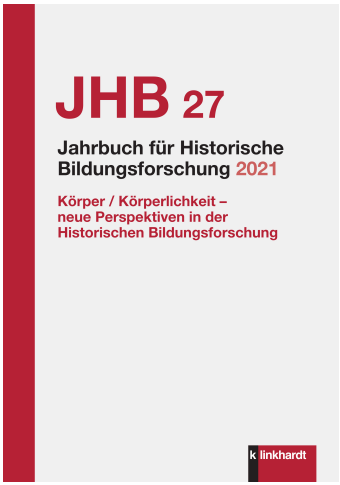
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‚Nur bey Leib': pedagogies of the body in early Reformation Germany

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‚Nur bey Leib': pedagogies of the body in early Reformation Germany

Zusammenfassung:
Die protestantische Reformation stützte sich vor allem in den ersten Jahrzehnten weitgehend auf die orale Kultur und nonverbale Medien wie Aufführungen und Rituale, um ihre Botschaft auch unter Analphabeten und in den unteren städtischen Schichten zu verbreiten. Die Tradition der Fastnachtspiele bot dabei günstige Möglichkeiten für die Polemik gegen die alte Kirche, aber es bedurfte einer artikulierteren sinnlichen Pädagogik, um die Reflexion über den neuen Glauben anzuregen und ein Gefühl der Gemeinschaft aufzubauen. Dieser Aufsatz analysiert die Muster einer körperzentrierten Pädagogik in der frühen deutschen Reformation anhand von Bildern, die entweder aus frühen Ausgaben der Fastnachtspiele stammen oder mit deren Autoren und benachbarten literarischen Gattungen verbunden sind.

Abstract:
The Protestant Reformation relied largely on oral culture and non-verbal media, such as performances and civic rituals, to spread its message among the illiterate and lower classes, particularly in its first decades. The tradition of carnival plays offered fertile ground for polemics against the Church, but a more articulated sensory pedagogy was needed to stimulate reflection on the new faith and build a feeling of community. This article analyses patterns of a body-centric pedagogy in early Reformation Germany based on images either drawn from early editions of Fastnachtspiele or connected with their authors and neighbouring literary genres.

Schlagworte: Frühe Reformation, Volkskultur, Pädagogik, Körper, Fastnachtspiel

1 Introductory remarks: the need for a sensory pedagogy

Visual and performative culture's role in the Protestant Reformation's diffusion is acknowledged widely today, thereby giving full legitimacy to means of expression that did not require literacy to be understood, such as illustrations, oral persuasion through preaching and, most of all, representations and rituals, from religious-based ceremonies to full-fledged theatrical performances. The emphasis that early Protestantism placed on general literacy cannot be denied, and from a long-term perspective, it is correct to view its educational culture as a culture of the written word, as implied by the principle of the *sola Scriptura*. Nevertheless, this general assumption risks overshadowing the fundamental role that popular pedagogies have played through the five senses, particularly during the Reformation's first decades, a subject that Scribner promoted in his foundational 1981 study on woodcuts,[1] but only recently has captured scholars' attention.[2] Extant literature on the history of education during the Reformation[3] has focussed on elementary education and higher learning, with social studies providing important information on education through the study of family and household rules on the basis of written sources[4] but the realm of the senses, particularly visuals, needs further examination in the large ‚grey zone' between persuasion, proselytism and education. This focus on sensory experience was all the more crucial early in the Reformation, as believers of the new faith largely were illiterate, and a whole system of ‚adult education' had to be deployed, relying on an existing fabric of civic rituals.

Of course, Reformation leaders did not explicitly formulate the concept of ‚adult education' in their efforts to elicit general literacy and in the diffusion of a new faith and moral system. Nevertheless, the emphasis that Protestantism placed on marriage and the family as the essential nucleus of society, the opposition to ascetic life and the enhanced responsibility of the household in forming the pious citizen[5] necessarily empowered strict social control on parents' behaviour and self-awareness.

In the most relevant texts by Martin Luther about education, he called into question parents' ability to educate their children, advocating for institutions' role in providing professional, formal education. The 1524 pamphlet *An die*

1 Scribner 1994.

2 See especially Baum 2018.

3 A reasoned overview of pre-1990 scholarship on schooling in Early Modern Germany is provided by Karant-Nunn 1990; for a more recent, but also more general account, see Methuen 2017.

4 See Ozment 1983.

5 See Ozment 1983.

Ratsherren aller Städte deutschen Landes focusses on this necessity in particular.[6] However, before the intentions and provisions for public education morphed into a real educational and disciplinary system, adults had to be made to understand and participate in the new faith without resorting to formal instruction until children could become fully literate young people who could take over the task.[7] Moreover, parents had to be persuaded, through Scriptural principles, to send children to school and start the circle of mutual learning. Thus, a ‚culture of persuasion' aimed primarily at adults had to be enacted to trigger a need for or interest in literacy. In the first chapter of his *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, Andrew Pettegree focussed on such a culture's collective character:

> „We conceive a world of private reading and private, largely individual decision making. But this essentially modernistic reconstruction of the process of religious choice goes very much against the grain of sixteenth-century society. In the early modern world, most information was conveyed in public, communal settings: the marketplace; the church; a proclamation from the town hall steps. […] Reformers recognised a necessary double process of engagement: with the individual Christian and with a collective religious consciousness that also had to be nurtured and reinforced."[8]

In this context, intrinsically collective experiences played a primary role in respect to individual experiences, such as reading or observing a book or a woodcut. Pettegree specifically questions Scribner's assumption that woodcuts and illustrations played a central role in popular Protestant propaganda and provides various reasons, including the fact that illustrated books were generally more expensive than plain books and that images often were ambiguous and difficult to decipher without the help of written captions or explanations often present in one-page woodcuts.[9] Here, we do not aim to discuss this specific matter. We view illustrations and woodcuts as an opportunity to access imagery – more specifically iconography – which connected the world of print with the elusive, multisensory experiences of performance and community rituals. More generally, illustrations allow us to understand,

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6 „Es woellte denn eyn iglicher fur sich selbs eynen eygen hallten, aber das wuerde dem gemeynen man zu schwere" (Luther 1524; WA 15, p. 34).

7 „There is no doubt that children had the duty to submit themselves to parental authority, which, by extension, reflected the existing religious and social hierarchy, where all people were to respect the authority of their superiors. At the same time, however, the systematic church-controlled education of children – both in the catechism lessons and the Reformed schools – resulted in the relatively rapid indoctrination of the young and thus created a parallel system of dissemination of religious knowledge, in which the children played a leading role" (Kvicalova 2019, pp. 192–193).

8 Pettegree 2005, p. 8.

9 For the full discussion, see Pettegree 2005, pp. 102–127.

albeit only partially, how the body – in its presence and its multiple representations – contributed to such experiences' pedagogical side. Even if illiterate readers did not have direct access to illustrations that, for example, adorned printed editions of *Fastnachtspiele*, it is highly probable that such illustrations were a typified and exaggerated version of what actually happened on stage – a stage that was the city itself, populated by citizens and others visiting from surrounding areas.

The possibility of giving even a partial account of this complex matter clearly exceeds this article's scope. This analysis aims to offer only some hints and suggestions for a re-evaluation of bodily aspects in the formation of Protestant culture, accessing them through visual representations and decoding them through recurring themes, situations and types. Therefore, here we would like to delve into part of the history of education to find inspiration in Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky's method and start to trace iconography in early Reformation education, individuating subjects, stories and allegories, and assessing such imagery's symbolic values as much as possible to build a ‚history of cultural symptoms'[10] concerning the changes that this crucial era in modern history elicited.

2 Building a new ritual of the collective body: assimilating and re-signifying popular culture

Indeed, the dynamics of informal and sensory-based adult education both reinforced and transformed the late medieval heritage of civic rituals, making the early Reformation a distinctively urban phenomenon. As summarised by Steven Pfaff:

> „Historians have shown that the primary locus of the Reformation as a movement for religious change was in the cities (Mörke 2005; Scribner 1986). Chartered German cities enjoyed substantial autonomy and were self-governing under their own councils. In the context of what Te Brake (1998) calls a distinctive ‚political space', the coming of the Evangelical insurgency sparked by Luther made the cities an arena for religious and political contention."[11]

Most relevant scholarship has emphasised several factors that made some urban contexts more inclined toward accepting Protestantism in its different forms, such as guilds' role in Hanseatic cities,[12] the presence of universities in which biblical philology and humanism were developed (with Wittenberg

[10] Panofsky 1939, p. 16.
[11] Pfaff 2013, p. 190.
[12] See Broadhead 1996.

being the leading case in point) or the special status of autonomy that Swiss city-states enjoyed. All these contexts relied on social cohesion through a vast realm of social rituals, among which processions, religious ceremonies and theatrical representations that citizens performed played a central role well before the Reformation. Glenn Ehrstine's seminal study on the City of Bern and the incorporation of Protestant content in the local tradition of the Passion and Carnival plays[13] explains this phenomenon very clearly.

From a pedagogical perspective, continuity is expected and necessary to transmit cultures and customs effectively, and the most interesting aspect of this transmission of values through shared rituals is when the same rituals, or very similar ones, are reinvented to transmit opposing values. Collective events associated with devotion to saints and relics – including religious-based theatrical forms, such as the *Passionspiel* and *Fastnachtspiel* – as controlled spaces on popular transgressions exemplify how the capacity to appeal to the five senses impressed the public with emotions and helped consolidate community efforts into the service of Protestant adult pedagogy.

We will focus later on how Luther and other Protestant leaders dealt with this transition, and how rituals associated with Catholicism were re-signified to act as forms of religious education and community building in Protestant cities. In the realm of popular and festive representations, the *Fastnachtspiel*, as ‚*Akzentuierung von Körperlichkeit*',[14] was the first theatrical form that could incorporate Protestant propaganda in its attack on the Catholic clergy and its denial of the existing social order, which soon would find a dramatic outlet in the so-called *Bauernkrieg*. This ‚polemic pedagogy' through the grotesque also was part of popular prints' characters. In Scribner's words:

> „It is necessary to distinguish between the weaker form of ‚propaganda' involved in the projection or construction of an image, for example, of kingship or of a particular polity, and what might be called ‚adversarial' propaganda. […] The purpose of propaganda in this sense is to create types, or better, *stereotypes*. This is a result of the tendency of propaganda to reduce complex issues to simple terms, to present shades of meaning in stark black and white."[15]

It is highly suggestive to think of the marked contours and angled lines of German woodcuts and compare them, for example, with Italian Renaissance illustrations' soft and elegant traits as the visual counterpart of the ‚stark black and white' of the religious contrast, thereby depicting the refusal to compromise – an integral part of the Lutheran message against the often-unscrupulous *Realpolitik* of the Catholic Church. Indeed, the imagery of

13 Ehrstine 2002.
14 Klimczak 2018, p. 25.
15 Scribner 1994, p. xxii.

popular Protestant theatre and its representation in woodcuts were born from and, yet were against, the pervasive Catholic rituals that previously had united these communities. The process of accentuating such rituals' bodily side in stereotypical and exaggerated forms acted both as satire and as a substitute for older and missing forms of community building. Pettegree observed that:

> „In the first generation of evangelical agitation, the decision to adhere to the Reformation was often a very painful one. It involved difficult choices and life-changing decisions. It involved exchanging the familiar round of traditional observance for a new order which was untested and largely unknown. […] Yet ultimately, the renovation of religion involved the loss of much (of) the old structure of worship that had given comfort and pleasure. Some could only accommodate this transformation by putting psychological distance between the religious lives they have lived and that they were choosing. They turned on aspects of this now-rejected religious system with a savagery that would have been unthinkable only a few years before."[16]

Perhaps the reasons behind early popular Protestant pedagogy were more complicated than a process of ‚killing the father'. Moreover, the family's strong authoritarian structure was to be reinforced through the Reformation in its mimicking of the ‚natural' social order, which Luther[17] and later all major Protestant denominations taught to respect, particularly after the 1524 *Bauernkrieg*. However, it is fascinating that the early Reformation substituted visual, bodily and emotional late medieval rituals with heavily visual, bodily and emotional performances, with the ‚liberated' body of the carnival at their centre. In other words, they used the body against an older bodily devotion to idols and relics to foster collective learning of a more rigorous, highly spiritualised and moralising version of Christianity. This article will analyse some of the features of this bodily pedagogy through theatre, particularly the *Fastnachtspiel*, and the vestiges of its multisensory reality, comprehensible through popular illustration. In distinguishing between the features of the older *Fastnachtspiel* and those of its Protestant version, we also will assess how Protestant pedagogy appropriated symbols and languages from the *widerspenstige Leute* for a more orderly, ‚bourgeois', adult education project that over time would promote general education, as well as a form of pervasive social control.

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16 Pettegree 2005, pp. 1–2.

17 „Nu hie ist nicht not zu sagen, wie das welltlich regiment eyn goettlich ordnung und stand ist. Davon ich sonst so viel gesagt hab, das ich hoffe, es zweyffel niemand dran. Sondern ist zu handellen, wie man feyne geschickte leutt dreyn kriege" (Luther 1524; WA 15, p. 44).

3 From mockery to pedagogy

The Reformation's fast and robust expansion in mid-16th century German-speaking countries relied on a variety of factors, the analysis of which clearly exceeds this article's scope. From a pedagogical perspective, one of the most important factors was the tradition of performance rituals, which brought the local community together using something different that distinguished itself from the Church's general authority. According to Lionel Rothrug:

> „Historic resistance to episcopal authority and civic-minded religious practices permitted preachers in the south ‚to adapt Luther's message' to the prevailing ‚hegemonic corporate-communal values'. This urban ‚evangelism' united the sacred and the social, transforming the city, explains Bernd Moeller, into a ‚miniature corpus christianum'. Although levels of consciousness and ideological content may have varied from one town to another, scholars agree that the sacred commune was a notion common to the Reformation in south German-Swiss cities."[18]

This phenomenon helped transform the Bavarian tradition of festivals to honour saints into Protestant rituals and theatrical performances, and to develop, in Swiss cities, a well-known tradition of politically charged *Fastnachtspiele*, initiated by Niklaus Manuel.[19] In northern Germany, the social structures around guilds and municipal organisations provided similar support to expand the Reformation in terms of local identity and community bonds:

> „In the earliest stage of the North German Reformation, the religious and political lines were quite clear: With the exception of Ernst der Bekenner, duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, all territorial rulers took the side of the old Church. Consequently, a successful Lutheran Reformation meant at least a demonstration of municipal independence from territorial tutelage, in most cases even a real short-term expansion of the town's autonomy based on medieval tradition and privilege. Furthermore, the old Hanseatic social network was reinforced as a consequence of the transterritorial connections between the different Lutheran towns, based on personal contacts of the Lutheran preachers and teachers, as well as on family bonds of the burghers, especially the elite."[20]

Community building, as a peculiar and powerful trait of Protestant pedagogy, grew amid constant dialogue with the Reformation's humanist roots and developed simultaneously with efforts to perfect the individual, which came from Renaissance education models. Both of these traditions tended to address different social classes naturally, focussing on building a biblical and

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18 Rothkrug 1987, p. 163.

19 See Ehrstine 2002.

20 Schilling 1983, pp. 453-454.

classical scholarship for the ruling classes and on community building for the middle and lower ones.

In this context, the most cultivated Protestant humanism only had to elaborate on the rich tradition of Renaissance treatises on education and their balance of body and soul. At least ideally, there was no need for a new pedagogy from the body for scholars and princes. However, a Protestant pedagogy of the body for the people remained to be built and defined. The late medieval tradition of carnival plays had fixed the popular body's presence in the limited arena of the joke and temporary transgression, thereby confining in that same arena the feelings of local identity and empowerment. The medieval body defined the positions and roles of the collective's members, and the space of transgression offered by *Fastnachtspiel* consolidated the existing social order:

> „In derb-obszöner Redeweise und Gebärde wird das Geschlechtsleben von Mann und Frau durch gewagte Metaphern sinnlich vor Augen geführt, was sich wider die kirchlichen Sittsamkeitsvorstellungen kehrte. Denn der Körper war im Mittelalter Ordnungs- und Gliederungsmodell für die städtische Gemeinde. Am Verhalten eines Individuums und an seinem Erscheinungsbild wurde seine Stellung festgemacht."[21]

Corresponding with the carnival's well-known social function, the late medieval *Fastnachtspiel* offered a secure and limited space where the body, in its generally censored aspects, and in social terms the *widerspenstige Leute*[22] could express themselves. Nevertheless, the existence of this established tradition of popular performance provided a mighty foundation for the diffusion of the Reformation beyond the circle of biblical scholars and literate citizens. In doing so, as can be seen in Hans Sachs' lifelong activity as a playwright, popular theatre further legitimised, as well as assimilated, the lower classes' undisciplined bodies – including those of peasants, prostitutes and vagrants – and put them at the service of the collective (and urban) efforts to seek independence from the Church and construct a new municipal identity.

On one hand, the demise and overt mockery of religious rituals gave these popular performances the substance of rituals in themselves. On the other hand, they became increasingly pedagogical, creating situations in which Protestant tenets could be at least partially proposed and explained – and, as far as the body is concerned, delegitimise the individual body in its free enjoyment of pleasures while empowering the collective body: the villagers against the bishop or even the pope, the women against the indulgence ped-

[21] Klimczak 2018, p. 30.

[22] See Schindler 2002.

dler, etc. The nature of the ritual involves both a social dimension – consolidating a social order and celebrating its values – and a sacred dimension, which motivates the temporary substitution of personal and individual identity with a merging into the collective entity. In Durkheimian terms:

> „A ritual can be defined as an act, or sequence of acts, that involves multiple participants; that is highly routinised and conventional; that is enacted demonstratively; and that generates social distinctions and symbols (Stollberg-Rillinger 2011). Durkheim (1965) originally posited a relationship between ritual behaviour and the adherence to social order, putting collective veneration of the sacred at the heart of his theory of social solidarity. Ritual, organised around sacred objects as its focal point, and organised into cultic practice, was for Durkheim the fundamental source of the ‚collective conscience' that creates structure and helps ensure cultural continuity, while providing individuals with meaning and binding emotions. Participation in rites integrates the individual into a social order both in one's ‚day-to-day relationships of life' and in those celebrations of the collective 'which bind [one] to the social entity as a whole'."[23]

In these terms, the power of the Protestant *Fastnachtspiel* – being able to be a civic ritual, a place of transgression and a pedagogical tool simultaneously – lies in the sacred nature of the message involved: while having fun and staging bawdy jokes, the participants (without distinguishing between public and non-professional players) could learn lessons on how to be a better Christian and, as a consequence, a better citizen. It was necessary to involve a large portion of the population, which still was illiterate or scarcely able to read the daily Gospel, in this process. Therefore, the body was the privileged means of communication.

An idea of how the body was represented in performances can be drawn from popular woodcuts and printed editions of works by the most renowned playwrights of the time. Only a few visual renditions of the plays exist (among them, Niklaus Manuel's drawing for *Der Ablasskrämer*, quoted below), while book frontispieces and single-page woodcuts provide a more reliable idea of the imagery and representational rules to which both the playwright and spectators catered. Most of the images analysed in this article come from book illustrations and frontispieces, and should be considered with due caution (as already stated in the previous chapters) as reasonably reliable sources representing early modern society's visual imagination. The selection necessarily has been limited to themes that will provide an example of the new meanings attributed by the Reformation to the most common stage situations.

[23] Pfaff 2013, p. 197.

3.1 Physical illness as reality and metaphor

An example of the pedagogical evolution of popular themes was the body experiencing illness in its many variants (deformity, pestilence or madness, such as in the ever-present *Narren* with their donkey ears). In his study on nicknames as peculiarities of popular early modern German culture, Norbert Schindler highlights how illness was a widespread topic for mockery and not a taboo subject:

> „We might also note, with Norbert Elias, that the shame and embarrassment thresholds were a good deal lower four or five hundred years ago. Physical and mental deformities had not been subjected to a private taboo, nor had they disappeared behind the walls of institutions for clinical ‚treatment'. Suffering, pain and disfigurement were still public quantities that one could encounter on every street corner. Since their existence – contrary to the bourgeois sensibility that removes from view anything apparently too difficult to bear – was not denied or repressed, they were not considered special."[24]

The barber-surgeon played an essential role in early modern society, taking care of the body in both daily hygiene and more serious pathological situations: with the Reformation, the (often-unreliable) surgeon of late medieval *Fastnachtspiele* could become a metaphor of the necessity of purification from sin (such as in Hans Sachs' *Narrenschneider*). Later, in the more-cultivated Latin drama by Naogeorgus (*Mercator*), the surgeon cleanses the sinner of the frills and falsities of the Catholic Church, literally extracting ritual objects from the sinner's stomach.

For this reason, we take a possible visual reference for the late medieval *Fastnachtspiel* from works by Hans Folz, a barber-surgeon and perhaps the most important playwright in the genre before Hans Sachs.[25] Below is a 1482 woodcut from one of his short treatises on the plague (fig. 1)[26]:

[24] Schindler 2002, p. 62.

[25] For his pivotal role, see Huey 2016.

[26] Complete references for each figure are provided at the end of the article.

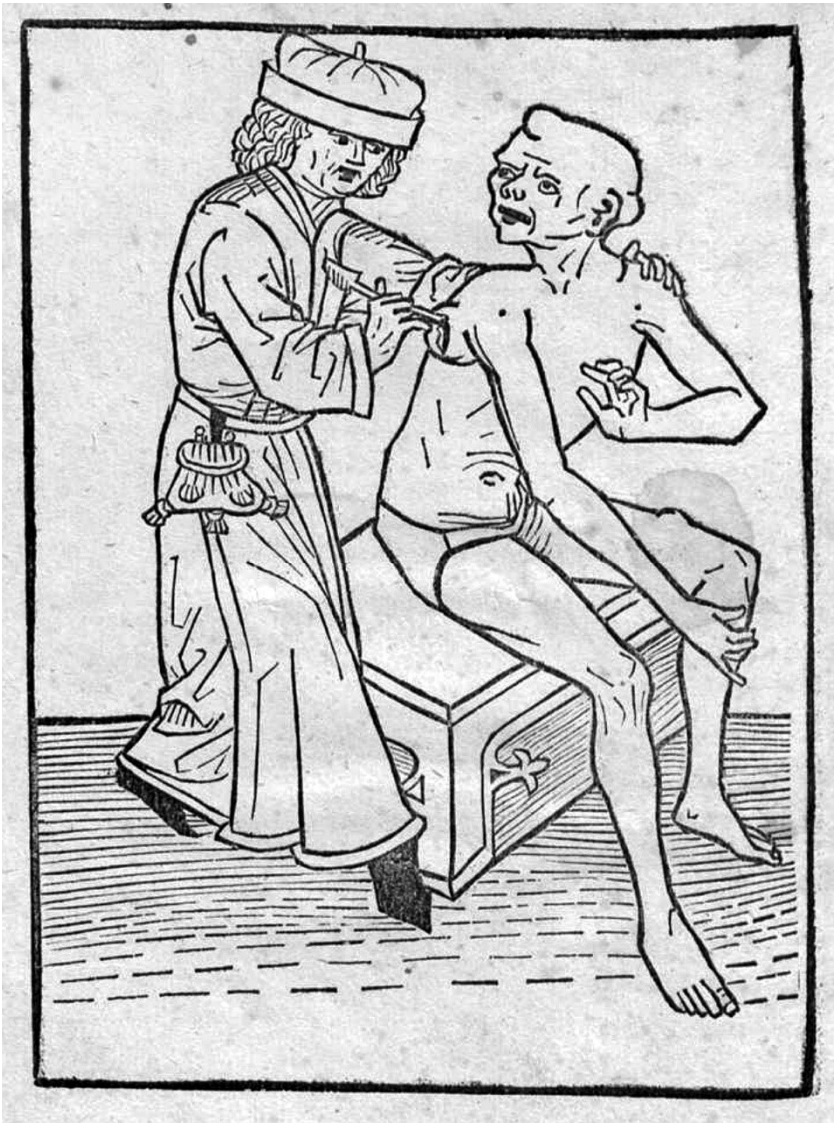


Fig. 1

In late medieval and early modern society, illness and death were the only occasions that allowed for a representation of the body in almost total nudity, making its fragility and imperfections visible in realistic terms. The graphic representation of the incision made in an abscess in this image is not aimed at

other surgeons (i.e., the image conveys no valuable, practical medical information), but provides a powerful representation of the patient's pain, as well as the surgeon's accuracy (well-dressed and in an elegant position) in hopefully removing the infectious bubo.

In popular comedy, the barber-surgeon's arrival usually means painful operations, such as the removal of a tooth, and can be staged to ridicule the patient's anguish or extort money by promising false or useless operations. In the age of the Reformation, this situation retained its comic potential, but also referred to purification from sin, and particularly from free will. In Hans Sachs' *Das Narrenschneiden*, a man's abnormally swollen abdomen is full of fools, symbolising his inability to act judiciously and in good faith (fig. 2):[27]



Fig. 2

The doctor cuts open the patient's belly, and seven fools (the seven deadly sins) emerge, followed by a verminous nucleus probably symbolising origi-

[27] An original woodcut representing the content of the play appears to be unavailable. Here we make use of the 20th-century reproduction printed in a 1991 Leipzig edition of Hans Sachs' selected works (full reference in the image table). In the final notice of this edition (p. 340), the editor makes reference to Goetze's catalogue of images contained at the end of his complete edition of Sachs, but does not give individual references to the images he used.

nal sin. Once the patient's health is restored, Hans Sachs summarises the moral in the text: human free will is the origin of folly, a clear allusion to the early Protestant doctrine of predestination and *sola fide*. Thus, the body represents, in the late medieval tradition, the passing and sinful side of humans and a subject of mockery, but also incorporates, in the Reformation version, the possibility of salvation through faith and yielding to God's design.
More generally, the body in popular Protestant theatre tends to be a source of laughter, pleasure and debauchery, rather than of austere self-punishment. Even if the moral message it conveys remains strong and becomes possibly stricter, the approach to the body looks light-hearted and its imagery less moralistic than its late medieval counterpart. Concerning Folz's theatre, Klimczak notes:

> „Folz vertritt in seinen Spielen, die genauso erbaulichen Inhaltes sein können, mitunter eine etwas erzieherisch-moralisierendere Position, wenn er beispielsweise das verantwortungslose Verhalten eines Ehemannes an den Pranger stellt und die Gerichtsbarkeit gleich mit, die alles als Scherz versteht, wie im ‚spil von den pauren' [...] Gezielt lässt Folz persönliche Neigungen in den Spielen durchblicken, indem er bestimmte Personengruppen angreift und sich moralisierend äußert. Diese ‚negative Didaxe' feuert die kurzweilig-unterhaltende Wirkabsicht der Spiele zusätzlich an."[28]

The mechanism described by Klimczak continues in Reformation *Fastnachtspiele*, as well as other works by Hans Sachs or Niklaus Manuel, but in the latter, the ‚negative Didaxe' looks like a byproduct of genuine entertainment and of the plays' community-building aspects. Reformation plays primarily aimed to bring together citizens and inspire in them a sense of unity against the Catholic enemy, and only secondarily to inspire some (if any) improvement in their morals and customs. The genre of Bernese Protestant drama analysed by Ehrstine (2002) provides a particularly significant example of this.

Other representations of the body and body parts are more refined and enigmatic. This image comes from a 1527 Wittenberg edition in which Hans Sachs and Andreas Osiander present a ‚commentary' through a series of images they said were found in a monastery library.[29] The work is a sophisticated fabrication aimed at proposing a ‚prophecy' of Reformation ideas and facts. One image represents a monk, identified in the caption as Luther with a sickle, a rose and a body part (fig. 3):

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[28] Klimczak 2018, p. 28.
[29] See the complete title in the references (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

Animal body parts, as well as fake human body parts, were commonplace in satirical and anti-clerical *Fastnachtspiele*, which mocked devotion to relics. From this perspective, the image draws on the same imagery of popular representation, but also offers a more serious and reflective meaning.

The caption by Hans Sachs alludes to Isaiah 40:4–8, in which human flesh is compared with grass to be cut, while the Word of God is eternal – a key passage for a Protestant believer. The rose in Luther's hand can be both the fragile human life and the precious flower of the Word of God, but the most striking element is the severed leg, reminiscent of human fragility, but also firmly stating the existence of human flesh and the body in earthly life. At the centre of the image, victoriously contradicting the message that the leg conveys, the reformer's body stands strong, stable and with working-class features, including vigorous hands. This body's self-confident, proud presence is a common feature of all popular early Reformation imagery, though further research would be needed to assess how and when this motif could be connected, like in this image, to *sola Scriptura* and its regenerative power.

3.2 Of mice and men: chimaeras and monsters between polemics and laughter

The nature of carnival masquerades lies in concealing and transforming identities, which included cross-dressing and wearing animal masks and costumes as part of this Reformation phenomenon. In traditional *Fastnachtspiele*, but also in its Protestant version, cross-dressing on stage is relatively rare, while situations in which animals and humans mingle and sometimes transform into each other are more common, often reflecting the use of animal-themed nicknames as Schindler described. This innocuous comedic element based on agricultural life shared the stage with a much more aggressive use of human-animal pairing, which aimed to represent, with monstrous features, the political or religious enemy. Before becoming a key theme of Reformation polemics, the ‚masquerade of monsters' was not uncommon in the 15th century, as in this anti-Hussite pamphlet by Hans Folz (fig. 4):



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

The use of monsters with animal features – often incorporating female nudity – is a well-known topic of Reformation propaganda, extensively analysed by Scribner in his work. Here, we aim only to reflect, in pedagogical terms, on two typical representations of the body in Lutheran and anti-Lutheran propaganda: Cranach's *Bapstesel* (fig. 5) and the less-illustrative, but still convincing, frontispiece of Thomas Murner's ‚Lutheran fool' (fig. 6), directly connecting with the imagery of surgery and ‚*Narrenschneiden*' described above.


Von dem grossen
Lutherischen Narren wie in
doctor Murner beschworen hat. ꝛc.
stultitiam pudē
mola
tia summa
ut
ferdum

Fig. 6

The two images share at least one common feature: the disturbing and, to contemporary eyes, gratuitous shift toward nastiness to capture the observer's attention to elicit strong emotions. Such images should have been able to trigger an immediate feeling of ‚otherness' towards the enemy and, therefore, a strong feeling of community among followers of the same religion, which is also a well-known mechanism in contemporary communication. However, this approach is very different, as the Lutheran image speaks of a monster that comes from ‚elsewhere', from Rome-Babylon, while the anti-Lutheran image puts a menace coming from ‚here' on stage, born on the same soil as the observer.

The *Bapstesel* – mixing a siren, woman, donkey and hen – uses exoticism to educate the observer to mistrust, representing what a good German Lutheran was not and was not meant to become if they were cautious and did not yield to seductions from the clergy. Like Rome-Babylon, the chimaera emanates a not-so-subtle appeal with her bare breasts, making the observer aware of the risk.

In a different sense, the Luther-fool represented in Murner's frontispiece caters to the same imagery of popular *Fastnachtspiele* and the familiar themes of men lying on the ground under the weight of excess wine and food – and sometimes hosting devils, strange creatures, fools or objects in their stomachs. Here, other fools come out of Luther's mouth, helped by a disquieting monk-cat. The image plays on the theme of domesticity (the cat and mouse are among the animals represented most often in popular prints) to inspire immediate disgust for and rejection of the expanding Reformation, telling the observer that it conceals an immediate danger of impurity, heresy and moral and physical contamination. Further research would be necessary on this subject to gain a better understanding of the duality between othering and physical proximity, elicited by the provoking aesthetics of chimaeras and animal-men hybridisations.

3.3 Fighting women on stage: between private and collective dimensions

This brief series of examples cannot overlook women's changing role in collective representations before and during the Reformation. The expression ‚collective representation' is intentional because during the Reformation, the woman's traditional role as wife and mother was reinforced, and the authority of the *paterfamilias* was consolidated further in the wake of the *Sozialdisziplinierung*, which, as defined by Gerhard Oestreich and also discussed by Gerald Strauss, was the crucial (even if missed) aim of the Reformation in

social terms. While Strauss' positions have been highly controversial, how education intersected with the basic idea of social control in his writing remains seminal and helps in understanding how various roles in the family were functionalised as gatekeepers of order.

In this context, the emphasis on obedience by the wife and mother did not hinder the fact that, in opposition to the Catholic clergy, in which celibacy and power coincided, male power needed to come to terms with the female presence in the context of the family and child-bearing in Reformation society. As a consequence, the Reformation rethought the image of the belligerent woman, very common in the traditional *Fastnachtspiel*, providing more critical and relevant roles. The comic device of the angry wife is well-represented in this woodcut for Hanz Folz's Spiel on ‚Der bös Rauch' (fig. 7), while an unhappy and repressed husband was represented by Hans Sachs in a carnival play of the same title:



Fig. 7

While a man bullied by a strong and violent woman was a recurring situation in comedy, arguments between husband and wife (or between the wife and other members of the household) often were used as a tool to introduce Protestant tenets and themes of discussion. Hans Sachs' short ‚morals of the fable', concluding his *Fastnachtspiele*, offer strong evidence of this mechanism. Thus, the woman's (belligerent) body maintained its domestic dimension, offering occasions for discussion to believers, but it also developed its collective dimension, often embodying the popular classes' protest against Church abuses. A frontispiece from Hans Sachs' *Eyn kampff gesprech zwischen eyner frawen und yhrer Hausmaydt* (fig. 8) and a drawing by Niklaus Manuel for his play *Der Ablasskrämer* (fig. 9) exemplify these two different pedagogies of the female body.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Hans Sachs' frontispiece depicts the female body not only in a passive, submissive role, but also able to fight and express its reason through the use of force. On the other side, the fight's domestic dimension kept the message reassuring, as is generally the case in the comedic genre. A different meaning is expressed in Niklaus Manuel's drawing. This image is an infrequent occurrence of an actual representation of a *Fastnachtspiel* on stage by the author himself, and for this reason, it is particularly precious, even if it portrays an ideal performance and not a realistic one. In any case, the indulgence peddler tortured by the women of the village until he is obliged to flee represents how women, as a collective, often were charged with representing communal anger towards the (exclusively male) Catholic clergy and the voice of practical, down-to-earth necessities against the posthumous promises of indulgences and salvation through ‚good works'. With the same function, ‚irregular' women, such as prostitutes, were brought on stage to question clerics and challenge their pretended virtue. It is unlikely that religious leaders aimed to empower the women themselves, but by putting them on stage as mediators in the battle against the Catholic Church, they paved the way for the return of female biblical heroes, which would play a significant role in later Protestant dramas.

4 ‚Nur bey Leib': some open questions and directions for future research

The presence of theatre and performance during the transition between late medieval and early modern society has yielded abundant evidence and has been discussed in various disciplines, from literature to anthropology – and, of course, in social studies. In the words of Norbert Schindler:

> "On the threshold of the early modern period, theatre did not yet have a fixed place removed from everyday practices; it largely took place in and around the body, and for that reason, the carnivalesque was still everywhere."[30]

The examples discussed above provide an overview of how the perception and representation of the body intersected with the world of popular print, illustrated books, performance and ritual, giving new meaning to the body's strong presence in popular performances, such as the *Fastnachtspiel*, and using the collective body – the sense of a community comprising the middle and lower classes embodied in public gatherings – as a powerful pedagogical tool.

[30] Schindler 2002, pp. 124-125.

This process not only developed new potentialities for popular performance, but also influenced more cultivated forms of biblical drama, giving biblical heroes' bodies a new relevance as instruments of the collective will of the *respublica christiana*, as illustrated, for example, in the many plays devoted to Judith during the early Reformation, from Hans Sachs to Sixt Birck to Joachim Greff. It is particularly in Birck's Judith drama that this political theme is developed[31], with plenty of references to the body (including our title expression ‚*nur bey Leib*', uttered by a member of the city council, Charmi, to describe the situation of the people patiently waiting, under the advice of Judith, for God's intervention, as emphasised by the rhyme *Leib/Weib*).

During its first phase, the carnival play had the primary function of mocking Catholicism and expressing popular rage against its symbols of wealth and power. Illustrations cannot convey the moving energy of such mock processions and ‚living theatre' actions in which the bodies not only were represented, but also acted without a fixed script. Contemporary descriptions can better summarise early Protestant carnival plays' features:

> „At the end of June 1524, a carnivalesque parody was staged in the small mining town of Buchholz in Ernestine Saxony. Duke George of Albertine Saxony had recently had a new German saint created in Rome, the eleventh-century Bishop Benno of Meissen. In celebration of the canonisation, Benno's relics were disinterred for veneration in Meissen in mid-June. This event was celebrated satirically in Buchholz. A mock procession was formed, with banners made of rags and some of the participants wearing sieves and bathing caps in parody of canons' berets. They carried gaming boards for songbooks and sang aloud from them. There was a mock bishop dressed in a straw cloak, with a fish basket for a mitre. [...] A horse's head, the jawbone of a cow and two horse legs served as relics, and were carried back to the marketplace. There, the bishop delivered a mock sermon […]. Then the figure of the pope was taken up on the dung carrier and tossed into the fountain, along with his bearers. An eyewitness reported that the spectators laughed so much that they could not stand."[32]

The citizens' bodies – parodically disguised and mixed with animal body parts and simulacra of bodies (the ‚figure of the pope') – found their role in their movement and mass energy, in mimicking the impressive appearance of a procession or a Passion play while disrupting the ritual's earnestness with undisciplined movements, sounds (the singing from gaming boards) and smells (the dung carrier). These mock rituals did not embody a pedagogical message yet, but rather served as preparation for such a message: the feeling of community empowerment and embracing upcoming change. Even if Lu-

31 See Pfeiffer 2014; Salvarani 2018.

32 Scribner 1978, p. 306.

ther often criticised such manifestations' excesses, he was well aware of their potential, as convincingly argued by Andreas Loewe:

> „In the early years of the Reformation, Martin Luther and his fellow reformers had actively supported evangelical revellers mocking the hierarchy and promoting anti-papal polemics during carnival. In 1521, for instance, as part of the Wittenberg carnival procession, Lutheran students acted out an ‚attack on the Pope, the attempt to overthrow him, which ended in the flight, in utter confusion, of Pope, courtiers and servants'. In a letter to Spalatin on 17th February 1521, Luther wrote that their ‚mockery was deserved by the enemies of Christ'. The following year (1522), the reformer Andreas Osiander used the Nürnberg carnival procession to ridicule anti-Lutheran practices, such as indulgence sales and votive Masses for the dead. Just as he lent some support to carnival mockery of the Catholic hierarchy and contested spiritual practices, such as the sale of indulgences, Luther also made good use of the image of St. Paul's fool, for Christ's sake' (1 Cor. 4:10) to promote his message."[33]

Luther knew very well that Protestant pedagogy had to go beyond pure mockery and rebellion, and actively promoted and supported biblical drama, recommending the practice of writing and performing it in Protestant schools. Nevertheless, biblical and Latin drama could only act to reinforce believers' faith and address literate people; they could do nothing for the *widerspenstige Leute*. From the very beginning, the old *Fastnachtspiel* developed some of its *loci communes* in a pedagogical direction.

This illustration from Hans Folz's *[Spiel] Von dreyen studenten die um ein aller schoenste wirtin pulten* (1480) summarises some of these *loci* at a single glance. First, the action takes place in a tavern or pub, where the popular and middle classes connected, did business when the market was closed, indulged in pleasures of the body and simultaneously built community structures, social behaviours and inner hierarchies. The ‚three students' courting the beautiful hostess bring typical sexual innuendo to the situation, while the two game boards – added by hand by a reader and for this reason even more significantly – probably alluded to the realm of gambling and the role of luck which, good or bad, seemingly governed people's uncertain daily lives (fig. 10).

[33] Loewe 2010, pp. 240–241.



Fig. 10

In the Reformation *Fastnachtspiel*, all these elements were appropriated and given a new significance: the tavern (or country village) embodied each local community's pride against the Church's remote power, and the game boards, as we have seen, were used to mock the supposed material advantages promised by Catholicism to those who performed devotional acts. The space of bodily functions was reclaimed as natural and given by God, even if on this side, a more rigorous moral system soon would govern individuals and families' daily lives in Protestant cities.

Women, as we already have seen, could exemplify the rebellion against conventional moral rules (putting prostitutes and other ‚irregular' women on stage), and in a more reassuring image, could function as a powerful collective armed with kitchen utensils, ready to chase and punish rapacious monks or anyone trying to trick peasants and the poor. More generally, the usual carnival play depiction of the fight between husband and wife could be transformed into a confrontation about fundamental tenets of Protestant faith, such as cynicism toward good works, as in Hans Sachs' *Der fahrendt Schuler in Paradeiß*. In this play, a shrewd scholar convinces a woman to give him money to buy salvation for her deceased husband. The new husband beats the woman, but is later robbed of his horse by the same scholar, who tells the wife that he has sent the horse away to bring the given money to the deceased

more quickly. The wife recounts the story to the whole village, expressing great scorn for her husband, and the story concludes with a short recommendation on pure faith.

From all these components, the popular, rebellious body of the *Fastnachtspiel* found its way into the most severe biblical drama in its heroic form. The heroes of sacred drama, far from being purely spiritualised, became the ‚body doubles' of the sacred body of Christ, providing salvation to believers through self-sacrifice. Their representation was physical and detailed, surrounded by adequate scenery, such as in Hans Sachs' *Judith* (1554, fig, 11) and a Saul and David play from Basel (1571, fig. 12):



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

These images presented a new Reformation body: alongside the heavily physical, often grotesque body of the lower classes, there is the calm and composed, strong and noble presence of biblical heroes, made contemporary and comprehensible by theatrical representations often written and staged by school pupils and attended by the most notable families of the city. Such a refined and bourgeois ritual had little to do with the unbridled freedom of carnival mockery, but it covered another side of the ‚adult education' process: while the popular theatre called on illiterate parents to build a feeling of belonging within the Protestant community, the cultivated ones had the opportunity, thanks to school dramas, to refine their knowledge of the Bible and Reformation tenets. In both processes, the body (of the participants themselves in popular festivals and of actors in biblical dramas, whose bodies in school contexts also celebrated the continuity of the family) played a central role, and further research is needed to assess its area of action: what was the relation between the most common ‚cultural symptoms' expressed by early

Reformation imagery and the related ‚cultural symptoms' accessible through the written word (including pamphlets and schoolbooks) and, even more importantly, in the highly performative realm of preaching? How did the most cultivated motives of biblical drama and the heroes' central role, perceived through the rediscovery of the classics and humanism, eventually intersect with the funny, nasty or marginalised heroes of the *Fastnachtspiel* and anti-Catholic mockery? More questions, and hopefully some answers, could emerge from interdisciplinary studies that couple the history of education with iconology, rhetoric and drama studies. The ‚culture of persuasion', described by Pettegree, evolved to make Protestantism one of the most powerful cultural phenomena of the Western world, and could not have done so without a pervasive pedagogy moulding moral education and transmitting knowledge and social roles. For most illiterate 16th century citizens, this was possible ‚*nur bey Leib*', and the study of this sensory pedagogy and its transformation during the later diffusion of literacy could elicit fruitful contributions to the history of culture at large.

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