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DISPERSED PERSONAE: SUBJECT-MATTERS OF SCHOLARLY BIOGRAPHY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ORIENTAL PHILOLOGY

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Abstract [1]

This paper is about the history of the European scholarly life as scripted reality. To this end, it explores a variety of patterns of discourse and genres of text concerning the nature and purpose of biography, personhood, and subjectivity in the world of scholarly learning, and more precisely, Oriental studies, in the closing decades of the 19th century. The paper draws on materials pertaining to the lives of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), and Enno Littmann (1875–1958). The argument aims to show (1) that the scholarly *persona* at the time was varied and disunified; (2) that some of the variations of scholarly *personae* were built on notions, and experiences, of transcending cultural boundaries; and (3) that the very condition of disunity, or dispersion, provided a specific mode of expressing the ineffability of subjectivity in this province of scholarship. In particular, the paper offers an account of the scholarly *persona* as a carrier of virtue and authority; of the scholarly *persona* as distinct from, and a spectator of, the great historical *persona*; and of the scholarly *persona* as marked by a plotline of cultural transgression and return into the co-operative of science. It concludes with a discussion of poetry as a means of seeking to express the scholarly subject.

Introductory remarks

The present paper will discuss a number of distinct patterns, or cultural scripts, of biographical discourse as marking European Orientalist lives, persons, and selves in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The aim is, not merely to assert, but to explore plurality; not merely to re-tread the well-trodden paths of anti-biography, but rather to try and indicate some of the potential, for scholarly life-

1 Work on this paper has been made possible by generous support from the University of Zurich Research Priority Programme "Asia and Europe" as well as the Gerda Henkel Foundation. For insightful comments on the text, no doubt not adapted with entirely sufficient insight on my part, I would like to thank Kelly Grotke, Astrid Meier, Niklas Olsen, Matthias Roick, Freya Sierhuis, and Ralph Weber.

writing, of engaging with actual plurality in biographical discourse. Such engagement requires following some of the patterns at hand and making visible their distinctness as well as their interrelations, incongruities, antagonisms, and sheer quaintness. In this manner, the paper contends, the plural can be pursued to the terrain of its dispersion in historical concretion. This pursuit seeks to revise, or more precisely amplify, notions that have formed, in recent discussions, around the ways in which 19th-century scholarly practice and moral and methodological discourses aligned to create a unified scholarly *persona*.[2] These discussions have taken place predominantly with regard to the place of biography in the history of natural science. They have drawn up a model of the scholarly *persona* as emerging from the sustained performance of trustworthiness, virtue, and authority. Historically, this type of performance has contributed enormously to many of the dominant 19th and 20th-century modes of the production of scientific knowledge.

The present paper diverges from the model in question. Drawing on the history of Oriental studies, I propose to regard scholarly *personae* as corresponding – under a unifier no more stable by necessity than a proper name – to multiple biographical models at once. The material through which the paper seeks to make its case is drawn from the period of ca. 1860–1910, comprising roughly the age of high imperialism as well as that complex period of "positivism" in the history of science to which the model of the scholarly *persona* here explored most properly belongs. The first part of the paper discusses the scholarly *persona* as carrier of epistemic virtue and authority, and thus reproduces and modifies, in the sphere of the history of Oriental studies, the argument as presented in the history of science. The second part undertakes to investigate the Orientalists' notions of personhood in relation to their understanding of historicity in general and the great historical personage in particular. This particular mode of framing personhood generated the opportunity to derive a notion of self from a sense of a scholarly spectatorship that was located on the outside of the playing field of historical time generally and antiquity in particular. The third part explores the travelling scholar as a collector of experiences, a *persona* that was shaped along pre-established plotlines of transgression and return and depended on the framework of a peculiar economy of the accumulation of scholarly property. The paper argues that this economy was ultimately a pre-condition for the realization of the scholarly phenomenal self, that conglomerate of experience so often

2 See esp. DASTON/GALISON, 2007: here esp. ch. IV.

regarded as the seat of ineluctable and fundamental subjectivity. The fourth and concluding part discusses the specific mode of referencing selfhood in scholarly poetry as a peculiar mode of discourse that had the singular feature of aiming to silence competing patterns of scholarly personhood as discernible in 19th-century European academic culture. It is in this context of antagonising other variations of scholarly personhood that, arguably, a type of subjectivity emerged: as an epiphenomenon of the dispersion of scholarly *personae*.

In the second, third, and fourth parts, the paper discusses the presence of transcultural components in the respective patterns of scholarly personhood. Indeed, the decision to focus on Oriental philology, of all fields, was driven by a desire to pursue some of the possibilities of transcultural historical argument in the parochial ambit of scholarly biography. The second part emphasises the centrality of one of the prime effects Oriental philology had on European intellectual history: the multiplication of antiquities as resulting from the Orientalist confrontation with ever more numerous ancient civilizations. The process was indispensable for the setting up of the agonal conception of historical greatness and scholarly spectatorship the present paper explores. Previous cultural models of normative classical and biblical antiquity were regularly transgressed. The third part foregrounds Orientalist travel and encounter with foreign cultural environments and the biographical arrangements framing the Orientalist *persona* as a mobile contact zone. The fourth part addresses the faint poetic echoes of the travelling phenomenal self and adumbrates the deployment and status of intertextual relations between European, or more precisely German, and (mostly) Arabic literary traditions, in the scholarly poetry under consideration. Here as in the other parts, the transformation of biographical script as a result of the transgression of cultural boundaries is subtle and might appear not to amount to very much. The paper, however, is partisan to such subtlety. It pleads for the recognition of the not-much as a legitimate, even an inevitable subject-matter as historical studies focus increasingly on the entanglement across historically distinct and remote cultural phenomena. The kinds of cross-cultural contact that can be diagnosed in the cases under consideration in the present paper were easily drowned out by the ceaseless and repetitive drone of the scholarly *personae* as emerging within the confines of a rapidly expanding and transforming academic milieu that might at first glance appear as a model case of European self-containment. Nonetheless the subtle transcultural connections were constitutive elements in the biographical scripts informing the *personae* in question. Yet, the plurality of scholarly personhood

also ensured that this was an environment in which contact with cultural alterity was hard put to produce any overriding type of transformation.

Virtue, authority, and the scholarly *persona*

The literature on the history of scholarly personhood is connected in particular with the name of Steven Shapin, if among others.[3] A basic point of Shapin's various arguments is to underline the function of authority in the social fabric of science, be it early modern or contemporary. In the actual functioning of evidence, a socially generated *persona* endowed with the trust of his or her peers seems to be of pivotal importance. More strictly institutional factors, e.g. employment at a large and well-respected university, though highly relevant, have never entirely supplanted the *persona*. Epistemic refinements – notably methodical documentation, meticulously controlled procedure, and the mechanical automation of a host of experimental processes – have similarly failed to depersonalise the sciences. The identity of the scientific author mattered, and still matters, for organising trust and attention. Personhood is entangled with evidence. Authority is produced not merely by epistemic means, but by means of institution, tradition, and personal charisma in combination. The Weberian tinge of all this is deliberate in the literature in question. Historically, authority's reliance on the *persona* created a stable notion of the scholarly life as a calm, focused process of achievement in which overall failure did rather not occur, and honour was a vital component. Moral damage of a certain kind, e.g. courses of action such as plagiarism or fraud, or a criminal career outside the sciences, or even just the characteristic vices resulting from aggressively sustained error, often led, and indeed still lead, to scientific disqualification.[4] The biography of authority is constructed from the anticipation of the scholar's demise; it is meant to be an accumulation of achievements and recognitions the *telos* of which is a peculiar kind of afterlife, embodied by posthumous academic fame. The scien-

3 SHAPIN, 2008; foundational was SCHAFFER / SHAPIN, 1985. Recently, in particular Herman Paul has begun to develop an analogous argument for the humanities, see PAUL, 2011. For other efforts in a similar direction see also TOLLEBEEK, 2011; ESKILDSEN, 2008.

4 There is an abundance of apt examples. A particularly instructive one is perhaps that of the mid-19th century geographer August Petermann (1822–1878), who, after misleading scores of explorers to expect open waters at the North Pole, eventually became so entirely discredited that he decided to take his own life; see FELSCH, 2010.

tific community is a community of commemoration, as practised, anticipated, omitted, and violated. Peculiar forms of forgetting and ignorance are part of the social fabric of the academe.

According to Shapin's and Schaffer's path-breaking argument, the foundations of the epitaphic understanding of the scholarly life were laid by the gentlemanly science marking the so-called scientific revolution. Yet, later on, this constellation was deeply transformed along various sinuous tracks. Piecemeal, from the late 18th century onwards, the academic environments of central Europe appear to have become more formative for the practice of science and scholarship elsewhere, spreading a different, more institutional, specialised, and self-abnegating model of academic personhood. The academic world achieved a greater degree of autonomy in the production of a body of social norms of its own making. Affective bonds, patronage relations, and the mastery of certain textual forms and media, e.g. the rhetoric of polite letter correspondence, were seminal components[5] – until many elements of this pattern of sociability were in turn superseded over the course of the 20th century.

The overall line of argument may be reproduced with respect to the Oriental philologies of the 19th and 20th centuries. For instance, it appears very plausible to interpret the diary of the Arabist and scholar of Islam Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) from the perspective of these considerations.[6] Hailed by Orientalists from all over Europe as the foremost scholar of the field, Goldziher rejected a lengthy series of prestigious job offers from abroad, insisting on persevering in his native Hungary where he hoped to advance to a professorship at the University of Budapest. Due to a web of anti-Semitic intrigues as well as general indolence in the Hungarian academe, towards both him and his research, those hopes remained unfulfilled for more than thirty years. Goldziher worked as secretary of the Jewish congregation of Budapest and as a *Privatdozent*, a lecturer without salary, at the University. His diary is characterised by frequent, alternately sarcastic and rageful outbursts about the real or imagined affronts and indignities he had suffered from officials of the Jewish congregation, the Hungarian ministry of education, or Budapest academics. One of the dominant themes was the perceived lack of recognition for his scholarly merits. Without the institutional career he coveted, Goldziher constantly felt incomplete as an

5 The toolkit for constructing a scholarly *persona* is most comprehensively – i.e., including social, material and institutional tools – laid out by CLARK, 2006.

6 GOLDZIHER, 1978; for an analysis of the diary as a document of selfhood, see the instructive HABER, 2006a.

academic *persona* and insufficiently recognised as an authority. This is illustrated in the passage on the year 1889 in the autobiographical part (about one third) of the text leading up to 1890 when Goldziher began to compose the actual diary:

> With the appearance of the first part of my *Muhammedanische Studien*, my scholarly life actually entered a new phase. Nöldeke, Guidi, Aug[ust] Müller and others pronounced their praise in such exuberant fashion that my self-confidence necessarily was reinforced. I began to realise that my fear of publishing the studies of this collection, a fear through which I lost roughly five years, was unfounded.[7]

Recognition was not merely of emotional, but of biographical significance, credited with the power of ushering in an entire "new phase" in Goldziher's life. The diary as a whole is written from a judgemental, authoritative point of view, which is based almost entirely on the scientific recognition Goldziher received. Recognition is what makes credible the author's superiority over his detractors, even and especially to himself. The text professed to be written primarily for the author's wife and sons – as long as Goldziher was still alive.[8] Ultimately, the diary craved their recognition and reasserted a paternal authority that Goldziher apparently felt was tarnished by the biographical misfortune crippling his academic career. If this interpretation is correct, there can be no doubt about the far-reaching force, in his case, of the academic *persona* as the recipient of recognition and the bearer of authority.

These matters – authority and the academic *persona* – also figured as parts of the *epistemic* process. That is to say, they were indispensable for the production, ordering and justification of scholarly knowledge. Yet in the philological and historical disciplines, this had different ramifications than in the sciences. The humanities of the 19th century were dominated by philological research, a complex form of text-based reasoning in which considerations about meaning, that is to say, interpretation and translation, were paramount. A sense of incompleteness, inconclusiveness and fragmentation was quite dominant in such documents from the period in which scholars discussed the epistemological underpinnings of their work.

7 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 116f. (unless otherwise indicated, translations in the present paper are my own). GOLDZIHER, 1889–90 (various reprints) remains his best-received work.

8 GOLDZIHER 1978: 15. The editor's preface points out that indeed, until the surviving son's demise in 1955, the diary remained a family document only excerpts of which were ever shown to other people.

This can be seen in a letter of the eminent scholar of Semitic languages, Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), to his Dutch colleague, Michael Jan de Goeje (1836–1909). Friends since 1858, when Nöldeke had studied in Leiden for a semester, they continuously exchanged drafts of the texts they edited and sent each other long lists of emendations. Regarding one of those lists, Nöldeke remarked: "It is strange how rarely our comments concern the same passages while nonetheless I accept almost all of yours and expect that you will also consent with most of mine."[9] While much of the considerable polemical fervour of the period was spent on pointing out other people's mistakes, there was an acute sense of imperfection at work, too. The subject matter of Arabic text was conceptualised as transcending the forces of a single scholar. Nobody could fully live up to the complexity of the task. As a prerequisite of this conception, in order to be able to be imperfect, the scholar had to be a person. And it so happened, that he (or, marginally, she) had to be a particular kind of person, subject to an ethical code, in which trustworthiness, objective disposition, dedication to work and even the inclination to overwork oneself as well as similar virtues figured prominently, so as to ensure collective work for the advancement of scholarship.

The connection of personhood and virtue ethics is hardly surprising. Virtue ethics presuppose a biographical process of learning that renders ethical dispositions ever steadier. Academic authority was conceived of in such terms, at least implicitly. The academic biography was regarded as a teleological process of the shaping of ethical dispositions. Inasmuch as this process was a prerequisite of scholarly knowledge, it had an epistemic function. Thus, the epistemic and ethical spheres, so carefully distinguished in the methodological discourse of the period, were blurred.

Yet, this conflation of the spheres is not the only or even primary site at which personhood could play a role in scholarship; and it is by no means the defining site – if any such exists – for what scholarly personhood, and thus scholarly biography, was. The scholarly *persona* was not limited to being the carrier of virtue. Instead, to use Erving Goffman's concepts, different *personae* merely functioned as different frames giving meaning to social interaction.[10] The scholarly life was (and is) dispersed through a large variety of such frames, some

9 Nöldeke to de Goeje 02–02–1903, Briefwisseling Michael Jan de Goeje, Leiden University Library, BPL 2389: "Es ist seltsam, wie selten unsere Bemerkungen dieselben Stellen betreffen, während ich doch Deine fast alle akzeptiere und erwarte, d[as]s Du auch mit den meisten meiner einverstanden sein wirst."

10 GOFFMAN, 1990; also GOFFMAN, 1986.

of which were exclusive to the world of learning. And unlike virtue, which was a comparatively rigid setting, some of those frames were permeable and produced unstable meaning.

Colossal times

Nöldeke was one of the protagonists of what one might call the "historical turn" of Oriental studies (especially as pertaining to the Middle East and the Islamic world) after ca. 1860.[11] This was a turn away from mere linguistic research and source editing towards a broader historical and cultural research agenda. The shift was effected particularly (though not exclusively) in the Protestant centres of Oriental studies, in Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands, and was profoundly influenced by the historical criticism of the Bible that had become an ever-stronger current, especially in Protestant theology, from the late 18th century onwards.

In keeping with these larger developments, throughout his correspondence with de Goeje, Nöldeke often reported on recent, rapturous perusals of Arabic or Persian source texts or historical studies by other scholars. His own historical research interests focused on pre-Islamic history, particularly the Sassanid Empire, and on the first two centuries of the history of Islam, a period he regarded as a "colossal time".[12] In his view, both periods were shaped by their connections with Mediterranean late antiquity, but nonetheless, he tended to describe them in such historical terms that stressed analogies to – rather than genealogical relations with – familiar classical antiquity. No doubt, this tendency resulted at least in part from the dispersion of his studies that moved him to embrace short forms rather than the comprehensive grand narratives popular with contemporary reading publics and practised, with great success, by several famous classicists of the period, such as Theodor Mommsen or Eduard Meyer. The most enticing of the analogies Nöldeke stressed was the emergence of vast monarchical Empires as achieved through the agency of heroic individuals. For Nöldeke's view of history, this discourse was so paramount that he did not see any interest in Islamic history from the loss of imperial momentum during the Abbasid caliphate onwards.

11 For the change of tide in mid-century Oriental studies see MARCHAND, 2009: 162–190, 206–211, 256–270.

12 Nöldeke to de Goeje 02–03–1873 (here and henceforth as in note 8).

Responding to a concern of de Goeje's about the rather fragmented nature of his scholarly pursuits, Nöldeke wrote in 1887:

> Yes, perhaps it is a misfortune that I have dispersed myself too much, but on the other hand I have to say that this is somewhat in my nature, and, after all, the merits & demerits of a man are most closely intertwined. I find it odd myself that I feel much more drawn to historical than to linguistic studies, and yet forever end up with the latter. If only I succeeded to arrive at a passably palpable conception of Muhammad! Then I would abandon all the Hebrew, Syriac etc, and commence a history of the Arabs from Muhammad roughly until Mutawakkil. But that man whom I believed to understand in my younger years has become ever more enigmatic to me, and yet I cannot well begin with his *death*. Neither is it acceptable to begin with the Hijra and merely to cover the external doings, leaving aside the Prophet as such. Regarding Muhammad's military campaigns etc. I have a number of novel ideas, but what does that matter? More than others, I am interested above all in imagining the leading *persons*. Describing an Umar, Uthman, Muawiya, Mansur as I imagine them, that would be my delight. And yet, in the beginning of it all there looms the great question mark, the Prophet who believes in himself and yet deceives the entire world etc![13]

This passage suggests a number of important points: Firstly, for Nöldeke the dispersion of his interests was related to his inability to apply the biographical discourse of historical greatness to the times of Muhammad in a satisfying manner. Secondly, this inability resulted from a hermeneutic failure of understanding the moral character of the Prophet. As the last sentence of the passage indicates, the elusive, enigmatic matter that escaped Nöldeke's grasp was the

13 Nöldeke to de Goeje 12–12–1887: "Ja, es ist vielleicht ein Unglück, daß ich mich zu sehr zersplittert habe, aber auf der anderen Seite muß ich doch sagen, das liegt ein wenig in meiner Natur und Fehler u. Vorzüge des Menschen hängen ja aufs Engste zusam[m]en. Wunderlich ist's mir selbst, daß ich mich viel mehr zu historischen Arbeiten hingezogen fühle als zu sprachlichen, und doch im[m]er wieder auf letztere kom[m]e. Wenn ich nur eine einigermassen greifbare Vorstellung von Muham[m]ed gewin[n]en könnte! Dann liesse ich am Ende alles Hebräisch, Syrisch etc. fallen und machte mich an eine Geschichte der Araber von Muham[m]ed etwa bis Mutawakkil: aber dieser Mensch, den ich in jungen Jahren zu verstehen glaubte, ist mir im[m]er räthselhafter geworden, und nun kann ich doch nicht mit seinem *Tode* anfangen. Ebenso wenig geht es an, mit der Hidschra zu begin[n]en und bloß d. äusseren Thaten zu besprechen, den Propheten als solchen liegen zu lassen. Für die Feldzüge etc. Muham[m]ed's habe ich allerlei neue Einfälle, aber was liegt daran? Gerade mich interessiert es vor Allem, die leitenden *Personen* mir vorzustellen. Einen Omar, Othmân, Muawiya, Mansûr zu schildern, wie ich sie mir vorstelle, das wäre meine Freude. Aber nun steht im Anfang von dem Allen das grosse Fragezeichen, der Prophet, der an sich glaubt und doch alle Welt hinter's Licht führt etc.!" (Emphases in the original).

question of how to reconcile Muhammad's personal sincerity with the overall deceitful nature of his religious movement.

"Colossal" was a quality in which the unity of an epoch and a civilisation were intractably entangled with a peculiar pattern of biographical discourse. This pattern became of central importance to the crafting of historicity, as is illustrated most strikingly by the enormous resonance of David Friedrich Strauß's and Ernest Renan's "Lives" of Jesus (1835–1836 and 1863–1883 respectively). Quite different books, both offered more than merely biographical treatments, but the point that at the core of Christianity and its "world historical" epoch there was the life, the consciousness, the intentions of a great individual was foundational for both of them. Both more or less directly belaboured the Hegelian notion – increasingly diluted over the course of the 19th century – that the great individual encapsulated the entirety of the activities of human reason that made the epochs of world history. This notion, often simplified (and ridiculed) as a servile devotion to "great men" later on, was endemic in early and mid-19th-century understandings of historicity, both among scholars and a broader public.[14] Still, it was difficult to tell who was a great individual. Hegel had particularly recognised Napoleon as such – the notorious world-spirit on horseback – but Strauß and Renan demonstrated that Jesus, too, was a contender; and so was Muhammad, as Nöldeke's letter implied. Thus, when Muhammad's greatness was at stake, the epochal character of the entrance of Islam into world history was at stake, too.

The bulk of the generally accepted standards of "greatness" coincided with the canon of examples antiquity provided. What was at stake was an *areté*, an acquired excellence, at being human, thus requiring a notion of the course of a life as inserted in history: a course over which greatness emerged. Antiquity thus accrued normative weight as a historical epoch defined quite specifically by human excellence. Moreover, "greatness" was a summary term for a specifically *historical* virtue, an epoch-making virtue occurring only in historical *personae*. At the same time, as the respective *areté*, it provided a measure for the best of humanity in history. In this way, antiquity as an epoch expressed a standard of greatness and universal humanity that was bound to personhood.

The converse of determining historical greatness was the identification of the contrary, the low, despicable, and ignoble. Commonly and fittingly, this quality was sought in groups instead of individuals. Nöldeke habitually resorted to national character for this purpose: the Persians were forever treacherous, the

14 See e.g. ZIMMERMANN, 2006.

Arabs uncivilised, if bold, etc. When individuals were marked as historical villains, this quality usually derived from some national deficiency, as for instance in Nöldeke's characterisations of the early caliphs.[15] The national was code for the particular in history, and great individuals transcended the particular. By contrast, the pursuit of historical ignobility fed into an overarching structure of national stereotyping and resentment Nöldeke unfolded in his letters as a running, often scornful commentary on past and present historical events. In this structure, nearly everybody – the Germans and, in the letters to de Goeje, the Dutch were excepted – was the target of fanciful historical and political denigration. Yet there was also a pervasive deployment of irony and hyperbole, expressing a peculiar sense of detachment and disengagement. Greatness and ignobility were categories of a remarkably playful understanding of history. In the letter to de Goeje, Nöldeke emphasised that it would be his "pleasure" to describe the caliphs "as I imagine them". In a certain sense, the ascription of greatness and ignobility coincided with one's pick of champion in the playing field of the past. Historical time was playtime, and history was a spectator sport.

This required partisanship and discrete units of comparison so that a competition could take place. Yet another letter from Nöldeke illustrates the mechanics of this mode of historicisation. Prompted by remarks on the part of a younger Dutch colleague, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), who had seen equal merit in Arab civilization, Nöldeke insisted on occidental superiority:

> [...] but would Sn[ouck] care to exchange his European sense of discretion with [that of a given Arabic author]? Nay, I constantly thank Zeus 'that I am Greek and no barbarian'! [...] How much do al-Maqrizi and Ibn Khaldun surpass their European contemporaries! And yet, how fast were the Europeans to overtake the [Orientals]! One may think about Islam and the other purely Oriental religions whatever one pleases, but *in the long run* they act as appalling fetters for higher developed man.[16]

15 This comes to the fore most clearly perhaps in NÖLDEKE, 1892, a work of popularising history, in which he laid heavy emphasis on the moral ruthlessness of the early rulers of Islam.

16 Nöldeke to de Goeje 12–02–1888"[...] aber möchte Sn[ouck] seine europäische Einsicht mit [einem arabischen Autor] tauschen? Nein, ich danke dem Zeus fortwährend ‚Dass ich ein Grieche bin und kein Barbar'! Gestern habe ich meine Beurtheilung über die Dissertation von G. Vos an die Facultät abgegeben. Ich habe bei der Gelegenheit diese Schrift Meqrîzî's gründlich gelesen, und meine Achtung vor dem Manne ist dadurch noch immer gestiegen. Wie überragen M. und Ibn Chaldûn ihre europ. Zeitgenossen! Und doch, wie rasch sollten d. Europäer die Occidentalen [lies: Orientalen] überholen! Man mag vom Islâm und d. anderen rein orientalischen Religionen denken, was man will, auf *d. Dauer* sind sie eine entsetzliche Fessel für den höher entwickelten Menschen."

The most salient element in this offhand pastiche of Renan is Nöldeke's self-identification with the Greeks. This is confirmed countless times in Nöldeke's correspondence. With tongue in cheek, he kept voicing his regrets about having specialised on the Orient, "for which I have at rock bottom so little affection", instead of Greek antiquity.[17] Yet, this partisan self-attachment was neither self-evident nor uncontested among his peers. Other Orientalists chose to define their area of research in terms of distancing themselves – sometimes rather ferociously – from the Greeks and the philhellenism that characterised Nöldeke.[18]

About an exchange with his former student Georg Jacob (1862–1937), a work of whose he had judged unfavourably, Nöldeke wrote:

> Jacob has accepted my review much more benignly than I had expected. Characteristically, in his letter to me he only raises vigorous protest against the passage on classicism. In this context, there occurs the phrase: 'In any case, the Greek seem a terribly *shallow* nation to me, even in the best of their creations'. How shallow then must be all of *us*, who, so to speak, live on Greek thought![19]

There was a tone of comical vilification in this conflict about Greek antiquity, which did not affect relations between the adversaries much. Jacob was a cultural historian and literary scholar of Islam who bestowed his affections on the Persians and the Turks, and eventually the Chinese.[20] The game in question was a last feeble replay of such traditional confrontations as the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, which had resurfaced in German literature in the confrontation of classicism and romanticism around 1800. As in other fields, in the Oriental philologies the echo was still audible around 1900. Jacob was routinely classed as a "romantic".[21] This type of "romanticism" implied aggressive rejection of the cult of classical antiquity so central to Nöldeke's view of history. The

17 Thus Nöldeke to de Goeje 28–07–1883: "Ich bedaure im[m]er wieder u. wieder, dass ich meine Studien auf den mir im Grunde so wenig sympathischen Orient gerichtet habe statt auf Griechenland."

18 On the historical context, see MARCHAND, 2009: 66–84; also for the broader context MARCHAND, 1996.

19 Nöldeke to de Goeje 16–02–1896: „Jacob hat m/e Anzeige viel besser aufgenom[m]en, als ich dachte. Characteristisch ist es, dass er in s/m Briefe nur gegen die Stelle über d. Classicismus energisch protestiert. Dabei kom[m]t das Wort vor: ‚Jedenfalls scheinen mir die Griechen ein furchtbar *seichtes* Volk, auch in ihren besten Schöpfungen zu sein'. Wie seicht müssen *wir* erst alle sein, die, so zu sagen, von griechischen Gedanken leben!"

20 LITTMANN, 1955a.

21 For instance LITTMANN, 1955a: 99.

original position of the "moderns" had slowly come to integrate those who championed others than the classics, as a response to which the opposing party had commenced to stress the continuity between classical antiquity and European modernity.

Over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, antiquity had multiplied.[22] Ever more "ancient civilisations" were unearthed, predominantly in Asia. These civilisations were marked by a number of shared features: large-sized sculpture, inscriptions (ideally at first illegible), religious and legal writings, urbanization, and so on. European and Mediterranean antiquities were slowly integrated with each other, ultimately with significant consequences for the scholarly view of Greco-Roman as well as Hebrew antiquity, which had for a long time stood next to each other quite unrelated.[23] Yet this integration largely omitted those antiquities too distantly removed in time and space. Thus, two simultaneous processes occurred. On the one hand, there emerged an ecumenical notion of the ancient world as a potentially unified whole that was centred on the Mediterranean. On the other hand, multiple antiquities were identified as separate units by aesthetic analogisation to Greek and Roman antiquity. These, and especially their leading historical personages, were set in competition against each other, and only some could ever count as serious contenders. Orientalist work fundamentally changed the monumentalising use of antiquity as the dominant European epoch of reference. Nöldeke's philhellenism expressed a position in this process, as did Jacob's contrarian attitude.

The specific monumentality of 19th-century antiquity arguably might be regarded as part of a larger process of the secularisation of eschatological notions of history.[24] "Secularisation", needless to say, is a problematic term. In this case, it might best be understood as a type of cultural forgetfulness where

22 See KLANICZAY / WERNER / GÉCSER, 2011, which however focuses strongly on the national positing of antiquities in Europe. The thought is also already present in KAEGI, 1942.

23 It is worth noting that the relation of classical and Hebrew antiquity, which also pertained to the status of the Old Testament and was a covert way of discussing the merits of Judaism as compared to Christianity, and even the rights of Jews in Christian states, became marginal to the extent that Hebrew antiquity became provincialised within the overall Mediterranean context. The competition of Hebrew and Greek antiquity continued to enjoy rematches long into the 20th century, though mostly these were hosted by Jewish authors. One striking example is Erich Auerbach's discussion of temporality in the Torah and in Homer in the opening chapter of *Mimesis*; on this see PORTER, 2008. On the way in which the problem of Hebrew antiquity was written out of Oriental philology, see the discussion of the issue in MARCHAND, 2009, esp. chs. 2 and 3.

24 See the classical account in LÖWITH, 1949.

the eschatological code has become undecipherable but nonetheless continues to work, if defectively. Most of those authors who have proposed analysing the modern notion of history in terms of a purported secularisation of eschatological content have pointed to the sublimated expectations of salvation allegedly expressing themselves in progressive and teleological notions of history. This analysis of the modern understanding of history has always been slanted towards the contemporary, the recent past, and the expectations of the future. Yet, arguably, the inherited code of eschatology had been so corrupted that it engendered a fragmented understanding of history. Eschatology had also comprised the beginnings of world history: creation and the expulsion of humanity from paradise. The philologies, obsessed with notions of originality, imbued with the pathos of cultural dawn, sought in the ancient only one half-forgotten element from eschatology: Paradise lost, unrecoverable by modern man. There is a teleological undercurrent in this history. It represents what one might call a negative teleology where the aim is to depart from somewhere, but without defined destination. "Greatness" and "colossal time" expressed that one had departed for good. The aesthetics of this kind of history stressed the immense and unrecoverable quality of the past; in this sense, it drew on a very specific aesthetics of the historical sublime.[25]

Yet this aesthetics would be incomplete without its comical side. Any given antiquity could be denigrated; to the extent it was open to the quality of the sublime it was also open to ridicule: the "terrible shallowness" of the Greeks. This aesthetics provided the universals to which historical discourse was then bound. These universals acted as strong and obvious limits of historicization. Greatness, for instance, while supposedly acting on the course of history, was itself not subject to historical explanation, nor did it undergo significant changes in itself. Such universals rendered antiquities comparable. Arguably, this was the prime use Oriental philology had for universality: staging a competition. Universalism was a function of pathos and ridicule as deployed in a diverse and fragmented arena of scholarly writing.

As far as personhood is concerned, the organisation of historicity as pertaining to multiplying and competing antiquities produced not simply one type of personhood, but two. The competition required protagonists as well as spectators. History as the sublimely unrecoverable past irrevocably separated the scholar from the ancient world. The historian could never quite be a player in historical time, as it were, only the spectator; never in the arena, only in the

25 Following ANKERSMIT, 2005.

ranks; never an ancient, only an admirer of the ancients (or supporting an opposing side and sitting in the seat of the scornful). The universal measure of historical humanity, "greatness", did not apply to the position of the spectator. Still, the aesthetics of history, as expressed by 19th-century Orientalists, required this spectatorial position. Scholars, collectively and individually, were audience, and more precisely, a non-participating audience.

Only, at times, they were not. This is where spectator personhood became permeable. An instructive case is that of Snouck Hurgronje, scholar of far-reaching fame who had however spent almost twenty years as an influential colonial administrator in Indonesia. When Enno Littmann (1875–1958) wrote Snouck's obituary,[26] he thus had two different *personae* to deal with: that of the scholar-spectator and that of the politician participating in history. Littmann first presented a *curriculum vitae* summing up Snouck's positions and most prominent merits (83–88). He proceeded to listing the major scientific works (88–92), then portrayed the political man (92–94), and concluded on a "personal" note (94f.). Clearly, then, several *personae* could attach to the same name. The political portrait begins thus:

> If in my necrology of Friedrich Rosen [...] I said that in him had been united the diplomat and the scholar, but that perhaps the diplomat had outweighed the scholar, then it must be said of Snouck Hurgronje that he was equally eminent as a scholar and as a politician. His daughter wrote to me, on 9 July 1936: 'At the end of the day, for Father, the practical application of the knowledge one had gained was the most important thing; his work for the Indies he regarded as an obligation, and it was dearest to him.' His was, from birth, the nature of a ruler. His entire character had something regal about it, and Wellhausen once said to me that Snouck Hurgronje should have become King of Holland.[27]

While some of these qualities were able to criss-cross between the political and the scholarly sphere of life, the decisive point was the actual distinction of these spheres. Snouck possessed a ruler's nature (*Herrschernatur*) as a political figure; less so as a scholar. Gaining knowledge was one thing, "applying" it another, higher one. Snouck had been touched by greatness: "He was commanding by dint of mere presence; even when he did not talk, it seemed as if his clear, calm eyes penetrated everything."[28] Littmann, the scholarly spectator, was gripped by the spectacle of Snouck. Julius Wellhausen, a theologian-turned-Orientalist

26 LITTMANN, 1955b.

27 LITTMANN, 1955b: 92.

28 LITTMANN, 1955b: 92f.

widely known for his satiric spirit, quipped about it – but in an admiring tone. The scholarly *persona* had to break frame in order to elicit such cheer, which was usually reserved for the enjoyment of the spectacle, say, of the history of the Caliphate that Nöldeke found "colossal" – and it should be added that in colloquial usage, German *kolossal* carries a note of ironical exaggeration, though not enough to cancel its meaning as an utterance of amazement.

Yet, by presupposing the necessity of such a rupture with the scholarly world in order to transgress into politics, the philologists and historians also convinced themselves that they were in fact only spectators, that the greatness and ignobility, the aesthetics of universality they deployed, did not, in the end, pertain to themselves. For the construction of their object of research – in which historical time was of central importance – this was crucial. The distinction between scholarly observation and political participation was key to the belief that history – and by extension the Orient – remained, in effect, untouched by its being observed. This distinction was established by means of a discursive pattern concerning personhood; or more precisely, the dynamics of interrelation between two such patterns, concerning the great historical individual and the scholar as spectator.

The banana republic of letters

The philologies in general, and Oriental studies in particular, celebrated epistemic, or perhaps one might say: spectator virtues such as the expert gaze of the seasoned specialist, the intuition necessary to decipher difficult inscriptions or handwritings, or even the experience of long periods of oral exchange with native speakers of foreign languages that could not otherwise be acquired.[29] Evidence in the humanities, due to its complexity and equivocality, irreducibly functioned (and functions) by more or less open appeals to biographically acquired experience. The philologies more generally – that is, the broad academic field – successfully upheld, in the modern university, an epistemological model of knowledge about text as based, not merely on superior knowledge of languages and scripts, but also on lived experience and the bare eye.

29 In this, the philologies maintained a notion of epistemic prowess very akin to what DASTON / GALISON, 2007, esp. ch. 2, describe as the "truth-to-nature" model of scientific vision. Still, there seem to be slight differences resulting from the philological privileging of text, as both written and spoken.

In the history of Oriental studies as pertaining to the Middle East, one can observe a gradual shift in the making of biographical experience proper over the course of the latter decades of the 19th century. While Orientalists of Nöldeke's and de Goeje's generation had usually done little travel abroad – Nöldeke for instance had only ever been to the Netherlands, Britain, and Italy – the scholars of the following generation increasingly visited the countries they studied, thus also developing the capacity to speak the languages that many of the earlier Orientalists had treated as purely graphic matter. In a letter from 1872, Nöldeke mentioned to de Goeje that the Swiss Orientalist Albert Socin (1844–1899) had recently "for the first time" given him "an impression of spoken Arabic; it sounds almightily unpleasant (*mordmässig unangenehm*)."[30] Again, Nöldeke ironised what had grown into a biographical deficiency, his ignorance of spoken Arabic as resulting from his lack of travelling. Actually, he had almost certainly heard spoken Arabic much earlier, for instance in 1858, by a Persian-Indian Munshi who had accompanied the brothers Schlagintweit to Germany after the end of their Himalayan journeys.[31]

Travelling, as a practice of scholarly culture, meant to cross borders, not just spatially, but also in terms of the life one lived, the kind of person one sought to become. Programmatically, travelling entailed exposure to the unpredictable, to improbable and dramatic changes of biographical trajectory. Goldziher, who had been to Cairo as a young man and had famously studied at the al-Azhar University, tended to speak of his period abroad as one in which he had so seriously engaged with Islam and Islamic scholarship that he had been on the brink of forsaking his own faith and the tradition of erudition in which he had been brought up.[32] This kind of crossing over was as much one of physical travel as it pertained to the subjective experience of the traveller. And it was this experience that laid the foundations of Goldziher's vast knowledge of Islam. Yet, however unconsciously, Goldziher had followed a cultural model, a narrative scheme that was deeply inscribed into the scholarly texts of the field and dominated the lived experience of numerous others. Religious faith was an important component of this model; a model of experimenting with alterity, as it were. Hence the indispensability, in the Orientalists' practice of accessing and ordering knowledge, of the notion of the academic *persona* as carrier of faith,

30 Nöldeke to de Goeje 16–05–1872. In the same letter, he also mentioned that he had heard spoken New Syriac from a travelling Nestorian from Urmia.

31 Nöldeke to de Goeje 10–07–[1858].

32 Thus especially GOLDZIHER, 1978: 59 (summary passage for 1873–1874).

and as embodying a peculiar biographical plotline. As a consequence, not only was biography an epistemic force, but the epistemic arrangements of the philologies had an effect on how scholars lived their lives. The scholarly life could not be lived without plotlines in communication with cultural, and actually textual, models.

Goldziher's first teacher of Oriental languages had been Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), born as Hermann Wamberger into a poor Hungarian Jewish family. Vámbéry had magyarised his name when converting to Calvinism in order to further his academic career.[33] During an extended sojourn in Constantinople from 1858–1861, he had mastered Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. After a short return to Budapest, he set out for a lengthy journey in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1861–1864, during which for the most part he had travelled disguised as a dervish (or so he claimed). These undertakings had all been financed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as Vámbéry professed to conduct linguistic research on the mysterious origins of the Hungarian language. Goldziher's portrait of Vámbéry is unflattering; but he does not conceal the attraction he felt in 1865, inscribing himself at the University of Pest as a fifteen year-old "extraordinary student":

> Vámbéry, returning from his dervish journey, had just settled at the University as a lecturer of languages; just recently his first oeuvre had appeared, accompanied by huge advertisements; all the papers were trumpeting poetry and truth about him, the walls of the capital were [plastered] with great posters ballyhooing the book, the image of the noble Jewish dervish in the middle. In my eyes, there was no greater man; I decided to sit at the feet of this colossus. I was the first student to sign up for his lectures.[34]

In the following pages, Goldziher denounces the vanity, greed, dilettantism, and deceitful nature of the teacher he came fervently to detest in later years. Among the things that the adult Goldziher found offensive in Vámbéry was "the scorn with which he talked about his own youth, how every single day he derided the faith of his fathers, the aversion he felt towards my affectionate fidelity towards my religion".[35] Vámbéry had not only disguised himself as a Muslim; he had also opportunistically disguised himself as a Christian, without actual belief. Certainly, there are many reasons for which Goldziher came to reject Vámbéry. But the latter's unscholarly comportment, as exemplified by his religious pro-

33 See HABER, 2006b.

34 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 25.

35 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 30.

miscuity, was not the least important. Vámbéry, as a traveller, was a fraud. Conversely, sincere faith guaranteed the *persona*. Vámbéry had no *persona*, only a series of instrumental disguises.

However, disguise belonged to the prime *topoi* of Orientalist travel. Travellers put on native garb and concealed their European origins – and then posed for photographs to immortalise their Oriental masquerade (and at the same time declare it as a matter of *past*, or *passing*, adventure). In one of the most striking episodes of his autobiographical narrative, Goldziher submits himself to this *topos*. Earlier in the account, he has expressed disdain for the habits of Western tourists in Jerusalem, and he has promised to the *sheikhs* of the Azhar – though the concession seems to have pained him – not to exploit his studies at the University as material for yet another smug European travelogue.[36] Yet towards the end of his stay in Cairo, he disguises himself in local clothing and participates in Muslim service without having converted.

> My friends were full of fear. But the daring deed was done. Among thousands of faithful, I rubbed my forehead to the floor of the mosque. Never in my life have I been more devout, truly devout, than on this sublime Friday. But one advised me better to avoid the mosque from now. I was not safe from betrayal.[37]

Goldziher justifies his transgression, however Vámbérian in style, by referring, in the strongest terms, to the sincerity of his religious affinity with Islam. He has not only studied its learned tradition, but instead *experienced* it:

> My way of thought was Islamic through and through; my sympathies also subjectively drew me there. My monotheism I called Islam, and I did not lie when I proclaimed faith in Muhammad's prophecies. My copy of the Koran may testify as to how much I had turned towards Islam inwardly. My teachers were seriously awaiting the moment of my open conversion.[38]

Here, the religious is a matter of the subjective, a conglomerate of theological thought and something additional, "sympathy". The authenticity of the subjective adherence to Islam is confirmed threefold: Goldziher makes a promise as to his sincerity; he points to his heavily used copy of the Qur'an for material proof; and to the testimony of his Egyptian teachers. Yet, his transgressive participation in Muslim service, for the sake of enhancing the experience, made it impossible

36 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 64f. and 70 respectively.

37 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 72.

38 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 71.

for him, not only to convert, but even to continue his studies at the Azhar. His flirt with Islam was self-defeating, and it contained an element of play and non-seriousness, in spite of his wordy affirmation of sincerity. At about the same time he received the news that his father was in ill health. He left Cairo precipitously and returned home. The father, by then on his deathbed, made him promise never to forsake Judaism. The binding force of Jewish tradition alone had apparently been insufficient to keep young Goldziher from straying afield, religiously. Still, whether it had been the old allure of Vámbérian travel or the theological attraction of Islam that had led him astray is difficult to tell. At any rate, the biographical plotline of travelling Oriental scholarship won out: Goldziher went over the edge, subjectively, only to return a greater scholar.

The binding force of the academic career was (and is?) to a large extent the binding force of a biographical plotline. In spite of dubious career prospects and meagre income, as in the case of Goldziher, a complete departure from academic biography was difficult to accomplish. This was true even for Snouck, probably Goldziher's closest academic friend. Snouck conducted a much-admired scholarly voyage to Mekka in 1884–1885, returned to Dutch academia for a few years, then left the scholarly life behind entirely and without apparent intention of returning in 1889, in order to become a colonial administrator of "native affairs" (*Inlandsche Zaken*) in the Dutch Indies. Nonetheless, in 1906 he returned to the university to become de Goeje's successor. His travels had comprised conversion to Islam and a lengthy stint as a military advisor, contributing to the crushing of insurgency during the Aceh War.[39] The boundaries of the academic life were varied, not only distinguishing the Oriental from the Occidental, but also, for instance, state service from scholarly work. The integrating force of the academic *curriculum vitae*, however, was powerful: as long as the scholar returned, he could have any number of border-crossings behind him. Returning was the decisive event in the biographical plot of the travelling Orientalist's life. And constructing the borderlines of the world of scholarship – for instance against the likes of Vámbéry – also had the function of defining what actually constituted a return into the republic of letters.

The force of returning has much to do with the nature of the biographical plotline in scholarship. This is a plotline not easily disrupted since, at the end of the day, it is a plotline of mere accumulation. Scholarly travel was a practice of accumulation; especially so after travel had lost its erstwhile pre-eminent

39 On Snouck, see PEDERSEN, 1957; WITKAM, 1985; KONINGSVELD, 1988; VROLIJK / VAN DE VELDE / WITKAM, 2007.

function as a scientific method.[40] The Orientalists of the late 19th century did not make many more of the grand "discoveries" their colleagues had been able to boast a century before. Yet, travel retained a function in the acquisition of languages, inscriptions, oral literatures, and archaeological objects; and it retained a function as defining the academic *persona* of the scholar who had travelled beyond the familiar and returned enriched. Much has been said about collecting, particularly in terms of the classification systems usually imposed on collections. The aspect of property, however, seems to have remained somewhat underexposed. Collections are collections of trophies. Their contents are to a large extent unique. They are not commodities in the sense that they could be translated into the sign-system of money unequivocally. This is a strange parallelism to the phenomenal, the content of experience, which is also unique and possessed by one person alone. Material property and experience seem interlinked, as for instance in Goldziher's reference to his copy of the Qur'an when averring the purity of his religious feelings. Arguably, the phenomenal was so elusive that it enlisted the support of material objects that were invested with the function of bearing witness to experience. In the context of broader collections, the objects, individually and as an ensemble, bore witness to connoisseurship, a biographically acquired steadiness of experience, the highest of the spectator's virtues.

Unlike many of his colleagues, Goldziher was not a collector. He lacked the financial resources to accumulate objects for himself and the mission to do so for institutional purposes. He looked down on collectors, expressing contempt for the hunt for old manuscripts, "favourite sport of scholars travelling the Orient", thus a non-serious pursuit. Instead, Goldziher declared that he wanted "to eavesdrop on people, ideas, and institutions",[41] a research agenda that heavily relied on personal experience. The verb he chose, *belauschen*, might also more neutrally translate as "listen to". Yet at the same time it connotes a secretive and transgressive activity. Only a few lines before *belauschen* occurs, Goldziher has determined the research agenda for his voyage in the following fashion:

40 The most comprehensive accounts of the epistemic programme of Enlightenment scholarly travel I am aware of are in STAGL, 1995 and OSTERHAMMEL, 1998. The developments of the 19th-century genre history of the travelogue remain somewhat understudied, but it seems the genre lost much of its previous function in an environment of increasingly specialised scholarship; for 19th-century travel generally see now VENAYRE, 2012.

41 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 57.

> Although officially dispatched to develop myself into a talking machine [*Parliermaschine*] à la Vámbéry, this task was unable to appear sufficiently significant to me so as to make me concentrate on such playing around. I set myself higher aims, the same that Snouck set himself 12 years later in Mecca. I undertook to immerse [*einleben*] myself into Islam and its science [*Wissenschaft*], to become myself a member of the Mohammedan republic of letters, to get to know the mainsprings that had, over the course of the centuries, formed, from the Judaised cult of Mekka, the tremendous world religion of Islam. Moreover, I also wanted to study the influence of this system on the society and its morals. This twofold aim I could reach only through close interaction with scholars and ordinary people, in mosques, bazaars and squalid inns.[42]

This research programme, one of the founding documents of the modern European discipline of *Islamic studies*, was both admirable and idiosyncratic. The perception of society was peculiar: on the one hand there was a republic of letters (Mohammedan, thus sharply distinct from the European one); on the other there were ordinary people. It seems clear that Goldziher prioritised participation in the life of the former – another mark of distinction from Vámbéry – but that he also rejected a socially exclusive elitism. The question as to how close contact with contemporary natives was supposed to help "understanding" the translation of a local cult into something "tremendous" (or might one say, "colossal"?) is perhaps not clear at first glance. Yet the tremendous character of Islam was also, and perhaps even primarily, an aesthetic phenomenon. Among many other things, Goldziher also sought the traces of the historical sublime in Islamic society. Concurringly, his research aims required the actual person as the receiving end of an aesthetic experience. The use of the term *einleben* underlines that the actual lived life was placed at stake. However, the strange slippage that occurs a few lines further – from honest face-to-face contact to eavesdropping – marks the fact that the scholarly *persona* was never merely a conglomerate of virtues, but that it also incorporated a transgressive side.

A similar, though more subtle slippage occurs in a different, quite unrelated passage of the diary, in which Goldziher addresses scholarly authorship:

> In the quarter-century of my scholarly career, many a time have I helped a colleague out of some scholarly predicament and protected him from smaller and greater mistakes. I have always refused to accept published expressions of gratitude. Science is common property. In everything a single scholar knows, he is obliged to others. Only [few] people have nonetheless acknowledged my contributions in public. First of all the great and honest Nöldeke.

42 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 56f.

> He indeed has no need of adorning himself with borrowed plumes. Whenever he used anything of my making [*ex meis*], he also gave entirely unusual signs of recognition.[43]

This passage phrases the problem of authorship in terms of property. It points out that science is owned by all its practitioners, yet it rejoices in the recognition of a more specific, individual kind of property as well: the property of the products of one's work, authorship. Scholarly authorship presupposed a claim to domains, to specific fields of undisturbed production over a certain span of time, leading to the accumulation of an individual oeuvre. Again, in spite of Goldziher's hinting at the contrary, the author was defined through individual property in science, and this was an essential feature in the organisation, the production and the justification of knowledge in the humanities. Yet, the property was of a specific kind: it was attached to the *persona* and non-tradeable, but at the same time not acquired by the *persona* alone but by concession on the part of other scholars. Hence the attraction of describing it in terms of *common* property: it was property within a co-operative. The renunciation of the recognition of authorship Goldziher proclaimed to practice indicated that authorship was supposed to be a gift bestowed upon the scholar by his peers. Moreover, it was a gift capable of excess. The co-operative knew everyday property and holiday squandering. As an opportunistic and greedy seeker of his own advantage, the mirthless Vámbéry knew nothing of the joys of scholarly community, as epitomised in Goldziher's excessive readiness to assist weaker colleagues and in Nöldeke's excessive ostentation of recognition. This is the slippage the passage contains: while it pretends to be speaking of obligation and humility, it actually speaks of the plumages of academic poultry, more or less colourful, adorning, and wasteful. This is the aesthetic regime of philological practice as the carrier of (occasional) beauty and joy; or more precisely, of the scholarly *persona* as such a carrier, for the regime was integrated through a specific and peculiar notion of personhood. This notion supplied a sense of aesthetic measure and transgression within a temporal span that was that of the scholarly life.

To this partly economic, partly aesthetic notion of the scholarly *persona*, the Orientalists appear to have provided a specific sense of displacement, a broadening of the space of possibility as to what the scholarly life could comprise. Oriental philology provided a highly recognisable set of biographical plot elements: travelling, experimenting with foreign cultural practices and substances, appropriating foreign texts and objects, culture and history, accu-

43 GOLDZIHER, 1978: 208 (17–12–1896).

mulating philological property.[44] The most important of these elements was perhaps that of returning from afar; and most, if not all, of the Orientalists' transgressions were designed for return. Goldziher dressed up as a Muslim, as did Vámbéry, both of them not in order actually to convert, but with the aim of returning to their European *personae*. Snouck formally converted in 1884 but still never meant to cross over into the Islamic world for good. Even the actual theft of epigraphic and archaeological objects, probably one of the most widespread patterns of Orientalist transgression, and the "theft of history"[45] it entailed, were nearly always committed with the goal of returning. Most of the time, the objects were not even meant to remain personal possessions. Although heavily charged with personal significance, *souvenirs* in the actual sense of the term, they were surrendered into the custody of the co-operative of scholarship, which was bolstered by state finances. Returning also meant returning gains. The *persona* as organised through travel and experience, transgression and excess, was also the *persona* as a proprietor in an economy where property was conceded by the defined collective of stake-holding scholars; and personal experiences and property in this sense became fused. Taken to the extreme, this means suggesting that property was co-constitutive of the notion of personal experience, and thus of evidence, in the philologies.

Still, this peculiar economy of scholarly personhood was a conceit. It was a make-believe economy, occluding the workings of an altogether different mode of economical organisation behind the scenes. After all, Goldziher also had sound economic reasons for wanting to be recognised institutionally. In the later 19th and early 20th centuries, only scholars who disposed of the most potent economic means occasionally renounced the scramble for university positions.[46] The republic of letters had become colonised by the modern research university, with the professoriate as a sort of oligarchy and the state, or non-academic wealth, as outside funding agencies. It had become, to put it rather crudely, a

44 And there is a hidden underside of plot elements that were relegated to rumour and sometimes popped up in correspondences, but remained suppressed in public utterances, e.g. sexual transgression in the Orient. For the larger context and the possibilities of conceptualization see as a starting point Edward Said's presentation of Flaubert in SAID, 1994: 179–90.

45 Echoing GOODY, 2007.

46 Prime examples of the wealthy amateur scholar in the history of Germanophone Classics and Oriental studies are Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890), the famous excavator of Troy and Mycenae; and the wealthy banker's heir Max von Oppenheim (1860–1946), a one-time diplomat, who financed his own Orientalist education, his own archaeological excavations in Syria, his own publications, and his own museum; see TEICHMANN / VÖLGER, 2001.

banana republic, producing a single commodity: knowledge, and displaying features of authoritarian government dependent on foreign money. It might well be that the aesthetic regime and the make-believe economy of scholarship were attempts at *forgetting* what was the actual economic life of the scholar. If so, then ironically, for the purpose of make-believe, the world of scholarship created models of biographical trajectories following which individual scholars could become immensely serviceable precisely to those funding agencies they were trying not to remember. The colonial employment of philological scholarship, as for instance in the case of Snouck, and, perhaps more importantly, the scholarly contribution to the notion of European supremacy, testify to this irony. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, though seeking to explore a discourse overwhelming all individuality, nonetheless produced a long string of individual portraits – or, perhaps more appropriately, caricatures aimed at exposing psychiatrically relevant desires and delusions among individual scholars and writers. Arguably, the social world of academia, the small-scale narrative teleology of the scholarly *persona*, transgressing from and returning into the co-operative, explains some of the problems at hand more convincingly than the grand narrative teleology of Empires built and dismantled. After all, personhood in a banana republic is no more or less devoid of agency than anywhere else.

The place where I breathe and live

The previous sections have presented a set of distinct patterns of discourse, using a number of different types of sources, establishing a variety of genre characteristics of scholarly biographical speech and writing, in 19th-century Oriental philology. Authority and the intersections of virtue ethics with the epistemic practices of scholarship; the peculiar notions of historical time, greatness, and spectatorship that were at work in the scholarly understanding of the past; the practices of travelling, the accumulation of property, and the economy of scholarly authorship – all of these patterns of speech and action supplied models of scholarly personhood. These models were in some respects combinable, which makes it difficult to distinguish them clearly. For instance, the virtues constituting scholarly authority easily cohabitated with the precepts of scholarly travel and experience, even though to some extent these precepts favoured transgression and undermined virtue. Yet there were also discontinuities. Re-interpreting virtue as property was an option that sharply changed the discursive

foundations of scholarly virtue. Similarly, the denial of agency and participation in historical time that was so prominent in the configuration of scholarly historicity marks a discontinuity with the ethical discourse of the scholarly *persona*. Yet, these are differences of registration within a shared formal apparatus. In this concluding section, the case remains to be made as to the possibility of non-registration as a cancellation of the previous patterns of discourse. As suggested in the introduction, I tend to believe that this is, semantically, the place of the elusive subject so ubiquitous in the concerns that mark biography and anti-biography alike.

From a yet different vantage point, perhaps it is merely the grammatical first person singular in one of the language games concerning the lived life. So far, the analysis presented in this paper has disregarded the semantic difference of first and third person and its ramifications in scholarly discourses on personhood. Still, with reference to Wittgenstein's respective arguments, when making assertions about the realm of the mental, the first and the third person are part of the same language game, even though conditions for acceptable predication differ.[47] The poetic game at stake in Littmann's writings might then differ from the other uses of mental predicates in that it suppresses third-person subjectivity altogether. The cancellation at stake might thus have to do simply with the suppression of the third-person options present in the discursive patterns of personhood so far traced. This suppression might be part of a very marginal and oblique manner of speaking – or rather mere writing – about scholarly personhood. However, Littmann was far from alone. Nöldeke, for instance, enjoyed cramming a few self-composed lines of Greek or Latin verse into his correspondences. Several other 19th-century philologists were productive poets, most famously Rückert and Nietzsche.

In Littmann's papers, there are several folders of occasional poetry, all unpublished.[48] Most of these poems do not bear dates, but certain characteristics of orthography and handwriting mark the majority, and especially the longer and more substantial pieces, as belonging to the period of Littmann's journeys in Syria and Abyssinia, from 1899–1900 and 1904–1906.[49] Many poems directly address travelling, dwelling particularly on visual impressions of colours, landscapes, wildlife. There are balladesque renderings of specific adventurous or

47 Following the argument on the impossibility of "private languages" and the use of mental predicates in WITTGENSTEIN, 1953: §§243ff.

48 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nachlass 245 (Enno Littmann), K. 89.

49 There is no biography proper of Littmann, but at least the Ethiopian travels have been the subject of significant research, see WENIG, 2006.

humorous scenes; but also poems dedicated to impressions from Littmann's sojourns in Italy, much in keeping with the more conventional travel destinations of Germanophone lyrical poets. The collection is too extended to undertake a comprehensive discussion here. I will only focus on two poems that directly address Littmann's sense of the nature of scholarly subjectivity. Most intriguing perhaps is his choice of addressing these matters in the form of poetry at all, instead of some other genre of text. The poetic self was capable of expressing things that did not fit into other forms of discourse. In the *caesurae* between lines and verses, qualities abided which eluded other textual forms of subjective expression that occurred in scholarly lives (mainly, letter-writing, and in some cases, as in Goldziher's, the writing of diaries and autobiographical accounts).

A	Ich sass und schrieb den ganzen Tag,	I sat and wrote the entire day,
	schrieb Zeile auf Zeile nieder.	Wrote down line after line
	Dann eilt' ich hinaus in die freie Natur	Then I hurried outside, to the great outdoors,
	Und ging und sang meine Lieder.	And went and sang my songs.
5	Und wie ich so sitze und Bücher schreib',	And as I sit and write my books,
	So kennen die Leut' mich und meinen,	Thus people know me and think
	Das wäre ich wirklich, das wäre ich ganz –	I was really like that, wholly like that –
	Ich will Ihnen gern so erscheinen.	To them, I gladly oblige to appear so.
	Der Körper ist wohl im Käfig hier,	The body may well be in a cage,
10	Doch ich zerbreche die Stäbe,	However, I break the bars,
	Ich selber bin in der weiten Welt,	Myself, I am out in the wider world,
	Dort wo ich atme und lebe.	The place where I breathe and live.
	Das Bücherschreiben mag nötig sein,	The writing of books may be necessary,
	Auf dass es der Wissenschaft nütze,	For the benefit of science.
15	Ich schreib', weil ich kann, und thu meine Pflicht	I write since I can and do my duty
	Geduldig auf meinem Sitze.	Patiently seated on my chair.
	Ich selber aber flieg' durch die Luft	Yet I myself, I fly through the air
	Und weile auf Bergeshöhen,	And dwell on mountain heights,
	Durchquere die Wüsten, den Ozean	Cross deserts and the ocean
20	Allein, – und keiner kann's sehen.	Alone, – and nobody can see it.

B	Ich sinne und sinne und weiss nicht warum,	I muse and muse, and don't know why,
	Ich wünsche und wünsche und weiss nicht was,	I wish and wish, and don't know what,
	Ich dichte und dichte und wund're mich,	I write verse after verse and wonder,
	Warum dies alles so sein muss.	Why all this has to be so.
5	Ich arbeite wohl den ganzen Tag,	I work along the entire day,
	Ich schreibe und lerne und lehre,	I write and learn and teach,
	Doch ich leb' erst auf, wenn das vorbei	But I only come alive when that is done
	Und ich mir selber gehöre.	And I belong to myself.
	Und doch, in all der Arbeit steckt	And yet in all the work there is
10	Doch auch ein Teil meines Wesens:	Also a part of my being:
	Ich forsche nach Wahrheit, und was ich erkenn',	I seek for truth, and what I find out
	Das such' ich andern zu geben.	I try to pass on to others.
	Und bin ich Gelehrter, so bin ich auch Mensch,	And though I'm a scholar, I'm also a man,
	Ein dichtendes, träumendes Wesen,	A verse-writing, dreaming being,
15	Das keiner erfasst, der sich selber nicht kennt,	That nobody knows who does not know himself,
	Gebild' einer launischen Schöpfung.	Shape of a wayward creation.

The two poems (A and B) are similar in theme and may well represent related impulses to put into words a closely related sense of self. Both rely on a four-lined verse scheme with folk-poetry associations and a flexible metre (alternating between four and three beats per line). This scheme, immensely popular in the 19th century after models such as Goethe's *Faust* and the poetry of Heinrich Heine, often carried a somewhat jaunty and comical quality. Littmann deliberately eschewed heavier forms frequently associated with brooding, introspective poetry. The only formal difference between (A) and (B) is in the absence of rhyme from the latter, a deliberate deviation from the scheme that traditionally required rhyme, if as minimally as in (A). This deviation indicates a certain denial of playfulness in the second poem; it aspires to greater gravity and depth.

Both poems contain imagery that relates not only to models in German, but also Arabic (and cognate) poetries. Especially the prominence of the dream journey motive in the last verse of (A) may be taken to echo well-known

episodes from the textual tradition concerning the life of Muhammad, as well as from the *Arabian Nights*, of which Littmann produced a multi-volume translation over the course of the 1920s. Already at the time of his travels, Littmann's philological research also focused on the collecting of folk narrative and oral poetry. Among Littmann's poems, there are several that treat subject matter derived from Oriental sources, for instance a humorous semi-narrative description of the deeds of the Ethiopian saint Tekle Haymanot, in which Littmann appears to imitate forms he studied as philological collector of Tigré oral poetry. However, the two poems here under consideration abstain from any outright imitation or appropriation of Arabic literary forms or motives, although models for such literary mimesis abound in German[50] as well as other European literatures. Littmann, although anything but free from an often unquestioning sense of European superiority, was nonetheless in the habit of pronouncing himself in favour of the universality of aesthetic sensitivity, regardless of the forms in which such sensitivity was expressed.[51] It would seem that in the poems in question, both of which aim for a sense of self closely related to aesthetic perception and activity, there was no call for the poetic equivalent of an Orientalist masquerade. On the contrary, Littmann opted for a subtlety of Orientalist reference that silently marked the negligibility of difference in the matter at hand, aesthetic subjectivity.

Both poems contrast the self of scientific work with another self that is associated with a life of the imagination (in A) and an actual "coming alive" (B.7) in poetry and "dreaming", in accordance with the fundamental being, the *Wesen* (B.10), of the author (in B). The second self, that of poetry, cancels the other one, that of scholarly work. There is, however, a range of subtle differences between the presentation of self in the two poems. In the second verse of A, one can discern a curious emphasis on the actual self as obscured by the academic *persona*. The academic *persona* here is derivative of authorship. "People" (the academic public sphere) believe they know the author from his scholarly writings, "really" and "wholly" (A.7). In this poem, it does not become entirely clear whether the academic *persona* actually is a deception or whether it is just a fragment, or a sub-section, of the true self. This ambiguity continues

50 For the German case, see especially POLASCHEGG, 2005.

51 Littmann was fond of imagining writing up his thoughts on the matter under the heading of "Arab Laocoön" from an early time; he mentions such thoughts for instance in a letter to Nöldeke from 13 October 1915, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nachlass 246 (Theodor Nöldeke), K. 1; the motive also recurs in his fragmentary autobiography written during the Second World War, BIESTERFELDT, 1986: 97.

through the remaining stanzas. There is a self that is content to appear as it is perceived. But this apparent self does not actually "breathe and live"; on the other hand, it does have a body, left behind in the cage of professional work (A.9f.); and it does virtuously comply with duty, "for the benefit of science" (A.14), and is "patient" (A.16). The poem is composed as an expression of a self-assertive authorial voice; the first person singular pronoun is deployed a dozen times. But between lines 15 and 17, a startling contradiction of reference emerges: while the "I" in "I write, since I can" clearly is that of the scholar, there is also another, emphatic "I", in: "Yet I myself, I fly through the air". This second, more emphatic "I" seems to be superior in some sense. The poem does not express much assurance regarding the reality of this superior self, which in the last verse is characterised as carrying out activities that are merely imaginary. The last line then functions as a sort of punch line the poem has been preparing for from the beginning: the self that is unalterably alone, a commonplace of literary subjectivity and hallmark of a notion of original authorship that flows from subjectivity alone. In a way, the point of the poem seems to be precisely the vexing opposition of two selves in a somewhat uncertain association with reality. But the second self is marked by negatives, by what nobody can see and by what happens when the work of scholarship is over. It is in this sense that the "real self" is determined negatively, as a type of cancellation.

The second poem (B) carries the intricacy of the matter further as it engages in universals. Here, the author states – it almost sounds as if he admits it against his will – that the learned, working self is also "part" of his "being". The ambiguity of the other poem is thus avoided. While the first person singular pronoun is again deployed a dozen times, the object of reference does not appear to be ambiguous. The scholarly self, on the whole, appears to receive more appreciation than in (A). The self is pursuing actual "truth" and seeking to communicate it. Again the arrangement is of a kind where there is a defined scholarly *persona* and a largely undefined sphere of subjectivity. Arguably, this sphere is asserted also in the somewhat perplexing first verse that insists on the self's inability to figure out why it thinks, what it wishes, what the verse it produces amounts to, and why things have to be the way they are. This massive front of unanswered questions appears to announce an entire cluster of failing patterns of discourse. The last two lines remark that those matters are not intelligible to anybody who does not understand himself as the result of a wanton act of creation – existential but universal contingency, all further questions are futile. In contrast to (A), subjectivity is here broadened into some

variant of the human condition. There are dark overtones of life as meaningless, produced by an inscrutable creative force. Existential truth cancels the discourses of scholarly personhood by making them irrelevant and trivial. To be sure, this variation of universality functions without reference to historicity; hence it appears to differ starkly from the notion of "greatness" so intimately connected with the aesthetics of the historical sublime and the historical ridiculous. The resources for this poetic universality of selfhood comprise religious rather than historical discourse, as Littmann's reference to creation, *Schöpfung*, indicates. In combination with the adjective *launisch*, here translated as "wayward", the poem's last line implies that there is a creator behind the creation, capable of having moods and intentions, and capable of being probed, even disapproved. Thus, not only is the self in (B) not alone in its condition, which it shares with all human beings; the poem also touches on the question of whether there is some other being not sharing that condition.

There is a lengthy quasi-religious poem (*Ewig Zweifel, ewig Schwanken*) in Littmann's collection that towards the end contains a curious passage of prayer:

Gott, himmlischer Vater,	God, heavenly Father,
Wenn wirklich du bist,	If really you exist,
So lass dich erkennen,	Let yourself be perceived,
Mach, dass ich ein Christ[.]	Make that I be a Christian[.]

Curious, since it appears odd to speak, or pray, to someone whose existence is in doubt. Yet precisely in this paradoxical suspension between belief and disbelief, the poem bears witness to a pattern of biographical discourse quite common among the Orientalists of the period: the forever open-ended plotline of the incomplete, uncompletable loss of faith. As so many of his colleagues, Littmann, too, had been a student of Protestant theology. Since he came from a comparatively underprivileged background, he had even taken the necessary exams that would have allowed him to accept a position as a Lutheran minister, before he strayed into Oriental philology.[52] Arguably, the attraction of the loss-of-faith narrative was that it did not fit into the discourses of the scholarly *persona*. It

52 An account of Littmann's education takes up much of BIESTERFELDT, 1986. In this text one can see, as in Goldziher's, that the autobiographical self remained closely attached to the motive of the accumulation of scholarship once the author had been granted citizenship in the republic of letters. This kind of text much rather documents a specific type of scholarly *persona* than the sort of self Littmann's poems staged.

was riddled with perplexing issues escaping expression. It allowed for a grand, mute gesture of profound selfhood, representing a venerable literary tradition distinct from scientific writing. For the performance of this gesture, ultimately it did not matter whether its author embraced the thought of conversion, like Goldziher, or eschewed any study of foreign religion, like Littmann. For Littmann's poems, at any rate, the reference to the deity was instrumental for evoking a sense of elusive selfhood reaching far beyond the scholarly *persona*. However, this function could be fulfilled by other devices. Thus, the self could also be "alone", as in (A), and exposed to, and contemplating, not God, but "the great outdoors", i.e. nature (A.3).

Both poems posited temporality in quite a different fashion than did Nöldeke's and de Goeje's letter correspondences. These correspondences presupposed a shared, precisely located time, traversed by letters *qua* physical objects. Goldziher's diary, too, presupposed a prosaic, continuous temporality in which perennial moral norms provided a counterpoint to the string of experiences and sufferings of the ageing author. By contrast, Littmann's poems did not know of dates and were dominated by an indeterminate, durative present negating measured biographical time. It was a purely first-person temporality, a fictitious phenomenal time, dependent on the subject and denying access to third-person description. In keeping with this observation, when talking about "mountain heights", "desert" and "ocean", *Ich sass und schrieb* referred to a sort of lived experience Littmann had acquired by travelling. This experience was the major moving force behind his poetic attempts, as the remainder of the collection demonstrates. Still, the poetic self, alone and invisible, was not a proprietor. Undoubtedly, it shared the journey with the scholarly *persona*; but neither had it transgressed nor was it on the brink of returning. The poetic self of travelling experience thus followed different rules than the scholarly *persona* of travelling experience, although it did not achieve, perhaps, full independence. For, the journey had still been that of Littmann, the Orientalist.

It appears warranted to conclude that the poetic self was not a notion manifesting itself every day and with such iterative monotony that it acquired the relative stability of ordinary discursive form. Rather it was determined by the manoeuvres of cancellation directed at the other discursive patterns from which Littmann started out. The poetic self then was secondary to the given, plural and historical, discourses of scholarly personhood and biography. Its impulse of cancellation, thrust in several directions at once, also brought together the dispersed *personae*. Yet, this was antagonism, an epiphenomenon and thus not a foundational first-person perspective on top of which other discourses were then piled

by force of cacophonous cultural babble. On the other hand, there was nothing illegitimate, transgressive, or even uncommon about the poetic self either. It may have consoled Littmann being able, at times, to shut out some of the noise of the academic *persona*, and to write up experiences that could not be made in independence from writing, such as the aesthetic pleasures he derived, not from his travels themselves so much but from transforming them into poetic inventions. The numerous poems describing episodes and impressions from Littmann's sojourns in Syria and Ethiopia bear witness to this peculiar interlocking of poetry and travelling experience. Ultimately, the particulars of biography in the Oriental philologies contributed to the shaping of Littmann's poetic self. In his poetic attempts to cancel out the academic *persona* and to assert the possibility of escaping from what he seems to have perceived as the heteronomy of scholarly work, Littmann did not entirely disconnect from academic patterns of discourse. At its most subjective, his writing still subtly drew on the resources of scholarship it antagonised. At the end of the day, his poetry was that of a philologist precisely where he undertook to arrive at the poetic self that tantalisingly beckoned where prose promised to fail.

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