Georg Wickram's *Rollwagenbüchlein* from 1555

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The First English Translation

Introduced and Translated by
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INTRODUCTION

One of the most successful and influential authors in the history of sixteenth-century German literature was, apart from the Nuremberg poet Hans Sachs (1494–1576), the Alsatian playwright, novelist, and didactic writer, Georg (or Jörg) Wickram (ca. 1505–ca. 1561), best known today, perhaps, for his collection of short jest narratives, or *Schwänke*, his *Rollwagenbüchlein* from 1555, which was reprinted in fourteen new editions before the end of the sixteenth century, and then at least four more times in the seventeenth century (1602, 1607, 1654, and 1665).[1] Some of his novels, such as his *Goldfaden*, have also been acknowledged for their high literary quality. The latter has even been translated into English, and there are several French translations of other works.[2] However, until today, there continues to be a remarkable dearth of relevant studies on Wickram and his contemporaries, and this despite the best efforts by recent scholars focusing on the German Renaissance and Baroque periods.[3]

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[1] Gudrun Bamberger, "Jörg Wickram: ein unerwarteter Erfolg auf dem Literaturmarkt des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Klassiker der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Regina Toepfer with the help of Nadine Lordick. Spolia Berolinensia, 43 (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2022), 293–319.

[2] Georg Wickram, *The Golden Thread*, trans. Pierre Kaufke (1972; Pensacola, FL: University of West Florida Press, 1991). A French translation of Wickram's *Rollwagenbüchlein* appeared in 2012: *Joyeuses histoires à lire en diligence ou Le petit livre du coche*, trans. Catherine Fouquet. Cahiers d'Arfuyen, 199 (Paris: Arfuyen, Impr. CPI Firmin-Dido, 2012). Wickram's *Knabenspiegel* has also been translated into French, *Un roman d'éducation au XVIe siècle: Le Miroir des Jeunes Gens, de Jörg Wickram*, trans. Brigitte Hébert. Cahiers du Centre de Recherches sur la Réforme et la Contre-Réforme, 4 (Clermont-Ferrand: Clermont-Ferrand Université Blaise Pascal, 1994). I have not been able to consult those, however.

[3] See, for instance, the contributions to *Literary Culture in the Holy Roman Empire, 1555–1720*, ed. James A. Parente, Richard E. Schade, and George C. Schoolfield. UNC Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, 113 (1991; Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020). As much as Parente, in his new introduction (2020!), laments the general lack of interest in secular sixteenth-century German literature, he himself ignores Wickram and all his contemporaries involved in the writing of jest narratives. The various authors in this volume deal only with seventeenth-century, i.e., German Baroque literature, that is, mostly drama (with the exception of Anthony Grafton who discusses the scientist Johann Kepler).

The title of this collection (*Rollwagenbüchlein*) indirectly refers to the fact that people traveling by coach have much idle time in their hands, are bored during their long journey, and look for entertainment, which is here provided by a large variety of stories about many different people and situations.[4] 'Rollwagen' means 'coach,' and 'büchlein' means 'little book.' In the late Middle Ages and early modern period, mobility increased tremendously, which had a huge impact on everyday culture, and so also on literature.[5]

Until today, popular songs refer to the traveling coach, called *Kutsche* since the eighteenth century. This is impressively mirrored in the popular song (folk song) "Hoch auf dem gelben Wagen" (High up on the yellow coach) written by Rudolf Baumbach (1840–1905) sometimes in the 1870s (first printed in 1878), to which the Berlin apothecary Heinz Höhne

[4] The tradition of frame narratives predicated on a travel experience has continued well into modern times; see, for instance, famous Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderter*. Those appeared, e.g., under the title *Novellen*. With an epilogue by Katharina Mommsen. Dtv Gesamtausgabe, 20 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1962). Cf. the contributions to *Der Rahmenzyklus in den europäischen Literaturen: Von Boccaccio bis Goethe, von Chaucer bis Gernhardt*, ed. Christoph Kleinschmidt and Uwe Japp. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, Beiheft 91 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2018). Unfortunately, neither Wickram nor any of his contemporaries, who also relied on the genre of frame narratives, were considered there. See my review in *Literaturkritik.de* (Feb. 18, 2019), https://literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=25356, with response and counter-response.

[5] Rosa Salzberg, *The Renaissance on the Road: Mobility, Migration and Cultural Exchange*. Cambridge Elements. Elements in the Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Albrecht Classen, "Mobility in the Middle Ages – Literary Evidence as a Mental Map for Travel Imaginations: A Critical Reconsideration of Modern Myths about the Past," to appear in *Quidditas*; id., "Mobility in the Sixteenth Century: Literary Evidence about Travel and the Discovery of the World," *Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur / Alman Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi*, 52 (2024; appeared in 2025): 1-16; online at: https://doi.org/10.26650/sdsl2024-1487982. As to the travel experiences by the pope and his court during the late Middle Ages, see now Christopher Kast, *Der Papsthof auf Reisen: Die Reisen der römischen Kurie in den Pontifikaten von Martin V. bis Pius II. (1417–1464).* Papsttum im mittelalterlichen Europa, 12 (Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau Verlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2024). He offers much very detailed information about the concrete conditions on the road, in the welcoming cities, the costs of the travel of a group of ca. 1000 people, and about other specific aspects. Wickram, of course, turns his attention to the travel experiences of the ordinary people.

(1892–1968) added the melody in 1922.[6] Concerning the metaphor of life as an unstable entity, we immediately recognize here strong parallels to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (completed briefly before 1400), where the storytellers are on their pilgrimage from London to Canterbury, riding on horseback. Chaucer in turn drew considerable inspiration from Giovanni Boccaccio's famous collection of tales, his *Decameron* (ca. 1350), in which a group of seven women and three men escape from the Black Death, which is raging in Florence at that time (ca. 1347–1348), and they subsequently spend ten days at their country estates to be safe and in a pleasant environment. They decide to tell each other ten stories per day, and after the hundredth story has been presented, they pack up and return home. Heinrich Schlüsselfelder, under the pseudonym Arigo, translated the *Decameron* into German, printed in Ulm by Johann Zainer sometime between 1476 and 1478. In 1490, Anton Sorg in Augsburg published the second and last edition, but that was reprinted at least fourteen times between 1509 and 1593, and then also in the seventeenth century.[7] The global interest in travel throughout time here finds an excellent expression, but we can trace it in world literature throughout time.[8]

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[6] Christian Bormann, "Hoch auf dem gleben Wagen," online at: https://pankowerchronikdotde.wordpress.com/2015/11/21/hoch-gelben-wagen-20788289/ (Nov. 21, 2015; revised by Martina Krüger on March 31, 2016); for an excellent study, see now Tom Borg, "Hoch auf dem gelben Wagen," *Alojado Lieder Archiv*, online at: https://www.lieder-archiv.de/hoch_auf_dem_gelben_ wagen-notenblatt_300175.html (Aug. 14, 2023). There is, however, otherwise hardly any critical literature on this text or song; even the *Historisch-kritisches Liederlexikon* published by the *Deutsches Liederarchiv* in Freiburg i.Br., Germany, now under the new title *Zentrum für Populäre Kultur und Musik*, does not contain an entry on this song (https://www.liederlexikon.de/). The director of the *Zentrum*, Eckhard John, confirmed this to me in an email from August 13, 2024, explaining that the song gained its true popularity only in recent history. As he wrote, the song attracted more attention only after World War II. "Aber selbst in dieser Zeit ist die Spannbreite seiner Rezeptionsformen sehr überschaubar" (But even in that period the spectrum of its forms of reception is very limited).

[7] Luisa Rubini Messerli, *Boccaccio deutsch: die Dekameron-Rezeption in der deutschen Literatur (15.–17. Jahrhundert)*. Chloe: Beihefte zum Daphnis, 45 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012); Elisa Pontini, "Die Überlieferung des Decameron [sic] in Deutschland im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert," *Giovanni Boccaccio: Italienisch-deutscher Kulturtransfer von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur* Gegenwart, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz. Bamberger interdisziplinäre Mittelalterstudien, 9 (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2015), 57–75.

[8] See, for instance, the contributions to *Inseln als literarischer und kultureller Raum: Utopien, Dystopien, Narrative der Reise*, ed. Francisca Roca Arañó, Marisa Siguan, Christina Jurcic, and Georg Pichler (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2023); *Abschied als*

Wickram in his turn deeply influenced the development of the entire genre of *Schwänke* well into the modern age, but he was also a successful author of Shrovetide plays, novels, didactic works, and the editor of a major German translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by Albrecht von Halberstadt from ca. 1220. Even though he lived in the period of the Protestant Reformation (since 1517), his work barely reflects the religious strife of his time or the major role by the intellectual movement of Humanism. Of course, he drew inspiration from the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), and he often ridiculed members of the clergy, closely following the popular anticlericalism common since the thirteenth century – see the highly regarded Middle High German poet Walther von der Vogelweide (fl. ca. 1190–ca. 1220) – especially targeting Catholics, himself being a Protestant. In fact, here we encounter a brilliant, fairly independent, and even innovative author of secular, mostly entertaining and morally uplifting prose narratives whose texts appealed extensively to his contemporary audiences especially in the Alsace and elsewhere in Southwestern Germany. That larger region had experienced a dramatic improvement of its economic and political status, hence also of the cultural and educational conditions since the fifteenth century and hence was very open to new literary endeavors, especially when they provided entertainment for the wealthy urban class. Since Wickram's works were published by many different printers, they also achieved a wider circulation across Germany being sold at all major book fairs.

Georg (or Jörg), Wickram was born in Colmar in Alsace, which is located south of Strasbourg and west of Freiburg i. Br., around 1505 as the illegitimate son of the respected city councilman Conrad Wickram. This social blemish had a deep impact on his life since he was denied an advanced academic education (no Latin) and could not assume any of the major political positions in town. In his early years, however, he studied hard on his own and later worked as a goldsmith, which was, after all, a greatly esteemed profession, and subsequently as a painter, guardsman, and court secretary. In the 1530s, Wickram began publishing literary works, some of which were performed as Shrovetide plays. In 1546, he inherited his father's house in Colmar, which entitled him finally to gain the full status

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literarisches Motiv in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: Festschrift zu Ehren des 75. Geburtstages von Jattie Enklaar, ed. Hans Ester, Barbara Mariacher, and Evelyne Tax. Deutsche Chronik, 62 (Würzburg: Königshausen u. Neumann, 2017); *Reisen in der deutschen Literatur: Realität und Phantasie*, ed. Peter Seibert, Berta Raposo, and Christian Prado-Wohlwend. Medien – Literaturen – Sprachen in Anglistik/Amerikanistik, Germanistik und Romanistik, MeLiS, 26 (Berlin, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2021).

as a citizen the. Late in 1546, he had acquired a *Liederhandschrift* (a manuscript containing vernacular songs; today in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 4997) in Schlettstadt (today: Sélestat, north of Colmar), which allowed him to create a poetry and singing organization for craftsmen ("Meistersinger") the same year. He himself composed some songs and published an anthology of seventy-three songs by other poets, mostly by the famous contemporary Nuremberg cobbler and master singer (craftsman singer) Hans Sachs. Some of his songs are included in his novels such as in *Der Goldtfaden*, and also in a story contained in his *Rollwagenbüchlein* (no. 53). In 1554, he moved to Burkheim am Kaiserstuhl (a famous wine growing region), east of Colmar on the other (right) side of the river Rhine (north of Breisach), assuming the post of the town's clerk, or secretary.[9] In a document from Strasbourg from 1562, he is mentioned as having been deceased (maybe ca. 1560). He appears to have been married, but we know nothing about his wife or children.

Wickram's earliest works were Shrovetide plays, such as *Die Zehen Alter der Welt* (1531; The Ten Ages of the World; anonymous, and basically a rewriting of the same play by the Basel poet Pamphilus Gengenbach from 1515); *Das Narren Gießen* (first performed in 1537 and printed in 1538; The Pouring Out of Fools; in the tradition of Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* from 1494, with all kinds of fools appearing on the stage and illustrating their own foolishness); *Der treue Eckart* (1538; The Loyal Eckart; originally composed in 1532; also based on a text by Gengenbach, but with more personal contributions, consisting of a debate between the heroic figure Eckart and representatives of the various social classes); and the *Weiberlist* (1543; Women's Cunning).

Then, Wickram wrote three dramas on biblical subjects, *Der verlorene Sohn* (performed and printed in 1540; The Prodigal Son; partly based on the respective plays by Georg Binder [1535] and Hans Sachs [1537]), the *Apostelspiel* (1550; A Play of the Apostles, commissioned by a Neuenburg city councilman [southwest of Pforzheim]); *Tobias* (1551); and the *History von einem vngerahtnen Son* (1554; The History of a Prodigal Son [literally: Spoiled Son]). A moralizing poem, *Der irrereitende Pilger* (1556; The Pilgrim Riding the Wrong Direction and in Confusion), is half-satirical, half-didactic.

[9] Georg Witt, *Georg Wickram und Burkheim am Kaiserstuhl*. Spuren, 125 (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2021).

Much more significantly, Wickram embarked on composing prose novels, a fairly new genre in the history of German literature (for earlier cases, see the novels by the Countess Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken from ca. 1437ff.; Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*, 1456; or the anonymous *Fortunatus*, 1509): *Ritter Galmy aus Schottland* (1539, Knight Galmy from Scotland; at first published anonymously); *Gabriotto und Reinhard* (1554; Gabriotto and Reinhard); *Der Knabenspiegel* (1554; Mirror for Boys; this was also rendered into a dramatic version for public performance in the same year); *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* (1556; Of Good and Evil Neighbors); and *Der Goldtfaden* (1557; The Golden Thread; sometimes spelled *Goldfaden*). He also published a *Loßbuch* in 1539, a textual basis for social games determined by satirical statements and riddles.

In 1542, Wickram traveled to Speyer and Frankfurt for some official business, but he also used his time there to promote the German translation of Plutarch (ca. 46 B.C.E.–after 119 C.E.; his *Moralia*, a collection of essays) by Bartholomäus Grüninger published in Colmar in 1541.[10] And in 1545, he himself published an extensively revised and richly illuminated version of Albrecht von Halberstadt's (ca. 1200) German translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (originally truly unpopular; Wickram, by contrast, published a solid revision in Mainz in 1545 which was reprinted four more times until 1631, when the last edition appeared; appealing, particularly, to artistic craftsmen, literary enthusiasts, and others without an academic training). Wickram's edition made it truly popular.[11] As a side note, most of these works carry much more complex titles typical of their period, but here I have shortened them down to the essential parts for pragmatic reasons.[12]

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[10] The full title reads: *Plutarchus: Ankunfft, Leben vnd wesen, Glück vnd vnglück, gut vnd böse, weise vnnd vnweise Räthe, Reden, Anschläge, Ritterliche, mannliche Thaten, Merckliche warhaffte Historien vnd Geschichten, Frommer vnd vnfrommer, hoher, fürtrefflicher Manns vnd Frawen personen*. The 1547 reprint edition is in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, under the signature ESlg/2 A.gr.b. 895; available as a digital version at: https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00088097?page=2,3 (last accessed on Aug. 4, 2024).

[11] Brigitte Rücker, *Die Bearbeitung von Ovids Metamorphosen durch Albrecht von Halberstadt und Jörg Wickram und ihre Kommentierung durch Gerhard Lorichius*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 641 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1997).

[12] The full title reads: *P. Ouidij Nasonis ... Metamorphosis, Das is von der wunderbarlicher Verenderung der Gestalten der Menschen, Thier, und anderer Creaturen: Etwan durch den Wolgelerten M. Alberechten von Halberstat inn Reime weiss verteutscht, Jetz erstlich gebessert und mit Figuren der Fabeln gezirt, durch Georg Wickram ... Epimythium, Das ist Der lüstigen Fabeln .. Auszlegung, jederman kürtzweilig, vornemlich aber allen liebhabern der Edeln Poesi stadtlich zu lesen*

Altogether, Wickram proves to be a realistic, entertaining, moralizing yet also innovative poet and author of a variety of texts in different genres. He had obviously acquired extensive knowledge of classical and medieval literature on his own, but he strongly pursued his personal interests and topics, addressing primarily an urban intellectual audience that was semi-educated but lacked the knowledge of Latin or Greek and was not so deeply concerned with Humanism or the religious strife of the sixteenth century (Protestant Reformation and Counter Reformation). As many scholars have already noted, Wickram composed rather simplistic and straightforward narratives without any sophisticated formal frameworks or complex characters, such as in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350). Instead, he followed the model developed by Johannes Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522; Facetious and Serious Matter).[13] Nevertheless, considering his dedication to his patron and his readers, there are noteworthy parallels to the frame narrative model developed by Boccaccio and then Geoffrey Chaucer (*Canterbury Tales*, before 1400).[14] Above all, his *Rollwagenbüchlein* proved to be highly attractive, and this until today because the stories told here are regularly grounded in the cultural context of the region of the Alsace and occasionally elsewhere – twice, a story is located in distant Frisia on the coast of the North Sea – mirroring the life of the ordinary people both in the countryside and in towns and cities. The moral and ethical lessons are straightforward, and the audience is invited to smile about misfortunate situations, witticism, and hilarious forms of stupid misbehavior.

In his novels, Wickram projected ideal characters who have to struggle like the author himself to make their way up the social ladder or to cope within a world dominated by evil characters who are jealous of them. Fantasy and romantic projections of an ideal world of King Arthur were of no interest to Wickram, and there are also no parallels to stories by the famous contemporary poet, Gian Francesco Straparola, the Venetian author of a similar collection of erotic, at times rather fantastical tales, the *Piacevoli Notti* (1550–1553), or the collection of tales by the Queen Margaret de

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Gerhardi Lorichij (Mainz: Johann Schöffer, 1545). For a digital copy, see https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10139926?page=,1 (last accessed on Aug. 17, 2024).

[13] Albrecht Classen, *A Translation of Johannes Pauli's Didactic Tales: Lessons from the Past for Our Future* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2024).

[14] Albrecht Classen, "Story Collections, Frame Narratives, and *Schwänke*: From the Late Middle Ages to the Early Modern Age," *Kairoer Germanistische Studien* 26 (2023/appeared in 2024): 1–21; online at: https://kgs.journals.ekb.eg/article_379618_6748fab0b9f55a5856ed6b3ac6528f92.pdf.

Navarre, her *Heptaméron* (1558/1559).

Nevertheless, as we observe for example in *Der Goldtfaden*, the ultimate outcome is that the son of a simple herdsman is knighted, marries the count's daughter, and takes over the position held by his father-in-law after his demise. As unrealistic and fairy-tale like this astounding climb up the social ladder appears to be, the central purpose of this text proves to be, as in most other works by Wickram, to present ethical ideals, models of perfect behavior of a young man and of his beloved; and examples of self-discipline, manly virtues, and the qualities of loyalty and resolute actions when required in dangerous situations. The protagonists' love relationships are regularly lived out in a refined, almost non-physical manner, dominated by conversations or good, knightly deeds on behalf of the lady (*Galmy*, or *Gabriotto und Reinhart*).[15]

As we observe in *Der jungen Knaben Spiegel* (Mirror for Young Boys), Wickram even endeavored to psychologize his narratives to some extent, explaining the errors committed by the young knight Willibald who is exposed to the evil influence exerted by others, and even to the excessive love shown by his mother for her son. There might be a possible echo of Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur* (ca. 1280) because there the overbearing mother also badly undermines the protagonist's love relationship, in that case with the Byzantine princess Meliur who tries to hide from her lover through magic that makes her invisible. That, in turn deeply worries Partonopier's mother and the bishop who then come up with a plan to destroy Meliur's magic because they are afraid that she might be a demon.

More importantly, similar motifs appear in the anonymous and highly popular *Fortunatus* (1509) which Wickram was probably familiar with, especially because the repeated reference to money and its great relevance within early modern society finds its direct echo in the anonymous novel that was highly popular throughout the sixteenth century.[16] As much as our poet highlighted evil characters at court, who

[15] As to Wickram's concepts of emotions and personal relationships, see now Johanna Kahlmeyer, Inn boeser liebe hart verwundt*: Eine komparatistisch-emotionstheoretische Untersuchung der Liebeskonzeptionen in Georg Wickrams 'Metamorphosen'-Bearbeitung*. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur, Beihefte, 44 (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2024). For the history of emotions, see, e.g., Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristian, *What is the History of Emotions?* (New York: John Wiley & Sons – Polity, 2017); Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018); Ute Frevert, *Writing the History of Emotions: Concepts and Practices, Economies and Politics* (London, New York, et al.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

[16] Albrecht Classen, "The Role of Wealth and Money in Medieval and Late-

calumniate the female heroine, or in the forest where hunters and others try to commit murder, he was not a outspoken social critic and never imagined or advocated radical changes in the social structure of his time.

Even though Wickram also pursued didactic purposes in his *Rollwagenbüchlein*, he aimed primarily, as he emphasized in his prologue, to provide simple entertainment and relief for those bored from extended journeys or suffering from melancholy. Nevertheless, throughout all his novels and didactic texts, he presented idealized images of worthy and dignified protagonists who know how to defend the courtly morals, ethics, and standard norms of behavior. Of course, in his *Rollwagenbüchlein* he exposed the ignorance, stupidity, and foolishness of many different individuals who can be found among all social classes and age groups.

Love, death, and the role of fortune matter centrally especially in Wickram's novels (*Gabriotto und Reinhart*, or *Galmy*), and the poet might have been influenced in this regard by the works of the Italian Renaissance poets Boccaccio (*Decameron*) and Petrarch (*De remediis utriusque fortunae*). Again, however, the influence of *Fortunatus* on Wickram cannot be overestimated, as little as he refers to that early novel in explicit terms. Wickram also highlighted the central importance of homosocial bonding and friendship and idealized upright moral and ethical behavior. That makes it possible for the male protagonist to win the love of a high-ranking lady and to gain a new social status, which finally allows the two young people to marry. However, in *Gabriotto und Reinhart*, which was based on a novella in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the lover succumbs to his death and thus gains universal respect by courtly society.[17]

Medieval German Literature," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* CI.3 (2000): 415–28; id., "The Discourse on Money in Early Modern Literature. The Case of Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof's *Wendunmuth* (1563)," to appear in *Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur / Alman Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi*.

[17] There are several valuable online biographical entries. This introduction is mostly based on my lexicon article "Wickram" in the *Literary Encyclopedia*, May 3, 2023, online at: https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID= 15066. I have, however, updated and improved the text in many ways. Following I list some of the critical research literature: Albrecht Classen, "Witz, Humor, Satire. Georg Wickrams *Rollwagenbüchlein* als Quelle für sozialhistorische und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studien zum 16. Jahrhundert. Oder: Vom kommunikativen und gewalttätigen Umgang der Menschen in der Frühneuzeit," *Jahrbuch für ungarische Germanistik* (1999; appeared in 2000): 13–30; Bodo Gotzkowsky, *"Volksbücher": Prosaromane, Renaissancenovellen, Versdichtungen und Schwankbücher. Bibliographie der deutschen Drucke*. Part 1: *Drucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana, CXXV (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1991), 574–83 (a list of the prints of Wickram's

Sixteenth-century audiences responded with enthusiasm to Wickram's works, as the many new editions or reprints, especially of his *Rollwagenbüchlein*, indicate. Moreover, Wickram's novel *Ritter Galmy vß Schottland* appeared first in 1539, and it was reprinted in 1540, 1548, and 1675. His *Goldtfaden* was first printed in 1557, and appeared in new prints in 1560, 1570, 1602, 1616, 1626, and 1663. The moralizing *Der Jungen Knabel Spiegel* (Mirror for Young Boys) was published first in 1555 and reprinted in 1556, 1557, 1571, 1595, 1600, and 1604. In 1806, the Romantic author Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué republished Wickram's *Historie vom edlen Ritter Galmy und einer schönen Herzogin aus Bretagne* (Story of the Noble Knight Galmy and a Beautiful Duchess from Britanny); in 1808, the famous philologist Jacob Grimm referred to Wickram in a letter to his

Rollwagenbüchlein until the end of the sixteenth century); Andreas Solbach, "Early Modern German Narrative Prose," *Early Modern German Literature 1350–1700*, ed. Max Reinhart. The Camden House History of German Literature, 4 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 467–508; here 475–79; Erich Kleinschmidt, "Jörg Wickram," *Deutsche Dichter der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1600): Ihr Leben und Werk*, ed. Stephan Füssel (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1993), 494–511; Achim Masser, "Georg Wickram und der Beginn des bürgerlichen Romans," *Das Elsaß und Tirol an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit*, ed. Eugen Thurnher. Schlern-Schriften, 295 (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1994), 63–73; Brigitte Rücker, *Die Bearbeitung von Ovids Metamorphosen durch Albrecht von Halberstadt und Jörg Wickram* (see note 11); Elisabeth Wåghäll Nivre, "Georg Wickram neu betrachtet? Historische Schreibpraktiken und das literarische Schaffen Wickrams (um 1505–1562) aus wissenschaftshistorischer Perspektive," *Dynamiken historischer Schreibszenen: Diachrone Perspektiven vom Spätmittelalter bis zur klassischen Moderne*, ed. Katja Barthel. Untersuchungen zur Deutschen Literaturgeschichte, 168 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 115–26; Xenja von Ertzdorff, *Romane und Novellen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989). For the *Rollwagenbüchlein*, see Georg Wickram, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hans-Gert Roloff. 12 vols. Here vol. 7. Ausgaben deutscher Literatur des XV. bis XVIII. Jahrhunderts, 46 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973; reprinted 2017); Georg Wickram, *Das Rollwagenbüchlein*. Text nach der Ausgabe von Johannes Bolte. Nachwort von Elisabeth Endres (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1968). Both editions are virtually identical, but Roloff offers extensive text-critical comments comparing the various editions, but those notes are not relevant for us. Endres, by contrast, provides very useful explanations and translations of dialect terms and idiomatic expressions. Roloff's edition is now also available online at:
http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Wickram,+Georg/Schwanksammlung/Rollwagenb%C3%BCchlein (last accessed on July 13, 2024). For an English translation of one of his novels, see Jörg Wickram, *The Golden Thread*, trans. Pierre Kaufke (Pensacola, FL: University of West Florida Press, 1991), the only work by Wickram that has so far been translated into English until today.

colleague Georg F. Bencker, and in 1809, the Romantic writer and poet Clemens Brentano re-published Wickram's *Der Goldtfaden* (originally, 1557; the last edition before that one had appeared in Nuremberg in 1663).[18] Other editions then appeared in 1901 and 1905, followed by newer ones since then reflecting modern research interests. Wickram has been consistently highly recognized by scholarship as one of the most reputable sixteenth-century German writers. His works, such as the *Rollwagenbüchlein*, are now available also in digital versions.[19] However, translations into English are sorely lacking.

Apart from the fact that Wickram's collection proved to be so successful in the early modern book market, which encourages us to appreciate these tales first of all from their literary-aesthetic character, we can also approach them as most valuable literary documents reflecting on the social, economic, political, and religious conditions during the second half of the sixteenth century. There are many cases where the events take place in an inn. We regularly hear of individual peasants and their foolishness, but neither students nor professors, neither medical doctors nor priests, and neither monks nor friars are exempt from Wickram's criticism and mockery. We learn much about the conditions at legal courts, the role of lawyers, the economic situation for lansquenets and other mercenaries. Poverty often plays an important role, and so does heavy drinking with its rather humorous or problematic consequences. In short, the *Rollwagenbüchlein* can serve as an excellent source for the study of everyday history in the early modern age because the audience was invited to laugh about foolish people in their midst, and the comedy implied worked only because the situations or scenes presented proved to be familiar.[20]

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[18] Elisabeth Wåghäll, "Georg Wickram," *German Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation 1280–1580*, ed. James Hardin and Max Reinhart. Dictionary of Literary Biography, 179 (Detroit, Washington, DC, and London: Gale Research, 1997), 309–16 (now also available online). The dates of the republications I have drawn from the online bibliography *Worldcat* and the comprehensive bibliography of all sixteenth-century prints in Germany, the *VD16* (online). The seventeenth century is covered by the *VD17*. My lists of reprints are probably not exhaustive, but the currently available data confirms that Wickram enjoyed great popularity with most of his works well into the early modern age. For an online version of Brentano's republication of the novel *Gold[t]faden*, see https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/wickram/goldfad/goldfad.html (last accessed on June 21, 2024).

[19] See https://archive.org/details/gri_33125014634261/page/n3/mode/2up. For his other works, also online by now, see https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_n2MZAAAAYAAJ/page/n7/mode/2up (both last accessed on June 201, 2024).

[20] See, for instance, Peter Burke, *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420–1540*. Studies in Cultural History (London: Batsford, 1972); Albrecht Classen,

Below, I present the first English translation of this important collection of jest narratives, perhaps the best German contribution to the international genre of entertaining and didacticizing compilations of verse narratives (Chaucer) and prose texts (Boccaccio, the anonymous *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Marguerite de Navarre, Gian Francesco Straparola, etc.).[21]

"History of Early Modern Society and Everyday Life as Reflected in the Works of the Bestseller Author Johannes Pauli (1522)," *Advances in Social Sciences and Management* (ASSM) 1.7 (2023): 46–59; online at: https://hspublishing.org/ASSM/article/view/148/113; Arnold Esch, "Repertorium Germanicum' und 'Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum' als Spiegel spätmittelalterlichen Lebens," *Die römischen Repertorien: Neue Perspektiven für die Erforschung von Kirche und Kurie des Spätmittelalters (1378–1484)*, ed. Claudia Märtl, Irmgard Fees, Andreas Rehberg, and Jörg Voigt. Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom, 145 (Berlin und Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2023), 21–44. This brilliant study builds on Esch's earlier research, such as his important monographs, *Wahre Geschichten aus dem Mittelalter: Kleine Schicksale selbst erzählt in Schreiben an den Papst* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2010); possibly the same book appeared a few years later under the title *Die Lebenswelt des europäischen Spätmittelalters: Kleine Schicksale selbst erzählt in Schreiben an den Papst* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2014), but Esch does not comment on it and does not include a separate bibliography; and id., *Menschen in ihrer Gegenwart: die Fülle spätmittelalterlichen Lebens im Spiegel der Apostolischen Pönitentiarie.* Online-Schriften des DHI Rom. Neue Reihe, 10 (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2024). Although Esch works with papal documents, he has clearly uncovered a major corpus of relevant sources for the history of everyday life, to which we can now add Wickram's *Rollwagenbüchlein*. See also Kathleen E. Kennedy, "Reference: Everyday Life in Late Medieval England," *The Open Access Companion to the Canterbury Tales*, online at: https://opencanterburytales.dsl.lsu.edu/refeverydaylife/ (last accessed on July 30, 2024).

[21] For a discussion of recent research on Wickram, see the contributions to *Vergessene Texte – verstellte Blicke: neue Perspektiven der Wickram-Forschung*, ed. Maria E. Müller, together with Andrea Sieber (Frankfurt a. M. and New York: Peter Lang, 2007). See also the contributions to *Poetiken des Widerspruchs in vormoderner Erzählliteratur*, ed. Elisabeth Lienert, with the help of Amina Šahinović and Catharina B. Haug. Contraction Studies (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019).

On the Translation

Wickram wrote in his sixteenth-century Alsatian/Swabian dialect, that is, in a variant of standard Early New High German, which often required some flexibility in the translation process to render the original correctly and especially more or less idiomatically understandably into modern English. To some extent, for a modern German reader, Early New High German is easier to understand than Middle High German or Old High German, but there are also significant challenges because a lot of idiosyncratic expressions or dialect terms make it often rather difficult to grasp what the author might have intended. Moreover, the poet used many specific colloquialisms that could not be translated well because a literal rendering would remain incomprehensible. At times, we come across rather crude language, at least crude to our modern ears, and yet I have tried hard to be loyal to the original without insulting modern sensitivities. In general, I have consistently striven to be as accurate as possible even at the risk of offering a sometimes awkward English. In more complicated cases, I provide footnotes with further explanations and suggestions of alternative translations. My goal has always been to be completely transparent in my translation, to make the best sense out of the text, and yet to be faithful to the original. This has led me also to engage extensively with many of the subject matters in these accounts that are deeply relevant for the history of everyday life in the sixteenth century.

Wickram at times quotes from the Bible; I translate his words verbatim instead of copying any standard English Bible, which allows us to stay true to our early modern German source. As is very common in all translations, the syntax of the original could often not be imitated; instead, I have edited the text according to the fundamental rules of modern American English, simplifying the sentence structure which at times required a remodeling of the text in the translation. We also need to keep in mind that many keywords carry a wide range of meanings, such as "lieb," which could mean 'love,' 'grace,' favor,' or even 'friendship.' To do justice to the task at hand, I had to navigate carefully through the respective context to identify which English word might fit best. All translators are fully aware of those challenges.

Occasionally, there are references to coins or currencies, which represent true difficulties for any translator. 'Taler' or 'thaler,' for instance,

though being the original term behind the word 'dollar' since ca. 1550, cannot be simply translated as such.[1] I use normally 'ducat' for the coins mentioned here because it was commonly used throughout Europe from the late Middle Ages to the nineteenth century and had a high gold content. The reader will easily recognize whether a certain coin had a high or a low value – such as *batzen*. In footnotes, I explain the basic meanings and point out useful reference works in print and online that I have consulted.

The greatest challenge proved to be Wickram's common use of idiomatic phrases or terms, often in a satirical or ironic sense, such as to ridicule braggarts or hypocrites. I have tried my best to explain the meaning of those words in footnotes, but I could not identify equivalent terms in modern-day slang or dialect. Some of the biggest difficulties, however, were his long and convoluted statements that threaten to block our modern understanding. Since Wickram uses prose, the syntax thus can at times become rather complex and opaque. This required occasionally to break down some sentences into two which then allowed the meaning to come through more clearly.

The author also tends to shift occasionally from present to past tense and back again, which I avoid in order to be consistent with the narrative flow. When necessary, I will point out in a footnote those grammatical changes in the translation. Nothing of the content changes thereby, which consists, after all, of a fictional account often involving various voices engaged with each other.

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[1] For a good survey of the history of the 'taler,' which originally referred to the 'Joachimsthaler,' or a large silver coin minted in the Joachimsthal (vale of Joachim), today in the northwestern Czech Republic, hence Jáchymov, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaler (last accessed on Aug. 5, 2024). See Herbert Rittmann, *Auf Heller und Pfennig: die faszinierende Geschichte des Geldes und der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung in Deutschland* (Munich: Battenberg, 1976); Anton Faber, *Vom Taler zum Euro: aus der Geschichte des Geldes und der Währungen* (Wiener Neustadt: Verein Museum und Archiv für Arbeit und Industrie im Viertel unter dem Wienerwald, 1999); Philipp Robinson Rössner, *Deflation – Devaluation – Rebellion: Geld im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2012). The best evidence for the close correlation between 'thaler' and 'dollar' was provided by Christian Ludwig, *Teutsch-Englisches Lexicon worin nicht allein die einzelnen Wörter, sondern auch die ganzen die eigenen, spruchwortlichen und verblumten Redensarten zu finden sind*. 4th rev. ed. (1716; Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditschens Buchhandlung, 1789), 448; online at: https://archive.org/details/christianludwigs00ludwuoft/page/n852/mode/1up (last accessed on Aug. 23, 2024).

To help the general and the academic reader, I have done much research of the historical or material background and provided references to the relevant secondary literature. Since I had to deal with countless different people, objects, historical events, and issues, I also relied on the internet, which explains why I cite at times *Wikipedia* when it seemed reasonable and responsible, especially when it is very difficult to find good scholarly studies on a particular topic. Since there continues to be some mistrust of this encyclopedia, I have backed up the comments with references to printed studies as much as possible, making the greatest effort to reflect the latest research on those topics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As has become clear, I hope, Georg Wickram's *Rollwagenbüchlein* (1555) deserves our full attention, both from a literary-historical perspective and simply as a remarkable, entertaining, and significant collection of fictional narratives. This highly influential work deserves to be appreciated in close conjunction with such masterpieces as Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350), Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1400), the tales by Heinrich Kaufringer (ca. 1400), the anonymous *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (ca. 1465), Johannes Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522), Gian Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* (1555), and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* (1558/1559). Fortunately, the *Rollwagenbüchlein* is easily available today both through two solid editions and a digital copy of the print from 1555. However, an English translation has been missing so far – it would even be necessary to publish a modern German translation since Wickram's dialect is often hard to understand for a modern reader. As far as I can tell, there are also no translations into other languages.

Hence, I am very grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing, and especially Adam Rummens, for accepting for publication this translation that I produced during the Summer and early Fall of 2024. While I was teaching in Göttingen, Germany, and then in Middlebury, Vermont, USA, I used much of my spare time to work as intensively as possible on the translation, dedicating many weekends and evening hours to this effort. I am grateful to the University in Göttingen and the Middlebury College for providing me with a teaching position and also time for my research to complete this task. My own home university, The University of Arizona, provided me with many of the resources necessary during the entire period from May through August 20024, for which I am very grateful. I am addressing here both scholarly readers and the wider audience. The extensive footnotes serve to make my translation as transparent as possible and to provide all the necessary background information and the relevant research literature.

A special word of thanks goes to my wife, Carolyn Sugiyama Classen, for her proofreading of parts of the manuscript. I also want to express my gratitude to the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen for allowing me to take photos of the copy of the *Rollwagenbüchlein* extant in their collection to use as illustrations. My dear colleagues Thomas

Willard, University of Arizona, and Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, Creighton University, NE, were also kind enough to read some of the manuscript and to provide valuable feedback. I can only hope that readers will find this work both entertaining and illuminating, instructive and meaningful from many different perspectives. I have not tried to smooth over the many difficulties and prefer to offer an academic translation clearly reflecting the linguistic challenges and cultural-historical topics and issues over a modern and excessively polished translation that would present a text Wickram did not write.

Fig. 3: Illustration of story no. 65 about a man who erroneously ends up in a dentist's office and loses a healthy tooth although he only wanted to find a restaurant but could not communicate properly due to his inability to speak Italian.

Translation

Text

This part offers the texts as they were contained in the original printed version from 1555.

Text Accompanying the Title Page on Top of the Cover Image, a Woodcut

The Little Book for Coach Travelers

This is a new little book with heretofore unknown stories. It contains many good jest narratives and historical accounts as they are related on ships and on the road [in coaches], and also in barber shops and in bath houses when during times of boredom the heavy melancholy needs to be lifted. These stories are good for young and old and can be read or listened to all by themselves without any need for external justification. They are presented here to all merchants who attend trade fairs and occasionally need entertainment on their journeys to the fairs and on the way home. They were collected by Jörg Wickram, city clerk of Burkheim, 1555.[1]

[1] Wickram here identifies himself with the first name of "Jörg," but this is only a derivative of "Georg," under which scholarship has commonly referred to him.

Dedication to His Patron

To the honorable, high-ranking, and respectable Martin Neuen, citizen and innkeeper of the inn 'To the Flowers' in Colmar, my very generous lord and good friend.

In ancient times long ago, people used a common proverb, saying that ingratitude is the worst vice of them all. I have to confirm that I have received many signs of friendship from you, and so need to admit [apologize] that, due to the weakness of my rough brain, I have not returned those in equal measure. In order to avoid this vice of ingratitude, I wanted to demonstrate, as much as was possible for me, my gratitude according to my ability. "I do not own silver or gold, but what I have I am giving," says Saint Peter in the Acts in the 3rd chapter [3:6]. I do not intend to compare my plain and negligible and little book or myself with Peter or his holy words. Instead, I have published my little book only with the purpose of offering entertainment, not to instruct or teach anyone, or to shame, mock, or dishonor anyone, as you then can see and read for yourself.

As many people know, there are many ecclesiastic and secular princes and lords who come to see and stay with you. Hence, you must be ready to offer them at all times and according to their personalities good jest stories [*Schwänke*] and entertaining jokes. Therefore, I have published this my small work in return for your generosity [good deeds]. It is your custom to equip a coach for the Strasbourg Fair ready for your guests. Then, when all the good lords and friends are together, you can provide them with some entertainment during the coach ride. This little book can also be read aloud by many without causing any irritation. I beg you herewith not to reject such a small gift since I present it to you with a good heart and mind for the beginning of the New Year. Please accept me further as your good friend and willing servant. I wish you herewith much good luck and health, both for you and your wife, and after this temporary life here on earth eternal life, blissfulness in heaven. Amen.

Date: Burkheim, on the Feast Day of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, on New Year's Day, in the year 1555 after the birth of our Savior.[2]
Your most willing servant!

Jörg Wickram
City clerk of Burkheim

[2] This was March 25, when the Archangel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mary and announced that she would be the mother of the son of God, Jesus Christ. This was also known as Lady Day, or Feat of Incarnation. See Luke 1:28ff. For the Feast of Annunciation, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_the_Annunciation (last accessed on Aug. 1, 2024).

To the Kind Reader

Kind and friendly reader, people have used for a long time a proverb among others: when a person had made a crude joke or used a dirty word, they used to say: "Keep quiet, you eunuch, this belongs to the coach or to a ship!" In my opinion, this was not well said or advisable because it happens many times that honest, chaste women, and also young maids, travel by coach or in a ship, and they are then not much spared those bad comments. There are many rough individuals who might say, even if they are beaten up for it: "Hey, they wear shoes or boots, and they do not understand what we say.[3] Those men then continue telling their dirty sexual jokes and do not consider what Christ had said, as quoted in Matthew 18: "Whoever angers the least ones who believe in me, would deserve that a millstone would be attached to his neck and then to be thrown down into the depth of the sea." Moreover, he says: "Problems/irritations come by themselves, but woe to the person who is responsible for them."

Now, it has always been a particularly upsetting matter when such useless words are spoken in front of chaste/virtuous people. But, since it is necessary to gain some entertainment through talking at such places [coach, ship], I have submitted to your grace and love[4] an entertaining little book in which you can find not few fun stories and jest narratives no one will feel irritated about. I beg herewith to grant me your grace and kindness. When it might happen that one or the other person might feel hit (hurt/insulted), then do not change the color of your face; otherwise, many might suspect you [of feeling exposed]. Then those might say: "When you throw a rock among the dogs, only the one will yelp/bark which has been hit." May God protect you, friendly reader.

Your Jörg Wickram, always your willing servant.

[3] Endres, ed., in her comments admits that the proverbial expression used here remains unclear (9, no. 5). The meaning could be that those female travelers wear men's clothing and hence should also tolerate men's jokes, but the verb in this sentence, "they do not understand it," does not seem to fit.

[4] The word "lieb" (love) carries many different meanings, so the translation depends heavily on the specific context.

Chapter 1

About a Good and Virtuous Man from Kochersberg Who Hired a Good and Simple-Minded Fellow to Do a Pilgrimage to Saint Vitus

While we are currently spending time during our ride or journey, a good jest narrative comes to my mind and urges me to relate it to you.

Many know that there are in Kochersberg, not far from Strasbourg, many good, virtuous, simple-minded peasants.[5] I want to write about one of them. This good man once fell seriously ill for a long time and suffered badly. While he endured this sickness, he conceived of the idea that he should pledge a pilgrimage to the monastery dedicated to Saint Vitus located on the mountains, promising a rich donation of a valuable silver coin.[6] Thereby, he hoped seriously that he would recover again. Thus, he promised and pledged that pilgrimage, and as soon as he would have recovered from his sickness, he wanted to undertake it.

Now, after he had regained his health within a few days, he was mindful of his pledge and had it in front of his inward eyes by day and night.[7] And whenever he was nearly ready to do so, embarking on his journey and to deliver the sacrifice, he was overwhelmed with work. Once he had sown grain on his fields, he had work in the vineyard, and he had so much other work that he hardly took time to eat and drink. Finally, it occurred to him that, to avoid irritating Saint Vitus with his delay, he should hire a good, pious man to do this pilgrimage on his behalf. Soon, he found a person who was to his liking. He provided him with the donation, that is, the money, wax, and a big fat rooster. He instructed him to take all of that to Saint Vitus.[8]

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[5] This village is located northwest of Strasbourg, at the eastern flank of the Vosges Mountains. The word used to characterize this man, "frommer," could mean both 'virtuous' and 'pious,' both very similar yet still distinct epithets and hence concepts.

[6] Saint Vitus, born in Sicily, was allegedly one of the martyrs who suffered under the Roman Emperor Diocletianus and died in 303 C.E. He was counted among the Fourteen Helpers. In Germany and neighboring countries, a custom developed with the faithful dancing in front of his sculpture. This later led to the identification of epilepsy, or *Sydenham's chorea*, a severe nervous disorder, as Saint Vitus Dance, although this represented the very opposite of the original veneration of this saint. Esther Meier, *Handbuch der Heiligen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010), 54–57. See also the detailed overview, with good visual material, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Vitus (last accessed on June 21, 2024).

[7] He kept it in mind all the time.

[8] See Gavin Fort, "'Make a Pilgrimage for Me': The Role of Place in Late Medieval Proxy Pilgrimage," *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern*

The good fellow soon embarked on his trip and approached the mountains with a pious mind. Whomever he encountered on his way, he asked for the shortest route to Saint Vitus. Everyone gladly explained the direction. Now, there is a large monastery at the foot of the mountain to which he went at first.[9] That monastery was dedicated to All Saints' and housed many monks.[10] The guardian pointed out Saint Vitus on the top of the mountain.[11] Climbing up proved to be difficult and frightful. Finally, he thought to himself: "Truly, I have not been wise enough to climb uphill with such struggling. People say that the monastery [at the foot of the mountain] is called All Saints', and since all saints are assembled in that monastery, hence Saint Vitus must certainly be among them, so I won't go and meet him at home [on top of the mountain].

Thinking about it, he turned around and went down the hill again at such a pace as if he were the prey of hunters. So, he got to the gate of the monastery and strongly pulled the bell. The guardian quickly arrived, opened the door, and asked the good fellow what he wanted and what was his business. "My dear man," said the pilgrim, "are not all saints here in the monastery." The guardian immediately confirmed that because he had espied the fat rooster in his hand and believed that he wanted to donate it to all the saints. "Good guardian," said the pilgrim, "go inside to all the saints and call for Saint Vitus, asking him to come out here because I have money and this rooster for him."

"My dear fellow," said the guardian, "if you want to go to Saint Vitus, you have to walk all the way up to the top of the mountain because you won't find him down here."

"How is that possible," asked the pilgrim, "that if all the saints are assembled here in the monastery you would have excluded Saint Vitus? That would be outrageous!" The guardian, who assumed that the pilgrim was pulling his leg, got angry with him and said: "You have heard clearly what I have said. Saint Vitus has nothing to do here in our monastery. Our patron saints are All Saints." The pilgrim responded: "Well, then keep all

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Time: Explorations of Worldly Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 424–45. He deals primarily with somewhat earlier and contemporary English sources.

[9] The author uses both 'hill' and 'mountain' without making a distinction. All that matters here is that the pilgrim has a hard time climbing up and then decides to return because it is too arduous for him.

[10] All Saints' Day commemorates all the martyrs of the early Church and is normally celebrated on Nov. 1. Lutherans have continued to observe All Saints' Day as an occasion to remember all Christians who had died for their faith.

[11] He means a chapel or a church dedicated to Saint Vitus.

your saints, and I will keep Saint Vitus for myself." Thus, he went back to his road and went home.

But when he had returned to the peasant, the latter welcomed him in a friendly manner and asked whether he had carried out the pilgrimage. The pilgrim confirmed it. [The peasant then asked:] "Where is the illustrated certificate as a proof for the pilgrimage?" The pilgrim did not think for long and responded: "I reached the church dedicated to Saint Vitus on the top of the mountain, but the Saint was not at home; instead, he was among the saints in the monastery at the foothill. So, I went to the bottom of the hill to the monastery and asked for Saint Vitus to come out to see me. I delivered the message and gave him the donations. He took them, but he let me have the rooster as a gift, sending you his best greetings. But he did not have any certificate with him which he could have given to me because they were all on the top of the mountain. The good naïve peasant believed him that, paid him his compensation, and let him go. The good pilgrim was quite happy because he had gained three advantage points with one playing card.[12]

We are supposed to learn three lessons from this story. First, there is a great naiveté all over the world; when people fall sick or suffer from some misfortune, then there are many who miss the right, true, and prearranged path [for healing]; they think little of Christ, our Savior. One person appeals to this saint, the other to another saint, when Christ, according to John 10, very clearly and specifically had stated: "When you beg the Father [God] in my name, He will do so." Further: "I am the way, the life, and the truth; no one gets to the Father except through me." And elsewhere we read in Matthew 11: "All of you who are suffering and suppressed, come to Me! I will refresh you." Moreover, we cannot stop being surprised that the world is so naïve. When a person promises much and yet then cannot fulfill it, he believes that he could ask someone else to do it for him. It often happens that one person hires another to say many prayers on his behalf, to fast, or to go on a pilgrimage. However, all that does not work; otherwise, Adam would have coped well in Paradise when he ate the apple and explained this thus: "The woman gave it to me, and I ate." The same way, the woman wanted to defer her guilt to the snake. But no excuse works; everyone has to carry his/her own burden. Third, there has arisen a terrible abuse with giving donations. Those have been brought to the rich monasteries, such as fat chicken, roosters, and capons.[13] But when those then come to ask for God's consolation, He knows it well [what they

[12] Idiomatic expression, meaning that he had had good luck in his endeavor, gaining a solid profit.

[13] A capon is a chicken that is gelded or castrated in young age and then fed with a rich diet of milk or porridge, which produces juicy meat.