jesus is – a prophet, or the Christ? As a reply to the latter suggestion the objection is voiced: How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from the family of David and from Bethlehem, the town where David was? (μὴ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ὁ χριστός ἔρχεται; οὐχ ἡ γραφή εἶπεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ καὶ ἀπὸ Βηθλέεμ τῆς κώμης ὅπου ἦν Δαυὶδ ἔρχεται ὁ χριστός; v. 41 f.). This reference to Scripture probably hints at the prophecy in Mic 5:1, that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem. John’s Gospel reports this objection without commenting on it, but the evangelist puts these words into the mouth of the people who were known to be hostile towards Jesus (cf. v. 44). Verse 42 has received divergent interpretations: on the one hand exegetes assumed that John did not know the Synoptic tradition, which locates the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. He rather seems to react towards Jewish, possibly Jewish-Christian, sources concerning the question of Jesus’s origin.⁸⁵ Others read the verse from the perspective of irony: the evangelist, who knows the Synoptic tradition of Jesus’s descent from Bethlehem and also the argument that Jesus could not be the Messiah because of his descent from Nazareth, places these words with an ironic intent into the mouth of the opponents, who thus become “unfreiwillige Zeugen der Messianität Jesu.”⁸⁶ For “in dem ausdrücklich mit dem Zitat von Mi 5,2 begründeten Einwand gegen die Messianität des Galiläers Jesus [ist] ein intertextuelles Spiel mit der Geburtsgeschichte des Matthäus (Mt 2,4ff.) zu sehen. Dabei besteht die Ironie dieses Spiels darin, daß es jetzt ahnungslose Juden sind, die gegen die Messianität Jesu und das bessere Wissen des impliziten Lesers geltend machen, daß er nicht in Bethlehem geboren

⁸⁵ Cf. Theobald, *Johannes* (see n. 84), 544.

⁸⁶ H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen, 2005), 410.

sei.”⁸⁷ Although the text-internal argumentation concerning Jesus’s descent mentions Nazareth only in the early references and later refers simply to the question of origin and genealogy, the notion of the topographical reference is always present. Moreover, John 1 and 19 frame the entire argumentation with explicit references to the specific town of Nazareth.

Regardless of whether the Fourth Evangelist reacts to Jewish-Christian opposition or whether he knows the Synoptic tradition concerning Jesus’s descent but refuses to receive it by putting forward the notion of a Messiah from Nazareth, the repeated references to Jesus’s place of birth *function as a narrative strategy of authentication*: in John 1:46 Jesus is introduced as the son of Joseph from Nazareth and, as a result, his messianic identity is called into question. Immediately, however, Jesus provides convincing proof (on the narrative level) that he is the Messiah. The Messiah’s place of descent and the Old Testament tradition in Mic 5 is hence implicitly devalued. In the course of the narrative in the following chapters, the reader is confronted with repeated references to the topic and is hence prompted to think about the subject and possibly to follow the narrative’s strategy of considering the tradition concerning the Messiah’s origin to be irrelevant.⁸⁸ This concern is voiced in John 7:42, where with definite uncertainty – possibly with ironic intent – the descent of the Messiah from Bethlehem is brought into the discussion by the Jewish opponents. The basic statement that Jesus in fact is the Messiah, disregarding his actual place of origin, was already set forth in John 1 in reaction to the first voice of opposition in this regard.

In John 19:19 the origin of Jesus is possibly again referred to in the context of the *titulus*: ἔγραψεν δὲ καὶ τίτλον ὁ Πιλάτος καὶ ἔθηκεν ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ· ἦν δὲ γεγραμμένον· Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. And this titular reference to Jesus, which in the term Ναζωραῖος may again refer to his place of origin,⁸⁹ is reinforced and verified by Pilate’s refusal to change what he has written: ὁ γέγραφα, γέγραφα (John 19:22). This explicit lexical reference to “that which is written” may even be considered a parallel to the Jewish opposition based on Scripture in John

⁸⁷ Thyen, *Johannesevangelium* (see n. 86), 410.

⁸⁸ Cf. also H.W. Attridge, “Some Methodological Considerations Regarding John, Jesus, and History” (paper presented at the Princeton Prague Conference, March 2016, to be published by Eerdmans), who suggests that John is making an epistemological point by juxtaposing two contradictory pieces of information about Jesus’s homeland without affirming which one he considers to be historically correct: historical facts seem to be less important over against their theological, christological or soteriological meaning.

⁸⁹ M.M. Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville, Ky., 2015), 362(b).

7:42 – the reader is expected to accept that which has been written. It is not, however, that which was written in the Scripture (γραφῆ) referring to Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah's descent, but rather that which is written (γράφειν) on the *titulus* – in the Gospel text –, which sets in wood the origin of Jesus the Messiah, namely Nazareth.⁹⁰ In setting “history” against “stories”, i.e., Old Testament promises, the Gospel's course of argument *inscribes* the birth place of the Messiah, Nazareth, into real history. The discourse concerning the descent of the Messiah in the Gospel of John, which starts out as a historical reference, can be read as a literary strategy guiding the reader (“*Leserlenkung*”), which serves the purpose of authenticating the narrative: the evangelist devalues the tradition of the birth and descent of the Messiah from Bethlehem and emphasizes the tradition of the Messiah from Nazareth. As is often the case in the Fourth Gospel, however, this narrative strategy is countered, when, for example, John 6:38 and 42 mention that Jesus came from “above” or “from the Father” – and hence offer a very different notion of the Messiah's descent. Yet, such a notion does not clash with the historical referentiality to Nazareth. The latter is not employed in the Gospel narrative due to historical tendencies, but functions as a narrative strategy of authentication, which purposely creates and intensifies the tensions with Johannine, incarnational Christology.

5 Conclusion

This article focuses on the question of the conception of history in John's Gospel and proposes that the evangelist advocates a conception of (literary) narrative historiography, which has to be analyzed with narratological methodology and with special consideration of strategies of authentication and of the text's claim to historical referentiality. As “there is no history outside of the text, but through the text and as text”⁹¹ a dualistic differentiation between historiography and fiction cannot be adhered to – fictional elements are part of historiographical narration, but historiography and narration are not merely fiction. History is a construct which is based on subjective, narrative perception and is restaged (i.e., rewritten) in factual narrative texts in order to endow historical events with meaning.

90 Cf. Thyen's comment: “unwissend macht sich der Statthalter Roms mit dieser unabhänglichen Inschrift zum Zeugen der Wahrheit Jesu” (Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* [see n. 86], 736).

91 Zimmermann, “History as Text” (see n. 28); id., “Geschichtstheorien” (see n. 36), 440.

Narrative historiography does not formulate absolute, but discursive truths and aims for a specific, overall interpretation of the historical events and processes. Narrative historiography in John's Gospel operates, for example, with historical referentiality and semantics of space by inscribing the (hi)story of Jesus into ancient history and by combining this-worldly history with a symbolic, metahistorical framework. It is the exegetes' task to describe the forms and functions of authentication processes and (constructed or real) historical referentiality in the Gospel in order to arrive at a clearer picture of the conception of history in John's Gospel.

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