

(Hi)storytelling: the ancient Near East in western historical novels and archaeological writing

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ABSTRACT

Verbal aspects of historiography are barely considered in the German archaeological community. The highly descriptive archaeological writing is still widely seen as desirable because of its seemingly neutral and objective nature, especially compared with other forms of historiographical storytelling such as non-fiction, historical novels or documentaries. Even decades after the linguistic turn, its insights never fully entered the German archaeology of the Near East. Therefore, in this paper, I will address issues of narration and language in archaeological fact-production in comparison to historical novels, which are commonly accused of being ideological, euphemistic and sometimes escapist. This leads me to expose some hidden ideological elements in archaeological writing, which are mostly concealed within our structural way to approach past as well as present societies. While I focus on several ‘-isms’ such as colonialism, eurocentrism or androcentrism, the archaeology of the Ancient Near East serves only as a case study. Parts of the issues discussed here apply to varying degrees to the archaeologies of other times and regions as well.

KEYWORDS

Historiography, historical novels, fact and fiction, postcolonial studies, ideologies in archaeology

1. Introduction

As the *March for Science* movement has recently clearly demonstrated, claiming factuality in public discourse becomes more and more difficult for researchers on an international level.¹ As soon as one considers factuality and fictionality as a research field in archaeology, one is almost automatically confronted with historical novels on one side and academic historiography on the other. The two genres are traditionally the terminological pair representing best the fact-fiction-divide in the historical field.² Thereby fiction is usually negatively connoted and the quality of a historical novel is often (and outside of literary studies) measured by its historical accuracy.³ Furthermore novels are mostly accused of being full of ideologies, euphemisms and occasionally escapisms.⁴ On the other side, academic historiography and by this archaeological writing, especially in German Near Eastern archaeology, is still considered as more neutral and objective, as it is academic and thereby factual. Since the insights of the linguistic turn never entered the German Archaeology on the Near East, language is still widely seen as a neutral tool of expression, which is one reason why I focus mainly on the German archaeological writing in this paper.⁵ Moreover, the dualistic concept of fact and fiction is rarely questioned in general.⁶ Research

focuses almost exclusively on proving the fictional and thereby less valuable status of historical novels. The resulting desideratum includes all questions on a) the archaeological production of facts and factuality, b) how archaeologists are writing history and c) what biases their historiography. In this paper my aim is to discuss especially the last two points. Therefore, I will first provide a brief definition of the terms fact and fiction and some methodological aspects of the linguistic analysis of our writing. Afterwards I will focus on some analytical categories influencing the factual and fictional status of both historical novels and archaeological writing and the ideologies hidden in them.

2. Fact and fiction in historiography

While fictionality is usually defined in opposition to factuality, most studies lack a definition of factuality, since they implicitly equate it with truth and reality.⁷ For that reason I give here a very brief definition of the terms related to historiographical writing as I use them in this paper:

Within the context of this article facts are understood as representations based on data and discursively negotiated narrations or verbalized formations of possible historical worlds. In comparison, fictions are understood as imagined possibilities of historical worlds, which do not have to stick fully to any given data or historical realities already discursively negotiated.⁸ This means that facts need to bridge the gap between the written text and a verifiable reality that is extra-textual and can be physically experienced. For example, a travel guide can be considered as factual if the directions given through the text lead travellers to a historical monument.⁹ In historiography, this gap is caused to a large extent by time difference. The metaphorical bridge into a historical reality is therefore not fully traversable.

¹ The *March for Science* is a global movement, which is advocating for amplifying the role of science in policy, empowering public engagement with science, fostering a diverse and inclusive scientific community and building a global community of science advocates. Further information can be found on <https://www.marchforscience.com/> (09/01/2019).

² E.g. PAUL, FABER (eds.) 2013; SCHAEFFER 2012; STORM 2010; BERNBECK 2005; MAIER, SCHWEIZER 1999; NÜNNING 1995.

³ GINZ 2014, p. 23. The negative connotation is usually based on the alleged deficiencies, particularly its lack of reality and truth.

⁴ AUST 1994, p. 1.

⁵ The term 'linguistic turn' goes back to RORTY (ed.) 1968 and triggered a critical discourse on language in various academic disciplines, especially in the humanities. The linguistic turn questioned the notion of language as a neutral tool of communication: language is influencing every discourse in such a way that, instead of simply mirroring or copying reality, it creates a 'new reality' of its own.

⁶ One of the rare exceptions is still WHITE 1973, whose work is barely considered among German Near Eastern

archaeologists, while Anglo-American anthropology is much more engaging with the topic in general, cf. VAN DYKE, BERNBECK (eds.) 2015; JOYCE, PREUCEL 2002; CLIFFORD, MARCUS (eds.) 1986.

⁷ SCHAEFFER 2012; 2010; NÜNNING 1995.

⁸ Cf. FELDER (ed.) 2013.

⁹ Cf. GARDT 2013, p. 36 ff.

However, for novels to be considered as historical fiction, they need to reference at least partly to extra-textual historical facts. Otherwise, they would be considered 'counter-factual' or fictional without the predicate 'historical'. Thus, the demarcation line between fact and fiction in (Hi)storytelling is quite fluid. Fact and fiction cannot be understood as two separate phenomena, but as extremes of the same sphere in which academic historiography as well as historical novels and even the so called 'non-fiction' can be arranged or classified.¹⁰ Furthermore, the constructivist character of factuality should be emphasized, as factuality is related but not equal to the terms truth or reality, especially when one is dealing with past worlds and societies and their present reconstruction, as the bridge metaphor illustrates. To avoid misunderstandings, this definition does not establish any proximity of factuality to the phenomena of falsehood and deception as they are closer but again not equal to the definition of fiction.

3. Methodological aspects

To analyse how facts and fictions are created in historiographical writing, and more importantly what influences them and how they are biased, one can focus on different 'meaningful factors'.¹¹ Such meaningful factors can be derived from the methods of two research fields, according to literary studies: linguistic discourse analysis and narratology.¹² While in narratology the focus is more on the forms of textual representation, in linguistic discourse analysis the content itself as well as the form's discursive effects are central.¹³ Furthermore, the already mentioned 'meaningful factors' can be grouped into three main categories: a) the contextual frame, b)

the textual macro-structure and c) the textual micro-structure.¹⁴

The contextual frame includes a consideration of the authors and their background, the publishers (scientific or *belle lettres*) and the cover's design. In general it also includes the forms of communication (written, spoken, pictorial). In this paper I focus on written texts in printed books. Furthermore the contextual frame includes a publication's outreach and an inquiry into the sphere of life or knowledge domain it is connected to. The knowledge domain of the following examples is the history of the Ancient Near East, but the spheres of life to which they belong can be categorized briefly as 'literature' (historical novels) and 'science and humanities' (archaeological publications).¹⁵ The last meaningful factor of the contextual frame is the anticipated reader, who is not to be confused with the actual reader. Information regarding these meaningful factors is not always explicitly formulated in the books and requires either further research or prior knowledge to be analysed. Since knowledge is an abstract entity, its range can vary from person to person. Accordingly, it becomes obvious that the categorisation of a publication as factual or fictional generally depends on an actual reader's knowledge and the separation is due to a relation rather than inherent in a text.

The analysis of the textual macro-structure focuses on the internal structure of the publication, which is given not only by the format (e.g. layout, outline), but also by a so called para-text.¹⁶ The para-text describes all textual parts of a book, that are not the actual text itself: the designation of the text genre in titles or subtitles (scientific report or study, historical novel), the title and subtitle themselves, a potentially existing foreword as well as the epilogues or indexes.¹⁷ Especially the last three cannot be found

¹⁰ I prefer the German term *Sachliteratur*, as the English term puts the so labelled publications into a vague non-status. For the problems on this specific genre see also HAHNE-MANN 2005.

¹¹ GARDT 2013.

¹² FELDER, GARDT (eds.) 2015; FELDER, MÜLLER (eds.) 2009; NÜNNING 1995.

¹³ Both, linguistic discourse analysis and narratology support the analysis of different languages and while my research focuses mainly on writings in German, I will occasionally refer to texts in other languages.

¹⁴ The terminology used here is based on linguistic discourse analysis as it allows to integrate the narratological aspects, see GARDT 2013.

¹⁵ The term 'literature' is used here as a pragmatic category in order to differentiate it from other spheres of life and to avoid the term fiction. 'Literature' does not include any implications on the artistic quality of the novels.

¹⁶ GENETTE 1989.

¹⁷ The mentioned genre can be satiric and does not have to reflect the publication's actual genre. Therefore, the designation of the genre is considered here as paratextual, while

in every book, so that their presence or absence has in itself analytical value.

The last category, the textual micro-structure denotes the actual text itself. Here the analysis includes the font, type of language or register (academic jargon or colloquial language) and terminology. Additionally, grammar and figures of speech are studied, as well as the forms of argumentation and how they are used.

The meaningful factors influence the categorization of a publication as a whole, not one by one, as belonging more to a factual or fictional sphere. By analysing such meaningful factors, it is also possible to find hints of implicit bias or ideologies, such as colonialism, eurocentrism, orientalism as well as androcentrism and many other '-isms'.¹⁸ Most of them are historically and ideologically intertwined and thereby difficult to differentiate. However, they are all part of what I call here 'hidden ideologies': hidden because we are often unaware of them and because I consider them as structural parts not only of our academic but also of our daily life. 'Structural' is used here in a more extensive sense to include all aspects of life, such as political, social, institutional and everyday structures, that are the context of our daily praxis, without reflecting or questioning them at any given moment.¹⁹ I refer here in a broader sense to Grada Kilomba who maintains that the question is not whether we, and hence our writing, contain hidden ideologies, but rather how we can dismantle them.²⁰

As historical novels are not subject to the academic conventions of neutrality and objectivity, hidden ideologies are more easily apparent than in academic historiography. To reveal some hidden ideologies, I will analyse some meaningful factors in a few case studies, starting with historical novels

the text genre as a category in itself is part of the archi-text. Cf. GENETTE 1989 as well as NÜNNING 1995, p. 157 ff.

¹⁸ E.g. classism, imperialism, patriarchalism, racism, sexism.

¹⁹ While there is a discourse on *Ideologies in Archaeology* in the Anglo-American anthropology, the German archaeology is less concerned about it, BERNBECK, MCGUIRE (eds.) 2011.

²⁰ Kilomba focused in her work on racism, but her discourse can be partly transferred to other repressive systems, especially when these systems are interconnected, cf. KILOMBA 2008, p. 22.

and continuing with some broader examples from archaeological writing.

4. Case studies

The first case is the analysis of a book cover that is a meaningful factor of a publication's contextual frame. The historical novel *Das zweite Buch* is written by classical archaeologist Michael Pfrommer and was published by publisher Philipp von Zabern in 2007.²¹ The cover is a montage of a watercolour painting from the Ishtar gate by Walter Andrae and a photograph taken by Birgit Betzelt, a photo journalist.²² The photo shows a desert scenery crossed by a person with a head scarf on a donkey. The painting of the Ishtar gate is emplaced between the sand dunes in the background.²³ The purpose of the montage is quite obvious: the picture makes the reader aware of the story's setting, which is taking place partly in the Near East (ancient Babylon and modern Iraq). The Near East is represented here by the stereotypes 'desert', 'Ishtar gate' and 'person with head scarf'. The donkey as a means of transportation underlines the novel's historical character. Betzelt took the photo in Darfur, Sudan close to a refugee camp called Aboshok. The photo is showing an «internal displaced» woman.²⁴ Due to the information given by the photographer and considering the political situation in Sudan one can potentially assume that the woman on this picture would not identify herself as 'Arabian' but as 'African'.²⁵ And these are already very generalizing and problematic

²¹ *The second Book*, literal translation. The title is a reference to Ezekiel's prophecies, cf. PFROMMER 2007. Pfrommer, born in 1954 is currently adjunct professor at the University of Trier and wrote a series of historical novels taking place in the Ancient Near East and Ancient Egypt as well as some non-fiction books.

²² PFROMMER 2007.

²³ For the original painting cf. ANDRAE 1992, p. 69, pl. 84.

²⁴ BETZELT: *Internal Displaced in Darfur*. <http://www.birgitbetzelt.com/?id=6§ion=3&clang=en&fototask=bild&gid=168&fid=1509&folder=sudandarfur&forder=1> (09/01/2019).

²⁵ BETZELT: *Internal Displaced in Darfur*. <http://www.birgitbetzelt.com/?id=6§ion=3&clang=en&fototask=text&gid=168&folder=sudandarfur> (09/01/2019).

labels themselves. The photo chosen represents consequently less a stereotypical 'Arabic woman', but a very Eurocentric worldview and thereby a westernised imagination of an 'Arabian'. Perhaps the use of stereotypes or general categories is not even so problematic, as we are dependent on them, not only in novels but in archaeology and other spheres of life as well, to communicate about past and present worlds.²⁶ In this case it is rather the uncritical way of conceptualising and using stereotypes that cause a problem. The book's cover becomes a paradigm of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and embodies how far actual content and a respectful handling of sources in a public discourse are sometimes considered less important than the satisfaction of western expectations and prejudices through the given fiction.²⁷

The following case study is an example from the textual macro-structure as it concerns a novel's topic. In Stefan Heym's *The King David Report*, history is used as a frame for a political statement for present conditions, rather than as a politicised way of retelling history in a novel.²⁸ Heym used the historical frame mainly for a socio-political criticism directed at authoritarian states and their methods of controlling the press, academics and thereby history. The author was always politically active and – being Jewish – he had to flee Germany during the Nazi regime. Later he had to face suppression in the US during the McCarthy era and then in the former GDR. Therefore, the novel's topic reveals as much about the authoritarian regimes as it reveals about Heym's own ideological stance in opposition to them. Since history is used here as a frame for the political topic rather than the other way around, it is not possible to unconditionally classify the book as a historical novel.²⁹ Because of its particular setting and structure, this text is at least partly beyond traditional questions of fact and fiction and the most

common accusations concerning the historical novels mentioned in the beginning. Additionally, the novel addresses the author's role in writing history through its main character, the historian and scribe Ethan. Ethan is constantly in conflict with himself while he is working on the ordered *one and only true report* about the Israelite King David. On the one side, he has to answer the government's expectations, namely the wishes of David, Salomon's son, which are clearly focused on the king's legitimacy, grandeur and moral impeccability. On the other side, Ethan's sources portray a violent and – in religious terms – sinful man, whose legitimacy could be doubted. The scribe attempts to include the contradictions implicitly in the report but fails at the end and is therefore exiled. The novel's theme and the scribe's role are confronting us on a meta-level with questions of historiographical perspective: why and for whom are we pursuing history in general and whom are we giving a voice in our histories?³⁰ Furthermore, the novel is a constant reminder of times during which archaeology and historiography were openly abused for the legitimisation of a political regime, be it the Nazi regime and later on the GDR government, or broadly totalitarian Stalinism.

In the next case study, I focus again on a factor of the textual macro-structure. I address a common literary motif, exemplary in the novels *Qatna* and *She wrote on clay*.³¹ In both novels the motif of the 'independent woman' is used. A motif that figures a female protagonist who is going to take her life in her own hands to make her way – not without struggling – independently in a patriarchal society. Generally, she is still doing that with the help of men, mostly father figures, or is at least relying on their generosity. Relatively common is the final result, where she ends up in a relationship with a man, optional as expecting mother, and will therefore fulfil her duty as a 'proper woman' in society. In *Qatna*, the 'independent woman' is the city state's princess Kija. At first, she enjoys a childhood among the favoured, as the king's prioritised daughter. Later, her personal odyssey brings Kija as Akhenaton's second wife to Egypt, where she succeeds to free herself,

²⁶ Cf. LAKOFF 1987 (1990).

²⁷ SAID 1978 (2014⁴).

²⁸ HEYM 1972 (1992). The novel was written in English and translated by the author himself into German. This novel was already subject to several studies and literary critiques, which all pointed out its politicised content: GINZ 2014; BERNBECK 2005; TABERNER 2000; HUTCHINSON 1986; REICH-RANICKI 1972.

²⁹ Nevertheless it is – not only by me – considered a historical novel, e.g. BERNBECK 2005.

³⁰ Cf. GINZ 2014.

³¹ COURANT 2009; GRAETZ 2013.

finding peace and freedom in the relationship with her childhood friend Talzu. In *She wrote on clay*, the ‘independent woman’ is named Iltani. She grows up in a scribe’s house, being the preferred daughter too. Her father’s role model in mind, she wants to become a «*naditu*» in the «*gagû*» of Sippar, which gives her the opportunity to become a scribe by herself.³² In the temple, she is challenged as woman, *naditu* and scribe but after initial difficulties masters her tasks confidently. On her path, she is falling in love with the king’s scribe Marduk-mušallim. To stay with him, she has to break with her family and the temple community, but gives up everything for marriage, where she is finally able to find her true destiny.

The motif of the independent woman refers to the female *Entwicklungsroman* and is internationally well known from female novelists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, like Jane Austen or the Brontë sisters.³³ At that time, women writers addressing contemporary women’s lives in society can be considered as practising acts of emancipation – even if these women published anonymously or under (male) pseudonyms.³⁴ Due to this, the motif can be considered to be anachronistic in historical novels about the Ancient Near East. In modern reception the motif of the independent woman is reactionary, but as it can be easily transferred into other patriarchal societies of any time and place, one can find it not only in historical novels about the Ancient Near East, but also in computer games, comics or Disney movies.³⁵ Consequently,

³² Cf. GRAETZ 2013. *Naditu* is the term for a legal position held by women, who were connected to certain temple precincts (*gagû*). Until today, their exact position in Babylonian society is not fully understood, but from what is known by the texts, they were very independent and well-educated women, mostly from an elite background, see also YOFFEE 2005, pp. 116-121.

³³ For the female *Entwicklungsroman* see BALMER 2011. Especially *Pride and Prejudice*, AUSTEN 1813 (2016), and *Sense and Sensibility*, AUSTEN 1811 (2003), as well as *Jane Eyre*, BRONTË 1847 (2014) can be read as well-known British examples of the female *Entwicklungsroman*.

³⁴ Lifelong Austen published under ‘by a Lady’ and the Brontë sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne under the male pseudonyms ‘Currer’, ‘Ellis’ and ‘Acton Bill’.

³⁵ For computer games cf. *Tomb Raider* (1996) or *Dis-honored 2* (2016). For comics cf. *Wonder Woman* (1941) or *Catwoman* (1940). For Disney movies cf. *Beauty and the Beast*

the motif of the independent woman focuses less on the role model of women in the Ancient Near East, but rather on a bourgeois European role model of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and has therefore probably little in common with women’s lives in the ancient Near East.³⁶ Instead, the motif «archaisms» the idealized European role model via the historical representation by dating it back to ancient times and thus perpetuates the backwarded concept until today.³⁷ And this is a good occasion to turn towards archaeological writing and research, as women as historical actors not only in the Near Eastern archaeology, but in archaeology in general were for decades totally silenced.³⁸ When women are explicitly mentioned in the archaeological historiography, they are up to our days mostly pictured according to the same anachronistic model outlined in the historical novels as housewives and mothers.³⁹ For this reason, the novel’s fiction is a fiction in archaeology as well and this prefiguration is literally blocking the view for establishing factual based historical narrations.⁴⁰

The above-mentioned examples were mainly addressing the representation of history. My next example focuses on the present representation of archaeologists as authors. The authors of a publication are a meaningful factor of the contextual frame, as their own status or professionalism (e. g. trained archaeologist vs. novelist or journalist) on a certain topic takes part in establishing a publication’s more factual or fictional status and is therefore an impor-

(2017), *Frozen* (2013) or *The little Mermaid* (1989).

³⁶ On *naditus* cf. YOFFEE 2005, pp. 116-121. For other examples cf. BAHRANI 2001; CHAVALAS (ed.) 2012; LION, MICHEL (eds.) 2016.

³⁷ Cf. RÖDER 2013, p. 244.

³⁸ Cf. YOFFEE 2005, p. 128; CHAVALAS (ed.) 2012, p. XII.

³⁹ RÖDER 2013 is also pointing out, that the prefiguration of the bourgeois role model is concerning the interpretation of gender roles and family concepts in general.

⁴⁰ Cf. RÖDER 2013. Without any intention of belittling past as well as current research made by and / or about women, it can be pointed out that this research field and connected topics like an archaeology of gender are still on the fringes of archaeological research while constantly facing a wide range of inimical attitudes between ignorance and active refusal. Exemplary shall be mentioned here BOLGER 2012; CHAVALAS (ed.) 2012 and with a focus on the situation in Germany VOGEL 2012.

tant analytical category. For this analysis, scientific and public CVs are the most useful source. The CVs of archaeologists are usually neutral and impersonal, especially on the webpages of the institutions archaeologists are working at. The institutions have usually a template, which intends to establish equality and leaves little space for individuality. The CVs include information about the current position, education, previous positions, experience in field research, received grants, institutional responsibilities and a list of publications. Information of main research interests is optional. What the public CVs usually do not include is information about the number of applications submitted and refused, times as part of the academic precariat, personal interests and background or political orientation.⁴¹ Consequently, every narration includes non-narrated aspects and due to the narrated CVs conscious as well as unconscious ideologies and biases are well hidden. By listing all successes while concealing failed applications for jobs and grants the CVs are creating a picture of almost infallible researchers, who are supposed to be the legitimate neutral and factual narrators of the Ancient Near Eastern history. Undoubtedly, there are very good reasons for this, and by pointing the problem out I do not want to call for the 'transparent Archaeologist' but suggest that it is worth to question the author's (self-)representation and its impact.

Another example for hidden ideologies in western archaeological writing are the languages in use – not only in publications but also in the field documentation. Focusing here on the archaeological publications, language is a meaningful factor on two levels: The publication's language itself is a meaningful factor of the contextual frame and the languages of the secondary sources, as they become visible through the bibliography, affect the textual macrostructure. The bibliography visualises a publication's intertextual connections within the archaeological discourse and is therefore a good indicator for pow-

er-relations established by language. The most common languages used in the western archaeological publications on the Ancient Near East are English, French, German and Italian.⁴² Exemplary I mention here the *Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Königsgruft von Qatna* (QS1), as the research at that site was contemporaneously carried out by a German-Syrian, an Italian-Syrian as well as a Syrian team.⁴³ The publication includes an Arabic translation of the preface, but all other 28 contributions are either written in German (19), English (6) or French (3). Neither in the publication itself with a total of 606 bibliographical references nor in the 19 page long project bibliography with 335 entries a publication in Arabic can be found.⁴⁴ The example shows, that the European researchers publish to a large extend in their native language and refer mainly to publications written in the European languages, but not to publications in the languages of the host countries. Reverse the Syrian researchers – in this specific case – publish mainly in French, English and German but less in Arabic. This imbalance is on a large scale reflected in the German and broader Western publications, as most of the research published in Arabic, Turkish or Persian is only rarely considered.⁴⁵ Furthermore, German students of the Near Eastern archaeology need to be able to read and speak – besides German – at least English and most commonly French or Italian to pass their studies, but not Arabic, Persian or Turkish.⁴⁶ In most jobs within the

⁴² I make no claims of completeness here and refer only to the most visible languages in publications and in conferences.

⁴³ PFÄLZNER, AL-MAQDISSI (eds.) 2011b. The quite recent publication represents the present state-of-the-art in archaeological publications. The edited volume includes contributions from researchers of varying countries and disciplines. Furthermore, I choose this example, as the site is already addressed through the novel *Qatna* in this paper.

⁴⁴ Double mentions were excluded from that number. The Qatna-Bibliography covers all publications on the site between 1924 and 2013: <http://www.qatna-projekt.uni-tuebingen.de/PDF/Bibliographie/Bibliographie.pdf> (09/01/2019).

⁴⁵ The situation is actually much better for Turkish in comparison to other languages.

⁴⁶ At the Freie Universität Berlin, English is required for the Bachelor and the students can choose between Latin, French, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Persian or Turkish for the Master. Since the German *Abitur* requires already two foreign languages (mostly English and Latin or French), most students are already covered and the need of learning another language is minor.

⁴¹ Compare for example the faculty member's CVs of the Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology at the Freie Universität Berlin: <http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/vaa/vaa/mitarbeiter/index.html> (09/01/2019). A rare exception is the post-modern alternative CV from Thomas Meier, currently at the University of Heidelberg: http://www.ufg-va.uni-hd.de/mitarbeiter/meier_vita2.html (09/01/2019).

field of Near Eastern archaeology the knowledge of these languages is welcomed but not required either. This state is by no means a normal condition in all archaeological disciplines, since for the archaeology of Eastern Europe or Russia the host country's languages are nearly always required. As in the case of the CVs, there may be reasons for the requirement of specific languages used in western archaeology of the Near East. But the well-established research languages are to a large extent the languages of the former colonialists and mandatory powers in the Near East.⁴⁷ Simply by using these languages, historically based imbalances of power are perpetuated on a structural level.⁴⁸ Furthermore, they are providing very little access to research and publications in the host countries. Simultaneously it goes without saying that colleagues from Near Eastern countries have to learn what is commonly referred to as research languages. Meanwhile, the vast majority of western archaeologists never reach a fluency in Arabic and Persian or Turkish that enables them to publish or give a talk. Thus the structures formerly established by the colonialist systems are implicitly continued by academic conventions, in which publications in the present Near Eastern languages experience very little credit at an international level.

Making one step further into archaeological writing, one can focus on the terminology and grammar used in publications. Both are meaningful factors of the textual micro-structure. Very common are still the terms Near or Middle East or the (ancient) Orient for the research area.⁴⁹ Exemplary I mention here the publication *Ausgrabungen und Surveys im vorderen Orient*, the German Archaeo-

logical Institute's journal *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* or – as an American example – the exhibition catalogue *Pioneers to the past: American archaeologists in the Middle East*.⁵⁰ All these terms and therefore the publications that use them establish a geographical relation, with Europe as the central actor and the Near East as its peripheral region. As soon as one adds the perspective of time as in the notion 'Ancient Near East', occasionally complemented by 'the cradle of civilization' and / or references to the Old Testament, ancient societies and cultures of the Near East are implicitly put in opposition to the present ones. At the same time, the terms are establishing a more or less subtle claim of ownership of that history in the hands of today's western societies via a «*translatio imperii*», respectively a linear construed genealogy.⁵¹ A version of this can be read in the foreword of the mentioned catalogue *Pioneers to the past*:

Breasted immediately grasped the significance of this historical moment and approached John D. Rockefeller Jr. with an ambitious and detailed proposal for financial support to found the Oriental Institute as an interdisciplinary center for archaeological and philological research on the ancient Near East and its role in the origins of Western civilization.⁵²

Thereby imbalances of power are reproduced again. Consequently, I stop here writing about the 'Near East' and continue this paper by using 'Western Asia' instead. This may not be the best alternative, since the geographical term is less precise in the exact location and spatial extent, but the use of alternative terminologies creates awareness due to irritation and sensitizes for the problems set out above.

A grammatical aspect of the textual micro-structure to be discussed here is the use of the generic masculine. The generic masculine means the use of the male grammatical gender in a generic sense for individuals, whose biological sex is unspecified or unknown as well as for mixed groups of persons.

⁴⁷ Even if Germany was never a colonial power in the Near East, I would not exclude it, as I agree with MARCHAND 1996, pp. 199-208, who is pointing out the German quasi- (cultural) imperialist ambitions in the Near East and the role of archaeology in it. The official non-colonialist status made it comparably easy for German archaeologists to avoid an engagement with postcolonial studies for decades, especially, as the role of Germany as political actor in the Near East was not considered by SAID 1978 (2014⁴) either.

⁴⁸ Of course this is not a unique problem for Near Eastern archaeology, as one can find it in varying manifestations nearly all over the world. Cf. CASTRO VARELA, DHAWAN 2005 (2015²), p. 34 ff.

⁴⁹ Same for *Naher / Mittlerer Osten*, *Alter Orient*, *le Proche- / Moyen Orient* or *il vicino / medio oriente (antico)*.

⁵⁰ EICHMANN (ed.) 2010; EMBERLING (ed.) 2010.

⁵¹ LIVERANI 2005, p. 224 describes the *translatio imperii* as «imperial power shifted from Assyria and Babylonia to Media and Persia, then to the Greeks, finally to the Romans».

⁵² STEIN 2010, p. 7.

While its impact in English is comparably minor (but still existing), it is fatal to a language like German, which uses gendered articles as well as female-associated nouns that derive from the masculine version and therefore seem subordinate to them.⁵³ Similar problems occur in other languages such as French or Italian too, but since my expertise lies in the German language I restrict myself to this example. Critics of the use of the generic masculine are focusing mainly on the marginalisation of women because many readers and writers associate them less with what is said when using or reading the generic masculine and women feel less likely included as well.⁵⁴ Some examples can highlight this process of marginalisation. Due to the paper's limitation I stick here to the already introduced QS1. In this work, present archaeologists and past individuals are addressed, whereby the archaeological present as well as the historical past is affected. While for the acknowledgements the *Binnen-I* in «MitarbeiterInnen» was used to address female and male staff members, readers are addressed in the singular and male form of «der Leser» only.⁵⁵ Referring generally to archaeologists and their tasks within the research the male form is used only, as for the archaeological «Bearbeiter».⁵⁶ For historical individuals male forms in their generic function were used for persons with unspecified or unknown sex, as it can be seen in setting the theoretical frame for an interpretation of the objects found in the royal tomb: «Dies sind solche Objekte, die kein spezifisches Statussymbol darstellen, sondern die *der Verstorbenen* zu Lebzeiten persönlich besaß und die *ihm* im Tod mitgegeben werden, um *seinen* Besitz und *seine*

persönliche Identität zu konservieren».⁵⁷ Especially through the singular male forms the text gives the impression that only men could have had personal grave goods, while the vast majority of the objects found in the royal tomb cannot be brought together with a specific individual and moreover, the ones identified are of both sexes.⁵⁸ The examples represent the present state of language use in Germany and show clearly, that past and present women as historical actors and active archaeologists are textually marginalised.

Unlike common expectations the generic masculine is not a continual and therefore unquestionable grammatical phenomenon, but was established in grammars with its full implications in 1850 in the United Kingdom and 1962 in Germany.⁵⁹ It is no surprise that this moment falls together in the UK with the 'golden age' of the female *Entwicklungsroman*, since bourgeois role models and generic masculine reflect an androcentric worldview in the end. This ideology is a persistent one and the efforts to overcome it are rare, as the continuous use of the generic masculine and the motif of the independent woman illustrate. Finally, the writer's and reader's inability of including women in their thoughts while using the generic masculine generates, in terms of fact and fiction, academically written historical and present worlds that are predominantly populated by men and are in this aspect simply fictional. Gender awareness in language is consequently not only a feminist topic pushing for gender equality, but rather an indicator for a factually oriented historiography.

5. Conclusion

The discussed cases clearly show that neither fictional narrative strategies nor (hidden) ideologies are unique to fictional (hi)storytelling, respectively historical novels, as both can be found on all levels of archaeological writing (contextual frame, tex-

⁵³ E.g. *Archäologe* (m) – *Archäologin* (f). In English e.g. craftsman – craftswoman, the male form is used generic.

⁵⁴ A number of studies attest the marginalisation of women through the generic masculine in English as well as in German, cf. BRAUN ET AL. 1998; 2007; DOLESCHAL 2002; GASTIL 1990; HAMILTON 1988; HAMILTON, HUNTER, STUART-SMITH 1993; MILLER, JAMES 2009; STAHLBERG, SZCESNY 2001.

⁵⁵ PFÄLZNER, AL-MAQDISSI 2011a, pp. IX-X, the French version of the Preface uses male forms only as well. The German *Binnen-I*, so the capital letter *I* in a word's female grammatical form is one possibility to indicate, that both biological sex are meant.

⁵⁶ PFÄLZNER 2011, p. 39.

⁵⁷ PFÄLZNER 2011, p. 49, male forms highlighted by the author.

⁵⁸ WITZEL 2011.

⁵⁹ DOLESCHAL 2002.

tual macro-structure and textual micro-structure) as well. Furthermore the two genres share common pitfalls in the use of stereotyping, anachronisms and perspectivation, which include common prejudices. From this point of view the mantra-like adherence to neutrality and objectivity especially in the German archaeology of Western Asia becomes a fiction itself and is rather suitable to hide than to reveal ideologies and bias in factual historiography. Some of the pitfalls can be easily avoided by using for example a gender-aware language instead of the generic masculine, so that traditionally perpetuated inequalities based on fiction are converted into inclusive factually based historiographies. Others – like bourgeois role models, research languages or terminology are firmly established in a westernised understanding of the world and academic structures or conventions. They cannot just be avoided by dropping them. Dismantling them requires a conscious, self-critical and creative approach as well as an open and active discourse within the field of archaeology to focus on a transparent factually-based archaeological writing. Here the difference between factuality and objectivity clearly emerges and indicates, that the resulting historiography will not become more ‘objective’, ‘neutral’ or ‘unbiased’. In conclusion the unbiased writing is not possible and cannot be the goal either, but a his-

toriography which is aware of its own ideological bias and is dealing with them in a responsible way should be attempted. Consequently, a critical understanding of the functions of language and linguistic discourse is not only a matter of factuality or fictionality, but it is also a useful method of revealing hidden ideologies in archaeological writing.

At the end, I want to return to the initial mention of the *March for Science* movement. As a side effect, this brief comparative analysis of historical novels and archaeological writing elucidates that popular media and academic discourse are influencing each other. Therefore, the analysis enters the ongoing public discourse on the production of facts in science, the humanities and public media and addresses archaeological responsibilities in it. The perpetuated inequalities and imbalances in the writing of western Asian archaeology, revealed in the case studies of the author’s (self-) representation, research languages, terminology and grammar, point out that archaeologists are not only in charge of research and archaeological fact production, but also in the power over history. However, rather than claiming interpretative authority legitimised by academic neutrality and objectivity, an open minded and self-reflexive approach to our research objectives may lead to a diverse and inclusive engagement in public discourse.

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