

## **GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY...**

### **The Features of Experts Awarding Literary Prizes**

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In the Netherlands a large and heterogeneous group of experts staff the juries for literary prizes. However, not every jury seems to be accessible to all experts. This article deals with the allocation of jury-memberships to literary experts. The judges for the more prestigious literary prizes tend to have specific features; in general they have a long history of personal commitment to literature (literary seniority), they have previous experience in juries and in boards and advisory committees dealing with literary affairs (administrative experience), and/or they practise literary criticism.

These results allow for two different interpretations. On the one hand the literary activities can be seen as the means to gain the authority required for prestigious juries. On the other hand the predominance of literary seniority and administrative experience especially over the setting of the literary activities might indicate that the allocation of jury-memberships is honorific in nature: a compensation for a long-term dedication to literature and for ample but disinterested work done in the anonymity of literary committees.

In general, sociologists of art agree that in the course of time the practice of art has broken away from the custody of maecenas, state, nobility or church. But who has taken over their task? Who decides now what is to be considered as art, who distinguishes between valuable and less valuable works or art? Today, this task is performed by a number of bodies containing a great number of persons. In this article, one of these bodies, viz. the juries for literary prizes, is investigated. Who are the members of these juries and on account of which characteristics are they presumed to be competent to judge literature?

### **1. Outline of the problem**

In 1880, the first Dutch literary prize was established, at least the first literary prize in its modern sense. Up to and including the Second World War, the number of literary prizes was relatively small. After the end of this war, some

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new prizes were instituted especially by the national government and the councils of some big cities. Subsequently the system of literary prizes expanded rapidly. In the seventies, no less than 83 different literary prizes were presented.

Juries pronounce upon the literary quality of a text or of a body of works. Therefore, they function as instances of consecration: they attribute literary value to objects and, in doing so, they contribute to the harmonization of opinions concerning literature. However, not all literary prizes are thought to be equally important. Some prizes are respected highly and entail a lot of publicity, whereas other prizes do not cause any commotion whatsoever. Prizes are said to vary according to the prestige they enjoy. Likewise, the people awarding the prizes differ with respect to their authority in the literary field. By literary field I mean the set of interrelated institutions and organizations which produce, judge and/or acquire literary works. The decisions and statements concerning literature of one expert are considered to be more prominent than the pronouncements of another.

In the context of the literary field, the prestige of the bodies or positions within an institution and the authority of the experts occupying this position, are expected to be related. The institutional approach assumes the prestige of a position to redound to the person occupying this position and vice versa. Members of the literary field will transfer the prestige of a position to its holder and the authority of the expert to the position held. Eventually, this will lead to a certain degree of agreement between the prestige of the position and the authority of the expert occupying this position. A prominent expert will not be inclined to accept seats in many juries for literary prizes deemed inferior; this might cost the expert his/her reputation. In contrast, the people forming juries will not like to hazard the reputation of their prize by recruiting many judges deemed insignificant. This assumption is supported by the fact that the names of the judges are usually stated emphatically in the publicity caused by the presentation of an important prize.

In which way do people acquire expertise and authority in the matter of literature? The assumption made before, that the prestige of a position reflects upon the authority of its holder, indicates where the origins of literary expertise have to be sought: viz. in the activities people perform in the literary field. Important aspects of these activities are: the prestige of the setting within which the activities take shape, their nature, duration and, in the long run, the reception by colleagues and members of other institutions. I will adduce some arguments and examples in support of this claim.

If the position's prestige reflects upon the person occupying this position, the respect paid to an expert will be proportional to the number of activities performed in highly valued settings. The longer or more often one is perceived as a member of prestigious organizations, the more profound will be the impact on the standing one enjoys. The settings of the various literary

activities can be divided into rough classes according to their prestige. A small proportion of the literary publishing houses are deemed much more important than all other firms. This holds for the papers and magazines, with respect to the publication of reviews, as well as for the advisory committees and boards concerning literary affairs: a few are considered to be prominent. Thus, the activities of authors, critics and of members of committees and boards, can be classified according to prestige. For instance, an author who has managed to build up a large body of works at an important literary publishing house, will be paid more respect than a debutant of a prestigious firm, who, in turn, will be considered more important than an author making his/her debut in the programme of a less prestigious publishing firm, etcetera.

Also the nature of the activities performed is important. Those who belong to the institution 'criticism', charged with the task of evaluating literary works, will be more authoritative than people involved in the production and distribution of literary work. With respect to their authority in judging literature, critics will outrank authors and authors will outrank booksellers; someone trained in literary theory will outrank a student of related, nonliterary disciplines.

To a certain degree, these activities are influenced by the reception of previous activities in the literary field. Here, *reception* means the judgements and decisions passed on the literary activities by members of the literary field and by the reading public. The occupation of a position presupposes the approval of the person or body responsible for the allocation of this position. For instance, without the consent of the (board of) editors, it is impossible to have reviews printed. For an author, the approval of a publisher, which usually implies the approval of literary critics and the sympathy of the reading public, is a prerequisite for publishing a vast body of works. The more prestigious the position, the more severe the selection and the more awarding it is to be selected. Of course, the reception of previous literary activities is the best indicator of the authority a member of the literary field enjoys. But this reception is a complex matter to investigate. First of all, the reception of various kinds of activities should be measured differently. Measuring the reception of an author raises other kinds of issues than measuring the reception of a critic. In the case of the activities of an author, viz. the publication of fictional work, the amount of praise and lasting attention that critics give to his/her books, should be measured. In the case of critical activities, the approval by peers of his/her choices and statements should be measured. But the praise for authors as well as the approval of a critic's statements are often implicit. Therefore, I will limit this study to the more concrete characteristics of the members of literary juries, that is their activities and positions previously obtained in the literary field, although I will keep in mind that these are closely interrelated with the reception in the literary field.

In the investigation reported here, the following hypothesis has been put to

the test: the literary activities of judges for literary prizes will relate to the prestige of the prizes they award. Juries for prestigious prizes will be staffed by people who enjoy a high authority as an expert. Since I expect the authority of a judge to be related to his/her literary activities, the assumption that certain (combinations of) activities will characterize the members of prestigious juries is self-evident. The members of juries for less important prizes will display these characteristics to a much lesser degree.

In accordance with this line of argument, the following research design has been chosen. The literary prizes are split up into categories, based on their prestige. The judges are characterized by the most prestigious prize they awarded in or just before 1982. Thus, for every category of prizes, a corresponding category of judges is made. These categories of judges differ systematically as regards the status they achieved in the system of literary prizes and, supposedly, with respect to the authority they enjoy in the literary field. I will refer to these categories as *statuses*. Next, the literary activities of the judges are registered and they are used to predict the status achieved in the system of literary prizes. The subsequent sections will contain (1) the selection and classification of prizes, (2) the selection of relevant cases, (3) the registration of the judges' literary activities and their classification according to authority and, finally, (4) the analysis and interpretation of the correlation between the judges' literary activities and the status they attained in the system of literary prizes.

## 2. The literary prizes and their prestige

At the moment, the system of literary prizes in the Netherlands is differentiated. Some prizes are awarded to any piece of Dutch literature, other prizes are presented to works in a specific genre or to books related to a specific city or region. Is it plausible that all prizes require the same kind of expertise of their judges? Some findings point to the contrary.

The literary prizes which are not restricted formally to one or some genres, are usually presented to books belonging to the genres 'narrative prose', 'poetry' or 'essay', especially to narrative prose. These are also the most frequently praised genres. The genres 'drama' and 'children's literature', as well as translated and Frisian literature are apparently considered to be specific categories. Also, the exchange of judges between prizes shows a salient pattern. The prizes for Frisian literature share judges but they do not exchange any judges with the prizes for Dutch literature. Prizes related to a specific city or region are usually isolated from the network of shared judges. In this network, the prizes for drama and children's literature form sub-clusters; the prizes belonging to each cluster share more judges between themselves than

they do with other kinds of prizes. (These facts concern the period 1970–1982.) These findings show that, besides the most current genres (i.e. narrative prose, poetry and essay), there are some categories of prizes which, to some extent, have their own circles of experts. They probably require a specific expertise, and since the analyses are based on the assumption that the judges possess differing degrees of the same kind of expertise, these deviant categories are ignored. The analyses are limited to the prizes for narrative prose, poetry and essays, originally written in the standard Dutch language and not restricted to a certain city or region.

How to classify these literary prizes according to prestige? The prestige of a prize is equivalent to the importance that members of the literary field attach to it. This field contains many, quite divergent members, so no more is to be expected than a rough consensus bound to a specific time-interval. Therefore, the prestige of prizes must be measured over a restricted period of time and it can only be divided roughly into a small range of categories. As a point of reference, the year 1982 has been chosen. The prizes will be divided into three classes, by means of their characteristics in or just before 1982. The choice of this point of reference will affect the selection of the judges to be incorporated in the analyses. A later section will deal with this matter.

The prestige of a literary prize is gauged by means of the following indicators: the organization presenting the prize, the object of the prize, its tradition and the amount of money related to the prize.

It is obvious that as widely diverging *organizations* as the national government and a private foundation enjoy quite differing degrees of prestige. Therefore, the prestige of the prizes presented by these organizations will vary too. In this investigation, the state prizes are supposed to be the most prestigious, the prizes presented by the councils of the big cities in the Netherlands, which have created their own organizations to stimulate the literary life in their communities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam), are considered second in rank and all other prizes are ranked lowest.

The *object* of a prize refers to the kind of literary works to be awarded, ranging from a debut to an author's complete works. Naturally, an incentive prize is presented to authors who are just starting, whereas prizes for complete works are awarded solely to authors who have had quite some books printed. The remaining 'regular' prizes are usually awarded after an incentive prize and before as well as after the award of a prize for an author's complete works. The latter will be the most prestigious prize. The fact that an author has built up a considerable oeuvre implies the goodwill of publishers, critics and of the reading public. To build up a body of works by one author, a considerable long-term investment is necessary. To publishers, this is acceptable only when some of the books belonging to this oeuvre will attract sufficient attention of critics and readers. In a sense, the award of a prize for an oeuvre summarizes these instances of approval and success.

In general, the incentive prize will be lowest in prestige, because at the time of presentation, there is a considerable risk that the laureate may not live up to the expectations raised by the prize. This would happen, for instance, if the author stops writing or if later work by the author is evaluated negatively or is not evaluated at all by literary critics. Therefore, there is a reasonable chance that, with hindsight, an incorrect decision was made in awarding an incentive prize to a certain author.

It is probable that the *tradition* of a prize will add to its status in the long run. Previous presentations of a prize constitute its own history with examples of awards that are deemed successful retrospectively. If an awarded work of literature has been added to the canon of 'literary masterpieces', the award can be regarded as a (more or less decisive) contribution to the canonization of the book in question. This will draw the attention to future awards of the prize and it will raise expectations towards the importance that will be attributed in future to an author receiving the prize now. The tradition of a literary prize is measured by means of two variables, viz. the number of years a prize has existed and the number of times the prize has been presented. The latter variable is meant to distinguish between old but incidental prizes and prizes with a long and regular tradition.

Finally, the *amount of money* connected with a literary prize is taken into consideration. The gradual but seemingly orchestrated increase in the sums of money of the various prizes indicates that an organization seeks to harmonize the amount of money and the intended prestige of their prize. For instance, the Dutch state prize used to be the most valuable with respect to the money involved. In 1986/1987 a new prize was instituted which offered a sum of money ten times as high. In the same year(s), a political discussion was held on the amount of money related to the state prize, and an increase resulted.

An important question in the classification of the literary prizes according to status is the order in which to use the respective indicators. Which aspect should come first? The correlation between the various indicators of prestige shows that the organization presenting the prize is of central importance. This variable correlates highly with the sum of money and the object of the prize. Also, it correlates weakly with the tradition of the prize, which, in turn, correlates weakly with the prize's object. Therefore, I have classified the prizes according to the organization presenting them, the amount of money involved and tradition, in that order. This resulted in the following classification:

*Status 1 – high* – the state prizes, both of them awarded to complete works, combining a large amount of money with a long and regular tradition (2 prizes);

*Status 2 – middle* – the remaining prizes with a long and regular tradition or a large amount of money and a tradition of more than average length. The prizes presented by the councils of Amsterdam and The Hague, or presented

by an old Dutch society for the study of literature (Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde) form the major part of this category. Only two of these prizes are awarded to complete works (in total 14 prizes);

*Status 3 – low* – the recently instituted or once-only prizes, offering widely diverging amounts of money to debuts as well as to complete works. The organizations presenting these prizes must be seen as a rest category.

### 3. The selection of cases

This investigation aims to point out whether the literary activities of judges relate to the prestige of the prizes they award. However, it is unrealistic to expect a perfect fit. This is first of all because we are dealing with an informal selection criterion. The assessment of the prestige of one's own prize and of the authority of a potential judge is not regulated by rules and thus it is, to a certain degree, open to the subjectivity of the people forming the juries. A consensus is to be expected, but a consensus is never perfect.

Secondly, if I express expectations about the authority needed to become a judge for a literary prize, I am talking about necessary instead of sufficient conditions. To be recruited as a member for a specific jury, one will have to satisfy certain criteria. But this doesn't imply that everybody satisfying these criteria will be recruited. It is very well possible for someone not to be invited in spite of his/her qualifications, or for an invitation not to be accepted. Also, there is no fundamental reason for someone not to participate in a jury with a prestige below his/her potential. Although this is not expected to happen very often, it cannot be ruled out.

In consequence, I have selected the memberships of juries which are most likely to represent the potential of a judge, that is to say, his/her membership

Table 1  
Prizes and judges per status and per annum (1978–1982).

| Status     | Number of prizes | Number of judges in: |             |             |             |             | Total number of judges |
|------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|
|            |                  | 1978                 | 1979        | 1980        | 1981        | 1982        |                        |
| 1 – high   | 2<br>(5%)        | 5                    | 4           | 11          | 5           | 5           | 30<br>(20%)            |
| 2 – middle | 14<br>(34%)      | 3                    | 10          | 4           | 7           | 15          | 39<br>(26%)            |
| 3 – low    | 25<br>(61%)      | 8                    | 17          | 23          | 9           | 24          | 81<br>(54%)            |
| Total      | 41<br>(100%)     | 16<br>(11%)          | 31<br>(21%) | 38<br>(25%) | 21<br>(14%) | 44<br>(29%) | 150<br>(100%)          |

for the most prestigious prize s/he awarded in the years up to 1982. This I regard as the limit of their possibilities until that moment. Subsequently, I have determined the last membership in which they reached this limit and if this happened to fall in the period 1978–1982, I selected the membership as a case for analyses. I have chosen this period of five years in order to concentrate the cases in time as much as possible.

As I have argued before, the prestige of a literary prize as well as the authority of an expert are to be regarded as fixed only in a limited time span. Table 1 shows the number of literary prizes and judges in the period 1978–1982, according to the prestige and authority they are presumed to enjoy. For the sake of clarity: a status consists of a set of prizes which are deemed to have a similar prestige, together with the judges who awarded these prizes in the period 1978–1982 and who had never awarded a more prestigious prize before.

#### **4. The literary activities of the judges**

In the section dealing with the outline of the problem, the following literary activities have been marked as relevant: (1) writing or translating literary texts, (2) practising literary criticism, (3) performing administrative tasks concerning literary affairs, and, finally, (4) professions in literary institutions, such as academic institutes for the study of literature, publishing firms, libraries and the field of education. The prestige of the setting and the duration of these activities must be taken into account.

By means of two literary lexicons and the national bibliography, the body of literary works written by each judge was registered. This served to trace the year of his/her debut, the number of literary books originally written in Dutch and the number of these books published by the four biggest and most important literary publishing houses and the part published by less important firms. The former are considered to be a prestigious setting, whereas the latter are considered to be less prestigious. Also, the number of genres represented in a judge's body of works is determined. Of course, I only counted the publications up to and including the jury membership that was selected for the analyses. The literary age of a judge is calculated as the number of years that have passed since the judge's debut as a literary author.

The practise of literary criticism by judges was assessed by means of a computer file containing all reviews in Dutch papers and weeklies between 1975 and 1980. This implies that I do not know the totality of critical activities and that the critical activities do not link up exactly in time with the jury membership included in the analyses. What I do know is whether the judge is practising literary criticism during a part of and just before the period under investigation; in addition, I know the number of reviews written in that period and the newspapers and weeklies the reviews were published in. The national



newspapers and weeklies which pay a lot of attention to literature are attributed a higher prestige than the rest of the periodicals.

The administrative activities have been taken stock of by means of the annual reports of the organizations which concern themselves with literature. The boards and committees which deal with Dutch literature in general received a high prestige, whereas the boards applying themselves to the literature produced in a specific city or region are considered to be less prestigious. However, this distinction turned out to be irrelevant, because judges with activities in regional boards and committees are hardly found. The profession of each judge is assessed by means of various sources, including the two literary lexicons mentioned before. The following categories were distinguished: full-time literary authors and translators, critics, journalists, staff members of departments of literature (at universities or at institutes for higher vocational education), staff members of other (related) university departments, public servants in the field of literature, professions related to theatres and other cultural professions such as librarians, teachers, publishers. A person's experience in previous juries is also taken into account, and measured by the number of previous juries sat on and of prizes awarded previously. Finally, I have assessed whether a judge was a member of juries in various regions. This variable indicates whether the judge's expertise had a national or regional character.

## 5. The analyses

The analyses have to show (1) to which degree the status attained in the system of literary prizes, that is the membership of one of the statuses described in table 1, can be predicted by means of the literary activities of the judges, and (2) which (combinations of) literary activities have the largest predictive power. The method chosen is called *discriminant-analysis*. Discriminant-analysis is a multi-variate technique to assess the correlation between a set of independent variables and a dependent variable which is a dichotomy or a multichotomy. Usually, the group that people belong to is the dependent variable and a number of characteristics of these people are used to predict this variable. Discriminant-analysis produces one or more weighted and uncorrelated linear combinations of independent variables, which predict the group-memberships as accurately as possible. These linear combinations are called *discriminant-functions*. The statistical significance of the group-differences on the discriminant-functions can be tested, showing whether the group-differences are to be attributed to chance. The structure-coefficients, that is the standardized weights incorporated in the discriminant-functions, show the importance of the various variables in the prediction of the group-membership: their 'discriminatory power'.

This is what we might call the analytical phase in a discriminant-analysis. There is also the matter of application. If the group-differences are statistically significant, the actual classificatory power of the discriminant-functions can be investigated. To what degree do the literary activities predict the status attained in the system of literary prizes accurately? The discriminant-functions allow for the classification of individual cases. For each case, the chance of

Table 2  
Results of the discriminant-analysis.

| Number of cases  | 75   |                   |                   |
|--|------|-------------------|-------------------|
|  |      | <i>function 1</i> | <i>function 2</i> |
| Canonical correlation  |      | 0.69              | 0.45              |
| Significance   |      | $p < 0.001$       | $p < 0.09$        |
| Structure-coefficients: <sup>a</sup>                             |      |                   |                   |
| literary age (ln)  | (1)  | 0.50              | 0.15              |
| number of genres practised                                       |      | 0.45              | 0.02              |
| staff member literature department (Y/N)                         | (7)  | 0.43              | 0.05              |
| number of books (small publishers) (ln)                          |      | 0.40              | 0.13              |
| number of memberships in literary boards and committees (ln)     | (4)  | 0.37              | -0.36             |
| number of reviews in prominent newspapers and weeklies (ln)      | (2)  | 0.35              | -0.26             |
| regional limitation of juries                                    | (3)  | -0.33             | 0.32              |
| number of books (big publishers) (ln)                            |      | 0.24              | -0.14             |
| number of reviews in less important newspapers and weeklies (ln) |      | 0.25              | -0.17             |
| number of previously awarded prizes (ln)                         |      | 0.23              | -0.16             |
| journalist (Y/N)   | (6)  | -0.20             | 0.03              |
| number of previous juries (ln)                                   | (10) | 0.16              | -0.06             |
| staff member of non-literary departments at universities         | (8)  | 0.13              | 0.51              |
| full-time literary author  | (5)  | 0.10              | -0.18             |
| other cultural professions                                       | (9)  | 0.04              | 0.38              |
| Group-means on the discriminant-functions:                       |      |                   |                   |
| status 1: high   |      | 1.35              | -0.67             |
| status 2: middle   |      | 0.66              | 0.73              |
| status 3: low  |      | -0.84             | -0.12             |
|  |      | <i>analysis</i>   | <i>hold-out</i>   |
| Classification with function 1:                                  |      |                   |                   |
| number of cases  |      | 75                | 75                |
| a priori correct <sup>b</sup>                                    |      | 0.53              | 0.53              |
| fraction predicted correctly                                     |      | 0.69              | 0.69              |
| index of predictive association (Lambda)                         |      | 0.34              | 0.34              |
| Classification with functions 1 and 2:                           |      |                   |                   |
| a priori correct <sup>b</sup>                                    |      | 0.53              | 0.53              |
| fraction predicted correctly                                     |      | 0.72              | 0.57              |
| index of predictive associaton (Lambda)                          |      | 0.40              | 0.09              |

<sup>a</sup> The bracketed numbers following the names of the variables show the order of inclusion in the analysis. The variables without a number were not used because they provided too little extra information.

<sup>b</sup> Given the actual distribution over the statuses.

belonging to one of the groups is computed, and the most probable group is selected. A comparison of the predicted group and the actual group for all cases gives the hit-rate of the discriminant-functions. The difference between this hit-rate and the best prediction to be made without prior knowledge of any of the judges' characteristics, gives the predictive power of the discriminant-functions. Here it is measured with Lambda, the index of predictive association.

However, if the data used to derive the discriminant model were also to be used to assess the predictive power of this model, the results would be biased. The model is derived in such a way that it yields an optimum prediction for the data used. Therefore, the model should be applied to new data, in order to test its reliability. To this end, the judges are divided at random into groups of equal size and equally distributed over the three statuses. One half of the cases will be used to compute and test the discriminant model, the other will be used to obtain a reliable estimate of its predictive power. Table 2 shows the results of these procedures.

The profession of the judges is changed into a series of dummy variables. Only professions shared by at least 10 out of the 150 judges are included. These are: *journalists*, *staff members of departments of literature*, *non-literary staff members at universities*, *other cultural professions* and *full-time literary authors and translators*. The professions represented incidentally are added to the rest category *profession unknown*. If the distribution of the variables measured at ratio level differed considerably from the normal distribution, the data were transformed by taking the natural logarithm (ln).

## 6. Interpretation of the results

The results show a correlation between the characteristics of judges and the status they attain in the system of literary prizes. This correlation is too strong to be accidental. But what is the nature of the connection? The discriminant-analysis produces two functions; the first function is highly significant, the second is marginally significant. So it is up to the investigator to decide whether to accept the second function or reject it. The classification, meant to determine the reliability of the results, indicates that the contribution of the second function is doubtful. The status attained by the members of the analysis sample is predicted more accurately, but the prediction of the cases in the hold-out sample is disappointing. This function does not contribute to the prediction in a reliable way and therefore I will not interpret it here.

The first discriminant-function ranks the three statuses as I expected: the first status scores highest and the third status scores lowest, witness the group-means of 1.35, 0.66 and  $-0.84$  resp. The more a judge possesses or combines the characteristics specified by the independent variables, the more

prestigious will be the prizes that s/he is allowed to award. The structure-coefficients show that these characteristics, in order of importance, are: a high literary age, practising various literary genres, a job as a literary scholar, a body of literary works published especially by small publishing houses, fulfilling administrative tasks, reviewing in the most important periodicals and, finally, having a considerable experience in other juries without a clear regional bind.

The interpretation of this function is quite easy and straightforward, at least if one takes into consideration the (weak) correlation between literary age and the number of genres practised and the number of books published. These variables can be united under the term *literary seniority*. The longer the period of literary activity, the greater the chance of building up a body of works of some size, including several genres. However, the fact that literary age is a more important factor in predicting the attained status in the system of literary prizes than, for instance, the size and composition of the personal literary 'oeuvre', might indicate that members of the literary field are only qualified to award the most important prizes after a certain time span, regardless of the creative oeuvre they achieved; a generation effect?

Next to literary seniority, some other characteristics of the judges are relevant. These are the (previous) memberships of literary boards and committees and of other juries, the critical activities in the prominent periodicals and the jobs in departments of literature. Here too, clustering is possible. The activities of literary critics as well as the professional activities of literary scholars can be considered as instances of *literary criticism* (cf. Van Rees (1983)). The previous activities in boards and advisory committees as well as previous memberships of juries, show the ability and willingness of an expert to invest time and energy in these kinds of activities. I will call this cluster *administrative experience*, with a broad interpretation of administrative as functioning in an ensemble of experts facing the task to decide on literary matters. In short, the first discriminant-function can be characterized by the catchwords *literary seniority*, *literary criticism* and *administrative experience*.

In the section dealing with the selection of cases to be included in the analyses, I argued that the literary activities of a judge will form a necessary

Table 3

Predicted and actually reached status in the system of literary prizes (number of judges, classified with discriminant-function 1).

| Actual status | Predicted status |        |     |
|---------------|------------------|--------|-----|
|               | High             | Middle | Low |
| High          | 17               | 8      | 5   |
| Middle        | 6                | 15     | 15  |
| Low           | 1                | 9      | 71  |

rather than a sufficient condition for awarding the most important prizes. A judge might not make the most of his/her – supposed – capabilities, but s/he cannot go beyond them. The incorrect predictions only contradict the hypothesis if the predicted status turns out to be below the actual status reached in the system of literary prizes. In those cases the judges lack the characteristics which, according to the results of the analyses, are necessary for being qualified to award the prizes they actually awarded. In table 3, the predicted and actual status attained are cross-tabulated. The diagonal contains the correct predictions. To the left and below the diagonal, the judges who are given too high a classification are enumerated (16 judges in total), on the top right-hand side of the table, the judges who are given too low a classification are given (28 judges in total).

In general the errors in the predictions are small. Only in 6 out of 44 cases the maximum error is made: the highest status is predicted instead of the lowest, or vice versa. In this investigation, it is of no importance to check all individual misclassifications on characteristics or peculiarities of the judges concerned which would qualify them all the same for the status that they actually reached. They are, so to speak, the exceptions proving the statistical rule. However, it would be very interesting to know whether the judges given too high a classification, have indeed been considered as possible candidates for juries of the prizes with the predicted prestige. If this is the case, these judges are not classified incorrectly. In that case the percentage of correct classifications would be no less than 81% (with  $\lambda = 0.60$ ).

Does it suffice to have a high score on one of the characteristics or is it necessary to combine several activities to become judge for the most important prizes? This question cannot be answered in an unequivocal way, at least not with the results obtained. The status reached in the system of literary prizes can be predicted correctly for a majority of the cases with one variable only, viz. the literary age of the judge. Only for a minority of the cases is a combination of activities needed to predict their status correctly. Unfortunately, especially the variable literary seniority seems to stand for a range of activities, witness the (weak) correlation with the structure and size of the literary oeuvre of the judge.

## 7. Conclusion

Do the literary activities of judges relate to the prestige of the prizes they award? Provided that my classification of the literary prizes according to prestige corresponds with a consensus on this matter within the literary field, the question can be answered in the affirmative. There is a statistically significant difference between the categories of judges with respect to their literary activities. With the help of these activities, the achieved status in the

system of literary prizes can be predicted correctly for 69% of the judges. If one may assume that the judges whose classification is too high were potential candidates for the juries predicted, only 19% of the cases would be misclassified. The characteristics of judges which have the highest predictive power are *literary seniority*, centred around the literary age of the judge and his/her own body of literary works, *practising literary criticism* and *administrative experience* in the field of literature. As expected, a judge rating higher on these characteristics is found to be a member of the juries for the (most) important prizes.

A connection between certain literary activities and the achieved status in the system of literary prizes is assessed. In conclusion I will present some remarks on the nature of this connection.

What is actually assessed is the existence of a correspondence or orchestration. In general, but not always, a certain kind of people are recruited in juries for certain kinds of literary prizes. However, it was assumed that the literary activities influence the status reached. That is why these activities are measured over the period before the jury membership to be predicted. It was claimed that the people who empanel juries use the literary activities of a candidate to decide whether or not to recruit him/her. Why would they? I think there are several explanations. First of all, the people empanelling juries might conclude from these activities whether the candidate has the knowledge and abilities that qualify him/her as an expert in the field of literature. Literary activities presumably lead to the acquisition of knowledge and abilities or are a means to show one's knowledge and abilities. However, it is neither clear what components make up the knowledge and abilities connected to literary expertise, nor how they can be gauged from literary activities, nor whether everyone in the literary field subscribes to the same opinion regarding the preceding two points.

The second explanation is that the people empanelling juries use the positions occupied by potential candidates in the literary field to gauge the expertise attributed to the candidate by other members of the literary field. To occupy a position, whether this is a place in the programme of a literary publishing firm or opportunities to publish reviews in newspapers and weeklies, one has to be approved of and selected by the publisher or by the (board of) editors in question. The more positions a person has occupied, the greater the number of gate-keepers and organizations who have judged and valued his/her expertise and the smaller the chance of blundering when recruiting such a person as a judge; this is no more than doing what many others have done before.

There is a third possibility, namely that the relation between literary activities and the memberships of juries is essentially honorific. The offer of a seat on a jury could be just a mark of honour. The more important the literary prize, the more honorific a membership of its jury. A long-term and broad

dedication to literature – seniority and versatility – is recompensed for with memberships of juries, just like decorations are conferred on patriots. The nomination of previous laureates, and the appointment of members of boards and committees *ex officio* seem to be honorific in nature. Maybe these people regard their memberships of juries as an honourable compensation for the ample but disinterested work they have done in the anonymity of literary committees.

In brief, are experts in the field of literature selected on personal knowledge and abilities, thanks to a self-strengthening process of attributing expertise or thanks to a honorific mechanism, peculiar to the literary world? It is obvious that these alternatives do not exclude one another. Nevertheless, each single alternative gives a totally different impression of the way the literary circuits work.

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