

A Translation  
of Johannes Pauli's  
Didactic Tales



# A Translation of Johannes Pauli's Didactic Tales:

*Lessons from the Past for Our  
Future*

By

Albrecht Classen

Cambridge  
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for Our Future

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## INTRODUCTION

The early modern book market was naturally determined, as is still the case today, by 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 with individual manuscripts in the Middle Ages as well (e.g., Books of Hours, personal collections of poems, such as by Oswald von Wolkenstein [1376/1377–1445]; or reflective treatises, such as those by Christine de Pizan [1364–1431]), printers tried to appeal to their potential customers by publishing 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. Only from ca. 1470 did printed books begin to flood the markets. These were the so-called incunabula (book printed in the “cradle.” After ca. 1500, they are called early printed books since then).<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, new schools and universities were established in numerous cities, and in the course of time the general literacy rate increased enough to make the production and sale of printed books profitable. Both factors thus supported each other, as scholarship has already observed for a long time.<sup>2</sup>

The present volume makes available a large selection of didactic and entertaining tales composed by the Franciscan preacher Johannes Pauli. He called them *Schimpf und Ernst*, and they quickly turned into a major success in the early modern book market. Pauli completed his collection of jest narratives around 1519, but it took another three years until the first edition

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<sup>1</sup> Uwe Neddermeyer, *Von der Handschrift zum gedruckten Buch*. Vol. 1: *Text: Schriftlichkeit und Leseinteresse im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit; quantitative und qualitative Aspekte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> *Laienlektüre und Buchmarkt im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Thomas Kock and Rita Schlusemann. Gesellschaft, Kultur und Schrift / Mediävistische Beiträge, 5 (Frankfurt a. M. et al.: Peter Lang, 1997); Erin A. McCarthy, *Doubtful Readers: Print, Poetry, and the Reading Public in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); *Buying and Selling: The Business of Books in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Shanti Graheli. Library of the Written Word, 72 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019); globally, see Wolfgang Schmitz, *Grundriss der Inkunabelkunde: das gedruckte Buch im Zeitalter des Medienwechsels*. Bibliothek des Buchwesens, 27 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2018).

appeared in Strassburg/Strasbourg, printed by Johannes Grüninger (1522). In 1525, Erasmus Johannes Knobloch in Strassburg published that volume again (perhaps lost today),<sup>3</sup> followed by a rapid increase of ever-new print runs, both in Strassburg and in other cities in Germany with the most successful book-printing workshops in the lead. Johannes Bolte lists, for instance, the years of 1526, 1533, 1534, 1535, 1536, 1537, etc. when new editions appeared. 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.<sup>4</sup>

Intriguingly, the interest in *Schimpf und Ernst* did not wane by the end of the sixteenth century. Instead, new editions appeared in 1602, 1608, 1609, 1612, 1613, 1617, and 1618. However, the Thirty Years' War that erupted in 1618, probably had a deeply negative impact on all book printing and many other cultural activities in Germany. Pauli's collection hence did not undergo its next reproduction until 1630, and again in 1654, by then already six years after the Peace Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück had been signed 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. Nevertheless, new editions were printed in 1670, 1677, 1690, and 1771. Throughout the entire period of the Napoleonic wars and its corollary,

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<sup>3</sup> *CERL Thesaurus* (<https://data.cerl.org/thesaurus/cni00025719>; this is the Center of European Research Libraries) does not list this printer under that full name, but has Knobloch, Johann, der Ältere (senior), active in Strassburg from 1504 to 1528. But it seems that Bolte, ed. (1924/1972; see below) autopsied that work because he gives precise information about the number of stories contained here and about the material condition of that volume (141). He refers to a "Kimm in Würzburg" and "Reichards Bibliothek der Romane" without further explanations. Josef Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet*. 2nd improved and expanded ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), 438, knows only of Johann Knobloch der Ältere.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Pauli, *Schimpf und Ernst*, ed. Johannes Bolte. 2 vols. (1924; Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms. 1972). This is now also available in digital form: vol. 1: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.39000005804138&seq=15>; and vol. 2: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.39000005804146&seq=7>.

For an alternative, see

[https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/pauli\\_bolte1924bd1/0241/image.info](https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/pauli_bolte1924bd1/0241/image.info).

Before Bolte, the work was published already once by Hermann Österley. Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, LXXXV (Stuttgart: Verlag des Litterarischen Vereins, 1866). This is available now in digital form online at:

[https://ia800906.us.archive.org/3/items/bub\\_gb\\_pOFgb2tuu3QC/bub\\_gb\\_pOFgb2tuu3QC.pdf](https://ia800906.us.archive.org/3/items/bub_gb_pOFgb2tuu3QC/bub_gb_pOFgb2tuu3QC.pdf)

the Romantic period, considerably fewer copies of this work appeared in print. However, the interest was rekindled subsequently, as documented by new prints from 1822 onwards, and this obviously occurred in the wake of a renewed interest in pre-modern literature.

Numerous other authors drew from Pauli's model and composed their own collections of tales with the same title, *Schimpf und Ernst*. These included 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), Samuel von Butschky with his *Hochdeutsche Venus-Kanzeley: darinnen allerhand schimpf- ernst- und wahrhafte Brife in Libes sachen* (1644), Christian Funke (1626–1695) with his *Schimpff und Ernst. Von Widerwertigkeit des heutigen Freyens / belachtet und beweinet* (1653, translated from Danish to German), Ernst Christoph Homburg with his *Schimpff- und ernsthaffte Clio* (1638 and 1642), and *Politischer Schimpff und Ernst: in unterschiedlichen Discursen* (anonymous, 1669).<sup>5</sup> The same strategy was pursued by modern scholars. When Willy Hass published a collection of entertaining medieval narratives translated from Latin to German in 1931, he used the same keywords in his

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<sup>5</sup> All data were collected from the invaluable online catalog of the VD17, books printed in seventeenth-century Germany, which is almost completely comprehensive, 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=Schi mpf+und+Ernst&REC=\\* &TRM3](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=Schi mpf+und+Ernst&REC=* &TRM3); last accessed on Aug. 20, 2023. I have also consulted the Karlsruhe Virtual Catalog and WorldCat. I also discovered, while doing research in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, the work by an anonymous author, *Schertz mit der Warheyt: Kurtzweilige Gespräche / Jn Schipff vnd ERnst Reden / Vil höflicher / weister Sprüch / lieblicher Historien vnd Leren. Zu vnderweisung vnd ermanung / in allem thuon vnd leben der Menschen . . .* (Frankfurt a. M.: Egenolff, 1563); see also Ernst Christoph Homburg, *Schimpff- und ernsthaffte Clio: Historisch-kritische Edition nach den Drucken von 1638 und 1642*, ed. and commentary by Achim Aurnhammer, Nicolas Detering, and Dieter Martin. 2 vols. Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 346 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2013); *Politischer Schimpff und Ernst: In unterschiedlichen Diskursen . . . bestehend So Von einem Liebhaber . . . auß alten und neuen Auch zum theil unbekannten Geschichtsbüchern und M.S. zusam[en] getragen* (Martin Flach, d. 1500; Freudenstadt [i.e., Nuremberg]: [Kramer], 1669). In short, the formula 'Schimpf und Ernst' was highly popular during the early modern period, thanks to authors such as Pauli, which modern scholars have not yet paid attention to. Cf. Aurnhammer, Detering, and Martin, ed., vol. 2 (see above), 21.

title.<sup>6</sup> Those collections or editions, however, had nothing to do with Pauli's own work, as much as they were deeply influenced by it. In other words, the expression 'Schimpf und Ernst' had turned into a rhetorical formula and was soon used rather freely without specific references to Pauli's contribution or any adaptations.

Since the early nineteenth century, *Schimpf und Ernst* from Pauli's pen has been re-issued many times, so in 1822, 1839, 1856, 1866 (reprinted in 1967), 1876, 1877, 1886 (according to Bolte, ed.); other editions – to be as comprehensive as possible for the record – not mentioned by Bolte had already appeared in 1579, 1644 (in Dutch), 1723, and 1777. Additional new editions (also not listed by Bolte, ed.) appeared in 1839, 1856, 1866, 1876, 1877, 1880, 1887, 1890, 1893, 1900, 1904, 1911, 1913, 1916, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1943 (a selection),<sup>7</sup> 1949 (also a selection of modernized tales), 1957 (in a collection titled *Minutenspiele*), 1967, 1972, 1994 (in Dutch), 1999, 1999 (in Japanese), 2012, 2014,<sup>8</sup> and 2022.<sup>9</sup> Bolte also lists a Latin

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<sup>6</sup> W[illy] Hass, *Schimpf und Ernst des deutschen Mittelalters in lateinischem Gewand*. Eclogae Graecolatinae, 31 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931; reprinted as late as 2019). This is a textbook for a Latin class on the secondary school level. The author does not indicate any awareness of Johannes Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst*. See also Adami von Lebenwaldt, *Poetische Schimpf- und Ernst-Reden* (s.l.: sec. ed., 1685).

<sup>7</sup> Upon autopsy, this volume, *Schimpf und Ernst: Deutsche Schwänke des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, selected by Walther Breinersdorf (Berlin: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1943), does not include any text by Pauli but uses the title of his work without acknowledging his authority. In a note added by the publisher after the cover page, the reader is alerted to the possibly objectionable content of the stories collected here because some would be too graphic and indecent. However, since the intention with this book was to represent the sixteenth-century genre of German jest narratives ("Schwänke"), bowdlerizing would have been inappropriate. The publisher reminds the reader that this book should not be shared with all potential readers. In his epilogue, Breinersdorf refers to the critical sources for the early-modern jest narratives, Geiler von Kaisersberg and Johannes Pauli (364), but the tales chosen for this collection originate from later writers exclusively: Georg Wickram (*Rollwagenbüchlein*, 1555), Jacob Frey (*Die Gartengesellschaft*, 1556), Martin Montanus (*Wegkürzer*, 1557), Michael Lindener (*Katzipori*, 1558; *Rastbüchlein*, 1558), Valentin Schumann (*Nachtbüchlein*, 1559), and Hans-Wilhelm Kirchhoff (*Wendunmuth*, 1565). Breinersdorf continues to identify Pauli falsely as a converted Jew (364).

<sup>8</sup> This is a reprint by Michael Holzinger who claims to have revised ("durchgesehen") the entire text (Berlin: Michael Holzinger, 2014). It is basically a photomechanical reprint of Bolte's edition from 1924.

<sup>9</sup> The 2022 reprint was published by Forgotten Books (s.l.) with the ISBN: 0365975486; 9780365975489. All data according to WorldCat, online; last accessed on Aug. 20, 2023. The *Universal Short Title Catalogue* lists only a short selection,





Nevertheless, until today, there has not been any English translation, the reason for which remains uncertain, particularly because other German texts, such as the anonymous *Fortunatus* (1509; see Thomas Dekker, *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus*, 1599) and the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587; see Christopher Marlow, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, 1592 or 1593) found English translators or rather adaptors. However, if we want to understand the cultural background of the Reformation age in the German-speaking lands, there is hardly any other literary example more important and influential than *Schimpf und Ernst* – the one and only big exception would be the collection of tales about the jester *Till Eulenspiegel* (first printed in 1510/1511).<sup>12</sup>

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<https://dx.doi.org/10.48189/nl.2023.v04i2.018>; id., “Discourse on Sexual Violence (Rape) in Late Medieval Short Prose Narratives: The Case of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*, and Johannes Pauli’s *Schimpf und Ernst*,” *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science* 7.7 (2023): 1460–73; online at: <https://wap.hillpublisher.com/Index.aspx?magid=34.>; id., “Johannes Pauli and His Social Criticism. A Past Voice for Our Own Time? Pedagogical Reflections on the Relevance and Usefulness of Sixteenth-Century Sermon Narratives Until Today,” *The Bulletin of the History of Education* (Poland) (forthcoming). For the history of the genre of jest narratives, see id., *Deutsche Schwankliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts: Studien zu Martin Montanus, Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof und Michael Lindener*. Koblenz-Landauer Studien zu Geistes-, Kultur- und Bildungswissenschaften, 4 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2009). Truly amazingly, Pauli is mentioned only twice just in passing in the massive *Early Modern German Literature: 1350–1700*, ed. Max Reinhart. The Camden House History of German Literature, 4 (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 241 and 603. His *Schimpf und Ernst* is acknowledged both times as a bestseller, but there are no further comments, as if that collection was nothing but a popular item in the lists of book sellers. However, the fact that a published book gained such enormous traction should have attracted more scholarly attention. The translation of “Schimpf” as “Mischief” (here 603) is highly questionable, as I discuss below several times. Werner Röcke, “Schwanksammlung und Schwankroman,” *Von der Handschrift zum Buchdruck: Spätmittelalter, Reformation, Humanismus, 1230–1572*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and Ulrich Müller. *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, 2, ed. Horst Albert Glaser (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 180–95, offers a good overview of the literary genres, but again he touches on Pauli only in passing.

<sup>12</sup> By sheer accident, I recently discovered the book *101 Irreverent Stories Collected from the Works of Johannes Pauli*, trans. Calvin Murarius (Createspace, 2014). It is not listed in any major bibliographies. It consists of 98 pages, offering 101 out of the total of 693 stories. Why Murarius called them “irreverent” remains curious and misrepresents Pauli altogether. Createspace is an on-demand book publisher, a self-publishing service founded in 2000 in South Carolina and acquired by Amazon in

Curiously, Pauli does not engage with any Reformation issues in specific terms although he has much to say about wrongdoings and failures of the clergy, from the level of the parish priest up to that of the papacy. He also ridicules the institution of indulgence letters as useless and serving only for bragging rights, such as in *Schimpf* no. 83, or as a cheap sales strategy. In that regard, Pauli would have fully agreed with Luther, although he took only a satirical perspective, whereas Luther was harsh and radical in his condemnation of that practice.

In 1522, the religious conflicts were already most intense, and it was clear by then that the gulf between the Protestants and the Catholics could not be bridged. However, that did not have any noteworthy impact on the popularity of *Schimpf und Ernst*, obviously because the vast number of prose tales addresses such a wide range of ethical, moral, and religious concerns relevant for virtually all people (truth, foolishness, friendship, gender relationships, justice, trust, loyalty, thievery, tyranny, and general conflicts in everyday life). Obviously, both Catholic and Protestant readers felt comfortable with Pauli's work in which fundamental concerns in human life are unabashedly addressed.

Significantly, the author addresses a wide range of other topics reflecting on everyday-life conditions among the laity, such as marriage, business issues, conflicts among judges and lawyers, the role of magicians, usurers, etc. The full list of thematic groups or chapters consists of ninety sections, or chapters, beginning with truth (I) and ending with warfare (XC). Maybe a third of all narratives concern situations within the Church, in monasteries, or they address religious aspects, such as the institution of confession (XXIX), giving alms (XXXIII), the Fourth Commandment (LV), the holy Scripture (LVII), giving aid to the souls (LX), the bishop of Trier (LXX), blessed water (LXXX), the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception (LXXXII), and other issues. Otherwise, there are topics such as foolish behavior (IV), the workings of the devil (VIII), uneducated people (IX), lawyers and judges (XI), proper marriage (XII), arrogance (XV), greed (XVI), usury (XVII), adultery (XVIII), drunkenness (XXI), gullibility (XXII), wrath (XXIII), *memento mori* (XXV), medical doctors (XXXVIII), loyal servants (XXXIX), innkeepers (XLII), gamblers (XLIII), dancing and playing music (XLV), lying (XLVII), peace and harmony (XLIX), prostitutes (L), painters (LI), friendship (LIII), giving advice (LVI), swearing oaths (LXIII), deception and fakeness (LXIV), etc. It seems almost impossible to detect any systematic order here. At the same time, it

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2005. I could not find any information on the Internet or in WorldCat on the translator.

appears most appropriate to identify in this collection of sermon tales a literary quarry that can easily serve to reflect on specific issues in sixteenth-century everyday culture and that sheds good light on the public discourse in fictional terms. In an index at the end of this book I have compiled an extensive list of topics covered or addressed by Pauli.<sup>13</sup>

Pauli drew from many different sources, combining social or political topics and fairytale elements with ethical, moral, and religious issues. In many cases, he paraphrased his sources but reconfigured them, and further added an epimythium, a moralizing and especially spiritualizing conclusion. After all, he was a Franciscan preacher and not a poet as such. Pauli directly addressed concrete, problematic cases in human life and examined the causes of the countless conflicts, subsequently offering solutions, or at least some teachings. As much as he was a sixteenth-century author, he certainly understood rather deeply and globally what the human shortcomings were and what poets like him could do to address those, with the deep optimism that human existence was not only materially conditioned, which regularly made people commit many vices if not crimes. Instead, preaching meant for Pauli to instruct people about their shortcomings, and the narratives collected in his work served as a literary mirror. Reform was possible, hence hope that the audience might realize the divine plan for all existence already here on earth. Laughter was accepted as a critical tool in this learning process.

## Biographical Notes

The Franciscan preacher and author, Johannes Pauli, was born in the Alsace (perhaps in Thann, northwest of Mulhouse, today northeast France) around 1450/1454 and died there around 1522. There is no reason any longer to assume that his parents were Jews, as Hermann Österley, following previous opinions, still claimed, noting that Pauli originally carried the name Paul Pfedersheimer, but converted early. This was an old confusion with another person and must be dismissed by now as utterly wrong.<sup>14</sup> In 1479, Pauli

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<sup>13</sup> Bolte, ed. (1924/1972), vol. 2, already included such an index, but in German, of course, 479–501. His interest focused, however, more on the religious, ethical, and moral aspects contained in Pauli's texts. There is, for instance, no lemma for rape, a matter of serious concern for the author. He has a reference to prostitutes, but uses the pre-modern term "Metzen," which modern readers might not even know any longer.

<sup>14</sup> Hermann Österley, ed., Johannes Pauli, *Schimpf und Ernst* (1866), 1; he relied, in turn on the claim by C. Veith, *Ueber den Barfüßer Johannes Pauli und das von ihm verfaßte Volksbuch Schimpf und Ernst: nebst 46 Proben aus demselben* (Vienna: F.

joined the Franciscan Order in Thann, and worked widely as a preacher, teacher (“lector,” or “reading instructor”), and confessor on behalf of his Order in Southwestern Germany and neighboring countries, i.e., in Villingen (Saint Claire Monastery, 1490–1494), Basel (1498), Bern (1503/1504), Strassburg (1504–1510), Schlettstadt (1515), and Thann (since 1518), that is, mostly in Alsace and Switzerland.

He gained major notoriety through his edition of the sermons by the popular preacher Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445–1510), the publication of his most influential collection of comic and religious stories, *Schimpf und Ernst* (first appeared in 1522), and through twenty-eight sermons delivered between July 1493 and April 1494, recorded by a nun of the Saint Clare Order in Villingen. Here, for instance, body and soul debate each other about who might hold a higher rank; or allegorized reason and will are engaged in a discussion about their respective superiority. Pauli relied in various ways on the sermons by the Italian Dominican Thomasinus da Ferrara and on the sermons by Heinrich von Friemar, both heavily employing satire to make their points. In these sermons, Pauli voiced severe criticism of his fellow clerics, targeting, for instance, their hypocrisy, deception, and religious deviation, and especially wide-spread selfishness and disrespect of the teachings of the Church.

Pauli heard Geiler’s famous sermons while he stayed in Strassburg as the guardian of the Franciscan convent there. He published them under the titles *Das Euangelibouch* (1515; The Gospels; new editions in 1517 and 1522), *Die Emeis* (1516; The Ant), *Her der Küng ich diente gern* (1516; King, I Would be Happy to Serve), *Die brösamlin* (1517; The Breadcrumbs), *Navicula sive speculum fatuorum* (1520; The Ship or the Mirror of Destiny; originally published in 1498), and perhaps also *Das buch der sünden des munds* (1518; The Book of the Sins Committed with the Mouth [Words]). Although he appears to have recorded Geiler’s sermons

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Beck, 1839), 3–4. Johann Bolte, ed. (1924/1972), vol. 1, \*9–\*10, put to rest this faulty speculation, pointing out that Paulus Pfederheimer was another Franciscan, born near Mainz around 1460, who converted and studied at Mainz and Tübingen, and then earned his Magister Artium (Master of Arts) in 1480. He appears to have died around 1508. Veith himself voices surprise that Pauli’s sincerity and highly critical assessment of the clergy, could have been misunderstood or questioned although he was (sic) a converted Jew, who copied so diligently even the Antisemitic passages in Geiler von Kaisersberg’s sermons (10). Another edition, a selection of Pauli’s texts, rendered into modern German, was published by Hermann A. Junghans, *Schimpf und Ernst von Bruder Johannes Pauli* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., 1877); online at: <https://ia601801.us.archive.org/17/items/schimpfundernstjunghans/schimpfundernstjunghans.pdf>.

most accurately, compared to the works by other copyists and scribes, he nevertheless tended to add his own comments and to apply thematic changes. In contrast to Geiler, who only briefly alluded to fables, Pauli included the various fables in full length.<sup>15</sup>

### *Schimpf und Ernst*

Pauli is best known today for his collection of entertaining and didactic narratives (*Schwänke*) collected in his *Schimpf und Ernst* (Joke and Earnestness), published in 1522. Those served primarily for the purpose of making sermons more lively, applicable, and appealing to the parishioners and to provide concrete examples of human shortcomings against which the members of the parish ought to be on their guard. Generally, we can assume that the author specifically targeted members of his Order, that is, other preachers, but also members of the nobility, and a generally educated urban audience, as he indicates in the prologue. It is not surprising that Pauli addressed, above all, the Seven Deadly Sins, such as in the sections (chapters) XV to XXIV. In this sense, *Schimpf und Ernst* served the global purpose of reflecting on human life in humorous and also didactic terms, so the cases presented take us from the world of the ordinary peasants to that of the emperors and popes, reflecting on the words and deeds of men and women, children and old people. Such an approach was quite common in the Middle Ages and far beyond, and it was actually formulated already theoretically by the Roman poet Horace (65–8 B.C.E.) through his statement: “aut prodesse aut delectare” (to profit and to delight).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Die Predigten Johannes Paulis*, ed. Robert G. Warnock. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 26 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1970); for a good summary, see F. Rapp, “Pauli, Johannes,” *Lexikon des Mittelalters: Kukasbilder bis Plantagenêt* (Munich and Zürich: Artemis & Winler Verlag, 1993), 1811–12.

<sup>16</sup> See the contributions to *Prodesse et delectare: Case Studies on Didactic Literature in the European Middle Ages / Fallstudien zur didaktischen Literatur des europäischen Mittelalters*, ed. Norbert Kössinger and Claudia Wittig. Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung. Beihefte, 11 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019). As to the universal interest in entertaining literature as a springboard for didactic reflections, see *To Instruct and to Entertain – Medieval Didactic Dialogues. The Old English Prose Solomon and Saturn, the Middle English Master of Oxford's Catechism and Their Reconstructed Latin Source; the Old English Adrian and Ritheus, and the Old Icelandic Dialogue between a Pupil and his Master*, ed. Hans Sauer and Alessia Bauer. Middle English Texts, 17 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2023).

## Sources

The anthology in its first edition from 1522 contains 693 short prose narratives, 231 of them with a serious or didactic content (*Ernst*), and 462 determined by humor (*Schimpf*), though both aspects are intimately intertwined and often not fully distinguishable. Pauli drew much inspiration from classical Latin literature, the Bible, and a variety of medieval sources – there are at least forty sources specifically identifiable. At times, however, Pauli simply relied on his own experiences or oral anecdotes he had heard. We can also assume that he was somewhat or remotely engaged with the tradition of Arabic story telling through Christian-Latin translations, such as Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina clericalis* or Etienne de Besançon's *Alphabetum narrationum* (late thirteenth century), although he never mentions them by name and would have learned of their narratives through various channels. Pauli mentions, however, such famous figures as Aristotle (no. 611), Macrobius (no. 502), Valerius Maximus (nos. 113, 502), Aulus Gellius (no. 392), Plutarch (no. 622), and Diogenes Laertius (no. 471, 475). He also drew from the highly popular *Vitae patrum*, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, Caesarius von Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*, the anonymous *Gesta Romanorum*, Heinrich Steinhöwel's *Dialogus creaturarum*, Geiler von Kaysersberg's sermons, and the anonymous collection (perhaps by Hermann Bote) of *Till Eulenspiegel*. There is no specific thematic or alphabetical order of the tales; instead, *Schimpf und Ernst* appears as a literary kaleidoscope or as a freely flowing compilation of entertaining and instructive tales, which made it so easy for posterity to enjoy and to cull from it at liberty. Later editions also added further narratives fitting into the general framework. Pauli was very familiar with a large body of classical-antique and medieval texts, but he was not a scholar, or a Humanist; instead, he enjoyed the genre of the jest narratives and used it to great advantage for his purposes as a preacher.<sup>17</sup>

## Satire and Criticism

The author only offered the following two categories as headings for all his short prose narratives: "Von Schimpff" or "Von Ernst," and sometimes a combination of both. The same formula can be already found in Sebastian Brant's famous *Narrenschiff* (1494), but not as terms for the literary genre

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<sup>17</sup> Bolte, ed. (1924/1927), vol. 2, \*24\*26.

as in Pauli's work.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Brant referred with this formula only to the general sentiments of happiness and earnestness. In general, however, the difference between joking entertainment and didactic instruction was often rather minimal.

For Pauli, judging from this major collection, the world was in bad shape; people were losing their morality and ethics, and so he regarded it as his urgent task to admonish them to return to the proper path toward honor, morality, and love of God, for which the literary discourse proved to be most effective. As the very first story signals, truth is no longer desired by people, and those who tell it openly and directly are badly punished. Hence, this large collection served him as a literary medium to teach, to entertain, and to admonish his clerical contemporaries and the lay audience. He also encouraged others to contribute to future editions and to improve his book (prologue).

At the same time, Pauli took a rather mild view of all the shortcomings among his contemporaries and allowed his audience to laugh about foolishness and wrong behavior both by members of the clergy (especially monks and nuns, and also priests, radical monastic groups, religious fanatics, but also high-ranking authority figures, including bishops and the pope) and the laity (lawyers, usurers, prostitutes, merchants, peasants, married people, Jews, knights, innkeepers, medical doctors, princes, and others). Many times, particularly fools appear on the narrative stage, speak up, or assume important roles in public and can thus demonstrate the true foolishness of the learned or the high-ranking people in their pretentiousness. In fact, the fool was a highly popular figure in early modern German art and literature.<sup>19</sup> In a way, through the fool, Pauli criticized many problems of his time, including bickering, fights, wars, deceptions, lying, greed, ignorance, and stupidity. Naturally, he took into view difficult gender relationships inside and outside of marriage. While he clearly espoused a traditional patriarchal worldview, he certainly defended women when they were victimized by their husbands or other men, trying to harass or even rape them.

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<sup>18</sup> Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*. Nach der Erstausgabe (Basel 1494) mit den Zusätzen der Ausgaben von 1495 und 1499 sowie den Holzschnitten der deutschen Originalausgaben, ed. Manfred Lemmer. 3rd. expanded ed.. Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke, Neue Folge, 5 (1962; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986), p. 4, v. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Könneker, *Satire im 16. Jahrhundert: Epoche – Werke – Wirkung*. Arbeitsbücher zur Literaturgeschichte (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1991); Yona Pinson, *The Fools' Journey: A Myth of Obsession in Northern Renaissance Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

Hence, without any particular interest in structuring his collection apart from general terms, Pauli addressed the wide gamut of human shortcomings, criticizing high and low, members of the Church, the aristocracy, the merchant and peasant class, men and women, learned individuals, painters, gamblers, innkeepers, usurers, and prostitutes. We also come across Antisemitic statements (nos. 154, 555, 556, 557, 684), comments on magic (nos. 150–53), on the devil (nos. 86–88), and many times on ordinary people's weaknesses, ignorance, virtues, accomplishments, and failures. We are invited to laugh and to cry here and there and are expected to learn from the reading of or listening to experiences privately and publicly. Indirectly, *Schimpf und Ernst* provides an amazingly insightful mirror of the learned and the popular culture and the social and religious conditions during the early sixteenth century. Pauli also relied much on the tradition of the fable, as had been most influentially developed by the Swiss Dominican Ulrich Bonerius with his *Der Edelstein* (The Gemstone, ca. 1350), and he commonly utilized proverbs and idiomatic statements to summarize his particular concerns about people's vices or ignorance.<sup>20</sup>

In the course of the sixteenth century, the new editions of *Schimpf und Ernst* focused increasingly on the entertaining parts only and left out the religious and moralizing stories. Many authors of subsequent jest narratives (*Schwänke*) such as Martin Montanus, Hans-Wilhelm Kirchhof, Jakob Frey, Michael Lindener, Martin Montanus, Valentin Schumann, Georg Wickram, and Bartholomäus Krüger drew intensively from Pauli's collection and adapted individual stories for their own purposes. Although *Schimpf und Ernst* slowly faded in popularity during the eighteenth century, Pauli was still consistently identified as a major authority by writers such as Friedrich Nicolai, who extensively drew from his work for his *Vademecum* (1764–1792), and the Brothers Grimm, who resorted to two stories in *Schimpf und Ernst* for their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812; first included in the second edition from 1815; here according to the 3rd ed., 1837, nos. 145 [Pauli no. 437] and 151 [Pauli no. 261]). Future research might have to investigate to

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<sup>20</sup> Richard van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Vol. 1: *Das Haus und seine Menschen, 16.–18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990). Vol. 2: *Dorf und Stadt* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992); Vol. 3: *Religion, Magie, Aufklärung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994); Albrecht Classen, "Einblicke in den Alltag des 14. Jahrhunderts: Die Fabeln des Ulrich Bonerius: *Der Edelstein*," *Etudes Germaniques* 75.4 (2020): 593–615; for art-historical perspectives relevant for the sixteenth century, see now Marion McNealy and Max Geisberg, *Town and Country: 1517–1550: Scenes of Everyday Life in Detail from Geisberg's German Single Sheet Woodcuts* (Kennewick, WA: Nadel und Faden Press, 2021).



what extent the highly popular author of calendar stories, Johann Peter Hebel (1760–1822; particularly his *Der Rheinländische Hausfreund*, calendar stories for the years 1803–1811) might have been familiar with our Franciscan preacher-author.<sup>21</sup> Many points raised by Pauli, criticizing his contemporaries, still seem to be rather virulent today, so we might claim that *Schimpf und Ernst* has lost very little of its relevance also for modern readers. Once we have gained access to the narratives' inner core, the ethical or religious message, we can easily recognize their universal value until the present.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean at all that we are supposed to subscribe to everything promulgated by Pauli, since he openly advocated Antisemitic views, urged women to submit under patriarchal rule, and promoted a rather traditional, feudal worldview, for instance. However, *Schimpf und Ernst* still allows us to gain very insightful perspectives and to reflect on common notions dominant at that time. Most importantly, though, in most cases, we discover refreshing kernels of truth and stunningly critical comments about major problems of his time, which often seem very similar to those that vex us until today.

This collection, once published in 1522, immediately turned, as we have already seen, into a bestseller and deeply influenced many later writers, such as the prolific Nuremberg cobbler and composer of Shrovetide plays and poems, Hans Sachs (1494–1576), who utilized about 180 of Pauli's texts for his own purposes. The oldest edition from 1522 (Strassburg: Johannes

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<sup>21</sup> Johann Peter Hebel, *Die Kalendergeschichten: Sämtliche Erzählungen aus dem Rheinländischen Hausfreund*, ed. Hannelore Schlaffer and Harald Zils (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999). Unfortunately, the edition does not include an index for names, subjects, or topics, disregarding the index with the titles of the individual stories. There is no doubt that Hebel generally drew from the long tradition of didactic and entertaining tales for his calendars, and he might also have known of Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst*. So, we still face a huge desideratum as to the impact of Pauli's works on early modern German literature, but see, for example, my comments on the 595th story that confirm a specific influence in that unique case. Moreover, there are in general significant structural parallels between the stories by Hebel and Pauli, especially the quite regular effort in both cases to add in the epimythium an explanation and a moralization. However, in most cases, Hebel refers to recent events from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and when there might be parallels in content, they would seem more archetypal and not the result of a direct influence.

<sup>22</sup> For further reflections on that, see now Albrecht Classen, "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)," *Sankalp Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 3.4 (2023), online at: <https://sankalppublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SJMS-Vol-3-Issue-4-2023-03.pdf>.

Grüninger), the most extensive version compared to all subsequent republications, is the only one in which the author himself was directly involved – he seems to have died shortly thereafter.

The table of contents lists fourteen texts that are not included in the anthology. Later editions also did not supply those, and increasingly Protestant values and ideals dominated, although the original author had been a strong Catholic, a Franciscan priest. Those stories that appeared to be anti-Protestant were eliminated more and more over time, while new, often rather crude and even graphic narratives, including fables, *facetiae* by Poggio Bracciolini, and stories by Boccaccio entered the new versions. The Augsburg imprint of *Schimpf und Ernst* produced by Heinrich Steiners (1534) offered twenty-one new stories and woodcut illustrations copied from the Strassburg edition by Hans Weiditz. Major changes as to the arrangements of the texts also appear in the three earliest Frankfurt imprints, and the adaptation process continued from there.

Altogether, *Schimpf und Ernst* was a major literary contribution from the early sixteenth century which exerted massive influence across northern and central Europe for the next centuries, although modern scholarship has not yet paid Pauli the full credit that he truly deserves. The term ‘bestseller’ certainly applies here, although the author never seems to have found readers in England, Spain, or Italy as far as I can tell. Nevertheless, the narratives, often very short and rather poignant, were supposed to appeal to a wide range of audiences, from the peasant class to the world of wealthy burghers and members of the nobility. Many times, as we have already seen, Pauli drew from classical Latin or Greek literature, and he also utilized numerous medieval literary sources ranging from Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (tenth century) to the tales of *Till Eulenspiegel* (first printed in 1510/1511).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Albrecht Classen, “Die deutsche Predigtliteratur des Mittelalters im Kontext der europäischen Erzähltradition: Johannes Paulis *Schimpf und Ernst* (1521) als Rezeptionsmedium,” *Fabula* 44.3/4 (2003): 209–36. For the relevant research on Pauli addressing a wide range of topics, see Silvia Schmitz, *Weltentwurf als Realitätsbewältigung in Johannes Paulis “Schimpf und Ernst“, vorgeführt am Beispiel der lasterhaften Frau*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 346 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982); Alexander Hildebrand, “Johannes Pauli,” *Kindlers Neues Literatur Lexikon*, ed. Walter Jens. Vol. 13 (Munich: Kindler, 1991), 8–9; Anna Mühlherr, “Johannes Pauli,” *Deutsche Dichter der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1600): Ihr Leben und Werk*, ed. Stephan Füssel (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1993), 125–37; Arlene E. Pearsall, *Johannes Pauli (1450–1520): On the Church and Clergy*. Medieval and Renaissance Series, 11 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994); Yumiko Takahashi, *Die Komik der Schimpf-Exempel von Johannes Pauli: eine textpragmatische Analyse frühneuhochdeutscher Predigterzählungen*. Hochschulsammlung Philosophie / Sprachwissenschaft, 10

Undoubtedly, this preacher-author was highly skillful at utilizing the daily experiences of the rich and the poor for his narratives and addressed them all in an often hilarious and yet also critical fashion. These tales were meant to be presented orally, which explains the heavy use of dialog across the entire collection. But the vast number of new print runs indicates that this work quickly gained highest popularity also as a source for reading entertainment.

## On the Translation

Although *Schimpf und Ernst* was a huge success on the early modern book market, and appealed to readers in other languages as well, this work has never been translated into English. My goal is not to cover the entire collection; instead, I will offer an extensive selection of the best tales as far as I can judge them. This often proved to be a rather difficult task since the sixteenth-century author and his audiences certainly had different tastes and concerns than we do today. But there are enough fundamental concerns and topics that address all people throughout time and all over the world to guarantee that this translation of selected samples will also appeal to modern readers. Many times, we can observe that a certain tale refers to specific contemporary phenomena of great interest for modern scholars of history, religion, psychology, and literature. In those cases, above all, I have provided extensive notes with relevant bibliographical references.

Of course, Pauli lived in the period between the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century; he was a Franciscan preacher, so he had his own perspectives on women, criminals, sinners, peasants, tyrants, noblemen, and members of the clergy, among many other people. His primary task was to offer pastoral care for his parishes, and these sermon narratives provided valuable literary reflections for all members of his audience to reconsider their own shortcomings.<sup>24</sup> I have tried to include at least one or two

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Sprachwissenschaft, 10 (Freiburg i. Br.: Hochschul-Verlag, 1994); Hans-Jörg Uther, "Pauli, Johannes," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich. Vol. 10.1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 661–70; Sebastian Coxon, "'Da lacht der babst': Zur komischen Erzählmotivik als Mittel der Kohärenzstiftung in Johannes Paulis 'Schimpf und Ernst' (1522)," *Schwanksammlungen im frühneuzeitlichen Medienumbruch: Transformationen eines sequentiellen Erzählparadigmas*, ed. Seraina Plotke, and Stefan Seeber. Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift, Beiheft 96 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019), 223–41.

<sup>24</sup> For the history of pastoral care in the late Middle Ages, see now Deeana Copeland Klepper, *Pastoral Care and Community in Late Medieval Germany: Albert of Diessen's Mirror of Priests*. Medieval Societies, Religions, and Cultures (Ithaca,

narratives from every section, although at times the thematic orientation did not justify that because of the exclusively religious content. But I have translated all section titles. It might have been good to translate the entire collection, I admit, although then we would be exposed to a considerable body of texts that often reflect only deeply religious and conservative convictions by a sixteenth-century Franciscan preacher. I have tried my best to identify interesting narratives that carry timeless relevance, or that are well structured and developed. In addition, I opted also for tales that prove to be intriguing from a cultural-historical perspective. Whenever reasonable, I have accompanied the texts with comments and references to relevant research literature.

The translation does not pretend that all those stories are must-read materials also for us. Many times, irony or satire, and especially the spiritual concepts might seem a little out of place for our taste or out of date because of their political and social perspectives. Many times, for instance, the author clearly reveals that he fully subscribed to a traditionally patriarchal worldview. At the same time, there are numerous examples of direct criticism of tyrants and high-ranking ecclesiastics who abused their authority and power, and also of sharp comments about violent and foolish husbands. Apart from those categories, I selected texts that poignantly and convincingly formulate their particular concerns, and also express their ideas in a clear and understandable fashion.<sup>25</sup>

Granted, there is some personal or local humor which might not always appeal to us since wit and witticisms are always predicated on specific cultural conditions. Although Pauli was a stout Catholic, and that at a time when the Protestant Reformation was already taking strong shape, he viewed and criticized people's shortcomings and faults with a good sense of humor and tended more to reprimand or to chastise them instead of judging and condemning outright. His central concern was to convince

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NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2022); for a recent review, see Andrew Reeves in *The Medieval Review*, online, 23.09.06. As Reeves notes, "Albert, Klepper explains to us, was not just writing for 'priests' or for 'priests and laity,' but for the priests of one particular town and region. In particular, his work was for both Augustinian canons serving as priests in parishes owned by Diessen and the priests of parishes that ultimately reported to the convent. The discussion of the physical space of the town and convent and how it was spiritually understood shows an admirably interdisciplinary character, drawing on the language not only of history, but of religious studies, particularly in the discussion of how one theorizes space."

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, nineteenth-century Hebel, who possibly drew some inspiration from Pauli, also emphasized explicitly that husbands should never beat their wives; it would hurt their own honor ("Seltsame Entscheidungen," 294 [see note 18]).

people to repent, to reform, to cry, or to laugh, and hence to improve, and he did not want to destroy the traditional Church.

Many times, the prose tales in his *Schimpf* and *Ernst* prove to be small literary masterpieces, well structured, direct in targeting human problems, and deft in the choice of language with a lot of local flair and dialectal elements (Alsatian). Since I want to offer only a (large) selection, the reader is strongly encouraged to turn to the original work, if at all possible, and to examine other narratives of the same topics, depending on the themes covered here. In one case, I felt compelled to copy also the original because the narrative seems to be a true literary masterpiece (no. 129).

Ironically, of course, many times Pauli offered texts that he himself had translated from classical and medieval Latin or Middle High German, rendering them into his early modern Alemannic dialect. But his versions are never the results of a direct translation; rather, he adapted all his sources for his own purposes, abbreviating or changing each one as he saw fit in order to address a specific message about human misbehaviors, failures, shortcomings, or vices. We can often recognize the preacher behind the various accounts, as entertaining or didactic they might be, especially when he summarizes his message in a brief epimythium (concluding or moralizing commentary) addressing people's need to guard the well-being of their souls. Pauli presents his stories the way a public speaker would do, which means, for instance, that there are often duplications in the statements that do not need to be replicated in the translation.

At the same time, the narrator tends to employ idiomatic expressions that are not very difficult to decipher but still need to be explained to some extent. The Alsatian dialect is clearly noticeable, especially regarding the word choice or the selection of metaphors or idioms. The translation offered here attempts to solve these issues by way of simplifying the statements where appropriate, cutting out some of the wordiness or metaphorical formulations, rendering them into specific terms addressing the concrete issues in the manner in which we would express them in our day and age pragmatically.<sup>26</sup>

However, numerous colloquialisms could not be translated appropriately and directly, especially when they tend to reflect crude concepts and might even be vulgar, at least in Pauli's language (pertaining, for instance, to urinating or defecating). It would be too extreme to search, as some translators do, for equivalent idioms from some English or Scottish dialects, for instance. After all, this is supposed to be a precise translation,

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<sup>26</sup> Most useful proved to be the online platform with many different dictionaries, <https://woerterbuchnetz.de/#0>; especially the *Wörterbuch der elsässischen Mundarten*, because Pauli himself originated from the Alsace.

and not a poetic recreation; so, the original German text remains the standard by itself, and I can only try to convince the reader to turn to that and enjoy the author's idiosyncratic expressions, if possible in the first place. Unfortunately, Johannes Bolte used the old font type, *Fraktur*, for the edition of *Schimpf und Ernst* in 1924, a script that was in use until 1941. Even for a trained eye, the reading of the text can thus be a little difficult, and errors might easily enter the picture because of the small print which makes it almost impossible to identify whether a superscript for the *umlaut* is an 'e' or an 'o,' such as in "huoten" (28; here already spelled out).

Through my adaptation process in the translation, I might have at times moved a little too far away from the original, and we thus certainly lose some of the historical-linguistic flavor. However, this seems to be the necessary and correct, i.e., an effective and realistic approach when offering a modern translation of a sixteenth-century text. When important for the modern reader, I have provided explanations for individual terms in the footnotes. Overall, however, Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* can be understood fairly easily by anyone with even a modicum of a grasp of pre-modern German even though many features are determined to a considerable extent by dialect expressions (Alemannic). Overall, Pauli's language was mostly standard Early Modern German, but he did not hesitate to incorporate local expressions, signaling that a split between the linguistic registers became noticeable.

To stay true to the specific terms used by Pauli, I keep the words *Schimpff* (or *Schimpf*, as it is generally spelled until today) and *Ernst* in the titles to identify the content the author tried to address. The term *Schimpff* carries with it the sense of entertaining, comical material, the flavor of a witty and fun story that intends to delight the audience. *Ernst* means 'Earnest,' hence, a serious matter. In most cases, however, the content provided does not allow us easily and clearly to recognize the difference especially because many of the moral or ethical concerns are cast in jocular terms.

The stories are all numbered, but there is no clear system as to the distribution of *Schimpf* and *Ernst* stories. When the heading says, for instance, "Von Ernst das 21." (20), this does not mean that it is the twenty-first *Ernst* story. Instead, it is the twenty-first story altogether, which the author assigns, however, to the group of texts with a more serious, moralizing, or religious content. Many times, the author refers to people at large and uses the masculine pronoun, but it is regularly intended as a generic term for both genders. I do not change that for pragmatic purposes and avoid the clumsy 's/he' or the grammatically problematic 'they.'