

Exemplum and Wundertier

Three Concepts of the Scholarly Persona¹

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The current proliferation of the term ‘persona’, especially in the history of science and scholarship, might conceal the fact that it is often used in three distinct senses. One, more akin to its use in literature and media studies, denotes an individual person’s crafted image; a second notion of persona concerns ‘what it takes to be’ a worthy philosopher, a ‘true’ historian and so forth. Here, persona stands for a set of regulative ideals made flesh, of a commitment to shared moral and cognitive values. In a third sense, broader and messier than the second, persona is understood as a cultural template for a codified social role – the man of letters, the scientist and so on – emerging at the intersection of contradictory social forces: not a neat embodiment of a group of practitioners’ shared values, but more a shaky historical compromise, sometimes an *exemplum*, sometimes a *Wundertier* and often both. After surveying briefly the three concepts, their uses and some of the problems they pose, the paper exemplifies the third notion by discussing Johannes Kepler’s conscious attempts to grapple with the scholarly personae available to him.

Exemplum en Wundertier. Drie concepten van de wetenschappelijke persona

Het huidige gebruik van de term ‘persona’ in de wetenschapsgeschiedenis lijkt te verhullen dat het begrip eigenlijk op drie verschillende manieren wordt ingevuld. De eerste, in overeenstemming met het gebruik in literatuur- en mediastudies, is het beeld dat een individu van zichzelf presenteert; de tweede verwijst naar wat het betekent om een filosoof te zijn, of een ‘echte’ historicus. Hier staat persona voor vleesgeworden idealen, voor een onderwerping aan gedeelde morele en cognitieve waarden. Op een derde wijze, die breder en heterogener is dan de tweede, wordt persona begrepen als een cultureel sjabloon voor een gecodeerde sociale rol – de geleerde, de wetenschapper – dat op het snijvlak van tegengestelde sociale krachten verschijnt: niet een nette belichaming van de gedeelde waarden van een groep, maar een wankel historisch compromis, soms een *exemplum*, soms

een *Wundertier*, en vaak beide. Na een kort overzicht van deze drie verschillende concepten, hun gebruik, en de problemen die ze opwerpen, gaat dit artikel dieper in op de derde notie door te analyseren hoe Johannes Kepler trachtte om te gaan met de hem beschikbare wetenschappelijke personae.

Three uses of *persona*

Terms often have a longer and far more intricate history than is suggested by their current usage, framed by the extended present of scholarly debates.² The recent proliferation of the term ‘*persona*’ in the history of science and scholarship, however, owes much to Lorraine Daston and Otto Sibum, who in 1998 launched a collective research project on ‘scientific personae’.³ And yet, by now at least three distinct notions of *persona* are in circulation. I shall sketch them briefly before focusing on the one I have found most useful in my work. I shall use the example of an early modern scholar groping for a viable *persona* to highlight the utility of this concept, and conclude by signalling some recurring problems and limitations of the concept of ‘*persona*’.

1) In current common usage, ‘*persona*’ is shorthand for a person’s individual image, typically an important person’s image, cultivated through more or less visible efforts. Madonna, for instance, has crafted – and skilfully refashions and maintains – such a *persona*; politicians, for their part, spend a great deal of

- 1 I would like to thank Snait Gissis, Raz Chen-Morris and Herman Paul for discussing with me several issues raised in this paper, as well as the participants in the discussions at the Annual Conference of the Royal Netherlands Historical Society and at the research project ‘The Scholarly Self: Character, Habit, and Virtue in the Humanities, 1860-1930’ at Leiden University, November 2014, for their comments and criticisms.
- 2 Marcel Mauss’s essay is often invoked in this context, but his main interest concerned the emergence of the sense of ‘moi’ rather than the range of problems for which the concept of ‘*persona*’ is currently used: Marcel Mauss, ‘Une catégorie de l’esprit humain: La notion de personne et celle de “moi”’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 68 (1938) 263-281. Mauss’s evolutionary scheme leading from ancient masks to a growing sense of self could

be fruitfully read, I think, together with Marx’s concept of the ‘Charaktermaske’ (which he was probably unaware of), just as his essay on the gift responds to Marx’s analysis of the commodity. Note also that at more or less the same time, Carl Gustav Jung launched the use of ‘*persona*’ in the sense of an obligatory mask, sharply distinguished from an ‘inner’ self; see Carl Gustav Jung, ‘Die verschiedenen Aspekte der Wiedergeburt’ (1939), in: idem, *Gestaltungen des Unbewußten* (Zurich 1950) 55-56. A history of the changing repertoire of designations for human actors and of ways of conceiving their making would be something to look forward to.

- 3 See 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. The following short sketch cannot do justice to all I owe to their friendship and inspiration.

money designing and disseminating personae.⁴ Cultivating such a persona, as a rule, is a social privilege, almost a form of self-branding. ‘Persona’ here stands for the unique image of a person, partly moulded through his or her own efforts. This use can be traced to literary studies (where one would distinguish between the author as a person and his or her persona constructed by the text) and has established itself in media and cultural studies where it draws attention to the configuring of a public figure and its performative dimension.

The prevalence of this sense of the term owes much to the growing awareness of the strategic importance of impression management – no longer merely a critical concept in Erving Goffman’s micro-sociology, but a distinct area of specialisation, a commercialised service.⁵ As the terms ‘image’ and ‘self-image’ gained currency in the early 1960s, sociologists traced their origin to market research and market psychology.⁶ It is largely equivalent to what is meant by ‘self’ in Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.⁷ ‘Persona’ in this sense tends to fluctuate between projected image (‘impression management’, maintaining a recognisable personal public image), and personal makeup (for example, distinctive habits and embodied dispositions), or some privileged dimension identified with one’s very ‘essence’ (the ‘self’) – and sometimes conflates them. While self-image is of course part and parcel of one’s makeup, the analytical distinction remains essential if persons are not to be reduced to their self-myths.

Even such individually tailored personae, however, must incorporate pre-existing prototypes, or at least elements of traditional templates, in order to be recognisable and memorable. The two other concepts of persona with which I shall mostly be concerned below refer to such types rather than to the singular image of a particular person; they use ‘persona’ in the less common sense of a recognisable template for persons; such a template relates to persona in the sense of a singular self-image, much as a model relates to a particular text.

2) The second notion of the term persona concerns ‘what it takes to be’ a philosopher, a historian, a scholar and so forth. This is a set of regulative ideals

4 See Jon Pareles, ‘Critic’s Notebook: On the Edge of the Permissible: Madonna’s Evolving Persona’, *New York Times*, 1 November 1990.

5 If in the central Middle Ages European societies came to be populated by *personae fictae* – corporations and formal institutions considered juridical persons and capable of holding rights and obligations – some business strategists currently discuss the cultivation of the persona of a company. See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton 1957) especially 302-317.

6 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City NY 1959); Hans Peter

Dreizel, ‘Selbstbild und Gesellschaftsbild. Wissenssoziologische Überlegungen zum Image-Begriff’, *Archives Européennes de sociologie* 3 (1962) 181-218.

7 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago 1980); Mineke Bosch, ‘Persona and the Performance of Identity: Parallel Developments in the Biographical Historiography of Science and Gender, and the Related Uses of Self Narrative’, *L’Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 24 (2013) 11-22, stressing the performance of a scholarly identity.

made flesh (at least partly)⁸, an exemplification of a philosophical stance, of one's commitment to basic values⁹, or of the epistemic virtues cherished and cultivated within a specific scholarly community.¹⁰ It finds its use especially in recent contributions to the history of thought and scholarship where, traditionally, images of disembodied knowledge and an exclusive focus on doctrine had marginalised interest in images of the knowing subject and philosophical prescriptions for leading one's life.¹¹ Here, persona is conceived as exemplifying doctrines (for example in the case of moral philosophy) or as a set of virtues deemed necessary for engaging in scholarly practice (precise observation, withdrawal of judgment, objectivity and so forth).

3) The third notion of persona is broader and more heteronomous than the second. I shall try to explicate this sense of the term, which is very much akin to Daston and Sibum's suggestions, and seek to draw some practical lessons. Its use does not entail a commitment to any general theory or research programme. It is, at least in my usage, a relatively simple tool that can be deployed in combination with a variety of others. It offers no answers but helps us formulate questions.

As in the second sense, persona here denotes not an individual self-image, but a generic one. Thus, it is not the image of Leonardo da Vinci, but the templates – the inspired painter, the humanist – that he assumed

8 Strictly speaking, it is not an ideal type in Max Weber's sense: a Weberian ideal type has nothing 'idealising' or normative about it and does not claim to embody ideas of virtue or exemplarity shared by people-in-the-culture; it is constructed in order to bring out bundles of properties deemed distinctive and important from a particular research perspective. See Max Weber, 'Die "Objektivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis' (1904), in: Johannes F. Winckelmann (ed.), *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre von Max Weber* (Tübingen 1968) 146-216, especially 199-200.

9 See, for instance, Conal Condren, 'The Persona of the Philosopher and the Rhetorics of Office in Early Modern England', in: Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger and Ian Hunter (eds.), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity* (Cambridge 2006) 66-89; Stephen Gaukroger, 'The Persona of the Natural Philosopher', in: *ibid.*, 17-34; and idem, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the*

Shaping of Modernity, 1210-1685 (Oxford 2006) 196-227; Ian Hunter, 'The History of Philosophy and the Persona of the Philosopher', *Modern Intellectual History* 4 (2007) 571-600, stressing a tight relationship between a propounded doctrine and 'intellectual arts' and 'a specific sense and kind of self'.

10 Herman Paul, 'What Is a Scholarly Persona?: Ten Theses on Virtues, Skills, and Desires', *History and Theory* 53 (2014) 348-371 DOI 10.1111/hith.10717, proposing an original conception of the persona as embodying epistemic virtues and suggesting it might be useful for the history of scholarship well beyond the early modern period.

11 See, for instance, Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford 1995); Juliusz Domański, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre?: Les controverses de l'antiquité à la Renaissance* (Fribourg 1996); Condren, Gaukroger and Hunter (eds.), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*.

and partly reshaped. Templates of this sort function as an essential cultural resource for forging personae. Such fashioning might be accomplished by others, and if need be, after the fact. Did Dante have a beard? If he was a philosopher, surely he must have had a beard.¹² Persona in this third sense need not coincide with any ideal espoused within a given community, derived from the proper ‘office’ of, say, the philosopher or the scientist. It might partly reflect such ideals, but as a cultural model, it is shaped by larger and diverse forces. It can also be ascribed by others, imposed on its bearers and become the obligatory counter-gift offered to society by practitioners seeking social recognition. Hence the ‘hybrid character of the persona concept’.¹³

Such personae are not invented by individuals out of whole cloth. Rather, they predate any single actor, though one may refashion them in the wearing. Established fields of practice are often already populated by existing characters that one has to take into account in fashioning oneself in their image. Thus, Lisa Jardine’s masterful *Erasmus, Man of Letters* considers the eponymous figure’s efforts to craft and circulate his image (the persona in our first sense) on the basis of ‘readily available models’ (personae in our third sense) such as the Church Father, primarily Jerome, as well as ‘the civic hero’ of Greece and Rome. By showing how Erasmus’s image itself became a model – ‘a type and figure of the humanistic man of letters, the model for the detached and disinterested pursuit of learning’ – Jardine has provided us with an exemplary case study of the emergence of a model, a persona, embodied in a singular person.¹⁴

While at times a persona might be closely associated with a professional role or an institutional setting, the concept is broader than any single office or task.¹⁵ The medieval persona of the knight, for instance, is not exhausted by the relevant rights and obligations to which it pertains. In like manner, it would be difficult to pin down the persona of the entrepreneur, yet its valence in contemporary culture can hardly be denied. Thus a persona in this sense can be considered a cultural institution: while anchored to a specific field of practice or an institutional setting, it is usually not formed by actors

12 R. Allen Shoaf, ‘Dante’s Beard: *Sic et Non* (*Purgatorio* 31. 67)’, in: Arthur Groos et al. (eds.), *‘Magister Regis’: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske* (New York 1986) 171-178. Beards were important, see Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, translated by Alan Shapiro (Berkeley CA 1996); Barbara E. Borg, ‘Das Bild des Philosophen und die römischen Eliten’, in: Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (ed.), *Der Philosoph und sein Bild. Dion von Prusa* (Tübingen 2009) 211-240.

13 Daston and Sibum, ‘Scientific Personae’, 7; Steven Shapin, ‘“A Scholar and a Gentleman”: The Problematic Identity of the Scientific Practitioner in Early Modern England Gentleman’, *History of Science* 29 (1991) 279-327.

14 Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton NJ 1993) 5-9.

15 Paul, ‘What is a Scholarly Persona’, 355-356.

in this field alone. Instead, its contours are cast by several others; it circulates across milieux and might be recognised by laypersons.¹⁶

Cultural models matter. They frame orientations and expectations, and define courses of action (without necessarily making them available for differently positioned agents). The persona of the experimentalist, for instance, was only established over time in academic institutions and particular disciplines; its consolidation opened for some experimentalists new venues and increased their chances of gaining recognition and authority.¹⁷ At the same time, it would not make sense to expect personae to bear the entire explanatory burden of accounting for social processes. Personae do not bring about formal institutions; their emergence ought not to be confused with the social processes that make it possible for people to appropriate them effectively.

The notion of persona is intuitive to anyone who considers that any account of practice must make at least some reference to culture. If we understand culture as primarily a toolbox, comprised of sign-systems and meanings, but also models for action (the ‘how-to-do-what concept of culture’)¹⁸, it seems only natural to think about models of and for persons in addition to models of practices and relationships (obligatory gestures, pre-fabricated scripts). This is not some sort of a culturalist magical formula for bypassing the intricacies of social history. Situated practices with all their complexity and contradictions can no more be derived from scripts than can persons be reduced to personae. Yet crafting viable accounts of social action requires taking into account pre-existing models, options and scripts – structured repertoires.¹⁹ Such repertoires – in our case, the range of existing

16 Cf., for instance, Stephen Johnson, ‘The Identity of the Mathematical Practitioner in Sixteenth-Century England’, in: Irmgard Hantsche (ed.), ‘*Der mathematicus*’. Zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung einer neuen Berufsgruppe in der Zeit Gerhard Mercators (Bochum 1996) 93-120.

17 H. Otto Sibum, ‘Experimentalists in the Republic of Letters’, *Science in Context* 16:1 (2003) 89-120.

18 This approach has no accepted brand name; it takes culture as essential for practice, but does not reduce practice to the execution of pre-existing models. See Sidney M. Mintz, ‘Culture: An Anthropological View’, *The Yale Review* 71 (1982) 499-512; Ann Swidler, ‘Culture in Action’, *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986) 273-286; Gadi Algazi, ‘Kulturkult und die Rekonstruktion von Handlungsrepertoires’, *L’homme. Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 11:1 (2000) 105-119.

19 Itamar Even-Zohar has noted that cultural models are usually acquired as parts of a repertoire (e.g., coffee drinking as an option with a repertoire, or a code, of sociability) and in relation to other options (e.g., having coffee rather than being invited for a meal, or taking tea or having a drink), rather than in isolation. In opting for ‘repertoire’ over the term ‘code’ Even-Zohar intended to signal that such repertoires consist not only of generative models but also of finished items (e.g., an obligatory phrase, a beard for a philosopher worthy of the name, a national poet for a nineteenth-century national movement). See Itamar Even-Zohar, ‘Factors and Dependencies in Culture: A Revised Outline for Polysystem Culture Research’, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 24:1 (1997) 15-34. ‘Repertoire’ is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘model’; I use it here to refer to a structured set of rules, models and specific items.

personae – are partly shaped by prevailing social relations: some groupings do not have a recognised persona; some actors cannot easily shake off the burden of an ascribed persona ('a stereotype') and cope with its ambivalence (think of 'rustics'²⁰, or the Renaissance 'Learned Lady'²¹). At the same time, personae are not epiphenomenal reflections of social conditions; as cultural models, for example, they can outlive the social groups that once inhabited them.²² Whether individuals take up a persona on their own, assisted by others or against their will; what personae are available and which are actually accessible to women and men and which conditions enable them to assume them; what leeway they have to adapt a persona and to adapt themselves to it – all these issues are grist to the mill of social analysis, for reconstructing social relationships, particular trajectories and relations of power. Cultural repertoires do not dispense with such questions; on the contrary, they set them into sharper relief.

In a seminal article published in 1923, Boris Tomashevsky anticipated in significant respects the study of personae as cultural templates. Tomashevsky discussed the futility of trying to debunk venerable authors' embellished biographies by recovering their actual lives, demonstrating that such biographies were often themselves literary constructs, inseparable from writing, and eventually even function as templates for how to lead a writer's life. A codified, partly ascribed biography, a culturally specific template for being a poet (including elements such as unrequited love or long incubation), was itself a meaningful fact of the history of literature. Tomashevsky considered irrelevant the debates on whether or not authors' biographies were germane to the history of literature in general. For him, under specific historical circumstances, an author's life – stylised, ascribed, invented – became part of his or her literary work. The relationship between authors' biographies and literary production varied historically: for the Romantics for instance, biography validated literature; authors of the Pushkin era, he claims,

20 A.M. Hespanha, 'Savants et rustiques: La violence douce de la raison juridique', *Ius commune* 10 (1983) 1-48; Heide Wunder, 'Der dumme und der schlaue Bauer', in: Cord Meckseper and Elisabeth Schraut (eds.), *Mentalität und Alltag im Spätmittelalter* (Göttingen 1985) 34-52; Teodor Shanin, *Defining Peasants* (Oxford 1990).

21 M.L. King, 'Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance', in: P.H. Labalme (ed.), *Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York, London 1980) 66-90; Lisa Jardine, "'O Decus Italiae Virgo", or The Myth of the Learned Lady in the Renaissance', *The*

Historical Journal 28:4 (1985) 799-819; Helmut Zäh, 'Konrad Peutinger und Margarete Welser – Ehe und Familie im Zeichen des Humanismus', in: Mark Häberlein and Johannes Burkhardt (eds.), *Die Welser. Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte des oberdeutschen Handelshauses* (Berlin 2002) 449-509.

22 The knight, by contrast, remains a recurrent image. It is available still for nostalgic invocations or parodies, but no longer functions as a habitable persona. This is a main theme of William Faulkner's *Wild Palms* (1939) (originally titled *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*).

had ‘group created biographies’, sustained by a network of correspondence while making each other the subject of their poems. Some of the Futurists, for their part, held their lives themselves to be literary constructs, hardly distinguishable from their works.²³

To be sure, lives and works are configured differently in the worlds of literature and scholarship, but Tomashevsky’s point remains valuable: not only do personae change historically, say, as an image of scholarly withdrawal and ostentatious rejection of social conventions is challenged by a stress on politeness and social competence, but the whole architecture – the relation between lives and works, between persons and personae – is likewise subject to change.²⁴ It is entirely possible, for instance, that the strategic importance of cultivating a proper scholarly persona would recede with the growing weight of formal institutions and scholarly expertise – a form of delimited authority, particular to specifiable domains. In this vein, it seems for instance reasonable to assume (though this need not be the case) that with growing professionalisation – and as William Clark has argued, with the concomitant separation of home and work encouraged by the institutionalisation of research universities – more limited aspects of the person would be considered relevant to claims for scholarly authority. In other words, instead of expecting the whole person to embody a collective ethos, a professional ethics would be concerned with more circumscribed areas of behaviour.²⁵ If a growing autonomy of scientific communities is the flipside of professionalisation, one could expect a narrower, more bounded and at the same time more binding persona – a circumscribed template for appropriate behaviour on the part of practitioners of science, perhaps not even amounting to fully-fledged persona, rather than the persona typical of pre-modern scholars, bearing on such

23 Boris Tomashevsky, ‘Literature and Biography’ (1923), translated by Herbert Eagle, in: Vassilis Lambropoulos (ed.), *Twentieth Century Literary Theory: An Introductory Anthology* (Albany NY 1987) 116-123; also in Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (eds.), *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Cambridge MA 1962) 47-55. Compare with an analysis of a more recent configuration of cultural production, impression management and biographical elements: Gordon Downie, ‘Cultural Production as Self-Surveillance: Making the Right Impression’, *Perspectives of New Music* 46:1 (2008) 194-224.

24 Depending on the changing notion of philosophy (a way of life, a mode of inquiry), lives could

vanish behind theories, or – at the other end of the spectrum – merge completely with doctrine so that biographical fragments would function as exemplifications of moral or epistemological stances. For examples of different figurations, see Werner Jaeger, ‘Über Ursprung und Kreislauf des philosophischen Lebensideals’, in: idem, *Scripta Minora* (Rome 1960) 347-393; C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia PA 1994); Gaukroger, *Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

25 William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, London 2006).

things as attire and dietary habits, family life, sociability and confessional allegiance.²⁶

Persona, Role, Mask

Daston and Sibum have usefully suggested that a persona is more enduring than a social role, assumed and shed from one social situation to the next.²⁷ Nonetheless, like the concept of a social role, it leaves open the question how deeply such ‘character masks’ transform their bearers. A persona can become the cherished core of identity, but at times might indeed function as a mere mask, or again, as an intermediate object between individuals and their social surroundings. It might also become *noles volens* and inadvertently part of one’s second nature. Scholarly forgetfulness, to take an example perhaps close to home, could be an unremarkable side-effect of utter dedication to one’s work, so that a Samuel Johnson could critically remark that ‘he that devotes himself to retired study naturally sinks from omission to forgetfulness of social duties’.²⁸ Yet, a codified persona of the scholar in which forgetfulness enjoyed pride of place could also turn out to be useful in the daily management of social relations. It might secure a certain license from social obligations, and hence be expressly invoked and even deliberately cultivated. At the same time, it might function as a mere external mask, so that a sharp observer of late eighteenth-century mores could note that some people affected distraction ‘because they believe that it looks distinguished or scholarly’.²⁹ A codified persona does not need to be all of a piece: the composite makeup of viable personae, constructed from given cultural materials and mediating different sorts of contexts, also implies that shifting modes and degrees of attachment to a persona by its bearers can be envisaged. Thus a natural scientist may adopt

26 The relationship between persona and scholarly practice may also vary in different disciplines. In an exploratory study, Tübingen ethnologists have shown how this could be the case for some ostentatious elements of scholarly lifestyles; see Bernd Jürgen Warneken (ed.), *Das Outfit der Wissenschaft. Zur symbolischen Repräsentation akademischer Fächer am Beispiel von Jura, Botanik und empirischer Kulturwissenschaft* (Tübingen 1998). Needless to say, the point here is to exemplify the range of possible ‘architectures’ of ascribed personal traits and the shape of institutions and forms of scholarship, and not to offer some condensed historical account.

27 Daston and Sibum, ‘Scientific Personae’, 3. Both ‘role’ and ‘identity’ have been used in a sense very similar to Daston and Sibum’s ‘persona’. Persona

had presumably the advantage of not being encumbered by an inglorious history of inflated uses; see Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (Hamburg 2000).

28 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* no. 180 (1751), reprinted in: *The Rambler: A Periodical Paper published in 1750, 1751, 1752* (London 1825) 307.

29 Adolf Freiherr von Knigge, *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (third edition; s.l. 1790), Gert Ueding (ed.) (Frankfurt am Main 1977), Part 1, chapter 3, § 21; cf. Algazi, ‘Gelehrte Zerstretheit und gelernte Vergesslichkeit. Bemerkungen zu ihrer Rolle in der Formierung des Gelehrtenhabitus’, in: Peter von Moos (ed.), *Der Fehltritt. Vergehen und Versehen in der Vormoderne* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2001) 235-250.

certain elements of the established persona of the bookish scholar, the monk or the gentleman, while tacitly rejecting other elements, all the while seeking to gain acceptance and negotiate distance by adhering in public to a received persona.³⁰ Persona is handled here as a heuristic device rather than as a substantial hypothesis. Rather than deciding in advance whether a persona ‘is’ a disguise or a second nature, a ‘thinner’ concept of persona leaves this open so that a whole range of possibilities from ‘ego-involvement’ to ‘ego-detachment’ can be envisaged.³¹

Persona, Persona and Self

‘Persona’ is not one of the possible designations for persons (actors, agents, actants, selves, subjects, et cetera). Rather, persona is used here to draw attention to *one aspect* of the making of such persons – the recognised, codified templates through which they may be perceived, by means of which they can be shaped and which they are likely to negotiate. Persona is hence neither an alternative to, nor fashionable shorthand for, the concept of the self. We know too little about the historical processes shaping selves and still struggle with the challenge of constructing non-teleological or anachronistic accounts of historical selves in all their variety. Premature generalisations about ‘the self’ have tended to compress complex historical trajectories into the inevitable ‘discovery of The Self’, often inadvertently imposing some class-specific and gender-biased models of selfhood on far more variegated realities. We have also learned, for instance from students of Latin literature such as Karl Enenkel, and historians working on ego-documents such as Rudolf Dekker, to mistrust tempting shortcuts such as identifying a complex, layered and dynamic self with the literary image projected by a narrated first-person.³² This caveat is not intended, however, to invoke some unfathomable and distant ‘deep’ self, lying far beyond a ‘shallow’ persona: personae are among the materials that persons are made of – including those aspects identified with selfhood.³³ Maintaining conceptual distinctions between personae, persons and that aspect of persons

30 Steven Shapin, ‘The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Isis* 79:3 (1988) 383-404.

31 The terms are borrowed from Norbert Elias, ‘Problems of Involvement and Detachment’, *British Journal of Sociology* 7 (1956) 226-252, following Dreitzel’s remarks on ‘self-image’ (‘Selbstbild und Gesellschaftsbild’, 187).

32 Karl A.E. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen. Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin 2008); Rudolf

Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland: From the Golden Age to Romanticism* (Basingstoke 1999) chapter 14.

33 To circumvent some of the difficulties entailed by the ‘individual’ and ‘self’, some historians have suggested using the concept of person – a low-key concept which allows for cross-cultural comparisons and entails minimal assumptions about capacities for action, for attributing rights and making claims. See especially Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich (eds.), *Vom Individuum zur Person. Neue Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von Autobiographietheorie und*

identified as their self, should enable us to better explore the modalities of active appropriation of existing personae in the making of actual persons. The following example might serve to illustrate this.

Kepler in search of a persona

In 1612 the newly widowed imperial astronomer Johannes Kepler wrote a remarkable letter to an unnamed lady. The text must have been penned in the context of negotiations preceding Kepler's second marriage. Kepler's late wife, Barbara Müller, had died the year before and Kepler was seeking a suitable bride. This proved a difficult task. He was now a renowned court astronomer but still a social upstart, the native son of a town in Württemberg, a man who rose from obscurity to the imperial court. Persistent rumours about the widower's behaviour toward his deceased wife impaired his reputation and undermined his remarriage plans. The document at hand attempted to refute these allegations. Kepler defended himself as a scholar, a husband, as well as a Protestant whose unorthodox religious views had aroused some suspicion.³⁴

While our text does indeed look like a letter, its extraordinarily candid nature calls this representation into question. It is perhaps best described as a private memorandum, a series of arguments and counter-arguments, occasionally apologetic and often dangerously revealing. It belongs to a small group of texts in Kepler's literary output in which he used the process of writing to think through issues. In such texts, like his searching self-portrait of 1597, or his *Deliberatio* of 1600³⁵, Kepler was by all evidence thinking through writing – asking difficult questions and not merely rhetorical ones, formulating answers only to discard them and examine new ones. He may have prepared the piece in anticipation of issues likely to be raised by his addressee.

A full analysis of this fascinating document is beyond the scope of this article. Here I shall simply tackle the passages in which Kepler struggles with scholarly personae – first rejecting one that is ascribed to him, then trying, and failing to redefine it, and finally opting for another, more traditional one.³⁶

Selbstzeugnisforschung (Göttingen 2005); Gabriele Jancke, 'Persons, the "Autobiographical Person" and Cultural Concepts of the Person: Early Modern Self-narratives from German-speaking Areas in a Transcultural Perspective', *Journal of Medieval History* 18:2 (2015) 346-377.

- 34 Johannes Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 17, Max Caspar et al. (eds.) (Munich 1937) no. 643; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Cod. 10703, 181-186.
- 35 Johannes Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 19, Martha List (ed.) (Munich 1975) no. 7:30 (1597); 2:1 (1600).

- 36 Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 17, no. 643. References have been reduced to a minimum; I rely here on a fuller analysis of the text I have published elsewhere: Gadi Algazi, 'Johannes Keplers Apologie. Wissensproduktion, Selbstdarstellung und die Geschlechterordnung', in: Björn Reich, Frank Rexroth and Matthias Roick (eds.), *Wissen, maßgeschneidert. Experten und Expertenkulturen im Europa der Vormoderne* (Munich 2012) 215-249.

At the age of twenty-three Barbara Müller, the daughter of the wealthy owner of a mill near Graz, married Johannes Kepler, a young professor of mathematics and astronomy. Three years later, Kepler received an unexpected invitation to work under Tycho Brahe at the imperial court in Prague. After the latter's death in 1601 Kepler assumed the post of imperial astronomer. Barbara, however, did not fare so well. Far from kith and kin in Prague and isolated at the imperial court, she became melancholic, and, stricken by the death of Friedrich, their six-year-old child, died in 1611. Rumour had it that Barbara had been tormented with the epithet *Sternseherin* – the female form of the term *Sternseher* ('stargazer'), analogous to calling a doctor's wife 'Frau Doctorin'. Reputation was hence the issue – and, more precisely, the relationship between Kepler's own persona and that of his wife. The term *Sternseher* lumped into a single category astronomers and astrologers, and was aimed to describe especially those who produced calendars and prognostications. *Sternseher* was a derogatory term, suggesting deception and trickery.³⁷ Any woman considering a marriage alliance with Kepler the stargazer was likely, it was thought, to suffer a similar fate.

In our text Kepler makes no attempt to deny the derision heaped upon stargazers or his deceased wife's distress. Instead, he begins by invoking his own misery. When he opted for astronomy as a young student, he recalls, people laughed at him. Kepler, who had 'such a delicate temperament that no woman could ever possess', was called 'stargazer' by fellow students. The mockery was painful, he continues, but upon reflection he found it baseless. Making virtue out of necessity, Kepler decided that from then on he would style himself a stargazer, that is, he would appropriate the term and make it his own. Since then, Kepler writes, I have not been offended by being called a stargazer, but his wife suffered when referred to as *Die Sternseherin*. Giving an idiosyncratic meaning to a common derogatory label, adopting the persona of a stargazer while transforming it, was not an option open to her.

Kepler hence leaves behind the realm of definitions and considers the map of social status at court. He does this by offering a series of rough assessments of positions and the social distance separating them: a stargazer ranks much higher than an artisan or merchant, is more respectable than a schoolteacher, and, as a husband, a better match than a preacher. Kepler now turns to comparisons with learned professions: a stargazer is equal to physicians in honour, but is somewhat better positioned since he lives a quieter sort of life; unlike the former, he does not need to leave the house

37 Theophilus Golius, *Onomasticon Latinogermanicum* (Strasbourg 1579) col. 155; Hadrianus Junius, *Nomenclator octilinguis: Omnium rerum propria nomina continens* (Paris 1606) s.v. 'Astrologus'; Johannes Serranus,

Dictionarium Latinogermanicum (Nuremberg 1539), 'Astronomus, Ein Sternenseher'; Robert S. Westman, 'The Astronomer's Role in the Sixteenth Century: A Preliminary Study', *History of Science* 18 (1980) 105-147.

to care for his patients. Not all elements of a persona are of equal weight: tranquillity and scholarly *otium* possess a special symbolic value as the hallmarks of a truly scholarly way of life. Note that Kepler attempts to offset the opprobrium with invocations of honour, marriageability, and lifestyle: nowhere does he bring actual learning into the equation, or refer to his academic title.

It seems that in court circles, derision of his wife as a *Sternseherin* came particularly from ‘scribes’, that is, court officials and their wives (‘scribe’ could refer to anyone from petty clerks to a high officials). Scribes deride star-gazers, Kepler admits, but soldiers and officers show scorn for scribes. A doctor’s daughter thinks herself too good to marry a scribe; a student who fails to make progress in his studies becomes a scribe and this brings scorn upon universities.

Having mapped the direction of disrespect at court and the patterns of marriage alliances in order to claim respect for astronomers, Kepler, in a remarkable scholarly gesture, turns to explain why the contrary opinion of astronomers prevails in court circles. He offers a simplistic sociological explanation: the multitude usually despises the few; scholars had been derided in the past because there were so few of them. Nowadays stargazers are denigrated because there are so few of them compared with the number of physicians, lawyers, or preachers. At court, with its many chanceries, it is scribes who know no better who shape public opinion.

By undermining the basis of scorn sustained by astronomers, Kepler managed to relativise prevailing prejudice against them, perhaps even to explain it – but he could not do away with their burden. Sociological explanations do not modify social relations. To escape the contradictory valuations that elite groups have of each other’s relative standing, in a final move Kepler resorts to an absolute measure of status – proximity to the ruler. As befitting a true Copernican, he asks his reader to turn her gaze toward the centre of the court system – the emperor. Emperors and princes are the ultimate source of honour, he contends, and they actually like to have learned stargazers in their midst. Measured in this way, a learned stargazer can beat any rich scribe, that is, any court official. Kepler seems to have made his point, but his social realism and candour compel him to step back and admit: even if emperors do prefer the company of learned astronomers – such as himself – rulers cannot do without the services of scribes. Astronomers, he implies, are nice to have around, but are basically dispensable.

Disdain for astronomers has other sources as well. Why is it, asks Kepler, that stargazers are considered laughable figures? It is because some imagine themselves as a sort of *Wundertier* (a fabulous creature, a legendary animal). This strange creature does not walk like other people normally do, forward looking, but rather trains his gaze toward the sky. A person who behaves in this way should properly be called a fool, he writes.

Kepler here seems to be alluding to the famous story about the ancient Greek philosopher Thales. In Aesop's version Thales is an astronomer, who while walking, gazing upwards and watching the stars, fell into a well (or a ditch), and was laughed at by a servant-girl who said that he was eager to know the things in the sky, but the things that were lying at his feet escaped his notice.³⁸ Kepler's allusion makes clear that this ancient, ambivalent parable of concentration and oddity ascribed to the philosopher was no longer confined to the folklore of the learned and had become known in wider circles.³⁹ It was not only circulating as a source for scorn for astronomers, but has been actively adopted by some practitioners as a visible marker of their special calling. Some people who wish to be considered astronomers behave like *Wundertiere*, consciously imitating philosophers whose gaze is fixed on the stars.

This disposition had become such a codified element of the persona of scholars in general and astronomers in particular that it was applied to Kepler. At this point one would have concluded that Kepler rejected this element of the scholarly persona, were it not for the fact that a close friend applied it to him, and not unkindly. Kepler, he writes, is one of those *studiosi* of philosophy and mathematics who, as everyone knows, are not well-versed in household affairs because they do not see the things that lie at their very feet, their gaze fixed on higher things – placed either up in the air or in their thoughts.⁴⁰ Here, the given persona did not function as a burdensome mask but as a useful device legitimating a scholar's presumed habits. To make things more complicated, however, Kepler – although thoroughly familiar with this image of the otherworldly scholar – described himself in an intimate self-portrait as an inquisitive person, intensely (and quite unbearably) interested in household affairs.⁴¹ The persona was hence real enough as a ridiculous, ascribed mask, as a conventional element of learned folklore, and as a useful

38 On the anecdotes and its metamorphoses, see Hans Blumenberg, *Das Lachen der Thrakerin. Eine Urgeschichte der Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main 1987); idem, 'Der Sturz des Protophilosophen. Zur Komik der reinen Theorie – anhand einer Rezeptionsgeschichte der Thales-Anekdote', in: Wolfgang Preisendanz and Rainer Warning (eds.), *Das Komische* (Munich 1976) 11–64.

39 See, for instance, Otto Melander, *Joco-Seria; das ist: Schimpff und Ernst, darin ... lustige Historien erzehlet werden* (Lich 1605) vol. 2, 133, no. 136. On *mathematici* (which includes astronomers in this case), see Bernardino Ramazzini, 'Diatribae de morbis artificum', in: idem, *Opera omnia medica et*

physiologica, Bartholomeus Ramazzini (ed.) (third edition; London 1718) 377.

40 'Est enim tibi notum, quam non bene rem domesticam tractent uel mathematicum uel philosophiae studiosi: qui non quod ante pedes est, sed summa contemplantur, quae uel in aëre sunt, uel in phantasia.' Johannes Memhard to Matthias Bernegger, 16 October 1613, in: Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 19, no. 7.70.

41 Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 19, no. 7.30 (329, 336); letter to Tycho Brahe (1600), in: *ibid.*, no. 2.2. He was also capable of resorting to the more conventional persona when describing himself as single-mindedly devoted to studies and unversed in practical affairs (*ibid.*, vol. 17, no. 669).



Thales of Miletus as an inspired philosopher.
Hartmann Schedel, *Weltchronik* (Nuremberg 1493) 59.
Wikimedia Commons.

intermediary object between a *studiosus* and his social milieu – without ever coinciding completely with its bearer’s actual dispositions.

Reaching this point in his memorandum, Kepler seems to realise that he cannot change received cultural images by force of personal decision. He is unable to shape an acceptable, livable astronomer-*persona* for himself; a *persona* is a collective representation. All he can do is to argue that whatever one believes about astronomers in general, this need not apply to him: he does not behave like a fool. One should not rely on hearsay, but observe actual behaviour, he pleads, seeking to carve out for himself an exceptional place. Kepler’s frustration is palpable: this opinion ‘must be the devil’s work’, he writes, ‘that you can’t study astronomy, unless you are a bit crazy’.⁴²

In the following sections of the memorandum Kepler makes further unsuccessful attempts to rehabilitate the figure of the stargazer, either by repositioning it socially in terms of an economy of honour, or by remodelling it in terms of the intellectual content of astronomy and its typical practices. What *persona* remains open for him to occupy? Ultimately, he finds refuge in a well-established *persona*, that of the bookish scholar, the humanist:

I am a *Mathematicus*, *Philosophus* and *Historicus*. Not one scribe in a thousand has the faintest idea what these words mean and how they apply. I was thus appointed by the Estates of Austria and made their servant with these designations. What they mean is a scholar that has read many things and retains them in his memory and can use (this knowledge, G.A.) for the best in the service of those who nominated him.⁴³

This is a noteworthy piece of self-description. Conspicuously missing is any reference to observations or difficult calculations. Instead, Kepler resorts to an old formula entrenched in the tradition of bookish knowledge: acquiring knowledge through reading, retaining and processing it through ‘memory’, and applying it in the service of patrons. After all his attempts to refashion the *persona* of a stargazer, or to distinguish his type of astronomy from other types of astrology, Kepler finally claims these three traditional titles for himself. He does so even though he perceives himself as a person driven by *cupiditas nova tractandi*, ‘a desire to discover new things’, whose mind was attuned to ‘revealing nature’s secrets’.⁴⁴

From Kepler’s perspective, there is no acceptable *persona* that he could assume – at least not one which would gain him respect and recognition at

42 ‘Das einer das sternsehen nit lehrnen khönte, er wäre dan geschossen’: Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 17, no. 643, lines 51-52.

43 *Ibid.*, lines 71-76. Note that Kepler relies here on a ‘job description’ – the titles he used when offering his services to the Estates of Upper

Austria: *Gesammelte Werke* 16, Max Caspar (ed.) (Munich 1954) no. 617 (10 June 1611).

44 Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 19, no. 7.30, 332 (‘*cupiditas nova tractandi*’); idem, *Harmonices Mundi libri v*, *Gesammelte Werke* 6, lib. IV, cap. 7, 279 (‘*eruenda Naturae arcana*’).

court. The image of the astronomer is far too ambivalent, entwined with that of a stargazer, entangled in making horoscopes and catering to patrons' wishes; it connotes foolishness, quirkiness, is ascribed externally and occasionally even confirmed by would-be practitioners' behaviour. At the same time, Kepler's attachment to the traditional persona of the bookish scholar – *mathematicus, philosophus, historicus* – is not a matter of mere adjustment to external circumstances. It reveals his active identification with the world of humanist scholarship, his image of himself as a true humanist and author of polished Latin prose.⁴⁵

From this somewhat safer, fortified position Kepler can even permit himself to conjure a counter-factual trajectory – playing his actual vocation against an alternative way of life he could have chosen. What would have happened if he had become a scribe, that is a high-ranking court official? I could have exchanged my current position, he writes, for that of one of the court officials engaged in reading and writing, counting and raising money – although in fact, he adds, I am better at reading than writing. The possible advantages are obvious: perhaps I would have been awarded a counsellor's title, he muses, but in that case I would have lost the peace and quiet I need for studying. It is this that makes the exchange a bad deal in scholarly terms:

I would have done it to please a wife, but I have no need for this, nor does it seem advisable. What would I be trying to prove to myself? This would have been an expression of pure ambition on my part and would not have benefitted me more than my present state. I would have to swear an oath of allegiance and be bonded firmly, (whereas in my present position, G.A.) I am much freer, with less danger and less responsibility.⁴⁶

Each element in this statement calls for consideration. Kepler failed to redefine the persona of the stargazer and reverted to the established one of a humanist bookish scholar. For this pre-existing scholarly persona, peace and quiet for studies are supreme. Note, however, that this is not a mere mask he was wearing: at several key points in his career, Kepler did actually articulate his need to control his time, to be his own master, not to be subject to external control over the way he spends his time, to have fewer public responsibilities

45 Anthony T. Grafton, 'Humanism and Science in Rudolphine Prague: Kepler in Context', in: idem., *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge MASS. 1991) 178-203; C. Stephen Jaeger, 'Johannes Kepler: Poetic Inspiration and Scientific Discovery', in: Gerhild Scholz Williams and Stephen K. Schindler (eds.), *Knowledge, Science, and Literature in Early Modern Germany* (Chapel Hill NC 1996) 117-130.

46 'Einem weib thät Ich dies zu gefallen, was mich selbst belanget, ist mirs nit vonnöthen, villeicht auch nit rathsam. Was wolt Ich mich zeihen, wär es doch nur ein lautterer ehrgeitz, und nutzete mir mehrers nit dan Jetzo mein wesen, müeste ein *jurament* thuen, und starckh verpunden sein; bin also vil freyer, hab weniger gefahr und weniger verantwortung', Kepler, *Gesammelte Werke* 17, no. 643, lines 95-99.

and even less income – in order to gain precious time and freedom to engage in scholarship. The transmitted cultural image of the humanist scholar with his cherished *otium* is not effective *eo ipso*, but when actively appropriated, when it merges with Kepler's needs.⁴⁷ And his need for freely disposing of his time without being burdened by official duties was intimately related to his specific way of discovering new things.

'I would have done it to please a wife, but I have no need for this, nor does it seem advisable. What would I be trying to prove to myself? This would have been an expression of pure ambition on my part': Note how ambition and status considerations are disavowed and attributed to an imagined wife – or to lowly motives. Yet Kepler admits elsewhere how keen he is to accumulate honour and reputation. Attributing one's own baser motives – the yearning for honour – to 'a wife', as if taking up a high position is something one does only 'to please a woman', is a well-known gesture in the received scholarly tradition. Science is a gendered calling even where no women are present. It is as if scholars split themselves to maintain their persona, attributing their material and baser motives to 'women' in order to uphold a purified self-image of dedication to higher knowledge. In this case, the maintenance of the scholar's persona not only requires practical, active collusion by less visible others to maintain it; it also requires symbolic splitting and the projection of parts of the actual person onto others to uphold a purified image of single-mindedness. Here too, Kepler's text, with its peculiar inflections and contradictions, is more than a simple instantiation of a received discourse. He makes use of this tradition of scholarly self-depiction, wavering between different positions, but eventually candidly admitting that the yearning for honour was actually his.

Wundertier and Exemplum

Several points emerge from this brief case study. First, the utility of maintaining the distinction between persona, self and person in order to explore the range of possible tensions between Kepler's sense of himself, his embodied dispositions and habits, and the range of available self-images, becomes clear. Second, we see how fixing our gaze on all-too-visible scholarly personae may obscure the extent to which personae are jointly produced, constantly negotiated and marked by persisting inequalities. The maintenance of the highly visible persona of the scholar is accompanied by the correlate production of other, less conspicuous images, projected onto

47 I have tried to argue this point in some detail in the case of Hieronymus Wolf: Gadi Algazi, 'Food for Thought: Hieronymus Wolf grapples with the Scholarly Habitus', in:

Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments in History: Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum 2002) 21-44.



Thales, studying the stars and looking upwards,
falling into a pit.

Joachim Camerarius, *Fabulae c. Aesopicae à Gabriele
Faerno Cremonensi versibus & Iconibus explicatae [...]*
(Leipzig 1590) 168.

Boston Public Library, archive.org.

others ('a scholar's wife') or made to disappear (from 'invisible technicians' to research assistants). A history of scholarship in terms of the succession of exemplary personae might overlook them.⁴⁸

Third, Kepler's case demonstrates the usefulness of considering personae not only diachronically but also as concurrent options within structured repertoires: Kepler considered several personae (a stargazer/astronomer, a humanist scholar, and alternatives – a physician, a court official) – hierarchized, each with its distinct implications. In his correspondence, Kepler sometimes presented himself as an expert coping with difficult technical challenges, intent on providing services to patrons. At other times, however, he portrayed himself as a student of nature with a 'passion for engaging with new things' (*cupiditas nova tractandi*) – in both cases, he was offering partial, though not unfounded, versions of himself. Kepler was wavering between available personae, perhaps seeking to combine them.

Fourth, Kepler's memorandum makes clear that a scholarly persona (at least in the early modern period) was often enough not a straightforward expression of the ethos of the *respublica litteraria* or the virtues cherished by any single scholarly community. Rather, it tended to be a hybrid image, a compound of different regulative ideals propounded by different groups of practitioners, and in addition the views and prejudices of various groups of laypersons – patrons, administrators, preachers and moralists, competitors and allies of comparable social status, wives, fathers-in-law, neighbours and so forth. It was an ambivalent, contradictory persona, a shaky historical compromise, sometimes an *exemplum*, sometimes a *Wundertier* – and often both. It offered scholars a series of precious privileges – a limited and yet singular license to break with generally accepted social norms, to ignore some social obligations with impunity, to subvert communal rhythms, to engage in invisible work, to be occasionally occupied by deep thoughts while apparently doing nothing. This license was bought at the price of ridicule and standardised eccentricity, of accentuating presumed otherworldliness, pretending not to grasp household duties and expenses, adopting learned incompetence and proverbial indifference to worldly affairs. This compound image was encoded in the folklore of the world of scholarship, in manuals for adopting the habits of a true scholar, in physicians' advice and literary depictions, laudatory and satirical. The scholar's persona was also at stake in conflicts between different groups of learned practitioners. Thus courtier-scholars and *politiques* could play out the ambivalences of the received persona of the scholar against their rivals, presenting them as *weltfremd*, 'pedants', situated at the opposite pole of a differentiated field. 'True

48 Steven Shapin, 'The Invisible Technician', *American Scientist* 77:6 (1989) 554-563; Klaus Hentschel (ed.), *Unsichtbare Hände. Zur Rolle*

von Laborassistenten, Mechanikern, Zeichnern u.a. Amanuenses in der physikalischen Forschungs- und Entwicklungsarbeit (Diepholz 2008).

scholars', for their part, defending autonomous, self-centred scholarship against heteronomous uses and prominent boundary-crossers, could retort by asking how seriously one ought to take a scholar who failed to exemplify utter dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and who was far from indifferent to worldly interests.

Both basic positions and the tensions to which they obliquely refer are still with us. Personae often emerge at the intersection of heterogeneous social forces and expectations. William Clark devoted some of the finest pages in his *Academic Charisma* to showing how even the modern researcher's persona was partly imposed by German ministries through academic visitations and disciplinary measures. Ancient ideals of scholarly self-sufficiency and autonomy that are compounded by modern invocations of 'scientific communities' and strengthened by the contraction of pre-modern personae to more circumscribed realms of behaviour relevant to a professional ethics, may obscure the extent to which personae were the product of highly divergent forces.

Conclusions

We may have to make do with three related but distinct notions of persona (and perhaps adopt additional designations to distinguish them more clearly). The first, the singular, performed image, is well entrenched in current preoccupations and practices. The second – persona in the sense of sets of virtues personified in the image of exemplary practitioners – might be useful for exploring the regulative ideals espoused within a community of peers. The third notion – persona as an interdiscursive construct, an intermediary between different social contexts – is tailored more for the needs of socio-cultural analysis. The double life of persona in the last two senses – as embodying what it takes to be a virtuous practitioner and in the more robust and messy sense of a cultural type – might reflect the structural duality, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, between an autonomous 'field of restricted production', in which only recognition by one's peers counts and makes one count as 'a true scholar', and a broader, heterogeneous field of cultural production. By way of analogy, the term 'author' may refer in a broad sense to any person authoring literary texts, or more narrowly to a 'true author', one whom fellow practitioners recognise as epitomising the regulative ideals of the restricted field.⁴⁹

We need terms for all three: A notion of a performative, individual persona unconstrained by pre-existing models and abstracted from the

49 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le marché des biens symboliques', *L'année sociologique* 3, ser. 22 (1971)

cultural repertoires enabling it, would yield a one-sided and abstract account of ‘self-fashioning’; conversely, it would be futile to imagine pre-existing types – persona in the second and third sense – substantiating themselves in living persons and disregard agency and performance. A social historian’s robust notion of personae as cultural constructs might not be fine-grained enough to account for the ideals and quarrels within scholarly communities, especially those enjoying a high degree of autonomy. At the same time, contenting ourselves solely with a notion of persona as a normative edifice, embodying the regulative ideals of ‘true scholars’, without invoking at the same time the messier notion of persona as a blend of different social perspectives, might reproduce the self-image and discourse of privileged actors and miss the rest. Modern studies of (scholarly) virtues need to be complemented by attention to social relations and practices in order not to play into the hands of neo-liberal restructuring measures and the cult of efficient and self-sufficient individuals.

We like to try out new tools; give me a new conceptual hammer and everything starts to look like a nail. Thus good-enough tools may be peremptorily discarded for failing to fulfil exaggerated expectations. Perhaps all they really need is more time. In this spirit, I conclude with some limitations of the use of persona as a template for persons.

1) Personae are codified images. They are used by actors to project acceptable and recognisable self-images. Personae are patently not reflections of actual practices or lived relationships, nor are they an exhaustive blueprint for shaping these. Adopting a persona still leaves open all sorts of practical issues concerning how to go about organising one’s life and work. This is not to say that such practices are shapeless, since models for structuring everyday practices are also part of cultural repertoires, but simply that personae have a limited explanatory value. Institutional arrangements, for instance, are not derived from personae and at times might be in tension with them. One may easily either identify practices with codified images or set them in absolute opposition to each other – raw practices versus stylised representations. But scholarly otherworldliness, for instance, did not necessarily entail actual economic incompetence, just as philosophical seclusion did not necessarily mean rejecting sociability. These are not mere tensions between norms and realities: managing contradictions and representations is part of good practice. It took and still takes much more to be a scholar than to exemplify or embody a consistent set of virtues.

Consider in this context Robert Merton’s classic exploration of scientists’ ambivalence regarding claims for priority in scientific discovery – acknowledging others’ contributions and contesting them at the very same time; a reluctance to openly assert priority while regularly asserting it in an indirect way, and rehearsing that challenging competing claims is below one’s dignity while doing precisely that. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Merton’s analysis deals with systematic forgetfulness of prior discoveries.

Forgetting about having read a text containing an insight one claims for oneself, or failing to properly acknowledge former partners' contribution to the making of a scientific discovery, is not a matter of personal aberration. It is symptomatic of basic contradictions in the very structure of science as a collective endeavour and rooted in the commitment to both cooperation and institutionalised competition.⁵⁰ Conceiving scholarly practice as derived from scientific personae – in the narrow sense (as exemplifications of doctrine or bundles of epistemic virtues) or in the broader, less normative sense of codified images of those engaged in scholarship – yields no clue as to such constitutive contradictions and ambivalences. Selves are more than projects for designing selves. Viable accounts of actors (persons/subjects/agents) need not conflate personae with persons, valued virtues with actual dispositions, and ought to leave enough room for exploring varied dispositions – some of them certainly cultivated in response to codified self-images and cherished virtues, while others are not.

2) An exclusive focus on the persona does not tell us who can assume a given persona, that is, which members of different social groupings have access to it. It is remarkable, for instance, how easy it was in the first third of the fifteenth century to portray Christine de Pizan (1364-c. 1430) as a scholar in her study, as if gender did not matter: no thorough modification of the iconographic conventions was needed. On the other hand, Christine described herself as both endowed with the valued dispositions of a scholar, and as a woman who underwent a truly radical conversion as she became a scholar, having mutated from a dependent wife to an independent man – and yet remained fully a woman, a worthy successor to a lineage of learned women and a staunch defender of women in general against their detractors. A close reading of her work shows her coming to terms – symbolically and practically – with the contradictions involved in assuming the persona of a scholar.⁵¹ Appropriating a persona is hence not only a matter of accessing a given social position: social relations and trajectories are not external to

50 Robert K. Merton, 'Priorities in Scientific Discovery: A Chapter in the Sociology of Science', *American Sociological Review* 22 (1957) 635-659; idem, 'Singletons and Multiples in Scientific Discovery: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105:5 (1961) 471-486; idem, 'Resistance to the Systematic Study of Multiple Discoveries in Science', *Archives Européennes de sociologie* 4 (1963) 237-282; Mary Douglas, 'Institutionalized Public Memory', in: James F. Short Jr. (ed.), *The Social Fabric:*

Dimensions and Issues (Beverly Hills CA 1986) 63-76.

51 Susan Groag Bell, 'Christine de Pizan in her Study', *Cahiers de recherche médiévales et humanistes: Études christiniennes* (10 June 2008), <http://crm.revues.org/3212> (1 February 2016); Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Christine de Pizan and the Misogynistic Tradition', *Romanic Review* 81:3 (1990) 279-292; Earl Jeffrey Richards, 'Rejecting Essentialism and Gendered Writing: The Case of Christine de Pizan', in: Jane Chance (ed.), *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*

actors, but inscribed in them. Performing effectively a pre-existing persona requires sets of dispositions. To account for the way people shape the positions they occupy, to explore the possible tensions between embodied dispositions and assumed personae, we need to reach beyond personae and build fuller accounts of the making of persons.

3) It is essential, then, to embed personae in accounts of the interplay between social relationships and differentially accessible positions, of class- and gender-specific dispositions and habits. In this context, however, it does not strike me as helpful to stretch ‘persona’ to cover all aspects of the making of persons, to pack cultural templates, dispositions, modes of cultivating habits and sense of selfhood into any single concept – not least into ‘persona’. This would turn the concept from an analytical tool into an umbrella term and undermine its usefulness. Persona in the limited sense of an established cultural template leaves space for exploring how personae are adopted, transformed, ascribed or rejected (as in the case of the cobbler and naturalist Thomas Edward analysed by Anne Secord⁵²); for discussing people whose dispositions and trajectories make it impossible for them to effectively assume a pre-existing persona; and eventually, for considering scholars for which no fitting persona exists (as Kepler suggests about himself), those for whom no persona at all is available, or practitioners effectively made invisible by codified personae.

It is even less useful to conflate personae with whole ways of life. At issue is not only the empirical discrepancy, for instance, between the venerable persona of the solitary scholar and actual habits and practices.⁵³ Ways of life are a concept of a different order; broader, messier and more robust, they do not come and go on the winds of doctrine; they pertain to varied domains of everyday life and hence are only partly shaped in relation to a specific set of scholarly practices. More fundamentally, they involve whole figurations of persons, not individual scholars alone. Practices of astronomical observation, for example, required more than self-discipline: they were embedded in and moulded by social relations – by specific milieux such as family households or large-scale observatories with their constraints

(Gainesville FL 1996) 96-131. This is not merely a question of social forces external to cultural images, for gender could modify the very meaning of specific elements of a persona. Scholarly celibacy, for instance, had different meanings and social implications for women and men in the early modern period until well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

52 Anne Secord, “‘Be what you would seem to be’”: Samuel Smiles, Thomas Edward and the Making

of a Working-Class Scientific Hero’, *Science in Context* 16 (2003) 147-173.

53 Steven Shapin, “‘The Mind Is its own Place’”: Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Science in Context* 4:1 (1991) 191-219; Peter Dear, ‘A Mechanical Microcosm: Bodily Passions, Good Manners, and Cartesian Mechanism’, in: Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (eds.), *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (Chicago 1998) 51-82.

and expectations.⁵⁴ Extrapolating scholars' whole way of being from their persona is tempting, especially from an internalist point of view, but far less satisfying from the perspective of socio-cultural history. Social relationships, kinship ties, structures of income and household routines do not arise out of the regulative ideals of any specific vocation, nor are they simple emanations of spiritual exercises or forms of self-cultivation.

Personae need not stand for an entire *problématique*. I, for one, would content myself with their use as an analytical concept, a welcome addition to our toolkit. Templates do not have a history of their own – a historical succession of prototypes engendering prototypes, as in some older versions of cultural history. It is precisely their appropriation by social actors that makes them real and reshapes them, making them truly historical.

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54 Simon Schaeffer, 'Astronomers Mark Time: Discipline and the Personal Equation', *Science in Context* 2 (1988) 115-145; Monika Mommertz, 'Schattenökonomie der Wissenschaft. Geschlechterordnung und Arbeits-systeme in der Astronomie der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften im 18. Jahrhundert', in:

Theresa Wobbe (ed.), *Frauen in Akademie und Wissenschaft. Arbeitsorte und Forschungspraktiken 1700-2000* (Berlin 2002) 31-62; Sebastian Kühn, *Wissen, Arbeit, Freundschaft. Ökonomien und soziale Beziehungen an den Akademien in London, Paris und Berlin um 1700* (Göttingen 2011).