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THE CONTINUITY OF THE MIDDLE AGES UNTIL TODAY: LITERARY EVIDENCE FROM THE SIXTEENTH TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. *JOHANNES PAULI'S SCHIMPF UND ERNST* (1522)

Dr. Albrecht Classen

University Distinguished Professor
University of Arizona, USA

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Abstract: *The sixteenth century can be identified as a major turning point or fulcrum in western history and culture, if we think of the Protestant Reformation, the age of global explorations, the development of medicine and science, and the fully established book market predicated on the printed book. Nevertheless, the literary discourse from that time offers numerous examples that confirm the strong continuity of classical and medieval sources, motifs, topics, and concepts. Moreover, when we consider the example of Johannes Pauli's* Schimpf und Ernst *(1522), the notion of 'modernity' or of the clear demarcation line separating the Middle Ages from the age of the Renaissance or the Baroque proves to be much more porous than previously assumed. The poet drew intensively from classical and medieval sources and handed down to posterity a vast treasure trove of narratives of universal appeal and relevance. Judging by* Schimpf und Ernst, *neither the literary world of the medieval past nor of the age of the Reformation really came to an end by ca. 1555 or 1600; instead, we observe a significant transformation process that ultimately connected the pre-modern with the modern narrative tradition.*

Keywords— Continuity of the Middle Ages; reception history; sixteenth-century literature; Johannes Pauli;* Schimpf und Ernst*; jest narratives; vices and virtues; anticlericalism; foolishness; wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Pre-modern scholars have known it already for a long time, but when we confront modern scholars about this phenomenon, we tend to face incredulity, surprise, and even rejection. It often seems like an insult

to suggest that the Middle Ages, apart from its playful re-enactment in the twentieth and twenty-first century through videos, medieval festivals and tournaments, card games, acting, and movies, might have been a highly influential period in terms of literature, the arts, music, and so forth, maybe even in philosophy (Classen, 2022a). Undoubtedly, of course, since the late fifteenth-century, a paradigm shift took place that fundamentally changed the history of mentality, the worldview, science, medicine, technology, architecture, trade, and politics, not to forget religion and music (Classen, ed., 2019; cf. also the contributions to Janowski, ed. 1978; and to Boer, ed., 2013. There is no real disagreement about this observation, even when scholars might put more weight on one aspect over others).

The reality, however, often looked quite differently, especially when we focus more closely on the conditions on the ground, considering, for instance, the history of everyday life, that is, people's personal preferences, concepts, notions, and attitudes. While we can certainly confirm that the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent Church reorganization (Counter-Reformation) had a huge impact on gender relationships (Karant-Nunn, 2022), the educational system, the distribution of knowledge, and art history at large, in many other respects, cultural traditions, literary interests, urban and political structures, economic conditions, and leisure and pleasure activities continued as before throughout the sixteenth and even seventeenth centuries.

Paradigm shifts can happen radically and fast, or they are, which is actually the norm, the result of long-term and profound transformations that allow us to draw, ultimately, demarcation lines between the late Middle Ages and the early modern age. Preaching here to the converted, we can certainly affirm solidly that the past profoundly matters for the present and that the present soon will turn into a new past. Preparing ourselves today for this automatic process already happening all the time by studying the pre-modern past, for instance, could be identified as one of the essential tasks in all of the Humanities (see the thought-provoking and meaningful contributions to Dover, ed., 2023).

Whereas the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottomans and the 'discovery' of America by Columbus in 1492 and of the passage to India by Vasco da Gama (1497–1499) truly initiated a fundamental reorientation in geo-political terms, people's reading interests did not alter significantly until the middle of the seventeenth century when Baroque literature clearly signaled an irreversible transformation in tastes, themes, topics, styles, and genres. But did the value system ever change from classical antiquity to the present time? The invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg ca. 1450 certainly proved to be a huge impact on book production and the book market at large, as scholarship has demonstrated abundantly. At the same time, much of classical and

medieval material was carried over and experienced actually new successes among the various audiences, as perhaps best illustrated by Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine* (in manuscript, first 1456; printed countless times after the early 1470s) (Bertelsmeier-Kierst, 2022) and Herman Bote's (?) *Till Eulenspiegel* (1510/1511; equally successful until today). Particularly the latter work, which consists of a large number of jest narratives about this rogue figure from his earliest childhood to his death, has survived the so-called "Gutenberg Galaxis" and experienced, after many changes and censorship, a popularity that continues until the present. The modern *Eulenspiegel*, however, has become a book for children, so most of the rather problematic stories determined by scatology have been eliminated (Classen, 2022b). Nevertheless, the concept of *Eulenspiegel* continues to exert a deep influence on our contemporary mind because this figure represents transgression, breaking of taboos, critical reflections on the use of human language and on the lack of communication, and a playful engagement with this world determined by fools (for a useful list of modern examples of reception of the *Eulenspiegel* narrative until the present in various media, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Till_Eulenspiegel (last accessed on Aug. 4, 2023).

Only recently, for instance, Daniel Kehlmann published his latest novel, *Tyll* (2017), employing this famous figure for many different narrative strategies and discussions of human life situations. Unfortunately, many conceptual and simply content problems mar this novel; both structurally and thematically there are huge contradictions in the text that mostly leave the original figure of Till Eulenspiegel behind and transform him into a representative, if that's the right word, of postmodernity, though situated in the time period of the Baroque, which in itself is absurd (Meiser and Sikander Singh, ed., 2020; Classen, 2020; Schulte Eickholt and Schwengel, 2021). One of the major formal changes in late medieval literature was the replacement of the verse form for narratives with prose. Boccaccio had already cast his famous *Decameron* (ca. 1350) in prose, and Geoffrey Chaucer included two prose works into his Canterbury Tales. His contemporary Heinrich Kaufringer continued using verse, but later authors and collectors resorted entirely to prose, such as the anonymous editor of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (ca. 1460), Poggio Bracciolini with his *Fascetiae* (ca. 1455–1465), and Marguerite de Navarre with her *Heptaméron* (1558/1559). Similarly, the early modern novel (Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken's *Herpin*, *Loher und Maller*, etc.; Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*; the anonymous *Malagis*; *Fortunatus*, etc.) relied entirely on prose. However, the use of prose style did not mean at all that hence the medieval sources and materials had been

abandoned, as we notice in sixteenth-century literature across Europe, such as in the case of famous Gian Francesco Straparola's *Le Piecevoli Notti* (Classen, 2022c).

JOHANNES PAULI AS A RECORDER AND TRANSMITTER OF MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SOURCES FOR MODERNITY

The present study intends to pick up the epistemological baton and examine more in detail the implications of the reception history of classical and medieval literary material by the Franciscan preacher and author, Johannes Pauli, when he published his famous and most successful volume of *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522) (Classen, forthcoming, b). Recent scholarship has begun to explore more in detail the huge impact of this work throughout the following centuries, and thus has also acknowledged Pauli's considerable literary significance as a towering figure for much of the huge body of early modern jest narratives determined by humor, social criticism, political concerns, religious antagonism, satire, and sarcasm (Pearsall, 1994; for a succinct introduction, see Uther, 2000; cf. also Mühlherr, 1993), 125–37; for an English-language biography, see, most recently, Classen, 2023a; for a comparative literary analysis, see Classen, 2003; Coxon, 2019; Wagner, 2018; Takahashi, 1994).

If we want to pursue further the question to what extent medieval literary traditions were still alive in the sixteenth century, and hence their popularity also in the following centuries, Pauli's collection serves our purposes exceedingly well. He was a ravenous, attentive, and intelligent collector, drawing from a wide range of sources, both from classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. And through his spiffy rendition of those texts, combined with his moralizing epimythia, Pauli obviously succeeded in communicating very well with his audiences throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and then even further along.

Most of the fundamental bibliographical work concerning the reprints and translations has already been carried out by the editor of Pauli's Schimpf und Ernst, Johannes Bolte, and subsequently by Bodo Gotzkowsky who traced the print history of a large selection of early modern novels, jest narratives, and translations into German (Pauli, 1924/1972; for social-historical comments, see Classen, 2023d; for an excellent bibliography of printings of Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst*, see Gotzkowsky, 1991, 536–61). Using the data collected by both scholars, expanded by my own additional bibliographical research, we will have a most convenient, insightful, and revealing literary platform to re-examine and possible question the highly complex, perhaps somewhat artificial

strategy toward historical periodizations (Classen, 2023c). Modernity, which attempts to build such strong walls against its own medieval roots, will face significant challenges when we examine Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst*.

SERMON NARRATIVES AS SUCCESS STORIES IN THE EARLY MODERN BOOK MARKET

The early modern book market was determined, as is the case still today, by the principles of profit, unless a wealthy patron commissioned a printer to produce a particular book for his or her own consumption, as was commonly the case in the Middle Ages with manuscripts as well (e.g., Book of Hours). The printers tried to appeal to their potential customers by producing many different types of books, both didactic and entertaining texts, both religious titles and heroic epic poems, both jest narratives and early prose novels. However, the printing press was not immediately a great success; instead it took ca. two decades for the technology to mature enough until ca. 1470 to reach a stage at which the publication of printed books began to flood the markets (Neddermeyer, 1998). At the same time, in numerous cities, new schools were established, and in the course of time the general literacy rate increased. This in turn promoted the public interest in books and other printed texts. Both factors thus supported each other, as scholarship has observed already for a long time (Kock and Schlusemann, ed., 1997; McCarthy, 2020; Graheli, ed., 2017; see also Schmitz, 2018).

Pauli had completed his collection of jest narratives around 1519, but it took another three years until the first edition appeared in Strasbourg, printed by Johannes Grüninger. In 1525, Erasmus Johannes Knobloch in Strasbourg published that title again, followed by a rapid increase of ever new print runs, both in Strasbourg and in many other cities in Germany. Johannes Bolte lists, for instance, the years of 1526, 1533, 1534, 1535, 1536, 1537, etc. Other printers picked up this volume and published it as well because its previous success guaranteed a larger interest among the reading audience. Straßburg, Frankfurt, and Basel were the major centers of book printers who appear to have sold large quantities of this title.

Intriguingly, the interest in *Schimpf und Ernst* did not wane by the end of the sixteenth century. New editions appeared in 1602, 1608, 1609, 1612, 1613, 1617, and 1618. However, the Thirty Years' War that started in 1618, probably had a deep impact on all book printing and many other cultural activities in Germany. Pauli's collection hence experienced

its next reproduction not until 1630 and 1654, by then already six years after the Peace Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück in 1648. The demand for *Schimpf und Ernst* then seems to have faded to some extent by the end of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. New editions were printed in 1670, 1677, 1690, and 1771. Throughout the entire period of the Napoleonic wars and its corollary, the Romantic period, many less copies of this work were printed. However, the interest was kindled again subsequently, as documented by new prints from 1822, 1839, 1856, 1866, and so forth.

Numerous other authors drew from Pauli's model and composed their own collections of tales with the same title, *Schimpf und Ernst*, such as Georg Stöhr (1550–1630) with his *Geistlicher Schimpff un[d] Ernst* (Leipzig 1608), Otto Melander (1571–1640) with his *Joco-Seria Das ist Schimpff und Ernst* (1605 and 1617), Johann Rist (1607–1667) with his *Hochzeitlicher Schimpf und Ernst* (1643), or Christian Funke (1626–1695) with his *Schimpff und Ernst. Von Widerwertigkeit des heutigen Freyens / belachet und beweinet* (1653, translated from Danish to German) (all data collected from the online catalog of the VD17, online at: https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=1.28/SET=1/TTL=1/CMD?MATCFILTER=N&MATCSET=N&ACT0=&IKT0=&TRM0=&ACT3=*&IKT3=8183&ACT=SRCHA&IKT=1016&SRT=YOP&ADI_BIB=&TRM=Schimpf+und+Ernst&REC=*&TRM3). However, 'Schimpf und Ernst' turned into a generic formula and was used rather freely without specific references to Pauli's work.

Since the late nineteenth century, Schimpf und Ernst from Pauli's pen was re-published many times, so in 1822, 1839, 1856, 1866, 1876, 1877, 1886 (according to Bolte, ed.), in 1579, 1644 (in Dutch), 1723, 1777, 1880, 1887, 1890, 1893, 1900, 1904, 1911, 1913, 1916, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1949, 1957 (in a collection titled *Minutenspiele*), 1967, 1972, 1994 (in Dutch), 1999, 1999 (in Japanese), 2012, 2014, and 2022 (all according to WorldCat, online; last accessed on Aug. 1, 2023). Bolte also lists a Latin translation from 1568, Dutch translations from 1576 and 1680, two French translations from 1591 and 1596, and Danish translations from 1625, 1677, 1701, 1749, and 1781. These publication dates represent the fullest list currently available, considerably extending the data collated by Bolte and also Gotzkowsky.

Altogether, we can now clearly observe that Schimpf und Ernst was an enormous best- and longseller, although it does not seem to have appealed to English or Italian audiences at all until today. The only major gap appears to have been between 1677 (Strassburg) and 1699 (no location) on the one hand and 1771 (Freystadt) and 1822 (Leipzig). In essence,

however, this collection of tales was constantly available to many different audiences from 1522 until very recently.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHANN PAULI TODAY. REALLY?

Surprisingly, however, at the current time it seems no longer feasible to make *Schimpf und Ernst* available through a new edition or translation into modern German. Moreover, it is unclear why Pauli's work was never published in English or Italian, for instance. It would make perfect sense to have available a selection of his tales either in the original sixteenth-century German or in a modernized version, but my own attempts to convince the popular publisher Philipp Reclam to invest in Pauli again have failed (email from the copy-editor, Wilfried Volmer, July 6, 2023, rejecting my proposal) due to the alleged lack of interest in such a work from the sixteenth century. According to such an opinion, since Schimpf and Ernst would no longer be required reading material for upper-level German students at a Gymnasium, leading up to College, the publisher would not be able to sell sufficient copies. And, at the college level, sixteenth-century literature would not be popular either.

Of course, such an argument amounts to a circular and self-destructive concept, or a self-fulfilling prophecy. If *Schimpf und Ernst* would be offered for sale once again, and this in a reader-friendly format, then educational administrators would possibly acknowledge the great value of Pauli's famous work. Bolte's edition from 1924, republished in 1972, is difficult to read because the print type resembles the Fraktur type from the pre-modern era, so a future project ought to consist either of a translation into English, French, or any other vernacular, or of a republication in modern script, with annotations and glosses to facilitate the understanding of Pauli's text. Since audiences throughout the centuries responded to Schimpf und Ernst in a truly enthusiastic fashion for reasons that will be discussed below, it would be high time to make this literary masterpiece, a major narrative document of the Reformation period, available again.

THE RELEVANCE OF *SCHIMPF UND ERNST* UNTIL TODAY

Apart from a simple cultural-historical perspective, why would *Schimpf und Ernst* matter for us today? What would be its relevance as a literary document from the early sixteenth century? And how could or should we approach it at current times within a teaching context? Several answers come easily to mind.

First, Pauli's work represents a major contribution to early modern German literature, as the enormous and rich reception history demonstrates. It was also warmly welcomed through translations in various other languages. Second, much of the later corpus of jest narratives was deeply influenced by Pauli's collection, whether we think of Hans Sachs, Georg Wickram, Hans-Wilhelm Kirchhof, or Wilhelm Frey. Third, this bestseller closely mirrors the literary tastes of the Reformation age, although it was written by a Franciscan preacher. Studying Pauli's comments about many different types of ecclesiastics, for instance, allows us to understand how a representative of the Catholic Church viewed the conditions in monasteries, at parish churches, at bishop seats, and even at the Holy See. The author constantly frames his moral instructions with facetious comments and thus endeavors to draw the listeners to his side.

The pervasive laughter in the entire collection sheds light on the social conditions on the ground, both within the urban and in the rural space; and the narrator takes us also to monasteries, the courts of princes, legal courts, families, taverns, dance floors, and ordinary parish life. After all, Pauli regularly reflects on his own experiences as a preacher, priest, and confessor, and so he mirrors through his stories ordinary people's concerns, worries, aspirations, wrong-doings, fears, and other emotions. This means, particularly for the historian, if we want to examine daily life in early-modern Germany, then Schimpf und Ernst promises us a rich harvest (Borst, 1973; reprinted numerous times; Esch, 2014; Schmitz-Esser, 2023). If we want to examine what the common perception of the early modern legal system might have been like, we would find plenty of evidence here (for a variety of interpretive approaches to Pauli's work, following different perspectives than those that I pursue here, see Plotke, 2017; Coxon, 2019; Wagner, 2018; Takahashi, 1994).

As was typical of his age, on the surface Pauli was hardly an original author, and he openly admitted many times that he had drawn from a wide range of classical-antique and medieval sources (Bolte, ed., 1924/1972, vol. 2, 243–54, for a list of the major sources used here, and 255–406, for commentary and notes regarding the sources and the use of Pauli's respective text in later literary works). He transformed countless examples (exempla) into brief, didactic tales, peppered with much humor and serious instructions. This facilitates a close examination of what Roman, Greek, and medieval literature was known to a learned author in the early sixteenth century (Classen, 2003). And since numerous writers and publishers subsequently engaged with his work and made it available throughout the following centuries, we can recognize in *Schimpf und Ernst* an extraordinary literary proof that the so-called paradigm shift leading the late Middle Ages over into the early modern age was undermined by this vast store of traditional motifs, themes, topics, and narrative

matters. Future research will have to examine more in detail how an eighteenth-century reprint of Pauli's collection, for instance, reflected this continuous interest in by then very old literary material. We would need to question why ever-new audiences requested copies of this work and what they discovered in it. It's amazing popularity, however, can be confirmed as a fact, as if its cultural context and the ideas and values expressed in it easily transcended all historical barriers.

TIMELESS ISSUES ADDRESSED BY PAULI

If a literary work manages to address audiences throughout the centuries, we ought to examine carefully what the reasons for this phenomenon might be. Even though we might no longer want to subscribe to the idea of the literary canon, there is no doubt that those works that have traditionally been identified as canonical and have thus become the standard reading material in schools and universities across the world simply offer more complex, more profound, and more meaningful messages than run-of-the-mill narratives or poems. If we take, for instance, the Ancient Greek *Iliad* and *Ulysses* by Homer the Old English *Beowulf*, or Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, or Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*, we easily recognize that the issues raised there and the messages formulated by those poets address universal and timeless concerns, whether the relationship between an individual and a monster, or whether the tensions between the genders. The struggle against death, as in Johann von Tepl's *The Plowman*, or the engagement of a male human being with a female fairy, or hybrid creature, as in Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*, have always fascinated and intrigued the respective audiences. A good analogy might also be the huge corpus of fairy tales that mostly go back to the Middle Ages and continue to appeal to young readers until today who live in a post-modern reality and yet thoroughly enjoy the fantasy presented here and are thereby exposed to essential didactic teachings (McGlathery, 1993; Albrecht Classen, 2021) – not even considering the profound ethical, religious, and theological messages contained in those texts from all over the world.

Examining *Schimpf und Ernst*, we can immediately recognize an intriguing combination of generalities and specifics in those tales. Irrespective of their origin (classical or medieval), these 'exampla' or jest narratives address universal concerns people have faced throughout time. Pauli appears to have found the right tone and imagery to come to terms with them in such a way that many future audiences responded with enthusiasm to his tales. The first section, for instance, treats the problem with truth which people no longer want to listen to. The

cases presented here illustrate that those who tell the truth are disliked or even hated by others. Of course, in some cases, it would seem better not to hurt others' feelings and keep quiet, but many times, the narrator brings to our attention the fact that illusions and lies are much more preferred than honest remarks and comments.

In the second section, we hear about various virtuous virgins or nuns who know how to preserve their chastity. And the narrator also provides stories in which foolish women are exposed by authority figures. Each tale has to be examined by itself and cannot be categorized simply according to the section title. Pauli does not pursue a stringent strategy, mixing and combining hilarious with serious accounts, pursuing a variety of perspectives, offering advice, admonishments, and entertainment. Of course, as a preacher he was primarily concerned with teaching his audience moral and ethical lessons, but he tends to reveal his global interest in human affairs at large which he regarded with humility, humbleness, kindness, and a strong sense of humor. Undoubtedly, this kaleidoscopic approach made it possible for him to integrate a huge number of different tales with very different themes, so *Schimpf und Ernst* in a way offers literary delight and moral instruction at the same time, a key component for the long-term reception of this work until today.

Other topics covered here are, for instance, the relationship between parents and children (III), fools and foolish behavior (IV), ignoramuses (IX), horse traders (X), marriage at large (XII), adultery (XVIII), arrogance (XV), usury (XVII), drunkenness (XXI), wrath (XXIII), laziness (XXIV), medical doctors (XXXVIII), inn-keepers (XLII), gamblers (XLIII), dancing and music (XLV), prostitutes (L), painters (LI), friendship (LIII), dogs (LIV), patience (LXI), deception and cheating (LXIV), military strategies and war planning (LXXVIII), celebrating Christmas (LXXXIV), gratitude (LXXXIX), and warfare (XC). In addition, Pauli addressed many issues relevant for a good Christian life. Altogether, we can thus recognize in Schimpf und Ernst a significant, voluminous source for the study of early modern everyday life and mentality (Classen, 2023b; Classen, 2023d; Classen,2023e).

Very similar to the contemporary collection of hilarious tales about *Till Eulenspiegel* (first printed in 1510/1511), Pauli spends much time on relating tales about foolish people. There are countless situations in which individuals behave, as he observes, in a stupid fashion and deserve to be blamed for their own suffering. Although the social-historical context corresponds with the conditions during the early sixteenth century, the messages contained in Pauli's stories prove to be of timeless value. Inviting us to laugh about some people and their ridiculous thinking,

words, or actions, he creates a narrative medium for many different audiences throughout the subsequent centuries, if not until today, to recognize human shortcomings and failures.

In his "Schimpf" no. 25, for instance, a peasant has problems with his garden because a hare is causing him much harm. To get rid of that animal, he requests a nobleman's help who arrives on horseback and with five or six dogs. With all force, they hunt the hare, but fail to catch it. At the same time, however, they cause more damage to the garden than the hare ever would do within ten years (22–23). This almost comic situation serves the author to mock many people who are envious and never let go of their hostile feelings toward others. They feel insulted or hurt and want to seek their revenge, when that is ultimately up to God. The more they pursue that hatred and revenge, the more they hurt themselves. Even though they are then not punished by a worldly judge, they would never escape God's judgment (Psalm 17). Significantly, the author includes a proverb: "grebt einer eim ein Grub, und felt er selber daryn" (23; when one digs a trap hole for the other person, he then falls into it himself; cf. also tale no. 494).

This proverb is still in use in contemporary German and continues to address a fundamental issue in human life concerning the evil nature of avenging a perceived wrong committed by another person. It would even be possible to make a huge jump from here to the famous poem, "Die Füße im Feuer" (Feet in the Fire) by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1882) (for the text and its audio performance, see https://www.deutschelyrik.de/die-fuesse-im-feuer.html (last accessed on Aug. 3, 2023). There are many interpretations of this famous ballad; see, for instance, Pailer, 2009). where the issue of revenge assumes central importance because a Huguenot Count, who would have the opportunity to avenge the murder of his wife, controls himself and refrains from this awful act, citing the same biblical line, although it is really Romans 12:19–21. It might be impossible to determine whether Meyer had read Pauli's work, but the parallels between both texts are striking. Nothing would stand in the way today to appreciate the sixteenth-century 'exemplum' once again since it formulates effectively the fundamental problem at stake here. However, the entire text actually consists of three thematic strings, the first contained in the actual narrative, the second captured by the initial commentary regarding envious people, and the third formulated in the proverb and its corollary predicated on the proverb. This combination might be identified as overly ambitious and a narrative weakness, and yet, the outcome proves to be a highly instructive narrative exposing several human shortcomings at once, all of which are of high relevance in our modern world as well. Each point

raised here would deserve an extensive discussion but suffice it here to acknowledge that Pauli succeeded in the shortest possible space to address critically important issues at once.

Many times, the example provided seems to be just a facetious case without any deeper meaning, but at a closer analysis, which is actually quite typical of the entire genre of jest narratives, we recognize fundamental concerns, warnings, criticism, and commentary about human (mis)behavior. This is brilliantly illustrated in the "Schimpf" no 33 where a father passes away leaving behind only one son, who demonstrates a certain streak of foolishness. After the funeral, the guests approach the young man to express their sorrow for him, which continues to be the custom also today. The protagonist, however, does not understand proper communication and exposes his foolishness. In response to their kind words, he responds that he would wish that their father would also die (soon) so that he could mourn with them in the same fashion. If he had kept quiet, people would have regarded him with respect, but due to his silly words he revealed his true nature.

Of course, Pauli indirectly relied on the Latin proverb, "si tacuisses, philosophus manuisses," if you had kept quiet, you would have remained [to be regarded as] a philosopher – commonly attributed to the *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius (ca. 524), though that treatise does not contain those precise words (the phrase is often discussed online, but there are no solid scholarly comments, maybe because it was used so often throughout time both for political and philosophical reasons, and also for the practice of the Latin Subjunctive Past Perfect). More important proves to be Pauli's commentary since he strongly admonishes people to guard their mouths and not to speak idly because this could easily hurt others and cause much harm. Further, he offers the fundamental insight, "Wan bei seiner Zungen wuert einer erkent, uß welchem Land er ist und was er fuer ein Mensch ist" (27; People recognize from what country a person originates from and what kind of person s/he is).

In a number of tales, Pauli addresses problems at legal courts, complaining about corrupt judges and lawyers. It is not clear to us what role he himself might have played in that world, or what personal knowledge he might have had, but he addresses very specific concerns, such as in tale no. 122 where a man, who has a good friend, is appointed as a judge. When the friend then appears and asks him for help because his own case at court does not seem to be convincing, the judge evokes God and rejects this request resolutely. The friend then protests, wondering aloud what good then their friendship would be for him. But the judge retorts, cutting him off entirely, that this friendship would be good for nothing if he were therefore to lose God's grace (84).

However, as we learn in the following tale, when a nobleman questions two learned men at his court whether he as the lord over several villages could not only claim taxes, but also full ownership of the lands and other properties. He promises the one of the two 'wise' men a valuable horse as reward for the best answer in that case. The first one rejects his proposition as invalid, whereas the other one approves his claim, and thus receives the horse – a clear case of corruption (84). The most moving story, however, proves to be "Ernst" no. 129 where a judge is characterized as most honorable and God-fearing. When he falls ill one day and has to stay in bed, he overhears a young woman outside of his room screaming. The servant, whom he asks about the reason for this screaming, tells him that his nephew had some 'fun' with her, "hat mit ihr schimpfft" (87), which entails a sinister meaning, although the verb 'schimpfen' implies only a form of 'game' or 'fun.' The judge immediately realizes what has really happened, and secures a breadknife, hiding it under his pillow.

A few days later, his nephew comes by, and the old judge calls him in, asking him to give him a hug. In that moment, he pulls out the knife and kills him from the back. Then he orders the body to be buried; there are no further consequences. But the judge's health gets worse, and he is approaching death, so he calls in a priest to receive the last sacrament. First, he has to give a full confession in preparation for his absolution. However, he does not even mention the 'murder,' although the priest knows about him and reproaches him for this 'evil' deed. The judge rejects that charge and insists that his deed was not driven by any evil intentions; in fact, he had loved that young man the most. Instead, he insists, "ich hab es in Straffs Weiß gethon" (87; I did it as a punishment). The priest does not accept this explanation and thus refuses to grant him the sacrament. But when he is about to leave, the judge calls him back, opens his mouth and shows him that the sacrament, or the host, had been magically placed on his tongue, apparently by God. For Pauli, the story indicates that God "in gerechten Richtern ein Wolgefallen hat und sie lieb hat" (87; is pleased with just judges and likes them) (Bolte, ed., 1924/1972, 292 refers to several possible sources for this story, such as a sermon by Geiler von Kaysersberg (Evangelia, 167, Bl c. 42, 2), and Caesarius of Heisterbach (*Dialogus miraculorum*, 9,38). To explain the situation, this nephew's 'joking' was nothing but rape, and the judge realized that he had to execute his own relative to carry out justice.

As radical and maybe brutal this story might be according to our modern legal concepts, it proves to be a literary masterpiece in its dramatic development and surprising turn of events determined by a divine miracle. It could be argued that the old judge

operated too violently, but he simply upheld the laws and thus received the highest accolades from God. For modern readers, the development of this legal case might appear as rather extreme, but in essence, Pauli highlighted the extreme value of justice both then and throughout time. There would be no doubt as to the validity of this notion, also for us today, at least in principle. The cultural background of this story is not period-specific, which facilitated considerably the long-term reception process.

Topics such as those that address usury as a sin (section XVII) can easily be understood also today, even though banking for interest is now a very normal business model. It deserves to be noted that Pauli does not associate Jews with usury and instead identifies Christians only as active in that profession (Cluse, 1999; Dorninger, 2010; Berliner, 2015; Trivellato, 2019; Classen, 2022e). His attitude toward usury is completely negative and does not need to be explored further. Much more universal proves to be Pauli's concern about human communication, as much as he seems to formulate misogynist attitudes, such as in his tale no. 470, which addresses the issue of patience. A man marries a cantankerous woman after she has had already three other husbands. Of course, she continues bickering with him, but he simply remains quiet and does not provide her with a forum for further hostile exchanges. His silence ultimately defies all her efforts to provoke him and thus to give her more opportunities to yell at him.

As the narrator emphasizes, this silence finally changes her mind-set, transforming her into a good woman (276). Pauli drew this story from Francesco Petrarch, as he mentions himself at the end, commenting that he who would ignore his wife's anger and laugh about it would cause her more pain than physical violence. Of course, here we recognize a clear case of domestic violence, committed either by him against the wife or by her against the husband. But the essential message pertains to human communication in the private sphere. According to this tale, giving tit for tat in marriage, for instance, would only worsen the conditions and yield nothing. Instead, patience, the key word for this entire section (LXI), would overcome most personal conflicts.

Truly fascinating proves to be the tale no. 476 where the mayor of Strassburg strolls through the streets, accompanied by several guards. When they encounter a "Schalk" (fool, or rather entertainer), the mayor reprimands him for insulting him with his presence. The other man takes off his hat and thanks the mayor for his virtuous character and kindness always to engage with him in jest. The narrative operates with the double meaning of "Schalk," either meaning 'criminal' or 'fool/entertainer': "Er zohe das Wort Schalck in ein Schimpff" (178; He interpreted the world "Schalk" as 'joke'). If he had demonstrated impatience and anger, the mayor would

have ordered his guards to take him prisoner and punish him for his disrespect. As Pauli then concludes, which obviously rang throughout the centuries, a wise person would translate an injustice into a joke, and with the help of that patience he would do well. Fundamentally, the author reminds us of the central importance of laughter and humor in human interactions, especially when paired with patience.

The fool of this story fully understood the vast power differential to the mayor, but by resorting to this linguistic and performative joke he actually gained the upper hand (Classen, 2007; see also the contributions to Classen, ed., 2010; Velten, 2017; Classen, 2022d). In tale no. 478, a man fights with a philosopher, yelling at him loudly, while the other keeps quiet. Subsequently, however, the philosopher says that the opponent is obviously a master of the mouth since he can shout out whatever he wants. He himself, by contrast, is a master of the ears and listens to whatever he wants (278). Again, the virtue of patience finds vivid expression, an insight which Pauli had learned from Petrarch, as he indicates at the end.

We can regularly count on huge surprises in Pauli's large collection regarding cultural-historical perspectives, which is also the case with tale no. 480 in which the narrator situates his account both back in Europe and also in the world of the Mongols, which finds no real parallel in European literature, unless we refer to Marco Polo's *Travels* (ca. 1300). A happily married man is constantly reminded by his wife that everything that happens actually follows God's will and would thus have to be regarded as good. One day, the man suffers from an accident in the woods and loses one of his eyes. His wife consoles him with the same idea, referring to God's intractable intentions, which seems incomprehensible to him. Subsequently, this man transfers to the Tartars (Mongols), joins the royal court, and rises to being the ruler's closest advisor. The narrator then informs the readers/listeners about a custom there that a deceased king would always be buried together with his most favored person so that he would not appear alone before God. Next, we hear that this Mongol king dies, and the one-eyed man is supposed to be killed so that he would accompany the ruler on his journey to God.

However, he comes up with a brilliant excuse, pointing out that it would be shameful for the king to appear before God if he had next to him a man with only one eye: "Also ret er sich ab" (279; Thus, he talked his way out). Only then does he fully understand his wife's words because otherwise he would have been buried alive. Her words thus prove to be completely valid, and we are left with the idea that a man ought to listen carefully to his wife, especially when she displays patience and wisdom at the same time.

In tale no. 487, a Christian and a non-Christian [sic] debate with each other regarding religious matters. The specifics are not mentioned here, but at the end the non-Christian wonders why there are so many more lame, blind people, lepers and beggars in the Christian world than outside. The opponent cannot answer this question, but then has to learn from the non-Christian that they altogether badly treat their God with false oaths, curses, and cusses, and this much more than the non-Christians and the Turks [Muslims] (282).

Apart from false testimony, Pauli was also deeply concerned with the problem of perjury, as the "Schimpf" no. 489 illustrates. A rich burger and his servant wager over the issue whether truth and justice still govern this world, or whether falsity and disloyalty have gained the upper hand. The burger offers 100 ducats in case he would lose, whereas the servant must pledge both of his eyes if he were found to be wrong. They choose three judges, a merchant, an abbot, and a nobleman. Unfortunately for the servant, all three confirm that they have gained their position and wealth by means of deception, lying, robbing, and bribing. The merchant admits that all of his dealings are predicated on gaining excessive profit, instead of buying and selling at fair prices. The abbot confesses that he would not hold his post if he would not have bribed the canons through begging and money to vote for him. According to his opinion, "Falscheit und Ungerechtikeit regiert jetz uff Erden" (283; Deception and injustice now rule here on earth). Finally, the nobleman openly states that he would gain his income mostly through robbing others of their property; otherwise, he would suffer from poverty.

Pauli also resorted to the genre of fables to illustrate his central concerns, such as lying and deception. In story no. 493, a fox one day rests in the sun and keeps one eye closed, pretending that a thorn had hurt it. To get relief, the fox requests a rooster to pull it out with its beak, but the rooster is too smart and stays away, not willing to let the fox devour it. In response, the fox goes to the court and complains to the lion (king) that the rooster had destroyed one of his eyes. In defense, the rooster encourages them to check whether the fox kept that eye closed out of deception or because of a wound. They quickly learn the truth and then punish the fox by gouging out both of its eyes (286). Of course, due to the genre tradition, here we face animals talking to each other, but the meaning pertains, of course, to people and their moral shortcomings.

Although, or just because Pauli lived in the early sixteenth century, he was a strong social critic and warned the princes to abstain from abusing their subjects by imposing too many and too high taxes. Behind the metaphorical narrative no. 408, we

recognize a severe commentary about tyrants and dictators. When the sun brings forth another sun, all creatures jubilated, except for the earth because one sun already would burn it up. How worse would it then be if two suns existed at the same time. Pauli then offers his commentary that a prince would already cause extensive harm to his subjects through enforced labor, taxes, extra fees, and tolls. Once the prince would have children, "was wuert er dan thuon!" (288; what might he then do?). Inspired by Petrarch, as he remarks himself, that case would then have to be read in analogy to a situation in which many birds of prey would fly in the sky or when many wolves would arrive. Then, both the pigeons and the sheep would not be happy. The further a lord would stay away from his people, the better those would be off.

Ironically, Pauli also targeted his own fellow monks and friars in the tale no. 499. In this case, three princes meet at an imperial diet and facetiously compete against each other as to who would have the most amazing things in his territory. The duke of Bavaria refers to a beautiful bridge, another duke (not identified) brags about his stunning castle, and the duke of Saxony refers to the most incredible monasteries in his city of Leipzig. The Dominicans would sell grain all year around without owning any fields; the Franciscans would erect constantly new buildings and yet would not have any money. Most impressively, however, the Augustinians would wear white habits, would rule over all parishes in the city, and would produce many children without being married. This account, a direct hit against the pretentiousness of all monastic Orders, makes them all laugh, and they praise him as the winner.

Pauli proves to be a sharp critic, not sparing even other members of the clergy. Wherever he observes abuse, he offers biting, mocking comments, sometimes in a facetious way, sometimes very seriously. At the same time, he was self-critical and warned his audience about the danger of evil habits and the power of one's own will. In the tale no. 523, for instance, a stork has accidentally picked out the eye of another stork with its beak and wants to leave the country out of embarrassment. When it encounters another stork and reveals its intention, it is told to stay because it might cause the same damage at another place unless it would leave behind its beak (301). The narrator then translates the symbolism, equating the beak with the own will or the evil habit one might have. Wherever people might go, they would not be able to flee from themselves and their bad behavior. The lack of self-control would always stay with them: "Darumb so thuon wir unß selbs grosen Schaden" (301; For that reason, we cause great harm to ourselves).

One final example from the 1522 edition might suffice to underscore the argument developed here. In his "Schimpf" no. 527, the author references an

event in the life of the Carthage general Hannibal who managed to deceive people by pretending to hoard a large amount of gold in the temple. Since they assume that he would stay and guard that wealth, he manages to escape stealthily (303). The meaning, however, comes through in the subsequent epimythium where the narrator warns the audience about the dangers of money, gold, and greed as dangerous barriers on the way toward the afterlife. Worry and concerns about how to acquire wealth would detract people from the only true goals in life, the eternal and the spiritual.

TRANS-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES
ALSO A CONCLUSION

Neither here nor elsewhere does the historical or material context matter critically as long as it lends itself for a deeper analysis of human misbehavior, shortcomings, foolishness, vices, or ignorance. At the same time, Pauli always endeavors to couch his comments in a comic context because laughter facilitates the teaching of morality and ethics. *Schimpf und Ernst* proved to be fertile literary ground, as subsequent editions expanded the collection of tales with new narratives, which sometimes change the tone, the themes, the topics, and the character of the humorous comments (Bolte, ed., 1924/1972, vol. 2, *7–*9, and for the additional texts in the later editions, 3–130; we can rely on his valuable references for all tales in Pauli's collection). The historical setting of this work never seems to have had any impact on future editions because, as we have seen, the universal messages remained their value for people throughout time.

Undoubtedly, by ca. 1500, we can no longer speak of the Middle Ages at large; the early modern age had fully replaced the previous culture at least in technical, scientific, religious, economic, and political terms. However, as the example of Pauli's Schimpf und Ernst illustrates, true ideals or morals never lose their value. Pauli himself transcended any literary limitations and drew from ancient and medieval, and then also Renaissance sources at liberty. In this highly creative and productive amalgamation process, he translated countless themes into his own time and made them available once again to his own and future audiences. We could thus argue that any literary text that addresses major issues in human life carries enormous potentials for the future. Today, in the age of post-modernity, this might appear as a surprising phenomenon, but contemporary literature continues to be deeply influenced by medieval and early modern literature. The astounding reception

process of Pauli's famous work demonstrates that our notions of narrow or specific epochal categories really need to be questioned.

Of course, there are a number of barriers to these tales today. Pauli's language is not always easy to understand for a modern German reader because of many dialect elements and historical-linguistic features. What matters for us, however, consists of the long life of Schimpf und Ernst until the late nineteenth, and to some extent also the twentieth century, apparently because the author and his successors managed to address human concerns of timeless relevance. Moreover, through his efforts, he preserved numerous medieval narrative traditions and thus created a fascinating bridge connecting the pre-modern world with our own (for a parallel study based on different material, with significantly similar results, see Classen 2022c). The vast history of global storytellers radically undermines our common notions of separate cultural entities such as Latin Europe, Arabic Middle East, or Chinese Far East, and of clearly distinguishable historical periods. Of course, in the history of the arts and architecture, of science and explorations, and certainly of religion and languages, paradigm shifts occurred at major intervals, but the situation in the history of literature proves to be considerably different because of the continuous cross-fertilizations connecting older sources with modern texts, Eastern and Western genres (fables, e.g.,), and the ever-growing network of entertaining and didactic narratives.

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