

The Scholar as Judge

A Contested Persona in Nineteenth-Century Orientalism

CHRISTIAAN ENGBERTS

93

Templates of scholarship, or scholarly personae, mattered to nineteenth-century scholars. A template that appealed to many of them was the ideal of the scholar as an impartial judge. However, there was no agreement about how exactly this ideal was to be understood. Should you be allowed to judge your peers, or should you limit yourself to judging their work? Should the verdict be rendered in public, or should it be a private matter? Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909), professor of oriental languages in Leiden, was one of the scholars struggling with the judicial ideal. His discussion of this ideal with his peers, especially with his Strasburg colleague Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), demonstrates that scholarly personae are not just theoretical constructs used by present-day historians, but also representations of the aspirations of past scholars.

De geleerde als rechter. Een omstreden persona in het negentiende-eeuwse oriëntalisme
Sjablonen van wetenschappelijkheid, of wetenschappelijke personae, waren van groot belang voor negentiende-eeuwse geleerden. Een sjabloon dat veel van hen aansprak, was het ideaal van de geleerde als een onpartijdige rechter. Er was echter geen overeenstemming over hoe dit ideaal begrepen diende te worden. Zou het geoorloofd moeten zijn om een oordeel te vellen over je collega's of zou je je moeten beperken tot een oordeel over hun werk? Zou het vonnis in het openbaar uitgesproken mogen worden of zou dit een privéaangelegenheid moeten zijn? Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909), hoogleraar voor oosterse talen in Leiden, was één van de geleerden die worstelden met het rechterlijke ideaal. Zijn discussies over dit ideaal met zijn collega's, voornamelijk met de Straatsburgse hoogleraar Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), tonen aan dat wetenschappelijke personae niet slechts theoretische constructen van hedendaagse historici zijn, maar ook een beeld geven van de aspiraties van geleerden in het verleden.

Introduction

How can we tell who is a good scholar and who is not? This is one of the most important questions addressed in today's growing body of literature on scholarly personae. But what exactly are we talking about when we talk about personae? Are they first and foremost historiographical tools used as ideal-typical templates by modern day historians of science? Or did such templates also exist in the past as models of scholarship that no scholar could afford to ignore? Although Daston and others have emphasised mostly the usefulness of personae as an analytical tool, this paper argues that personae can also be historicised.¹ They are not merely modern-day retrospective inventions, but templates which were actively discussed amongst nineteenth-century scholars and on which they drew to distinguish between desirable and undesirable scholarly conduct.

In their introduction to the special issue of *Science in Context* dedicated to this concept, Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum describe the persona as 'a cultural identity that simultaneously shapes the individual [...] and creates a collective with a shared and recognizable physiognomy'.² The view of personae as cultural identities or templates presents them as a historiographical tool that allows for a high level of generalisation. In the work of Daston and Sibum a relatively small set of available personae helps to explain major shifts and developments in scholarship over a long period of time. This approach is exemplified in *Objectivity*, the book that Daston wrote with Peter Galison. The authors contrast the persona of the scientist pursuing truth-to-nature to that of the scientist striving for objectivity.³ The first persona suggests an ideal of scholarship stressing the creativity of the researcher in extracting truth from nature while the second encourages the scientist to eliminate every trace of his or her own activity from the results of his or her research. 'As ideals', Daston and Galison argue, 'they may more or less peacefully, if vaguely, coexist. But at the level of specific, workaday choices [...] conflicts can occur'.⁴

It is precisely this level of workaday choices on which this paper will focus. This emphasis also suits Herman Paul's definition of personae as 'template[s] to which scholars are invited to conform', or as 'ideal-typical models, [...] rough outlines that have to be applied, developed, and refined in every individual situation'.⁵ In this process of appropriation, scholars' commitment to epistemic goods, such as truth-to-nature or objectivity, plays an

1 See, for example: Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, 'Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories', *Science in Context* 16:1-2 (2003) 1-8 DOI 10.1017/S026988970300067X; Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York 2007).

2 Daston and Sibum, 'Introduction', 2.

3 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*.

4 *Ibid.*, 28.

5 Herman Paul, 'What is a Scholarly Persona?: Ten Theses on Virtues, Skills and Desires', *History and Theory* 53:3 (2014) 348-371, 353-354 DOI 10.1111/hith.10717.

important role. Like all people however, scholars have other commitments too. These include down-to-earth-consideration of money, status and collegiality as well as moral and political ideals.⁶ All these commitments might influence the shaping of scholarly personae. An emphasis on their appropriation and development allows us to look at both epistemic and other commitments as the constantly renegotiated building blocks of templates of good scholarship.

In their published works past scholars rarely reflected explicitly on how they related to the available templates of scholarly behaviour. Scholarly personae however, could be expressed in different ways. Scholars could choose to ostentatiously showcase their own virtuousness, for example by communicating their self-control and rationality through forms of asceticism.⁷ Sometimes the moral requirements of good scholarship, such as the ‘love of truth’, were explicitly mentioned in textbooks.⁸ Most importantly, scholars often discussed models of good scholarship in their private letters. Indeed, it is precisely this constant re-evaluation of templates of good scholarship in personal correspondences which suggests that personae are not only interpretive tools of the modern-day historian, but that they are also indicative of the experienced importance of cultural models of scholarship in earlier times.

This paper will give a typical example of the continuous re-evaluation of one particular persona. This example will be based on the correspondence of Michael Jan de Goeje (1836-1909), professor of oriental languages at Leiden University in the second half of the nineteenth century. Throughout his career De Goeje struggled to find an appropriate way to evaluate his peers at a time in which no general agreement on formal peer review processes existed. In his private correspondence his doubts are most clearly visible in his discussions of the template of the scholar as a judge of both his field of research and his colleagues. Above all, he had strong doubts about the extent to which he should publicly voice his opinion of his peers’ work and character. Since such reservations do not easily lend themselves to public discussion, De Goeje mainly reflected upon them in his private letters. His correspondence with his friend and Strasburg colleague Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930) is of particular interest because the latter had scarcely any qualms about harshly judging his colleagues in public. After a brief consideration of the ideal of the scholar as a judge, this paper will zoom in on three moments in the career of De Goeje, which prompted him to explicitly formulate an opinion about the judicial template. In the final section of this paper I will demonstrate how his

6 *Ibid.*, 362.

7 Gadi Algazi, ‘Food for Thought: Hieronymus Wolf grapples with the Scholarly Habitus’, in: Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum 2002) 21-43.

8 Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, ‘Inventing the Archive: Testimony and Virtue in Modern Historiography’, *History of the Human Sciences* 26:3 (2013) 8-26, 20
DOI 10.1177/0952695113496094.

application, development and especially his criticism of the persona expressed through this template affected his practices as a scholar.

The scholar as a judge

The ideal of the impartial judge was very popular amongst scholars in the humanities in the second half of the nineteenth century. The connection between judges and historians has always been especially easy to make.⁹ Carlo Ginzburg for instance, observes that '(b)etween the end of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth, historiography [...] took on a distinctly judicial appearance'.¹⁰ Upon accepting the Regius chair of Modern History in Cambridge in 1895 Lord Acton expressed the hope that 'history might be lifted above contention, and made an accepted tribunal'.¹¹ Both the notion of evidence and the ideal of impartiality implied by this judicial imagery were attractive to scholars. This impartiality was also the main subject of Robert Fruin's inaugural lecture at his appointment as professor of Dutch national history in Leiden: '(I)n the end (impartiality, Chr. E.) is the essence of historiography; who does not possess it to a large extent cannot excel as a historian'.¹² The ideal of the scholar as a judge was not put forward only amongst historians. One of Fruin's Leiden colleagues, the literary scholar W.J.A. Jonckbloet described the academic critics' common sense in his inaugural lecture as 'the conscience of a jury, to whose verdict there is no appeal'.¹³ Similar judicial turns of phrase can be found in the writings of contemporary orientalists. The German historian and orientalist Alfred von Gutschmid for example, admonished the Petersburg professor of oriental languages Daniel Chwolson in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* to be an 'unprejudiced researcher and judge' in his capacity as editor of Arabic texts.¹⁴

- 9 This is not to everyone's liking: see Michael Stolleis, 'Der Historiker als Richter – der Richter als Historiker', in: Norbert Frei, Dirk van Laak and Michael Stolleis (eds.), *Geschichte vor Gericht. Historiker, Richter und die Suche nach Gerechtigkeit* (Munich 2000) 173-187.
- 10 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian: Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice*, translated by Anthony Shugaar (London, New York 1999) 14.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 13; Lord Acton, 'Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History', in: John Neville Figgis and Reginald Vere Laurence (eds.), *Lectures on Modern*

History by John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton (London 1950) 5-26, 17.

- 12 Robert Fruin, *De onpartijdigheid van den geschiedschrijver* (Amsterdam 1860) 30. All original (German or Dutch) quotations in text and footnotes have been translated into English by the author.
- 13 Willem Joseph Andries Jonckbloet, *Het professoraat in de Nederlandsche taal en letterkunde* (Groningen 1877) 30.
- 14 Alfred von Gutschmid, 'Die Nabatäische Landwirtschaft und ihre Geschwister', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (hereafter ZDMG) 15 (1861) 1-110, 104.

The template of the judge as used in the examples above was fairly uncontroversial. It primarily referred to the way in which a scholar was supposed to relate to his object of research. Often however, judicial imagery was used in a different way, referring to the way scholars relate to their colleagues and their work. The German philologist Felix Liebrecht for example, stated in the same *Zeitschrift* as Gutschmid that ‘competent judges’ had not yet reached a final verdict on the level of criticism that Chwolson’s work merited.¹⁵ In later years the most influential editor of the *Zeitschrift*, Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer, invited Theodor Nöldeke to ‘take up judicial office’ and provide his journal with a highly critical review of a work which he thoroughly disliked. The judicial imagery in Fleischer’s invitation did not simply suggest impartiality however. It also referred to the public function of the judge whose verdict is pronounced on behalf of and in front of an audience – in this case a community of scholars. In this capacity Nöldeke was urged not to be too mild: the author’s eyes should be ‘opened to see his self-bedazzlement’. At the same time, he should not be as harsh as could be expected from less serious ‘younger reviewers’ who might try to make the author in question ‘look ridiculous’. Nöldeke should ‘soberly and rigorously tell the truth *in public*’.¹⁶ The necessary soberness and rigorousness call to mind the ideal of the impartial judge. The public character of the judgement adds an extra layer of meaning to the judicial template. It was exactly this public dimension of judgement that De Goeje would struggle with all his life.

Judging the Saint Petersburg tombstones

Michael Jan de Goeje – Jan to his friends and close colleagues – was born in 1836.¹⁷ His father taught him classical and modern foreign languages. He received his first instruction in Hebrew at the Latin school in Enkhuizen. When he was eighteen his father died, but his family was able to raise enough money to pay for him to study theology in Leiden. As a future theologian he had to study the basics of Arabic, Syriac and Aramaic as well. He liked these courses so much that he decided to leave the Faculty of Theology and join the Faculty of Humanities instead. There he studied with T.W.J. Juynboll, the professor for eastern languages. His most important teacher however, was the Arabist and professor for modern history Reinhart Dozy. He received his doctoral degree for a text edition and a Latin translation of an Arabic geographical work, al-Ya ‘qūbī’s *Kitāb al-Buldān*. Shortly before obtaining

15 Felix Liebrecht, ‘Tammuz-Adonis’, *ZDMG* 17 (1863) 397-403, 397.

16 Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Md 782 A 68, Fleischer to Nöldeke, 29 April 1879. Emphasis in the original.

17 This biographical sketch of De Goeje is based on: Arnoud Vrolijk and Richard van Leeuwen, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands: A Short History in Portraits, 1580-1950*, translated by Alastair Hamilton (Leiden 2014).

his degree, he was appointed assistant curator of the Leiden manuscript collection. Three years later he was appointed *Interpres Legati Warneriani*, head curator of the manuscript collection, as well as full professor. Through De Goeje, Arabic studies in Leiden would become heavily involved with the German world of learning, though his correspondence shows that he stayed in close contact with scholars from other countries as well.¹⁸ He would hold his Leiden chair until his retirement at the age of 70 in 1906. Although he was still a fit man at this time, his health was to decline quickly. He died in 1909.

As an internationally respected scholar, De Goeje was often asked to share his thoughts about the work of others. This is how in 1876 he became embroiled in a conflict between two scholars working in Saint Petersburg – the aforementioned Daniel Chwolson and the German orientalist Hermann Strack. The occasion was the publication of a pamphlet by Strack in which he disputed the authenticity of a number of Hebrew manuscripts in the Imperial Public Library, as well as some inscribed tombstones acquired by the Asiatic Museum of the Saint Petersburg Academy.¹⁹ The manuscripts and tombstones had been part of the legacy of the archaeologist and collector Abraham Firkovich. Even though the manuscripts and artefacts that Firkovich had collected through the years had contributed a lot to the study of Crimean and Karaite Judaism, a heated debate about their authenticity had arisen after his death in 1874. A few years later the dust of this debate had still not settled.²⁰ In this dispute Chwolson was the most ardent defender of the authenticity of Firkovich's findings, while Strack was amongst his sharpest critics. News of the debate had also reached the Netherlands. Therefore, when the International Congress of Orientalists gathered in Saint Petersburg in 1876, De Goeje decided to visit privately the museum with his Cambridge colleague William Wright. Chwolson volunteered to show them around. Looking at a small selection of the manuscripts, De Goeje and Wright soon came to the conclusion that they contained 'later alterations and additions'. Their judgement on the tombstones however, was not as clear-cut. Though they were hesitant to accept them unconditionally as 'genuine relics of antiquity', their short visit did not provide them with enough information to either wholeheartedly confirm Strack's harsh judgements or agree with Chwolson's positive verdict.²¹ They had, however, satisfied their personal curiosity and they did not expect any further involvement with the case.

18 *Ibid.*, 105.

19 Hermann L. Strack, *A. Firkowitsch und seine Entdeckungen. Ein Grabstein den hebräischen Grabschriften der Krim* (Leipzig 1876).

20 Today the authenticity of Firkovich's findings is still debated. See: Simon Szyszman, *Le Karaïsme: Ses doctrines et son histoire* (Lausanne 1980); Artem Fedorchuk, 'New Findings Relating to

Hebrew Epigraphic Sources from the Crimea, with an Appendix on the Reading in King Joseph's Letter', in: Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai and András Róna-Tas, *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives* (Leiden, Boston 2007) 109-122.

21 Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden (hereafter UBL), BPL 2389, Wright to Strack, 19 December 1876.

Therefore they were surprised when, shortly after their visit, their judgment was made public. Chwolson invoked their authority in a sharp criticism of Strack's pamphlet in the *Literarisches Centralblatt*.²² In the opening paragraph of this *Berichtigung* Chwolson even went so far as to suggest that Strack might have deliberately given a false account of his observations: 'Whether Dr. Strack has seen it wrong, or whether he gave a wrong account of what was seen, I will leave undecided'. The rest of the article recapitulated the visit and comments of De Goeje and Wright, about which Chwolson claimed to have taken notes immediately afterwards. The impressions of his visitors, he argued, prove that Strack's critical appraisal of the antiquity and authenticity of the tombstones had been too harsh. In his final paragraph Chwolson appealed to the 'honourable and impartial judges', De Goeje and Wright, to confirm his outline of their opinions: but they were not at all willing to play the role of judges. Meanwhile Strack was not willing to let Chwolson's allegations pass unanswered.

Immediately after the publication of the *Berichtigung*, Strack wrote to De Goeje and Wright to ask them if Chwolson's report of their comments was accurate.²³ Wright explained to him that their judgements had not been as clear-cut as Chwolson had described them, so in January 1877 Strack published a short rebuttal of Chwolson's *Berichtigung*.²⁴ He denied all allegations of dishonesty. Most importantly he stated that he had been in contact with De Goeje and Wright and that 'both of them refuse the judgeship ascribed to them'. Now it was Chwolson's turn to demand an explanation of his presumed supporters. He wrote De Goeje and Wright a letter in which he complained that his honour had been injured.²⁵ It could only be restored if De Goeje and Wright would make a public declaration confirming that he, Chwolson, had not in any way misrepresented their judgement in his *Berichtigung*. He proposed that Wright and De Goeje should write a joint statement to be published in the *Literarisches Centralblatt*. In his reply to Chwolson, De Goeje again underlined that he refused to be cast in the role of his colleagues' judge²⁶, but in the end Wright and De Goeje accepted the proposal to publish their side of the story and Wright submitted a letter on behalf of both of them to the *Centralblatt*. In this letter it was pointed out that they regretted the fact that they had given the 'appearance of setting ourselves up as umpires or judges in a case where we (were, Chr. E.) not entitled to do so'.²⁷ The case was settled as far as De Goeje and Wright were concerned, but it

22 Daniel Chwolson, 'Thatsächliche Berichtigung', *Literarisches Centralblatt* 48 (1876) 1601-1602.

23 UBL, BPL 2389, Strack to De Goeje, 1 December 1876.

24 Hermann L. Strack, 'Antwort', *Literarisches Centralblatt* 2 (1877) 61-62.

25 UBL, BPL 2389, Chwolson to De Goeje, 10-22 January 1877.

26 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Chwolson, 1 February 1877.

27 William Wright, Untitled letter, *Literarisches Centralblatt* 13 (1877) 439-440.

left a bad taste in their mouths. Wright wrote to De Goeje: 'One cannot touch pitch without being defiled'.²⁸ De Goeje complained to Nöldeke: '(Strack, Chr.E.) appears to be not a lot better than those other two *smousen*, Chwolson and Harkavy, that is, if Chwolson is not the most infamous liar to have ever existed'.²⁹

A couple of observations can be made about the way in which the idea of the scholar as a judge played out in this somewhat farcical example of scholarly disagreement. The first observation concerns the public character of the role of judge. At no point did Chwolson use the verdicts of Wright and De Goeje to convince Strack of his views in a private discussion. Instead he immediately publicised their cautiously-worded and provisional opinions. It was precisely this public dissemination of their opinions that rubbed De Goeje and Wright the wrong way. Secondly, in Chwolson's *Berichtigung* the opinion of the reluctant judges is not just used to question Strack's work but also to cast doubt on his character. The assertion in the article that bothered the latter the most was the insinuation that he might be a liar rather than any specific comment that Wright and De Goeje were reported to have made about the authenticity of the tombstones. Chwolson also saw Strack's rebuttal of his *Berichtigung* primarily as a threat to his honour rather than as a challenge of his scholarly competence. Therefore, the scholar accepting the role of judge would have to realise that he dealt not only with questions of good scholarship, but also with questions of honour and personal character. This particular combination of a judgement being both public and about personal character raised the important question just how scholarly disagreement should be voiced. It is precisely this sensitive question that is at the root of an earlier discussion between De Goeje and Nöldeke.

Judging the reviewing system

The above case shows De Goeje's aversion to being forced into the role of the judge. One could still argue however, that his complaint was not so much about being made a judge but rather about the fact that this happened without his prior consent. Although this did indeed bother him, his criticism of the idea of the scholar as a judge of his peers is also a continuation of an earlier discussion with Nöldeke. When he was still a *Privatdozent* in Kiel and a regular contributor to the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, Nöldeke became involved in a heated argument with the Austrian private scholar Alfred von Kremer by writing a scathing review of the latter's text edition of an

28 UBL, BPL 2389, Wright to De Goeje, 30 January 1877.

29 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 18 February 1877.

'Smous' is a Dutch derogatory term used for Jews

carrying a connotation of dishonesty and trickery:

Chwolson, Strack and Harkavy, Strack's ally in this debate, were all Jews.

Arabic poem: ‘At almost every place where he takes up detailed linguistic research, he is mistaken’.³⁰ Kremer was very upset about this review. In the introduction to a short collection of poems published the following year he harshly reproached his reviewer. Kremer claimed to accept Nöldeke’s authority as a philologist, arguing however, that his pronouncements upon ethnography and history betray ‘a sense of uncertainty, which he hides behind generalisations and wordplay’.³¹ Of course, Nöldeke was less than pleased with Kremer’s reproof and he paid him back with a harsh review of his new collection of poems, in which he defended his own capacity as a judge in the fields of history and ethnography and added further criticisms of Kremer’s philological prowess.³² Nöldeke found himself in what he explicitly called his first *Polemik*³³: and if there was one person from whom he expected support, it was his Leiden friend and colleague. De Goeje’s criticism of his polemical stance therefore, caught him by surprise.

De Goeje had his own problems though. He had just received harsh criticism from Gustav Weil in a review of his al-Balādhūrī edition.³⁴ In his opinion, Weil’s remarks did not do him justice: ‘Not even one word of praise, but a page filled with comments on the glossary, of which at most one is meaningful, while some are ridiculous and betray his own ignorance [...]’. De Goeje’s subsequent criticism of the reviewing practices of his day merits extensive quoting:

You worthy reviewers place yourselves on too high a pedestal and speak too much like chief justices about poor clients who stand trial before you. One has written or published a book on which one has worked for months with diligence and effort, and what now is the reward that one receives from the public; that a reviewer, who usually only became acquainted with the subject through one’s own investigations, gives an overview of one’s work from the lectern, in which a single word of praise is made powerless by a number of remarks (often hastily made and false) with the insidious addition, that this list could be lengthened *ad libitum*? You have too much of an eye for the defects and do not place enough value on the good. And no matter if your remarks are true or false, the reader gets the impression that there is much to object to the work. And never do

30 Theodor Nöldeke, ‘Die himjarische Kasideh. Herausgegeben und übersetzt von Alfred von Kremer’, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (hereafter GGA) (1866) 779.

31 Alfred von Kremer, *Altarabische Gedichte über die Volksage von Jemen als Textbelege zur “Abhandlung Ueber die südarabische Sage”* (Leipzig 1867) 8.

32 Theodor Nöldeke, ‘Altarabische Gedichte über die Volkssage von Jemen als Textbelege zur

Abhandlung “Ueber die südarabische Sage” von Alfred von Kremer’, GGA (1867).

33 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 12 September 1867.

34 Michael Jan de Goeje, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-buldān by al-Balādhūrī: Liber expugnationis regionum auctore Imāmo Ahmed ibn Jahja ibn Djābir al-Belādsorī* (Leiden 1866); Gustav Weil, ‘Al-Beladsori und Maçoudi’, *Heidelberger Jahrbücher der Literatur* 60 (1867).

you have the generosity to recall your false remarks [...] You see, that makes a writer or publisher bitter. He is convinced he will never receive praise but only criticism, if not true then false. Your system (that of the Göttinger and other journals) is not right. If you want to make comments, give a full list of demonstrations, in that case a writer can stand up against it [...].³⁵

Two familiar elements stand out in De Goeje's disapproving review of reviewing practices. The first is his aversion to the act of reviewing as an act of public judgement. This act of public judgement is even more dubious when the people who make such weighty judgements seem to be incompetent: often they would not even have bothered to deal with the subject in question were it not for the work under review. The second familiar element is the importance De Goeje places on preventing the appearance of judging one's peers' character. Especially the combination of a large audience and unqualified judges could easily be interpreted as unfair treatment of the scholar reviewed. In such a case, the scholar in question could have good reason to believe that a review was not a reflection on professional accomplishments. Harsh, mistaken criticism and unproven insinuations could easily be seen as an attack on a scholar's personal character rather than as useful assessments of scholarly work. The public character of such an evaluation could be a major threat to the reputation of the person under review, and as soon as a review was seen as a personal threat, the impartiality of the judgement would also be open to question.

In cases like this, the judicial ideal of scholarship proved problematic. On the one hand it encouraged impartiality: every review is supposed to be an impartial judgement of scholarly output. On the other hand it also encouraged making this judgement public. However, especially when the reviewer is not generally accepted as qualified, this public character creates a context in which a review is easily interpreted as being about the character of the author rather than about the quality of the work. This detracts from the perceived impartiality. De Goeje was not the only one to recognise the potential role of personal grudges in public reviewing. Nöldeke for example, admitted that the harshness of his second review of Kremer was partly motivated by the latter's personal insinuations: 'Anyway, what has annoyed me the most is the assumption that he has or pretends to have that I consider myself to be free from flaws and stupidities'.³⁶

In his elaborate complaint to Nöldeke, De Goeje did something that he failed to do when reflecting on the Chwolson-Strack debate – he also presented an alternative to mutual evaluation by public trial. Providing exhaustive lists of constructive comments – full lists of demonstrations – he argued, would help authors, not disheartening but encouraging them. Yet

35 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 21 April 1867.

36 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 12 September 1867.

this solution was far from being a revolutionary innovation; looking at the correspondence of De Goeje and Nöldeke, one finds that it is filled with long lists of improvements and detailed comments on both each other's published and yet-to-be-published works. This private reviewing practice could often be more time-consuming than writing reviews for review journals. This is nicely illustrated by an 1878 letter of Nöldeke's. His former student Siegmund Fränkel had asked him to publish a review of his dissertation, but he had declined:

I will not write a review of it [...], I have now gone through the text three times, in its original form as a referent of the university, in its written form before printing and as a proof print; I have had enough of it now [...].³⁷

Falling back on an established private reviewing practice can be seen as a way to focus on the product of scholarship rather than on the scholar. In private the reviewer would not be tempted to make judgements for which he or she did not have the required competence. Moreover, no one's reputation would be at stake when judgements were not made public. De Goeje's proposal suggested that colleagues were only able to criticise each other as impartial judges in the private sphere. As long as it could be kept private, De Goeje could even agree with Nöldeke's harsh opinion about Kremer's scholarly prowess. Some years after their dispute De Goeje would be as critical of Kremer in private as Nöldeke had been in public:

(Kremer, Chr.E.) has sent me a mass of emendations, with full permission to do with them whatever I want to, because he does not desire any fame or honour from it. I am afraid they will have to go to the waste-basket, because he proposes mostly, with a few exceptions, to make a healthy place sick. But he appears to have a heart of gold.³⁸

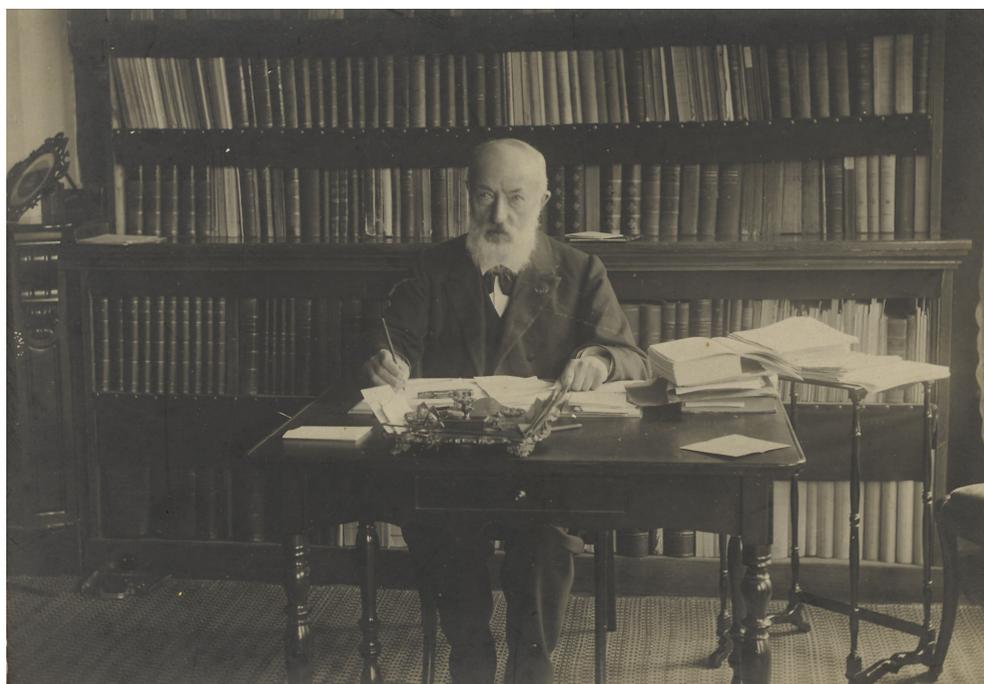
Judging the editor-in-chief

In academic publishing the editors of prestigious journals might be in the best position to judge their peers. After all they have the last word on whose contributions will be published and they can force their authors to make major changes to their articles. The most prestigious journal in oriental studies in the nineteenth century was the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.³⁹ Its early editorial practices showed the enormous influence of its most prominent editor Heinrich Leberecht

37 UBL, Or. 5585e, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 22 November 1878.

38 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 9 June 1875.

39 Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge 2009) 97.



M.J. de Goeje behind his desk.

Leiden University Library, Or. 18.097 S 67.5.

Fleischer. In a letter to De Goeje, a young Nöldeke described Fleischer's thoroughness in reworking a submitted essay:

By the way, apart from the language, the shape of the essay will still be changed tremendously: I know how ruthless Fleischer is in deleting and correcting mistakes, how he often translates passages anew. [...] I can assure you, that a lot of the articles in the *Zeitschrift* deserve Fleischer's name rather than that of the original author.⁴⁰

De Goeje had experienced this as well. After re-reading one of his own contributions to the *Zeitschrift* he noticed quite a lot of changes and wryly commented that 'Fleischer (was, Chr.E.) responsible for all those strange German words, that I would never have come up with myself'.⁴¹ Even though Fleischer did not discuss such changes with his authors, De Goeje did not express any discontent about these interventions, which were invisible to the public at large. However, a later discussion with August Fischer, one of Fleischer's successors at the *Zeitschrift*, illustrates that De Goeje did have well-defined ideas about the limits to the liberties an editor could take.

August Fischer joined the editorial board of the *Zeitschrift* in 1900, when he was appointed to Fleischer's former professorial chair in Leipzig. From 1903 onwards he was to be the editor-in-chief. In 1905 he introduced a new section, the editorial glosses. Here he planned to 'publish short remarks with critical or complementary content in a casual way, as they came to me while reading the essays and announcements that I received for the journal'.⁴² Most of the comments in what was supposed to be only the first instalment of this new section dealt with a contribution by Nöldeke's former student Jakob Barth who had also worked on De Goeje's Tabari edition. A few pages were dedicated to a contribution by De Goeje. The comments about Barth's work led to a sustained dispute between him and Fischer.⁴³ A number of members of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (DMG) voiced their concerns about this in private. Nöldeke, for example, wrote angrily to De Goeje and their Hungarian colleague Ignaz Goldziher that Fischer did not have the right to place himself above his authors in such a pedantic way.⁴⁴ In his reply to Nöldeke, De Goeje was not as vocal, but admitted that Fischer must have received some bad advice.⁴⁵ Even though he showed restraint in voicing his

40 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 25 September 1858.

41 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 21 October 1864.

42 August Fischer, 'Redakteurglossen', *ZDMG* 59 (1905) 442-456.

43 Jakob Barth, 'Ursemit. e, zum Demonstrativ d., ti und Verwandtes', *ZDMG* 59 (1905) 633-643; August Fischer, 'll.', *ZDMG* 59 (1905) 644-671.

44 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 8-7-1905; Budapest, Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, GIL/32/01, Nöldeke to Goldziher, 10 July 1905, <http://konyvtar.mta.hu/>

45 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 17 July 1905.

opinion to his colleagues, he was clear enough in his communication with Fischer. In the summer of 1905 Fischer wrote a humble letter to De Goeje. He explained that he had heard of the commotion caused by his glosses:

Now I am happily ready to let myself be lectured, but first I would like to hear the judgement of our greatest scholars and most diligent contributors, and therefore I would like to ask you to briefly inform me *on occasion in all openness* whether you think that these glosses damage the business of the DMG.⁴⁶

As his next letter shows, he was not prepared for the apparently devastating verdict of the usually amicable De Goeje. ‘To be honest it is unintelligible to me, to what extent I would have aimed with my glosses to give a “final criticism” or to function as “chief justice” in front of whom “no appeal is possible”’, he wrote in reaction to De Goeje’s honest opinion.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in the face of mounting criticism he promised that at the next meeting of the DMG he would announce the discontinuation of his glosses.

A few observations can be made about De Goeje’s criticism of Fischer’s glosses. In the first place it confirms that his main criticism of the scholar as judge was directed at the public character of the judgement. As his relationship with Fleischer suggests, he did not mind allowing an editor some freedom in the relation with his authors. As long as Fleischer’s additions and improvements were not recognisable as such by the public, De Goeje found no reason to complain. Fischer however, presented his additions and improvements in public and gave them extra weight by not just presenting them as the comments of an individual scholar but by presenting them as the verdict of the editor-in-chief of the most prestigious journal in oriental studies. This was an abuse rather than the judicious use of editorial power. Secondly, the episode shows that De Goeje was sometimes willing to not only judge his peers’ work, but their actions as well. It is important to note however, that his criticism of Fischer’s decision to publish his glosses was voiced only in private. Thus even if the requirement that judgements should be about scholarly production rather than about the individual scholar could sometimes be put aside, the norm that such judgements should be voiced in private rather than in public was not up for debate.

Living up to one’s judgments

The above examples present a clear picture of De Goeje’s ambiguous attitude towards the template of the scholar as a judge. Even if he shared the ideal of

46 *Ibid.*, Fischer to De Goeje, 19 July 1905. Emphasis in the original.

47 *Ibid.*, Fischer to De Goeje, 18 September 1905.

impartiality with his colleagues, he did not share their enthusiasm for the idea of mutual evaluation as a public event. In his eyes, this public performance might tempt incompetent judges to question their colleagues' reputation rather than their scholarly accomplishments. Extensive and constructive private communication would serve the scholarly community much better. It is easy to pay lip service to such an ideal. However, his commitment to an ideal of private mutual evaluation did inform De Goeje's day-to-day practice as well.

One way in which De Goeje's hesitance to publicly judge his peers informed his workaday choices was through his recurring unwillingness to publish reviews of works that did not live up to his high standards of scholarship. In 1889 for example, Reinhold Rost asked him to write a review for *Trübners Record* of a translation of an Arabic book by Eduard Sachau, one of Nöldeke's most renowned students. Though he liked the work in many respects, De Goeje told Nöldeke:

I found quite a lot to criticise in Sachau's translation and I would not have been able to keep silent about that. Therefore I have left the decision to R(ost, Chr.E.) if he would rather choose another reviewer for this reason and R(ost, Chr.E.) accepted this.⁴⁸

De Goeje also chose not to review Eduard Glaser's *Skizze der Geschichte und Geographie Arabiens von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Propheten Muhammad*. Even though he admitted to Nöldeke that he did this because he thoroughly disliked the book, he pretended incompetence as an excuse to stay silent on the topic.⁴⁹ This way the editor could not interpret his privately voiced refusal to review as a criticism of the book. He was also able to convince Nöldeke to treat his Leiden students with the same helpful mildness as he had propagated in their discussion about the Kremer controversy. In 1900 Nöldeke reviewed a book by Gerlof van Vloten. He wrote to De Goeje: 'I have not made any text corrections in my announcement; that I have sent (Van) Vl(oten, Chr.E.) himself a list, he will have told you'.⁵⁰ This was exactly the sort of mutual evaluation that De Goeje preferred: a friendly public announcement accompanied by a private and useful list of further comments.

Of course, De Goeje could not always refuse to review his colleagues' work. As an authority in his field his opinion was often solicited. Th.W. Juynboll, the grandson of his former teacher, lists 122 reviews in his overview of the publications of De Goeje.⁵¹ Although it was not always easy, he tried to be as constructive as possible. This is nicely illustrated by a series of reviews

48 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 21 March 1889.

49 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 27 July 1890.

50 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 14 November 1900.

51 Theodorus Willem Juynboll, 'Lijst der geschriften van Prof. Dr. M.J. de Goeje', *Jaarboek der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* (Amsterdam 1909) 147-166.

of text editions of Arabic poetry by Wilhelm Ahlwardt.⁵² His correspondence with Nöldeke shows that De Goeje did not hold these text editions in high esteem. In the summer of 1903 he wrote: ‘I am now fretting about El-‘Aġġāġ. This snobbery of Ahlwardt, as if those far-fetched phrases and wrenched sentences can be understood without further comment, is horrible. Because deep down I am still convinced that he did not understand several verses himself. [...] I do not yet see how I can perform this task without offending him’.⁵³ One year later he expressed his dislike of working on his last Ahlwardt review:

The only other thing that I will try to finish is the review of Ahlwardt’s Rūbā, on which I have been working for a long time and which I would not like to still see in front of me when I can get back to work in August.⁵⁴

His dislike of Ahlwardt’s work however, was not explicitly mentioned in his reviews. They consisted mostly of the same kind of lists of useful comments that he appreciated so much in private correspondence. Of course such long lists might still give the author the idea that his work was not very highly appreciated. De Goeje was therefore careful to finish his reviews with some words of praise, such as the observation that

I hardly have to add that, even if in the preceding I have criticised more than that I have praised, this does not at all mean that I do not highly value Ahlwardt’s book or that I did not learn a lot from it.⁵⁵

This benevolent approach, however, did not always come easily to De Goeje. For instance, shortly after criticising Nöldeke’s dispute with Kremer, as well as the whole system of reviewing, he wrote a review of a work by Eduard Sachau. Nöldeke was quick to point out that De Goeje had written exactly the kind of review that he had condemned so passionately the year before. Nöldeke himself did not mind the review, though; in his opinion it had taught Sachau ‘a lesson that would serve him well’⁵⁶, but De Goeje was not entirely convinced of the utility of this lesson. In his next letter to Nöldeke he apologised, expecting that these apologies would be forwarded to Sachau as well.⁵⁷

52 Michael Jan de Goeje, ‘Sammlung alter Arabischer Dichter. I. Elaġma’ijjāt nebst einigen Sprachqaṣīden herausgegeben von W. Ahlwardt’, *GGA* (1903) 245-251; Michael Jan de Goeje, ‘Sammlungen alter arabischer Dichter. II. Die Dīwāne der Regezdichter El’Aġġāġ und EzZafajān hrsg. von W. Ahlwardt’, *GGA* (1904) 420-430; Michael Jan de Goeje, ‘Sammlungen alter Arabischer Dichter. III. Der Dīwān des

Regezdichters Rūba ben El’Aġġāġ hrsg. von W. Ahlwardt’, *GGA* (1904) 761-770.

53 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 3 July 1903.

54 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 26 June 1904.

55 De Goeje, ‘Sammlungen alter arabischer Dichter. II’, 450.

56 UBL, BPL 2389, Nöldeke to De Goeje, 11 March 1868.

57 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 25 April 1868.

The case of Carlo Landberg's *Critica Arabica* provides a final example of De Goeje's aversion of public judgement and controversy.⁵⁸ Landberg had travelled a lot in the Middle-East and had been a student of Fleischer. Nevertheless, most of his colleagues saw him as a dilettante and a maverick. De Goeje described him as 'an odd scrounge' and 'colossally pedantic'.⁵⁹ In the *Critica* he collected his essays about the recently published works of others. One of these works was De Goeje's *Ibn-el-Faqih*. Landberg had offered De Goeje the opportunity to print an 'anti-critique' to his criticism in the same volume.⁶⁰ At first De Goeje was not sure if Landberg's comments merited a reply at all. A letter by Landberg shows that De Goeje felt that he had treated him 'like a schoolboy' in his essay, but on the insistence of Landberg he promised a reply on the condition that this would not become part of a continued discussion: he did not want to be caught up in a public dispute. Landberg wholeheartedly accepted this proposal: he argued that it would take him too much time to reply anyway.⁶¹ When the book was published however, it did not contain any contribution by De Goeje. Landberg had broken his promise not to react to the anti-critique and when De Goeje found out he immediately took counter-measures. The *Critica* was to be published by the Leiden publishing house Brill, with which De Goeje had a close relationship. De Goeje simply visited the publisher and politely asked that his contribution to the *Critica* be withdrawn, with the promise to reimburse all the extra costs this would entail for the company.⁶² Landberg sadly stated in his book that De Goeje had 'done him the honour of an anti-critique' but that he had alas 'retracted it because he did not want to be engaged in controversy'.⁶³ This incident shows just how far De Goeje went to prevent himself from being put in the position of having to publicly judge his peers. After what had happened between him and Landberg, a fair judgement of each other's arguments was no longer to be expected anyway. The fact that De Goeje already felt as if he had been treated like a 'schoolboy' and that he had already referred to Landberg as 'enormously pedantic' in his private correspondence also illustrates how their disagreement had already shifted from the professional to the personal level.

The above examples show how De Goeje was quite well able to refrain from harsh public judgements of his peers. As important as what he refrained from though, was what he actually did. The most time-consuming way in which De Goeje translated his ideals into deeds was his habit of providing his colleagues with long lists of comments, improvements and additions to

58 Carlo Landberg, *Critica Arabica* (Leiden 1886).

59 UBL, Or. 8952 A: 360, De Goeje to Snouck Hurgronje, 6 September 1884; UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 18 December 1886.

60 UBL, BPL 2389, Landberg to De Goeje, 10 November 1886.

61 *Ibid.*, Landberg to De Goeje, 22 November 1886.

62 *Ibid.*, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 11 March 1887.

63 Landberg, *Critica Arabica*, 89.

their work. His correspondence with Nöldeke contains many such lists: but if we are to believe this correspondence, he must have done the same kind of work for many others with whom he did not have as close a friendship, as he had with the Strasburg Semitist. In his letters he mentions doing this favour for the likes of Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, Arabist in Göttingen, Albert Socin, the first successor of Fleischer in Leipzig, Louis Cheikho, theologian and orientalist in Beirut and Carl Brockelmann, professor of Semitic languages in Königsberg.⁶⁴ With none of these people did De Goeje have a particularly close personal relationship, so one can imagine that he put even more effort into compiling lists of comments for his closest acquaintances like Nöldeke and Wright.

Final judgement

In the introduction I referred to articles written by Paul and Daston and Sibum to describe a scholarly persona as a cultural identity that shapes individual scholars and creates scholarly collectives. As such, it provides a template to which scholars are invited to conform. If we look at these personae as mere historiographical tools, they could coexist peacefully. This paper however, advanced the hypothesis that personae can be historicised and presented one particular persona as a rough model that was constantly renegotiated in the day-to-day practice of nineteenth-century scholarly life.

The identification of the scholar with the stern judge was common amongst nineteenth-century orientalists. This is further illustrated both by De Goeje's most influential teacher, Dozy, and his most famous student, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. As a historian Dozy was primarily interested in the history of Moorish Spain. He was known to be a harsh judge of his Spanish colleagues. His judgements were so severe that De Goeje characterised his teacher's criticism of one of them as a 'death sentence'.⁶⁵ Snouck, who would eventually be De Goeje's successor in Leiden, took after Dozy rather than after his own teacher. Already in the early days of his career the severity of his judgement showed in his 162-page review of the third edition of an authoritative Dutch handbook on Islamic law in the *Indische Gids*. In this review he not only demonstrated that the author, L.W.C. van den Berg, lacked sufficient knowledge of Arabic sources, he also judged his character harshly: 'He belongs to the supporters of an institution that I learn to abhor more every day, that gnaws like a cancer on all serious study: the "*sociétéés d'admiration*

64 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 27 February 1870, 11 October 1902, 20 October 1905, 15 May 1906.

65 Michael Jan de Goeje, 'Levensbericht van Reinhart Dozy', *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen* (Amsterdam 1883) 12-52, 15.

mutuelle”.⁶⁶ De Goeje rejected the severity of his student’s condemnations: ‘His aversion of *admiration mutuelle* is fine, but especially in a small country one accomplishes more through mutual benevolence and exculpation of each other’s mistakes than through his method’.⁶⁷

Throughout his whole career De Goeje struggled to find the right way of combining ‘mutual benevolence’ and mutual evaluation. His struggle demonstrates the ambiguity of the judicial template and its corresponding cultural models of scholarship. His continuous renegotiation of this template also suggests that scholarly personae are not only analytical tools for modern-day historians: they can also help us write a history of scholarship. The ever-recurring discussions about the ideal of the scholar as a judge reveal the contested elements of this ideal. One contested element is the relative weight of evaluating scholars as people and evaluating scholarship. Probably the most important contested element concerns questions of privacy and publicity. The significance of these points of contestation extends beyond the discussion of the persona of the scholar as judge. These issues are likely to also figure in discussions of good scholarship that are not at all informed by this particular template. The history of scholarship might benefit from a more thorough look at the renegotiation of other personae as well. Promising first steps in this direction have already been made. For instance, analyses have recently been published about the early-modern image of scholars as nobility and the more contemporary representation of the scholar as entrepreneur.⁶⁸ Such studies once again illustrate the potential fruitfulness of a history of science based on thorough investigation of both discussions of specific scholarly ideals and the practices with which they are associated.

Christiaan Engberts (1982) is a PhD candidate at Leiden University in the NWO funded project ‘The Scholarly Self: Character, Habit, and Virtue in the Humanities, 1860-1930’. His research focuses on practices of mutual evaluation amongst German scholars between 1860 and 1920. Email: c.a.engberts@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

66 Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Mr. L.W.C. van den Berg’s beoefening van het Mohammedaansche recht’, in: Kurt Schroeder, *Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje: Deel II Geschriften betreffende het Mohammedaansche Recht* (Bonn, Leipzig 1923) 59-221, 66.

67 UBL, BPL 2389, De Goeje to Nöldeke, 8 March 1884.

68 For a reflection on the image of the scholars as nobility, see Marian Füssel, ‘A Struggle for

Nobility: “Nobilitas literaria” as Academic Self-Fashioning in Early Modern Germany’, in: Richard Kirwan (ed.), *Scholarly Self-Fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University* (Farnham 2013) 102-120. For an analysis of the scholar as an entrepreneur, see Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Life: A Moral History of a Late Modern Vocation* (Chicago 2008) chapter 7.