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Gender discourse in Johannes Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522)

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Our understanding of past conditions, ideals, values, general concepts, or relationships depends very much on the testimonies available to us today. This applies critically to the gender discourse in the early modern age, especially in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, which was a true paradigm shift in many respects, and so also regarding the relationship between men and women. Both historians and art historians, religious scholars, and researchers in the field of Women Studies have already explored the issues pertaining to early modern women, but some of the best opportunities to gain deeper understandings have not yet been utilized. The collection of sermon tales, *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522), by the Franciscan preacher Johannes Pauli was one of the most successful literary enterprises in the sixteenth century, quickly gaining extraordinary popularity far into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fact that we face a bestseller here invites us to accept this anthology as a central narrative source for many different historical or social topics, including women's lives. This study opens thereby not only a new chapter in the exploration of the early modern gender discourse, but also a new chapter in Pauli research.

Keywords: gender discourse, Protestant Reformation, women, Johannes Pauli, adultery, marriage, prostitution, widowhood

Introduction: historical context

Paradigm shifts such as the Protestant Reformation normally affect many aspects of society, especially when those shifts concern theological worldviews, which then tend to have an impact on the economic, political, or social conditions for society at large. In this context, most important often appears to be the impact on the gender relationship, which was also the case around 1500 (or since 1517) when the Protestant ethics radically changed the religious landscape, critically destroying the institution of monasteries and strongly advocating marriage also for ministers. As Susan C. Karant-Nunn observed, "The Protestant Reformations unwittingly tacitly redefined the family as nuclear by cropping off nearly every extraneous leaf and branch, every venue of "diffuse" relatedness" [(1), 434]. Indeed, the focus on the *pater familias* and his subordinated wife and children became a strong role model for the next centuries to come. But Karant-Nunn then argues that "sermonizers impressed upon women their almost-complete subordination to their husbands as a result of Eve's part in causing the Fall of humankind" (442). Although this conservative concept was not new either for the Catholic Church, the Protestants intensified the patriarchal notion and impressed on women that their space was mostly limited to the home, hence the kitchen and the children (443).

Overall, this impression seems to have been correct and would not need to be revisited here. However, we know of a number of theologically active women, such as Argula von Grumbach, who made their own voices heard and tried hard to be involved in the theological debates of their time (2, 3). Anna Ovena Hoyers (1584-1655), for instance, struggled intensively against the orthodox Lutheran ministers in her region and later had to go into exile in Sweden in 1632 (4, 5). Scholars have also considered the many different roles that women in the early modern period could assume in politics, in the economy, in craftsmanship, and in religion,

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irrespective of male efforts to reduce them to the position of a housewife (6).

Once the paradigm shift had occurred, triggered by Luther and others, this did not simply stop all further social changes; instead, the discourse on gender continued to evolve, and we have thus learned that in the early modern period, women in the German-speaking lands evolved as well and could increasingly hold on to their own in various respects, which also entailed that women gained new access to professional lives, running businesses, handling the finances, or working themselves as craftswomen [(7), 120-30]. Widows, for instance, could gain considerable influence and economic weight, especially after they had had several marriages and had thus accumulated extensive properties and wealth [cf. the contributions to (8); and to (9)].

Early modern women

Undoubtedly, many noble ladies exerted extensive influence and defied traditional masculine concepts about women's proper roles in public (10). To do justice to this huge topic, we would have also to pay close attention to women's social status and rank, extending from prostitutes to queens, from artists and musicians to wet nurses and book printers [e.g., (11–13)]. As to be expected, all generalizations would be dangerous, especially if we consider the situation for women in Spain versus those in Denmark, those in England versus those in Poland, etc. However, we can still probe this issue by way of examining the larger discourse itself as it evolved over time. Literary documents, above all, allow us to gain access to a variety of points of view, especially when we can identify both relevant male voices, such as in the famous collection of Old French prose narratives in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (ca. 1460), and female voices in the much admired *Heptaméron* by Marguerite de Navarre (1558/1559) [see, e.g., (14–16)].

Although much ink has already been spilled on this significant and vast topic, we are often still lacking good access to primary sources and do not work interdisciplinarily enough, drawing from sources in a variety of fields. And, since the paradigm shift was primarily initiated by representatives of the Protestant Reformation, scholars have focused mostly on the voices on that side of the public divide (17).

Catholic perspectives on women

How did Catholic writers, for instance, view women, and what did they say about their roles? For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen one of the most popular writers from that time period, the Franciscan sermon author Johannes Pauli, who is truly famous among literary scholars for his collection of sermon tales, *Schimpf und Ernst*, first published in 1522, and many times thereafter well into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and also twentieth century [(18); for recent studies, see, for example, (19–22)]. We could go so far and identify this volume as one of the most influential secular and entertaining works published during the sixteenth century [(Gotzkowsky, 1991), 536–61; Bolte, ed., vol. 1, 141–54], deeply impacting the entire genre of jest narratives developed further by Georg Wickram, Hans-Wilhelm Kirchhoff, Michael Lindener, Wilhelm Frey, etc., [cf. (23, 24)].

However, Gender or Reformation scholars have mostly ignored Pauli altogether and have thus missed a great opportunity to investigate popular culture, the history of mentality, everyday life conditions, and hence also the dominant attitude about women formulated by one of the most successful authors of his time, Pauli. He is not even mentioned in some of the seminal studies on the early modern history of women (6, 7). There is no shortage of investigations of women during the age of the Protestant Reformation [e.g., (25, 26)], but we know much less about the general perceptions of and about women, especially formulated by representatives of the traditional Church. What we would need to learn, and what this author can help us with in an intriguing fashion, is what spectrum of women's roles existed, how male authors viewed women, whether they feared them or not, and how women interacted with men.

Schimpf und Ernst: a relevant source

Intriguingly, Pauli aimed at instructing his audience about the fundamental teachings of the Church pertaining to ethics and morality, intelligence and piety, religious devotion and reason, but he managed regularly to package his messages into entertaining narratives based on historical and contemporary experiences, combining universal with personal accounts. The stories are titled either as *Schimpff* (jest, normally without the double-f) or *Ernst* (earnest account), but the difference is mostly not clearly discernible.

The volume, in its original publication from 1522, contains a total of 693 short accounts, and those are divided into 90 thematic topics, but there is no systematic arrangement throughout. Major themes are, for instance, truth (I), good and evil virgins (II), fools (IV), priests (VII), the devil (VIII), horse swindlers (X), marriage (XII), arrogance (XV), usury (XVII), drunkenness (XXI), *memento mori* (XXV), penitence (XXVIII), alms (XXXIII), the pope (XXXV), medical doctors (XXXVIII), innkeepers (XLII), peace and accord (XLIX), painters (LI), friendship (LIII), giving advice (LVI), swearing oaths (LXIII), good councilors during war (LXXVIII), gratitude (LXXXIX), and warfare (XC). Later editors or publishers freely added further narratives, rearranged the content, and operated fairly independent from the original

version still supervised by Pauli for the first publication in 1522 (Bolte, ed., vol. 2, 7-130; all superscripta will be written out for clarity's sake; they only signal umlauts).

This wide gamut of issues covered here allows us to utilize this collection as a narrative basis for the study of everyday life in the early sixteenth century (27), which also entails that *Schimpf und Ernst* can be approached as a truly meaningful primary source reflecting the ongoing gender discourse as reflected by this writer. Of course, we would have to keep in mind the particular filters that shape all these narratives. First, there is, of course, Pauli's male, and second, his clerical perspective, and we could not expect him to be a spokesperson for women's liberation, which would be a rather anachronistic concept in the present context anyway. After all, he belonged to the Franciscan Order, and he pursued primarily the task of preaching to his various parishioners. For him, as we'll see, the wide range of human conditions made it possible for him and others to reflect on ethical, moral, and religious values. But for us, these sermon tales specifically mirror the conditions on the ground, so to speak, even if they at first served to make the audience laugh about foolish individuals, for instance, or to reflect on ordinary human shortcomings as a result of greed, sexual lust, envy, or gullibility.

In particular, as we have already recognized, *Schimpf und Ernst* was not a straightforward religious compendium serving only novice priests to enliven their sermons with examples borrowed from real life, or members of monasteries to gain some entertainment, as much as Pauli suggests that in the Prologue. Instead, the author drew extensively from ancient and medieval sources and adapted them for his own purposes to entertain and instruct a wide range of listeners/readers, and then situated them within his own time. He mentions by name most of his classical authors (such as Maximus Valerius), but he normally refrains from specifying the identity of his medieval sources, such as Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (tenth century) or Konrad von Würzburg (late thirteenth century). He also seems to have known Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350), but he leaves out his name (28). By contrast, Pauli regularly mentions especially Petrarch as one of his influential sources [(18), vol. 2, 240-54] and other humanists. His collection thus mirrors most meaningfully the contemporary awareness of ancient and medieval literature, providing a narrative platform for the further development of the classical themes far into the early modern period. For instance, Pauli demonstrates, which scholarship has not yet realized, full knowledge of the *Tristan* tradition, although he does not use the key names of the two protagonists (nos. 206, 227).

We can thus accept *Schimpf und Ernst* as a highly valuable literary document particularly useful for us to reflect in depth on the way how women were regarded and treated by early modern German authors, such as Johannes Pauli. Research on women's history, however, has entirely ignored him, and Germanist scholarship seems to have been content with identifying him broadly as a spokesperson of his time, neglecting to investigate them as expressions of social conditions, tensions, and conflicts. In some chapters, the author focuses exclusively and directly on women, either as prostitutes or as adulteresses, either as nuns or as wives. He also investigates widely the problem of women's sexual victimization and pursues a rather conservative, strict perspective identifying rape, above all, as a serious crime punishable with the death penalty. In short, *Schimpf und Ernst* offers itself as an ideal medium to identify the common opinions about the gender relationship in the early modern age, although the author does not investigate in a narrow sense what gender itself might apply.

These sermon tales commonly address facetious scenes, foolish behavior, ridiculous individuals, but also dangers, violence, and crime, all serving to entertain and to instruct at the same time. There is a certain sense of arbitrariness and even naiveté in the entire collection of tales, and for that reason, above all, we can examine more specifically how women fare, what types of social roles they are associated with, and how our male author comments on them. Not surprisingly, as we will observe, many tales are filled with highly negative remarks about evil, flirting, boisterous, arrogant, or even violent women. But we will also observe that Pauli offered many different perspectives, depending on the circumstances, as he has much positive to say about women in individual cases.

The issue of rape

Both today and in the pre-modern period, rape has been unequivocally identified as a crime [(29), passim; (Classen, 2019/2021)], and this is also noticeable in one of Pauli's best novellas, as we could call his texts as well. In story 129, identified as *Ernst*, an older judge, who enjoys the highest reputation for his honor and complete resistance to any form of corruption, falls ill and has to stay in bed. But he hears one day a young woman outside of his bedroom screaming and learns from a servant that his nephew had some "fun" with her. The metaphorical language, which often characterizes Pauli's narratives, speaks volume, especially for the judge, who immediately understands the deeper meaning of "schimpfen." In modern German, this verb only implies "chastisement" or "reprimanding," whereas in the pre-modern world it entails a wider range of meaning, including making fun, and then also hurting or raping someone.

The judge secures a sharp knife and hides it underneath his pillow. When the nephew comes to see him one day, the judge asks him to hug him. While the young man lies in his arms, the judge pulls out the knife and stabs him to death as punishment for the rape (87). There are no further comments about this deed, and the judge only orders the corpse to be buried. Soon after, his sickness gets worse, and when death is approaching, the priest takes his last confession to absolve

him from his sins. However, the judge does not confess the sin of "murder," although the priest points that out, urging him to do so. The judge flatly refuses, insisting that a. he had loved his nephew dearly, and b. that he had done this deed "in Straffs Weiß gethon" (87; as a punishment). The priest cannot accept this explanation, withholds the sacrament, and is about to leave the room when the judge calls him back and asks him to look into his mouth. On his tongue, there rests the sacrament, which God had miraculously moved from the priest to the judge. The narrative concludes with the author's curt comment: "Got in gerechten Richtern ein Wolgefallen hat und sie lieb hat" (87; God likes just judges and appreciates them).

As problematic this outcome might be, especially considering the apparent justification of the judge's actions against his guilty nephew, the message about rape is absolutely clear. It is identified as a crime to be punished with the death penalty. The female victim is never given the opportunity to comment on her suffering, and we do not learn specific details, but the old judge takes action into his own hands and so condemns his own young relative to death whom he personally executes.

However, Pauli also told stories in which the charge of rape was questioned because the evidence was uncertain. In tale 15 (16), for instance, a young and wealthy woman comes to see a judge and accuses a young fellow for having raped her. The judge listens to her charge but insists that he first has to listen to the man's testimony. He sends her home and tells her to return the next day. To probe the truth of the matter, the judge has a servant following the maid and pretending that he wants to rob her of her purse. Upon her loud screaming, the neighbors come rushing out of their houses and chase the thief away. The next day, when she is back at court, she is greatly shocked to encounter the alleged thief and accuses him of having tried to commit a crime against her. However, the judge only comments that if she had screamed the same way when her friend had allegedly tried to rape her, she would have been rescued by the people nearby: "so wer man dir auch zuo Hilff kumen" (16; they would have come to help you). Closing this case, he sends her off and declares that the alleged rapist would be free of that charge.

In tale 17, we hear of two peasant women who unrelentingly pursue a young man and finally manage to sleep with him one after the other in the same room. He impregnates both, and subsequently both women sue him to marry her. The case moves from one court to the other, and no one knows how to handle it. Finally, back in the village, the judge decides that the two women would have to pay a fine to the young man because they had robbed him of his virginity. In fact, the judge identifies both as prostitutes (17), which all superior authorities fully approve. Both here and in many other tales, Pauli often remarks on prostitution, which he views with criticism, but which he also acknowledges as a fact of life that was very common as an institution in late medieval cities [see, for instance, (30–32)].

Material conditions

It is very understandable that Pauli includes many references to women in his tales because those deal with ordinary situations in people's lives. Although the author regularly pursues religious intentions, addressing imminent death, warning about the devil, committing any of the Seven Deadly Sins, transgressions by members of the clergy, and idealizing the value of peace, confession, repentance, and friendship, we still observe the material conditions embedded in each tale. In the 84th story, for instance, a young unmarried woman works as a maid in a city, where she is constantly harassed by men and has a hard time in fending them off.

Finally, she decides to look for new employment and goes to a castle in the hope of finding a better position there. The devil appears to her in human shape and warns her about the courtiers who are "muotwillig Luet" (58; arrogant or willful people); she would later regret having turned there. The woman dismisses that advice, and then suffers even worse because she is soon pregnant, perhaps as the result of rape.

Due to her new condition, she is let off and now blames the devil for having urged her to look for work in the castle. This is a blatant lie, and the devil badly beats her for that (59), which the narrator then does not develop further. It remains unclear why the devil would have even warned her about the danger. But the narrative aims for a general teaching, since we are told that people tend to blame others for what they are doing wrong because they are driven by their own evil desires and instincts. It would be easy to make the devil responsible for all things that go wrong in this life, but people really ought to take responsibility for their own actions.

In tale 86, a thief forms an alliance with the devil who helps him steal goods from wherever he can find valuables. One day, the thief discovers a chest filled with women's garments and accessories, but the devil blocks him from taking any of those objects because those really belong to the devil who utilizes them to seduce men to commit adultery or other transgressions (59). The narrator, as a preacher, is aghast about the jewelry and textiles women acquire to be attractive to men, and he characterizes all that as belonging to prostitutes, not to honorable women.

Businesswomen

In a very different context, we hear of women who are involved in money business. In tale 113, a widow serves in the role of a banker, taking on a deposit of 500 ducats which two men entrust her. Both are deceitful and attempt to cheat the other, but the widow manages, with the help of a smart lawyer, to extricate herself from the charge of embezzlement. The men had set up the condition that she was to return the money only when both would be present and request it. The first one returns alone and claims that the other one had died.

The widow is naive enough to believe him, so she turns the money over to him.

When the second man then appears and makes the same claim, she is helpless and nearly prosecuted when a lawyer offers his free service to her. He actually wins the case because he reminds the second man that he would first have to find his fellow and appear before the widow; otherwise, the condition for this deposit would not be fulfilled. The author really intends to highlight the great responsibilities of a lawyer, but he here also sheds light on what financial business widows could assume. This woman does not fare too well and would have been thrown into prison without the good defense at court, but the narrative still reveals that a widow could carry out such a banking function.

Story 120 ("Schimpff") takes us to the court of a duke in Athens who had a pretty daughter. A young man falls deeply in love with her and tries to catch sight of her whenever possible. One day, he encounters her and her mother on their way to church, and in his passion, he approaches the young woman, hugs, and kisses her. Both women are deeply upset, and the mother has him captured and sent to prison. Her husband questions him the next morning, probably in the presence of his wife. The fellow admits that he had acted inappropriately but defends himself by pointing out that he feels deep love for her and all women ("natuerliche Liebe," 83; natural love). The duke does not pay attention to this explanation and wants him to be executed. However, his wife then intervenes, having understood the young man's lack of emotional self-control, and alerts her husband that the culprit was actually their friend. It would be impossible hence to imagine how to treat people who were their enemies.

The narrator does not address the duchess in particular, but he gives her indirectly much praise for the good advice and emphasizes that all judges, like this duke, should carefully listen to such comments and hence consider also the other side in all legal cases. The duchess had been upset about the fellow's behavior, but she understood his emotional condition and thus considered his action as virtually forgivable. Even though the prince at first wants to decide this case on his own, rashly, and aggressively, his wife manages to calm him down and to perceive the case from a reasonable perspective. Kissing his daughter would not be an act that should be punished with the death penalty. Indirectly, hence, the duchess serves as the voice of reason who helps her husband avoid issuing an irrational and extremely harsh judgment. Of course, she was also upset about the unpleasant incidence in the open, but she maintains her reason and urges her husband to observe moderation particularly as a judge.

Women and the legal courts

In tale 124 ("Schimpff"), we hear of a poor widow once again, but this time the woman has tried for a long time to get a hearing for a legal case. The judges simply delay everything and do not seem to care about her. One day, the old woman spends time with friends, and one of them advises her, to smear the judge's hand to promote her case. She means that, of course, metaphorically, i.e., to bribe him, but the widow does not understand the implied message because she is not intelligent enough: "kont nit vil Gloß machen" (84; she could not figure out the glosses; or, read between the lines). Nevertheless, the advice truly works because the woman applies some butter to the judge's hand when she meets him a few days later. The judge is completely confused about this, but when he learns what the other woman had recommended her to do, that is, literally he realizes the ethical messages and his legal obligation to give the case a hearing and not to let the old woman wait for a judgment in her case sometime in the distant future. As the narrator stresses: "Da schampt sich der Richter" (85; The judge was ashamed). In other words, that old woman deserved the same legal justice as anyone else, as the judge realizes only to clearly.

Gender trouble

Misogyny is certainly also part of late medieval narrative traditions, and Pauli's tale 131 sheds good light on this issue. At first, we hear of a young husband who consults with a philosopher [Socrates] about how to manage his married life. The philosopher takes him home and demonstrates to him that his wife completely obeys his orders whatever they might be, meaningful or not. If the young man would be able to enforce this authority over his wife, he would have a happy marriage. In general, this outcome does not surprise us, whereas the narrator's subsequent comments reveal the true complexity of the issue, revealing a considerable degree of male insecurity and fear of women's power over them.

As Pauli remarks, at his time, most men, deeply troubled, acknowledge their wives by default as their "Meister," or "Man Meister" (89), meaning that they are the masters of the house. In fact, men are at the present so downtrodden that they have to obey their wives in every respect. Worse, as the narrator adds, women have taken on the custom of dressing lavishly like prostitutes, wearing seductive dresses that show large parts of their naked bodies. To reestablish patriarchal rule, men just would have to resort to their physical superiority (violence) and deftly subjugate their wives.

In the following tale 132, a peasant relates to his friends that he and his wife have never enjoyed any peace or any agreement in their marriage of 30 years. Only once did they both agree on anything, at the very beginning, when their house started to catch fire, and both rushed out of it to save their lives. As the narrator notes, however, the fault for their severe disagreement and mutual hostility would rest on both of their shoulders since they had never demonstrated any kindness or love for each other.

The next *Schimpff* (tale 133) presents a deeply troubling scenario with three brothers and their wives who constantly

bicker with each other. One day, shortly before holidays, the brothers decide to do their fieldwork and ask the women to bake in preparation for the feast. The latter do not want to comply out of hatred for the others, but the brothers eventually return individually and beat their wives badly. Those finally agree to let their hostility go and collaborate in baking cakes and breads in plenty for the holidays. The brothers return, afraid that there would not be any food for them at home because of their domestic violence. However, when they find their wives peacefully gathered and enjoying their meal, they join them happily, which establishes peace among them all.

The narrative does not indicate to us how the harmony was really established, but the outcome of the entire scene, as violent as it developed, proves to be that "darnach wurden sie nit me uneins, die Frawen und die Man, und was eine wolt, das wolt die ander auch. und blieben in guotem Friden mit den Mannen" (90; thereafter they had never a conflict again, women and men, and what the one wanted, the other one also wanted. and so they observed good peace with the men). The element of physical violence remains in the background, but the narrator does not comment on it further as if wife-beating would be fully acceptable under the circumstances described (for parallel cases in medieval texts, see the contributions to (33); for the situation in the early modern age, see the contributions to (34); the testimony of Pauli, however, is not even considered in either publication). On the one hand, we are confronted with a brutal case of domestic violence; on the other, the author emphasizes the great need for people to collaborate with each other and to observe peace for the community to thrive. The real problem here rests in the women's animosity against each other, whereas their husbands, as brothers, collaborate and act in full agreement.

The ultimate goal, as outlined by Pauli, would be, however, to recognize what would be necessary to do within specific contexts and to accept that task with a willing mind, hence making a virtue out of a necessity. The author draws his inspiration from Petrarch once again and concludes: "'Wiltu nit gezwungen werden zuo gon, so gang gern und mit Willen!'" (90; if you do not want to be forced to walk, then go forward happily and willingly). Of course, this does not blind us to the fact that the brothers' beating up of their wives is fully condoned because the author identifies it as a "necessary" punishment for their recalcitrance. The ideal form of cohabitation, however, is described as one based on harmony and mutual respect, as long as the women acknowledge their husbands' authority.

Marriage and sexuality

For a Franciscan preacher to address sexuality and to approve of it within marriage might come as a surprise, but Pauli formulates this opinion in his 136th tale, another "Schimpff." Here, a wife consistently refuses to have sex with her husband, and this for excessive religious reasons. Every day, she has an excuse for refraining from sleeping with him because it is a holiday, a saint's day, etc. Already the medieval Penitentials offered highly detailed reasons for not having a sexual relationship because only the desire to create progeny was legitimate in the eyes of the major religious authorities [cf. the figure 4.1 in (29), 162, which perfectly illustrates the position of the Church]. In Pauli's tale, the wife closely follows the traditional argument and is hence labeled a "Goetlerin" (93; excessive worshipper of God). The husband gets so frustrated that he eventually hires a prostitute and brings her home to the bedroom. When the wife discovers the other woman, she gets very upset and wants to beat her up. The husband manages to prevent that, insisting to her: "'Frau, ir sein ein heilig Frau, wir sein arm Suonder. Darumb gon ir von unß!'" (93; Wife, you are a holy woman; we are poor sinners. Hence, go away from us). Subsequently, the wife no longer referred to holidays as an excuse when her husband desired sex from her, but the details are then not explored further since all that would be a matter of a private conversation between the confessing sinner and the priest. Altogether, the author signals that religion should not get in the way of ordinary marital life, and he even supports undoubtedly the necessity for sexual pleasures for marriage to be maintained well.

The narrator's comment, however, subsequently sheds a curious light on Pauli's own attitude toward women since he opines that they should not stay away from home for too long and should not retort to her husband in conversations, especially when he has flown of. In case of him exploding into wrath, she should keep quiet since the aggressive strategy to retort every word offered by the marriage partner would only turn into worst fights. Women should not try to have the last word. In order to solve that issue, the husband is encouraged to strike her in the face and thus to bring her to silence. In short, even in this case does Pauli encourage husbands to resort to domestic violence and thus to repress women if they insist on their own authority: "sol man sie uff die Scheid schlagen, uff den Trueffel, das sie das Schwert darin laßt" (93; they ought to beat them in their face so that they leave the sword in the scabbard].

For Pauli, wives ought to observe silence in marriage and act submissively and peacefully. But this does not mean that the author would have provided husbands with a blank check in that regard, as tale 139 indicates. There, a wife tries everything in her might to observe her husband's instructions and to be completely submissive, but he never displays contentment and keeps chastising her for whatever reason. In her desperation, she suggests that he ought to write down on a piece of paper what he truly expects her to do and what not. She only wants to please him and would be ready to follow his specific instructions. Soon thereafter, both return from a large festival, with him being so drunk that he falls off a footbridge into a ditch and desperately needs her help to get out of the water. Although he screams at her to come to his rescue, she

refuses and tells him that she first would have to go home and check the list of her tasks to see whether she would be expected to do so. The drunkard barely manages to climb out of the ditch when the water is already at the level of his lips. Hence, as soon as he has returned home, he does not turn to violence; instead, which proves to be a remarkable turn of events, he tears the letter apart and tells her: "'Thuo selber, was du meinst, das recht sei!"' (94; Do what you yourself think to be right).

Since that time, the couple enjoys a happy marriage, obviously because he has granted her private space and accepts her own decisions, while she is trying hard to please him and to perform correctly. We could thus not simply identify Pauli as a resolute advocate of patriarchy, especially not in marriage, although in some cases, the opposite seems to be the case [for a variety of parallel cases, though never with a reference to Pauli, see the contributions to (35, 36)]. As long as women submit and act obediently and kindly, they are recognized and acknowledged, certainly only a rather precarious condition, though one already prescribed by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. This comment was a guideline both for Catholics and Protestants.

However, there are also clear cases where the narrator strongly condemns drunken and foolish husbands, as in tale 140. There, a man is constantly drunk and has thus a double vision, not understanding what is going wrong for him. But one day, having come home from a long drinking party, he enters the kitchen and sees two pots hanging over the fire. The wife only says that she has cooked a roster in one pot and that she would grab that one to take it to the dinner table. The husband, completely confused, wants to take the other pot, which does not exist, and falls into the fire, badly burning his hands. Ever since, he makes sure not to see everything doubly, and he observes "Frid mit seiner Frawen" (95; peace with his wife).

Tale 145 also proves to be an interesting case because the criticism is here directed against the husband who has forbidden his wife to think on her own. Once, during his absence, she fried a chicken and ate it all by herself, leaving only some bones on the table. When the husband comes home and realizes what she has done, he criticizes her for not having thought of him and having left some food to share with him. She smartly replies that she had only followed his own order and had not thought of anything, especially not of him. The narrator briefly comments: "Also ließ er das Verbot ab" (99; Thus, he let go of that ban), ridiculing men's effort to control their wives when they would perfectly know how to handle their own lives.

Then, in his epimythium, Paul remarks that many men would like to know what their wives would do after his death, but they would not even know what the wives would do while they are still alive. Even though they would display great love for each other in their lives, as soon as one of the two would have died, the other would marry someone else, which applies both to the man and the woman (100).

Pauli's sharp criticism of men's misbehavior, especially of their drunkenness, comes through many times, such as in tale 205, and there are numerous tales addressing women's adultery, such as in tale 206. Marriage itself proves to be a difficult life for both people because their personalities tend not to match. When he finds six faults with his wife, she would find twenty faults with him (tale 207). "Darumb so muoß man Pacientz haben" (132; Therefore, you need to observe patience). The second half of this tale consists of general reflections on the consequences when someone chooses a wife for specific reasons. If he chooses a virgin, then the chances are that she is not a virgin. If he were to marry a widow, he would have to follow her commands. If he were to marry a widow who had already had two husbands – both deceased - then she would gird a sword around her hip and be in charge of the marriage (again, idiomatic). If he wanted to marry a woman who is eloquent, she might never stop talking. If he were to marry a woman for her wealth only, then his single motivation would be greed. If he wanted to marry a beautiful woman, then he would have a hard time preventing her from committing adultery. If he were to marry an ugly woman, then that would be an easy choice because no one else would desire her. If he were to marry a very fertile woman, then the many children would only cause worries. An infertile woman, however, would be like a tree that does not bear fruit. Finally, if a man were to marry an attractive woman, he would have to witness that her beauty would disappear quickly. The only conclusion Pauli can draw regarding marriage is: "Also ist der Tueffel in allen Orten in dem Kraut" [132; Thus, the devil is hidden in the vegetable everywhere (idiomatic)].

In another tale (tale 209), Pauli addresses a universal problem that both women and men desire sexual pleasures and often sleep with each other outside of marriage, especially among the servants and maids, with both sides actively involved in this game. Many times, even the master of the house or his wife turn to the servants and demand sexual favors: "Wa sie fuer einander gon, so stossen die Metzen die Knecht mit den Ellenbogen in die Seiten, und etwan so thuet es der Knecht der Frawen" (133; When they spend time together, the whores poke the male servants with their elbows in the rib cage, and sometimes the male servants do that to the ladies). In every household that employs servants, sexual transgression would happen all the time: "Wan es brint, wan man nit Wasser hat, so loescht man mit Mist" [134; When there is a fire and people do not have water, they extinguish the fire with manure (idiomatic)].

Pauli mocks those people who pretend to be chaste and want to abstain from marriage, such as a virgin in tale 212 who proclaims that she would never marry, even if she were to deliver two sons who would become as holy as Saint John and Saint Jacob. However, within a year, she has lost her virginity, has borne two sons, but neither one of them turns into a saint (135). For Pauli, unchastity is the result of arrogance and haughtiness, and the result would be that the

individual would finally learn to understand him/herself as a sinful creature, and hence begin to repent.

Widowhood

The author also considered complex social conditions involving marriage and widowhood in order to reflect on the soul's performance, as in tale 220, where a young but ugly woman is married by an old and rich man, out of pity for her. But then he dies, and suddenly there are many suitors who would like to win her hand because of the wealth her husband has left behind. The widow consults with an old matron about how to get rid of three insisting wooers, whom she then can ultimately chase away through a masquerading strategy scaring each one of them off: "Also kam die guot Frau der Hoffierer ab" (141; Thus, the good woman got rid of the suitors).

As to be expected, Pauli utilizes the opportunity to offer a symbolic reading, equating the lady with the human soul that has been cleansed through fasting. Once that has happened, the soul has gained the wealth of virtues, but it is then harassed by the suitors, here the body, the world, and the evil spirit. All three try to seduce the soul to return to the former vices, and the preacher warns the audience to abstain from that danger.

Beyond this religious reading, the tale itself mirrors three particular situations for women in a late medieval or early modern urban setting. First, the father is trying to get his daughters married; the first two are attractive and easily find a husband; the last one lacks that physical beauty and yet, second, is then accepted by the old rich man who thus gains a caretaker in his last years. And third, the widow, though still the same person as before, now is wooed by many men because she has money. The matron clearly recognizes this situation and hence helps the young woman to get rid of those three bothersome men. Widowhood, as noted already above, was not simply a tragic situation, but it had particular advantages, both economic and social, offering quite commonly women unique opportunities within their society (8, 37, 38). In this case, the author gives considerable credit to this young woman who upholds her honor, consults with a wise old woman, and implements the strategy as suggested, thus gaining the upper hand over those suitors. At the same time, Pauli scoffed at old men who in their lustfulness try to marry a young woman and only make a fool of themselves (tale 221).

Marriage itself seems a good choice to the author, but only for a certain time in life. True happiness would be achievable only if one observed complete chastity, as priests and monks would do. Those who opted for marriage, however, would have to be ready also to bear the burden of marriage, which would be unavoidable (tale 221). For widows, however, Pauli recommended, after all, to abstain from marrying again because no good would come of a new marriage (tale 222).

Adultery

The theme of adultery is addressed in an entire section (tales 223-32), and in each story the narrator explicitly warns about the sinfulness of this act and illustrates the dramatic consequences. Worse, however, appeared to him a monk's failure to observe his chastity, which could be triggered by excessive alcohol consumption, as we learn in tale 243. Women who were strong enough to resist men's wooing gain his highest respect, such as in tale 265, where a lady tries to get rid of her wooer and sends him away for a year during which he is required to attend to dying people. As Pauli remarks in the final comment that those who would have those experiences on a regular basis, "wuerd die Hoffart, Geit, Neid und Unluterkeit wol leren meiden und undertrucken" (171; would learn to avoid and repress arrogance, greed, envy, and lying).

Married life occupied his mind deeply, or at least it appeared to be important enough for him to address it because most of his parishioners were married. In tale 287, a man comes home one day from the Mass where he had confessed. He expresses great frustration because the priest had imposed a penance upon him that appeared too heavy for him. His good wife is kind enough to take on that penance for him, but when he later dreams of both of them trying to enter heaven after they had died, Saint Peter expels him and welcomes only his wife: "'Darumb sol sie den Lon auch fuer dich nemen und fuer dich in den Himel kumen'" (182; Therefore she is to receive the reward for you and enter heaven for you). The next day, the husband accepts his penance because he does not want to be left behind when his wife enters heaven, welcomed by God because of her piety and devotion.

Both here and in many other cases, Pauli projects a rather ambivalent picture of women, married or not. If they are pious and virtuous, they tend to outshine the men in their lives and receive highest respect. If they are adulteresses or, worse, prostitutes, the author expresses his contempt, but also fear because of their great influence on men and their intelligence in handling social conditions. As a preacher, Pauli of course prefers submissive daughters or wives, but he also offers much criticism of foolish, ignorant, lazy, violent and drunken husbands. In other cases, we encounter narratives where both husband and wife are the object of the author's satire since they are, for instance, alcoholics and only pretend to be pious and God-fearing (tale 306), or they betray their own pledge to God and are subsequently punished when both of their sons die early (tale 309). We hear of women who only pretend to observe the penance imposed by their priest and quickly transgress again (tale 317), and then of women who disobey their husband in whatever regard possible and hence have to suffer consequences (tale 318).

To satirize people in general when they act in a mean fashion against poor pilgrims, Pauli includes a story about a harsh peasant woman who denies the hungry beggar a

dish of lentil soup but then invites him in after all when she has dropped the pot and thus lost the food (tale 321). To praise truly saintly people, he refers to the wife of Emperor Otto (tale 322) who freely gives alms to all beggars, even when one of them, actually her own husband who is testing her, requests a richly decorated sleeve of her dress. Through divine intervention, the sleeve is then replicated, which shames the emperor deeply. From then on, he "gab ir Gewalt zuo thuon und zuo geben, was sie wolt" (199; granted her the authority to do and to give whatever she wanted). Immediately following, Pauli takes us back to the world of peasants and their complete trust in God, both husband and wife (tale 324).

In another case, we learn of a man whose wife has died and who marries another woman (tale 359). She, however, deeply dislikes her foster-son and maligns him to the father. To avoid further conflicts, the young man goes to a university, studies medicine, graduates, and then wins much reputation as a medical expert. When his father falls ill, his son can heal him quickly, but when his stepmother suffers from the same sickness, he refuses to help her. As he explains to his father, the latter's trust in his son's care and expertise was mostly responsible for the re-establishment of his health. Since the stepmother would not believe in him, there would be nothing he could prescribe to her that could achieve the desired effect: "sie foercht, ich geb ir was Schedliches, darumb so mag ich sie nit gesunt machen" (217; she fears that I might give her something harmful, and hence I cannot heal her).

Various life conditions

In the fortieth section, the first tale deals with the female cook in a lord's household and her gluttony (tale 364), whereas the second treats the animosity between a lady and her female cook (tale 365). In the section (43) dealing with gamblers, a cheater is caught and taken to the ruling lady who questions him and then has him executed. She is identified as "gewaltige[] Fraw[] und Witwe[]" (227; mighty lady and widow), which indicates that she runs her country after her husband's death. In another context, we learn about women who enjoy dancing and make sure not to miss any folk festival, although the narrator warns the male audience not to give their wives the permission because of severe dangers for their soul (tales 384 and 385).

As we have already observed, Pauli also discusses prostitutes in a variety of contexts and dedicated an entire section to those women and their lovers (50). He also voiced much criticism against women who wear wigs and pretend to be more beautiful than they really are (tale 419). Pauli was also concerned with the relationship between old people and their children. In tale 435, for instance, a widowed father hands over all his property to his three daughters who promise to take good care of him until his death, which soon proves to be an illusion; they all want to get rid of him. A friend then advises the old man to pretend one night to count all his remaining money kept in a chest, and the daughters then vie for the chance to host him because he has promised the money to the one daughter who would treat him most generously. However, once he has died, they open the chest and find nothing but sand and rocks in it, along with a club to beat the person who believes in his children's love after they have taken over all property.

Whereas in his source, Rüdiger von Hinkhoven's "Schlegel" (late thirteenth century), if not older Latin versions telling the same story, the emphasis rests on the sons, whereas here daughters are identified as the father's ungrateful children (39, 40). There are no words about their husbands, and the women appear to operate by themselves, though to the disadvantage of their father. In the following tales, the focus then shifts to ungrateful sons and their disrespect of the father (tales. 436, 437, 438), or to mothers and their children who mistreat her as well (tales. 439, 440).

The evil woman/the good woman

There are many other opportunities to identify in Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* relevant narratives that are predicated on the issue of gender relationships. In most cases, the woman/wife is characterized either as cantankerous and vicious, or as submissive, kind, and obedient. In tale 470, for instance, the narrator introduces a woman who has had already two or three men and is now married to yet another one. She continues to bicker with him all the time, as has been her habit throughout her life. The new husband, however, takes all her evil words with patience and silence, and in the course of time, since he does not fight back, she stops arguing with him as well: "Da sie niemans fand, der ir Wort gab, da muost sie Frid haben, und vor Boese ward sie guot" (276; Since she did not find anyone who retorted to her, she had to display peace, and from all her evilness she became good).

Sometimes, women are the fools and evil characters, sometimes they are obedient, meek, and loving. And sometimes, the narrator praises women for their intelligence and deep insights. This finds a good expression in tale 480 where a man is married to a "gedultige Fraw[]" (279; patient woman) who regularly advises him to accept everything that happens to them as something good, even though the direct implication might not come forth immediately. One day, the husband has an accident in the forest and loses one of his eyes. However, even this she identifies as positive: "Got hat es im Besten gethon" (279; God has done this as the best for you). Indeed, not long thereafter he travels to the Orient ("Tartary," 279) and becomes the local king's most favorite advisor. One day, the king dies, and according to the local custom, the one servant whom he had liked the most is supposed to be buried with him. The man, desperate not to be killed that way, then points out that it would be shameful for the king if he were to appear before God accompanied

by a man with only one eye. This proves to be convincing, and only then does he understand his wife's true wisdom: "het er das ander Aug nit verloren, so het er muesen lebendig vergraben werden" (279; if he had not lost one of his eyes, he would have been buried alive).

Although the wife hardly appears more concretely, the narrator gives her at the end, like her husband does, full credit for her wisdom and her religious devotion. She is submissive under God and accepts everything what happens as part of the divine plan. While her husband laments for a long time over the loss of his eye, he learns eventually to accept the truth of his wife's insights and can thus secure his life at a most dangerous juncture. His wife thus proves to be much advanced over him, having full trust in God, whereas he struggles for a long time to come to terms with his physical ailment and only comprehends the truth of her philosophy at the end.

The following tale (tale 481) underscores this lesson one more time, with the narrator pointing out that there would not be a day when people would not experience problems or conflicts. The world's obnoxiousness would serve as God's tool to teach people not to trust the joys and comforts of this world (280). The same way a new mother would wean her child from drinking her milk by covering the nipples with an unpleasant liquid (tale 482).

Various social conditions

The author never hesitated to include ordinary peasant women and their misfortunes, as he had experienced himself, as he says in tale 520, where a mother sends her daughter to the confessor priest with a basket full of eggs as gifts for Palm Sunday. The daughter happily obliges, but her mind is set on attractive shoes that she would like to purchase to please her wooer more through her elegant appearance. However, the daughter arrives too early at the market, falls asleep, then spills the vessel with milk, and finally falls onto the eggs and ruins them. We are invited to laugh about the young woman, whereas her mother earns our respect because she wants to send the eggs as a reward for the priest's good sermons through which she had gained spiritual education. The critical issue here is that the narrator incorporates the scene at the farm and the situation at the market, and both shed light on women's everyday life experiences in the countryside. There is, however, no word about the husband, although the daughter reveals to her mother that the bailiff's son is attracted to her. The entire setting proves to be very simple, and yet also insightful as to the roles which both women play depending on their generational level.

When a tale deals with both marriage partners, more often than not, he is characterized as a drunkard, a fool, if not as a mentally deranged individual (tale 560). But there are, unfortunately, also enough tales that relate of the husband's cruel violence against his wife (tale 589) as if that were acceptable. Even the wife's death at the husband's hand appears to be common (tale 595) and is not even condemned by the author because the woman's evil character is thus "rightly" punished. In tale 597, a woman commits adultery with the priest and is caught *in flagrante* by her husband. In this case, he does nothing except for shaving her head to make her look like a priest, in her case hence a sign of shamefulness (335).

But we would always go wrong if we categorized Pauli as a complete misogynist who would approve even domestic violence. Much depends on the circumstances, such as in tale 619 where a young noble woman is employed in her aunt's household in Brabant. No one wants to marry her, so she keeps working. One day, while being busy preparing a dough, a knight appears and wants to utilize the opportunity to seduce her. Thinking that she would not be able to defend herself, since both her hands are in the dough, he approaches her and tries to kiss her (or do more, which the narrator does not specify). The young woman, however, grabs the rolling pin and hits him so hard on his head that he faints. He never tries to harass her again ("Buolen," 344), but he bitterly complains that he had only intended to have some fun with her: "schimpfen" (344). In her response, she gives him fully tit for tat: "Es ist mir auch Schimpff gewesen" (344; My intention also had been nothing but having fun).

The verb "schimpfen" implies, as we have already seen above (tale 129), a violent act, i.e., rape, but here the knight tries to hide behind the other meaning, "to have fun," or "to be playful," and "jesting." Her quick repartee earns her great respect throughout the land, but more we do not learn about the further development or the subsequent events. However, in the second part of the tale, Pauli refers to a young woman, daughter of a duchess, who finds employment at the royal court of England. Again, no man wants to marry her, and after a couple of years, she is sent home to France where she becomes the head of a great hospital (located then in the Netherlands) and grows old with full honor: "Ist wol zuo loben" (344; This is highly praiseworthy).

In tale 624, an old woman is identified as a prophetess who knows how to foretell the future, especially a fire that later burns down almost the entire city. For Pauli, this means that people should not ignore the warning of "schlechten arme[n] frome[n] Menschen" (346; simple, poor, and pious people), whether female or male. In tale 626, a pious widow is graced by God who appears to her once in the shape of a child. Thirty days later, she receives the second grace, and this time, the child tells her that she would join him in the afterlife, which then also happens. Finally, we also hear of a beguine (tale 659) and her evil character, or of a wife who commits adultery (tale 678), which her husband cannot prevent. Significantly, the entire collection concludes with a tale (tale 693) in which a woman's brother is murdered. She is about to avenge this crime and has already hired assassins when a priest, here identified as John of Capistrano (1386-1456), appeals to her to forgive the murderer. She finally agrees, holds the man's

hand, and forgives him in the name of Christ. Miraculously, a strong sweet smell arises from their hands as a sign that this is approved by God.

Conclusion

Altogether, *Schimpf und Ernst* offers a myriad of entertaining and didactic tales reflecting a wide range of life situations involving men and women, children and old people, and we are invited to laugh and to reflect on the scenes presented. Pauli did not pursue a straight perspective regarding women. He agreed that sexuality was a necessity in marital life; he favored, however, virginity, and praised widows if they did not marry again. It was natural for him to discuss marriage because most of his parishioners lived in such a relationship.

Pauli as a priest had much to complain about, exposing men's drunkenness, women's cantankerousness, general disagreement among people, foolish attempts to control and subjugate the marriage partner, and women's abuse by husbands. In his tales, we hear much about rape and sexual harassment, which the author vehemently condemned as crimes. But he was also opposed to women if they tried to subjugate their husbands or to make their lives difficult. Altogether, *Schimpf und Ernst* proves to be an excellent mirror of people's ordinary lives, and this in the countryside, at a castle, in monasteries, in cities, and elsewhere. We encounter peasants and city dwellers, beguines and monks, the pope and various bishops, and kings and emperors. Wives emerge who are crucial in directing their husbands toward an improved ethical lifestyle, or toward a moderate form of government. Late medieval authors commonly identified women as sexually uncontrollable, hence as adulteresses. This is also the case in Pauli's tales. But he also presents the opposite case of pious and virtuous women.

Undoubtedly, *Schimpf und Ernst* clearly mirrored real life or the material conditions in the early sixteenth century at all kinds of social settings. Hence, it was only natural for Pauli to introduce many different types of women, young and old, married and unmarried, rich and poor, evil and good, hostile and peaceful, as is probably the case until today. To be sure, most of the tales examined here indicate that the gender relationship at that time was, to say it mildly, not unproblematic. However, women appear many times and thus gained the author's full respect, at least in narrative terms.

It is not surprising that Pauli as a Franciscan preacher embraced traditional, patriarchal views, but he also offered numerous examples of women who were either abused and harassed, which the author certainly condemned, or who stood their own ground and carved out a niche of their own. If we want to learn more about the contemporary gender discourse in the early modern time, then *Schimpf und Ernst* easily proves to be a highly valuable source, offering a wide range of scenes, settings, situations, discussing individuals, and topics relevant for the exploration of gender in the early sixteenth century (41).

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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