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Fun and loathing in later Lutheran culture

Kat Hill

I Introduction

All that glistens is not gold: an idiom which encapsulates the message of the most famous work of Lutheran literature of the sixteenth century, *Faust*. In *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, gold and its lure serves as a metaphor for the sins of pride and ambition, for Faust had not trusted God but placed his faith in the Devil.¹ In the final years of his pact with Mephistopheles, Faust descends into a cellar where he finds nothing but black lumps of coal, yet when he gets these home, they are transformed into golden and silver treasures. The reader knows that all his ill-gotten gains come through a misguided act of hubris and that the treasure is illusory.² Faust has been seduced by the temptations of the world which are glittering but transient, for he has been deceived by the diabolic pact. He exchanged his soul for forbidden knowledge about the workings of Heaven and Hell, and everything in-between, and for the enjoyment of all worldly pleasures.

The phrase also appears in Caspar Scheidt's 1551 translation of Frederick Dedekind's *Grobianus*. This was a fictional satire of Lutheran morality which told the story of an individual named Grobian who delighted in coarse and boorish behaviour, but whose

¹ The origin of the legends and stories about the figure of Faust is unclear but the story has been handed down to us in manuscript (*Historia vnd Geschicht Doctor Johannis Faustj des Zauberers*) written by a professional scribe in Nuremberg, and also as a published text printed in 1587 by the Frankfurt publishing house of Johann Spies, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1587). The tale was reprinted in the same year and many times in subsequent years, each time with additional stories.

² This tale is not in the manuscript version. *Historia Von D. Johan[n] Fausten, dem weytbeschreyten Zauberer vnnnd Schwartzkünstler, Wie er sich gegen dem Teuffel auff eine benandte zeit verschrieben, Was er hierzwischen für seltzame Abentherer gesehen, selbs angerichtet vnd getrieben, biß er endtlich seinen wol verdienten Lohn empfangen, Mehrertheils auß seinen eygenen hinderlassenen Schrifften, ... zusammen gezogen, vnd in den Druck verfertiget.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1588), fo. N3^{r-v}.

buffoonish actions were supposed to be a reminder of unacceptability.³ First written in 1549 in Latin by Dedekind, the work was intended for an educated and literate audience. Caspar Scheidt translated the work into German in 1551, probably without Dedekind's knowledge, and although he followed the form and content of Dedekind's narrative, he lengthened and elaborated it in places and gave it the fictionalised context of a Master Grobian writing a guide for his Grobian apprentices. Dedekind produced his own extended Latin version in 1552 which included a new section, later called the *Grobiana*, about how women should behave, and Wendelin Helbach translated the work anew in 1567, updating the text to include the section on female habits. By the time it was printed the text had mushroomed from the succinct original to a work of 500 pages.⁴ In the fourth chapter from which this line is taken, Scheidt described the gestures and actions of a Grobian dinner guest. He loosens his belt in preparation for the gourmandising to come, upturns fellow diners from their seat if they have managed to get a better place at the table, and fingers greedily through the platters to see which is the best. The reader is cautioned that appearances are not everything for the best food might look disgusting. He exclaims 'and not everything is gold that glistens', for delicacies that have outward allure often leave people bedridden for days.⁵ Instead of being used to express a profound truth about inner worth and true virtue compared to empty vanity, the comment was flippant and playful, an expression of Grobian's innate selfishness in

³ Dedekind was a student at the university of Wittenberg and soon to be Magister under the patronage of Philipp Melanchthon when he published the slim volume of around 2500 verses of Latin poetry, entitled *Grobianus*. *Grobianus* was an instant hit. In 1549 the work was printed three more times, and it seems there was demand for a German version. *Grobianvs: De morum simplicitate, libri duo. In gratiam omnium Rusticitatem amantium conscripti. Per Fridericum Dedenkindvm* (Frankfurt am Main, 1549). For detail on editions see Max Niemeyer (ed.), *Friedrich Dedekinds Grobianus verdeutscht von Kaspar Scheidt. Abdruck der ersten Ausgabe (1551)*, (Halle, 1882). For the German translation and second Latin edition see *Grobianus, Von groben sitten, vnd vnhöflichen geberden, Erstmals in Latein beschriben, durch den wolgelerten M. Fridericum Dedekindum, vnd jetzund verteutschet durch Casparum Scheidt von Wormbs* (Gregor Hofmann, Worms, 1551). *Grobianvs: De morum simplicitate, libri tres. In gratiam omnium rusticitatis amantium, conscripti per Fridericum Dedenkindvm. Iam denuo ab autore emendati, et plerisque in locis cum praeceptis tum exemplis aucti* (Leipzig, 1552).

⁴ *Grobianus vnd Grobiana. Von vnflätigen, groben, vnhöflichen sitten, vnd Bäwrischen gebärden, Erstmals im Latein durch . . . M.Fridericum Dedekindum beschrieben, Jetzund aber nach der Teutschen version Caspari Scheidij gantz von newem zugericht vnd auffß artlichst vnd lustigst in Künstliche Reimen gexzstellet Durch Wendelinum Hellbachium von Mülberg, auß Thüringen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1567).

⁵ 'vnd ist nicht alles gold das gleißt' *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. C4^v.

always acquiring the best in life. *Grobianus* was, of course, not meant to be taken literally. It poked fun at unacceptable modes of behaviour by toying with the form of serious conduct books.

In both works, and in early modern moralising more broadly, gold had a loaded meaning. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the Prince of Morocco chooses the chest of gold in the test designed for Portia's suitors by her father but is disappointed to find that all it contains is an image of a skull and cross bones, and an inscription bearing the same famous words: 'All that glistens is not gold'.⁶ In Shakespeare's allegory, the saying stands for all we would expect – the vanity of objects, the emptiness of human desires for money and sex, and the transient nature of such hollow wishes. Yet gold had other meanings. The 'golden mean' was a pervasive term from classical ideals that suggested placid equanimity between conflicting desires, and has persisted to the modern day in the fairy tale Goldilocks which started as a cautionary tale about the middle way.⁷ Gold expressed some of the anxieties in Lutheran fictions which played with ideas of pride, desire, and lust in a world of contradictions.

The teasing, satirical morality of *Grobianus* and its equivocal attitude to bodily habits and worldly goods (still wanting the best but dismissive of exterior show) gives us an insight into the deeply conflicted relationship which Lutheranism had with material culture and corporeal pleasures. Likewise, in *Faust*, criticism was combined with entertaining vignettes, which often centred around themes of vanity and transience. Lutheranism replaced a theology of good works, which drew a line between actions and outcomes, with a much more complicated sense of sinfulness. The repertoires for expressing the new theologies of sin and

⁶ John Cunningham and Stephen Slimp, 'The Less into the Greater: Emblem, Analogue, and Deification in *The Merchant of Venice*', in John W. Malone and Ellen Macleod Mahon (eds.), *The Merchant of Venice: Critical Essays* (New York, 2002).

⁷ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2011), 1–4.

salvation were not just conventional disciplining ordinances about rights and wrongs, and Lutheran pastors and theologians did not only deploy emotional frameworks of disapproval and loathing. Lutheran culture relied on a range of genres and emotions – hope and despair, fascination and revulsion – because at the heart of this culture was ambiguity about how to moralise within the framework of Lutheran theology which had done away with the structure of the Seven Deadly Sins. This chapter explores the way in which more straightforward pastoral works which told people how to act worked in conjunction with creative cultural forms such as fictions and satires, as well images, and the role that humour played in this moralising culture. It traces Lutheran attitudes to the body, speech, and appearance across genres, and then explores how this reflected Lutheran theology, not simply as a set of ideological rules dictated from above but a lived cultural system which explored morality and salvation.⁸ Protestant culture did not advocate empty, gleaming materiality but nor did it seek purity of flesh detached from the world of material objects. In the search for balance, however, Lutherans did not simply fall back on a notion of the golden mean. Whilst these works expressed ideals about how to behave, the attitudes evoked through humour and satire were anything but straightforwardly disciplining.

Lyndal Roper's insights that Lutheran interest in the body and processes was both castigating and celebratory, and that humour more than disciplinary functions have allowed us to take works of satire seriously. However, this approach is not without problems. First, the psychoanalytical and often Freudian assumptions underpinning analyses of bodily functions has focused on the gross and the lurid, but neglected the body as a whole. Second, the emphasis on the universality of corporeal experience and bodily concerns means that the theological implications of such moralising have sometimes been lost; we need to understand

⁸ Lyndal Roper, 'Drinking, Whoring and Gorging: Brutish Indiscipline and the Formation of Protestant Identity' in Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994).

how Lutheran bodily humour was inextricably linked to Lutheran theologies of the body and attitudes to the flesh. Thirdly, scholarship still needs to pinpoint what was Lutheran about these works. Gross humour was not the preserve of Lutheran Germans. After all, Rabelais is the example par excellence of early modern satire. Cultural repertoires were, as so many of the other essays in this volume illustrate, often shared. Satire must be understood in this broader cultural and cross-confessional milieu, yet there was also a specifically Lutheran context: theology had behavioural implications, and humour was a viable option for expressing the ambiguity of Lutheran moralising. Fun and joking were not merely disciplining; their use reveals the way in which theological frameworks affected emotions and the body. The creative culture of Lutheranism reflected people's attempts to resolve issues about the relationship between the sacred and the divine, and salvation and damnation.

II Theorizing fun

Scholarship on later Lutheran confessional culture and its mores has tended to focus on discipline, social hierarchies, and control, and emphasised the serious message pastors preached about the anti-social consequences of disobedience. However, disciplining culture was more conflicted than this analysis would suggest. Lutheran literature and pastoral writing of the later sixteenth century was obsessed with cataloguing bad behaviour and criticising sinfulness. Pastors seemed to despair of humanity. Numerous Devil books criticised all manner of comportment, from dress and drink, to hunting and whoring, and massive compendiums collected all these devils into diabolic encyclopaedias. Andreas Musculus famously demonised the fancy trousers of current fashion, whilst Jodocus Hocker, catalogued

everything about Satan in a work called *About the Devil Himself*.⁹ These volumes were a particularly Lutheran phenomenon: thirty-one pastors produced thirty-eight Devil books. Tracts which demonised manners seem to suggest a deep disapproval of material culture and bodily pleasures — parishioners were told to not eat too much, hunt too much, wear excessively large trousers, or spend too much money. In his *Drink Devil (Saufteuffel)*, Matthäus Friderich furnished a list of objections presented by drinkers to defend their evil habits (Illustration 1). Whilst some of the statements were constructed to provide a particular set-up answer, a reader can also detect the strains of well-worn arguments with parishioners. Paul banned wine, but what about beer? What if someone only drank once a week? What were guests supposed to do at wedding celebrations? Whilst the work condemned drunkenness, people needed to partake in celebrations, host guests, and entertain.¹⁰ Lutheran concerns, therefore, focused particularly on excessive consumption. The logic of Lutheran sermonising acknowledged the need to eat, drink, and dress, but chastised extremes at either end of the spectrum. Friderich wrote:

It is truly the way of flesh that it does not choose the middle way, it cannot go on it, nor does it want to, but goes too far to the right or it goes too far to the left. As when one forbids excessive decoration, so some understand that to mean being completely filthy, unwashed and with ripped clothes. Or if one bans filthiness, so some

⁹ Andreas Musculus, *Vom Hosen Teuffel* (Frankfurt am Main, 1556); Jodocus Hocker, *Der Teuffel selbs, Das ist, Warhafftiger, bestendiger vnd wolgegruendter bericht von den Teuffeln* (Frankfurt am Main, 1566). See also Albrecht Classen, 'The Devil in the Early Modern World and Sixteenth-Century German Devil Literature', in J.M. van der Laan and Andrew Weeks (eds.), *The Faustian Century: German Literature and Culture in the Age of Luther and Faustus* (Rochester, New York, 2013); Kathleen Crowther, 'From Seven Sins to Lutheran Devils: Sin and Social Order in an Age of Confessionalization', in *La pathologie du pouvoir: vices, crimes et délits des gouvernants: Antiquité, Moyen Âge, époque moderne* (Leiden, 2015).

¹⁰ Matthäus Friderich, *Wider den Sauffteuffel, Etliche wichtige vrsachen Warumb alle Menschen sich fur dem Sauffen heuten sollen* (Leipzig, 1552)

understand by that that they should decorate themselves with gold and silver, velvet and silk.¹¹

Excessive luxury and indulgence was sinful but Friderich warned that one should not become a monk. Friderich did not deny the need to ‘*essen und trinken*’ (eat and drink) but denounced ‘*fressen und sauffen*’, words used to describe bestial or boorish behaviour. Devil books accepted the needs and desires of the body, but rejected overindulgence or excessive abstinence. Lutheran moralising walked a tightrope between the two ends of the spectrum of acceptability, and humour proved fertile ground to express the ambiguities.

Wading through the voluminous Devil books can be tortuous rather than entertaining, but playful images on the front of many of the volumes suggest that an energetic, mocking dynamic was integral to this culture. Whilst admonitions like Friderich’s seemed to be a classic evocation of the golden mean recast for Protestant theology — obedience and nothing in excess — the use of satire and humour to advise betrayed a more conflicted relationship with the moral principles involved. From the beginning of the Reformation, mocking was a favourite tool of Protestant polemic, as Lutherans attacked their opponents. The bitterest and most scything criticism was reserved for the papacy. The final pair of woodcuts from *Passional Christi und Antichristi* published in 1521, with text by Philipp Melanchthon and images by Lucas Cranach, was the epitome of Reformation satire.¹² The Pope in full regalia plunges towards the licking flames of Hell in ungainly fashion, surrounded by beasts of all fashion with horrendous features. A goat with strange wings and a dragon with beetle-like legs drive him ever downwards, while the upturned faces of already condemned clerics stare upwards, mouths opening in silent, eternal screams (Illustration 2).

¹¹ Friderich, *Sauffteuffel*, fo. E1^{r-v}.

¹² *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (Wittenberg, 1521).

Whilst aggressive ridicule was a tool of Reformation propaganda which targeted Lutheran enemies in the first decades of reform, by the latter half of the sixteenth century, satire seemed to have become a literary trope for the Protestant elites. Superficially works like Dedekind's *Grobianus* or Johann Fischart's *Geschichtklitterung*, his German version of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, have more in common with the world of baroque fiction and Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* than they do with the rhetoric of Luther and his Reformation.¹³ They seem to look not back but forward to the seventeenth century and the picaresque novel. Yet it is hard to imagine such satire finding favour in a world without Luther and his earthy style and mocking insults, or without the aggression and energy of Reformation polemic. Lutheranism continued to use satire and humour, crafting its own form of moralising out of a matrix of existing forms and ideas which could encapsulate the contradictions of Lutheran theology.

Comedic mocking that was also deadly serious has become a staple of early modern cultural studies, largely because of Bakhtin's inescapable analysis of Rabelais, which emphasised the carnival, comedic universe of folklore that he believed was immortalised in the work of the French Renaissance writer.¹⁴ The Russian theorist postulated that raucous laughter was eliminated from official structures and ideologies in the medieval period but lived on in carnivalesque feasts and found literary expression in Rabelais and visual expression in Bosch and Bruegel.¹⁵ Coarse laughter was the domain of the common people in the marketplace which allowed them to escape from official and serious norms. Such a view of the carnivalesque, which set up an opposition between official and popular, has pervaded interpretations of early modern culture. Many subsequent scholars have seen ritualised forms

¹³ Johann Fischart, *Affentheurlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtklitterung* (Strasbourg, 1582); Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus, Teutsch, d.h. die Beschreibung des Lebens eines seltsamen Vaganten, genannt Melchior Sternfels von Fuchsheim* (Nuremberg, 1666).

¹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, 1984).

¹⁵ For a recent analysis of the works of these two artists see Joseph Leo Koerner, *Bosch and Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* (Princeton and Oxford, 2016).

of disorder as a pressure outlet to contain rebellion, though there was always the potential for disordered play to turn into real violence, but for Bakhtin the carnivalesque was more than a release valve. The authentic voice of the people is evident in the works of Rabelais. His descriptions of carnival, Bakhtin argues, represent the indomitable spirit of the people when they broke taboos and norms, and Rabelais himself used his writing to escape the official strictures of culture.¹⁶

Bakhtin's emphasis on play, laughter, grossness, the body, and common speech has pervaded histories of humour and analyses of Rabelaisian literature, but newer scholarship on early modern culture has pointed to the gaps in his framework. He is erroneous to conclude that the Rabelaisian texts represented a unique moment when satire and direct humour combined, as the laughter of folk culture was recreated for the last time in elite culture. Perhaps even more problematic, the Russian scholar seemed to equate text with reality. The world of carnival was different from Rabelais' literary presentation.¹⁷ Some modern scholarship prefers to argue that Rabelaisian texts are not the voice of the people but merely literary constructs. Yet this approach has also created a problem, since most histories of works like *Gargantua* or *Grobianus* have been written by literary theorists interested in discourse theory and linguistic strategies. As a literary text, therefore, *Grobianus* is presented as a Rabelaisian-like narrative on carnival rites and bodily culture, or a piece of Renaissance self-fashioning which allowed an emerging bourgeois class to control the Grobian other by putting it onto the page.¹⁸ Considerable attention has been devoted to satire as a literary phenomenon, and the work of scholars like Barbara Könniker has uncovered how carefully

¹⁶ Richard M. Berrong, *Rabelais and Bakhtin: Popular Culture in Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Lincoln and London), 10–12; Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History? Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), 284.

¹⁷ Aaron Gurevich, 'Bakhtin and his Theory of Carnival', in Jan Bremmer and Herman Boodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹⁸ Barbara Correll, *The End of Conduct: Grobianus and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (Ithaca, 1996).

authors sought to represent humorous forms in relation to classical ideas of satire and comedy.¹⁹

Such an approach is unsatisfactory and inherently limiting, not least because it treats *Grobianus* uncomplicatedly as a work of fiction, but also because it focuses on linguistic forms without moving beyond the text. Furthermore, for all its problems, Bakhtin's eloquent prose appears to capture something of the ambiguity of the destructive and creative forces in so-called Rabelaisian texts and evokes the inventive power of humour which deconstructs and challenges but also is intimately related to notions of order. Laughter could reinforce norms by indicating when they were transgressed, and controlling forms of laughter was an attempt to civilise, but it was also more than this. Laughter, whether wit, satire, or humour seemed to be interwoven into the fabric of early modern society as Renaissance writers revived the ideas and forms of antiquity.²⁰ What people laugh about and what they mock, can reveal much about a culture by indicating the limits of permissibility and the points of fracture in society. Any explanation which concludes that *Grobianus* was simply a way of mocking a Grobian age by an intellectual elite, or that it was created at the juncture at which civilised manners started to overcome coarseness through a process of literary restraint, is too neat and contained. Laughter did not merely fulfil the function of soothing a series of problems.

Laughter can express a range of emotions and reflect many cultural dissonances.²¹ As Albrecht Classen indicates, 'laughter implies a plethora of intentions, strategies, forms of aggression; it can also hide fear and insecurity, or expose an individual's deeply-hidden

¹⁹ Barbara Könniker, *Satire im 16. Jahrhundert: Epoche, Werke, Wirkung* (Munich, 1991); Könniker, *Die deutsche Literatur der Reformationszeit : Kommentar zu einer Epoche* (Munich 1975); Dieter Seitz, *Johann Fischart's Geschichtklitterung Untersuchungen zur Prosastruktur und zum grobianischen Motivkomplex* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974); Joseph Glowa, *Johann Fischart's Geschichtklitterung: A Study of the Narrator and Narrative Strategies* (2000).

²⁰ Michael A. Screech, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross* (Chicago, 1997).

²¹ Manfred Pfister, *A History of English Laughter: Laughter from Beowulf to Beckett and Beyond* (Leiden, 2002).

feelings.’²² Understandings of cultural systems should recognise their irrationalities and contradictions, and so laughter provides a possible starting point by appreciating the deep pleasure of mocking, but also the unease and discomfort that could be inherent in laughter and its forms.²³ Scholars agree that laughter does not simply originate in enjoyment or fun, and laughter and tears are not necessarily opposite but ‘symbols of a complex spectrum of feeling.’²⁴ The division between the tragic and comic is not clear. Furthermore, humour and laughter are not synonymous, a fact which itself suggests that the role of mocking satire is ambiguous and not simply related to notions of order and rebellion, when communities laugh at the transgression of norms. Instead of focusing on the functions of satire and humour in terms of aims and outputs, as a form of othering, disciplining, or resistance, a history of Lutheran laughter and humour should explore a set of concerns that surrounded satire in the context of Reformation culture and theology.

III Body

The body was central to the way satire worked in the sixteenth century. Literary and visual depictions of the body and its functions explored its grossness, fragility, and weakness. Lutheran culture disapproved of bodily excess but was also fascinated by it. Utilising Bakhtin’s dichotomy between the polite body and carnival corporealities, scholarship on satirical texts and images has suggested that humour about bodily functions and habits functioned simply as a way of othering by mocking behaviours that were uncomfortable and which belonged to the unsophisticated and crude dimensions of the body. Nothing might

²² Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behaviour, Its Meaning, and Consequences*, (Leiden, 2002), 2.

²³ Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville and London, 2012).

²⁴ Jan Bremmer and Herman Boodenburg, ‘Introduction’, in Bremmer and Boodenburg (eds), *A Cultural History of Humour*, 4; Christopher Rea, *The Age of Irreverence: A New History of Laughter in China* (Oakland, 2015), 4.

seem easier than to mock sexual misdemeanours, farting, belching, and gourmandising, and the derision created distance, allowing men and women to engage in a form of disciplining self-fashioning. These analyses elided neatly with the narratives of scholars such as Norbert Elias about the evolution of social norms. Such accounts are, however, strangely distanced from the conflicting, seemingly contradictory emotions that propelled this culture – fear, enjoyment, excitement, anxiety. The lurid fascination with corporeality does not suggest an easy narrative about discipline and othering.

Such ambiguity is related to a problem at the heart of Lutheranism: when good works were rejected as a path to salvation, how could one moralise without a Catholic framework of sin and reward? Damnation was not related to a set of definable sins, and Kathleen Crowther errs in asserting that the difference between Catholic and Lutheran sinning was merely the direction of the vector of obedience. She argues that the shift from the Seven Deadly Sins to a culture that produced Devil Books indicates that Lutherans defined sin as the act of disobedience against God's commandments, rather than the Catholic notion that sin constituted a failure to do what was required for blessedness.²⁵ Yet Lutherans did not have a defined set of 'sins' or disobedient acts, though they did conclude that mere obedience to a collection of ideals was not enough to ensure salvation. The boundaries between obedience and disobedience were not clear, and consequently the proper attitude to sex, greed, or desire could not be circumscribed by mere deference, nor sin by simple waywardness. Consequently, humour, laughter, and satire allowed Lutheran culture to express the ambiguous relationship to wrongdoing by intimating distaste and unease whilst sidestepping outright condemnation.

An essential element of the culture of sixteenth-century satires of the body were shocking and lurid references to anal processes and sex, with leaky bodies that spewed from

²⁵ Crowther, 'From Seven Sins to Lutheran Devils', 487–9.

orifices. Lutheranism mocked the papacy with images which played with these themes, most famously in a collection printed in 1545 entitled *Abbildung des Bapstums*, with text by Luther, where devils shat excrement in the form of monks and cardinals, and where the pope rode to Germany on a pig holding its faeces in his hand.²⁶ Anthropological and psychoanalytical approaches suggest that an evolving bourgeois bodily habitus wanted to eliminate the fearful ‘lower bodily stratum’ and base functions through disapproval, yet anality and sex were not the only dimensions of the corporeal culture of Lutheran satire.²⁷

Grobianus, both in its Latin version by Dedekind in 1549 and its German translation by Caspar Scheidt in 1551, used references to farting, lusting, gourmandising and belching to shock, but these were also placed alongside other themes. The face, expressions, eyes, ears, and nose feature prominently, as well as hands and nails. In part, *Grobianus* sat within established conventions about treatises on boorish habits, a direct reversal of the type of civilised manners one might find in Erasmus. In his work on morals for children, *De civilitate morum puerilium libellus*, first published in 1530, Erasmus focused almost exclusively on the head; he believed the eyes and face revealed the true character of a man.²⁸ Erasmus was not unique. Joseph Koerner and Ulinka Rublack have shown that the development of portraiture and letter-writing fostered this sense of individuality focused on the head and the hands. Casts were taken of Luther’s face and hands after his death as if to capture the essence of his person.²⁹ By contrast, in satires, hands and mouths were not used appropriately, and were placed alongside the base images of filth and grossness. Grobian has dirty fingers and restless hands, which grasp after everyone’s food and mark his shifty, untrustworthy nature. He is a perfect model for others who wish to follow his perverse rules. His mouth, often described in

²⁶ Robert Scribner, ‘Demons, Defecation and Monsters: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation’, in Robert Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987), 277–300.

²⁷ Will Stockton, *Playing Dirty: Sexuality and Waste in Early Modern Comedy* (Minneapolis, 2011).

²⁸ Erasmus, *De de civilitate morum puerilium libellus* (1530).

²⁹ Ulinka Rublack, ‘Grapho-Relics: Lutheranism and the Materialization of the Word’, *Past and Present* (2010) 206 (supplement 5); Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 1993).

animalistic terms, is more concerned with eating than talking and with belching after his meal. When he does use his mouth to speak or make noise, Grobian is uncontrolled, saying precisely what he thinks and giving free reign to his bodily processes by farting and burping. Grobian does not know how to use speech effectively or in a civilised manner.

IV Speech

In *Grobianus*, talk designated status and relationships, and the text characterised inappropriate ways of speaking. Dedekind and Scheidt describe the chatter that might take place after dinner which caricatured guests such as sailors, farmers and soldiers, droning on about their subjects, whilst elsewhere Grobian apprentices are told to scream, sing, and shout rumours, and engage in common chatter on the streets.³⁰ Why this concern with talk and chatter? Lessons could be learned about what happened when the tongue, what Erasmus called the ambivalent organ, was uncontrolled, since it could be a force for malevolence and benevolence, as well as deceive.³¹ Ways of talking were a good indicator of character, and Reformation culture, from its earliest days, had laid emphasis on modes of speaking as a way of marking Protestants apart from Catholics. Lutheran attacks on the papacy and radicals focused on the inability of the papists and ‘heavenly prophets’ to speak the truth in contrast to the true proclamation of the word. Dialogue pamphlets in the 1520s, which characterised the encounters of ordinary people with scripture, had formed an essential part of Reformation polemic to draw the contrast between clerics who were confused and garbled, and the pure straightforward word of reformers, preached to the simple peasants who could comprehend it. In an iconic dialogue from 1521 entitled *Kartshans* (the ubiquitous symbol of the

³⁰ *Grobianus, Von groben sitten* (1551), fos. E^{2v}–E^{6v}.

³¹ Erasmus, *Lingua* (1525). See also Carla Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England’, *Modern Language Studies*, xxviii (1998); *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises*, ed. Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin (Madison and Plymouth), xvii–xviii.

Reformation of the common man prior to the Peasants' War), the Catholic Thomas Murner is only able to make a miaowing sound like a cat.³² In mocking tones, corrupt Catholic clerics were often called 'belly preachers', who were interested in nothing but their paunch rather than the word of God, whilst another of the images in the *Abbildung* series described how the Pope piped falsities which everyone had to follow. Capturing the imagined sound of the true word gave weight to its veracity, whilst the noise of false preaching betrayed its hollowness.

Lutheranism displayed an on-going concern with how people sounded when they spoke, but by the time second-generation Lutherans were writing, such worries about ways of proper speaking extended beyond anti-clerical attacks and pervaded other forms of Lutheran culture and addressed broader concerns. Ludwig Rabus' *History of God's Chosen Witnesses*, a multi-volume martyrology, included the confession of Lazarus Spengler. Spengler had not died for his faith but Rabus included his confession of faith as a model version of the way individuals should defend themselves against the unjust slander of opponents. His enemies were up in arms and complaining about Luther, but Spengler said let them 'cry out, they will scream before long.'³³ Insults or satire about speech could even be turned inwards against other Lutherans. The Mansfield pastor Cyriacus Spangenberg composed a short pamphlet about the infamous lies (*Landlügen*) spread about him and his views. He directed the invective at his fellow Lutherans with whom he was engaged in bitter debate about original sin, and accused them of being false prophets who could not speak with clarity.³⁴ It was not just what people said, but how they said it and who had the right to speak. Hans Sachs' *Book of Trades* published in 1568, detailing artisanal culture in Nuremberg, ended with the natural

³² *Karsthans* (Strasbourg, 1521). See also Kat Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525–1585* (Oxford, 2015), 85.

³³ Ludwig Rabus, *Der Heyligen ausserwehlten Gottes Zeugen, Bekenner und Martyrern . . . Historie*, 8 vols., (Strasbourg, 1552–58): iii (1555), fos. clxxii^v–ckxxx^r.

³⁴ Cyriacus Spangenberg, *Antwort M. Cyriaci Spangenbergs, Auff die schreckliche, gewreliche, zuuor vnerhörte Landlügen* (Eisleben, 1572).

fool, who was not able to be anything other than ‘rash in speech and actions’.³⁵ (See Illustration 3). A text like *Grobianus*, was we imagine, not meant to be read out; as such the rhetorical strains that it echoed only appeared as silent records on the written page. However, Lutheran plays such as the famous *Fastnachspiele* of Hans Sachs gave voice to these ways of talking. Dedekind too dabbled in drama, producing a play in 1576 based on Ephesians 6 and the theme of the Christian knight, which articulated these modes of humorous speech in performance. The play mocked Moses who stormed about the stage in anger because people were not following the law of God.³⁶ The ambivalence was that whilst Lutheranism seemed to condemn immoderate speech, aggressive verbal rhetoric and crude imagery were fundamental to the creation of Lutheran culture and its verbal and written registers.

V Appearance

Lutheran satires such as *Grobianus* explored ambiguities about speech, but also in relation to appearance and attire. Clothes used to dress a body were always a source of humour. Reformation satires honed in on the distinctive dress of the various ranks of the Catholic clergy, but also created a new visual register for clothes in relation to confessional identity. Many of the attacks of the early Reformation poked fun at the excessive dress of the clergy and the papacy, embodied in images like the *Passional*, and Luther’s written attacks on the Catholic church. The papal tiara became instantly recognisable as a symbol of the anti-Christ and Catholic corruption. Rublack indicates that the consequence of invectives against clerical material excess was not simply to accept that plain, unadorned piety was the solution.

³⁵ Hans Sachs, *Das Ständebuch* (Nuremberg, 1568); <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-book-of-trades-the-standebuch/>.

³⁶ Friedrich Dedekind, *Der Christliche Ritter, aus dem 6. Capitel der Epistel S. Pauli zu den Ephesern. In ein Geistlich Spiel oder Comedien gefasset, durch M. Fridericum Dedekindum von der Newenstadt* (Uelzen, 1576).

False poverty was just as objectionable.³⁷ As with ways of speaking, it seemed that Lutheran culture attempted to delimit the boundaries of certain respectable ways to dress, yet these might differ according to station and were neither stable nor certain. And as with speech, as the century progressed, attacks became intra as much as inter-confessional so that the concern with clothes was being used to shape Lutheran disciplining culture, as well as to attack enemies.

In chapter one of *Grobianus* the young student is told to have perverse pride in tangled, long hair, not least for what it might say about social position. ‘For you, however, it is truly a source of pride, when your hair hangs full of feathers, from that everyone can tell, that you have not lain on straw.’ Unlike the decorative feathers that might adorn the apparel of a Swiss soldier or Nuremberg merchant, these were of an altogether less glamorous nature. Drawing attention to the feathers indirectly chastised contemporaries for the adornments they might use to enhance their appearance while poking fun at the unwashed Grobian. Unbrushed, dirty teeth were also to be admired; the yellower the better. ‘Is not saffron also yellow? The same colour has precious gold, after which all men grasp the most precious of all the metals, (Therefore let your teeth get yellow)’.³⁸ The good Grobian could be a bejewelled feast for the eyes, decorated not with gems and stones but snot and wax.³⁹ *Grobianus* provided a commentary on the contemporary material culture of consumption and production and how individuals decorated their bodies, and it reflected a certain unease or uncertainty about how clothes, fashion, and adornment should be used. The image of the leaky, boundless body and fascination with orifices and expulsions was deployed, though this went beyond more base concerns with anality. Clothes were normally used to bind in. In contrast, here the reader was instructed: ‘Sit down at the table laid with food/ And loosen all

³⁷ Ulrika Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2012).

³⁸ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fos. A3^r–A4^r.

³⁹ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fos. A4^r–A7^v.

your ties/ And give your belly its proper way/ So that it can expand, wide and long/ And has good room according to its will/ So that you might fill it with lots of food.⁴⁰ The stomach almost had a life of its own, deprived of its fill from a period of work and fasting. At the end of his meal, Grobian's belly is distended like a drum, and if he needs to fart, then so be it.^{41,42} What was the moral lesson to be taken from the reversed logic of *Grobianus*? Clearly you should not let your snot hang down like an icicle on a house, but the Lutheran message was also to beware of taking too much pride and care in one's appearance.

Just as ways of speaking might mean someone could be identified as a hypocritical Catholic cleric, so too Lutherans could chuckle at all the stereotypes immediately identifiable through clothes. Lutheran pastors often bemoaned conceit and mocked those obsessed with appearances. Joachim Westphal wrote a long text in 1565 about the devilish dangers of vanity, and *Vom Hosenteufel* (1555) by Andreas Musculus expressed concerns that consumption could become excessive, enshrined in the title image with a devil wearing the *Pluderhosen* of *Landsknecht* slashed to within an inch of their life.⁴³ Barbara Correll's suggestion that this was simply reflective of the values of an urban bourgeois world is, however, doubtful.⁴⁴ Grobian's tale critiqued more than one social group. It disapproved of the boorish habits of unclean rustics but it simultaneously poked fun at a culture of excessive consumption, at the feigned poverty of monks and ascetics — in one section the Grobian exclaims that hose should be ripped and full of holes like Beguines — and even the bravado of knights, since the dried snot is described like a suit of armour.

Lutheran culture derided a set of different types variously classified by age, gender, and profession. When rules for women, the *Grobiana*, was added by Dedekind in 1551 and

⁴⁰ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. C2^r.

⁴¹ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. D2^v.

⁴² *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. M^{r-v}.

⁴³ Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 239.

⁴⁴ Correll, *End of Conduct*, 162.

then tacked on to the later German translations, they seemed to rely on a standard set of assumptions in early modern culture about women as predatory creatures, using their bodies to entice unsuspecting men into mischief. In the Wendelin Helbach translation, women lift their skirts above their knees to reveal white fleshy legs, and have eyes that rove tirelessly, looking for the next target for seduction.⁴⁵ Likewise in Fischart's *Flöh Harz*, which imagines a battle between fleas and women, the frontispiece showed the women lifting their skirts to reveal their legs as they search for the small pests.⁴⁶ If sin was located in behavioural practices rather than a defined set of vices and virtues, it might be particularly important to locate these in relation to the body. Seduction and lust, for example, was a female vice indicated in these texts by the desire to expose parts of their body. Ludwig Rabus stressed that gluttony was unlikely to be a sin of the elderly who were far too protective of their money and were more likely to be avaricious hoarders; whilst Cranach's depictions of ill-matched partners which mocked the widow or widower marrying a much younger partner used the jarring contrast between the physicality of young and old to underline the sordid lust of age. Lutherans did not conceive of wrongdoing as embodied in a set of unchanging abstract sins but sought to explain why and how certain types of behaviour prevailed and why they were unacceptable. Human beings were naturally prone to wrongdoing but this manifested itself in different ways.

Lutheranism emphasised that the body was human, fragile, and weak. *Grobianus* elaborated on the danger of falling ill from bad bodily habits, a theme common in Erasmus too, though in Dedekind's text conventional moralising was naturally turned on its head. Foolish Grobian thought that if he washed his hands too often he would make himself ill, and

⁴⁵ *Grobianus und Grobiana Von unfletigen, groben, unhöflichen sitten und Bäwrischen gebärden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1572), fos. F8^v–Hv.

⁴⁶ Johann Fischart, *Flöh Haz, Weiber Traz. Der wunder vnrichtige, vnd spatwichtige Rechtshandel der Flöh mit den Weibern: Ain Neu geläß, auf das vber kurtzweiligst zu belachen* (Strasbourg, 1577); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, 2004), 168.

greed was advisable because being hungry was not good for him as it made him weak and sick.⁴⁷ Such misplaced care for the mortal body was laughable, but in many ways also spoke to the crux of the problem in Lutheranism, about what framework should govern this frail body, when ultimately men and women could do nothing themselves about the inevitability of death or possible salvation. Wilhelm Salzmann wrote jokingly in the 1538 *Grobianus Tischzucht*, a forerunner of Dedekind's work: 'If I spend and ruin I die, if I save I die, better to spend then die, rather than save then die.'⁴⁸ How could a Protestant preacher answer this objection, when theology emphasised humanity's inescapable sinfulness and denied the validity of good works?

VI Sin and salvation

Lutheranism did not provide a set of linear rules about sins to avoid and virtues to follow which would lead to salvation. Instead Lutheran authors attempted to collect and detail sets of behaviour which characterised types of wrongdoing. Mocking worked particularly well as it could express discomfort with a range of unacceptable types of behaviour in varied situations without dismissing completely a prescriptive list of sins. This permitted Lutheran culture to adopt a much freer and more creative attitude to the body and material culture. To suggest that Lutheranism used satire as distancing tactic, grounded in dichotomies of popular and elite, and obedience and disobedience, is unsatisfactory. Satirical and sometimes uncomfortable humour targeted all types of wrongdoing in every possible situation and expressed a very Lutheran view of human nature. Humanity is born in sin, and men and women must struggle with this fact all their lives, hoping that God may grant them grace but unable to do good works that might positively counteract sin. Faust personified

⁴⁷ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. L^r.

⁴⁸ Wilhelm Salzmann, *Grobianus Tisch zucht bin ich genant, Den Brüdern im Sew orden wol bekant* (Dresden, 1538).

these conflicts. Although he had made a pact with the Devil and renounced God, even then a glimmer of hope remained. He is still able to confess and hope for God's grace, although his false Judas-like repentance cannot save him.⁴⁹ In this sense, there was a degree of desperate spiritual equality that remained at the heart of Lutheranism. Even the Grobian hero is able to recognise this fact, although he misinterprets its significance. He instructs the reader to grab the best seat at dinner and pay no heed to rank or title. In a passage of rather eloquent philosophising to explain, he says: 'We came from the same one Father/ Whether we are poor or rich/ And are made from dust and earth/ One good fellow is worth the same as another.'⁵⁰ Such a theory justified all manner of uncouth behaviour, such as pushing people out of their chairs and grabbing platters of food to ensure that the best always came to him first. Grobian was mistaken, of course, about what spiritual equality meant, but his laughable selfish concern for his own health and well-being indicates how Lutheran ideas about humanity gave shape to these moralising works. Men and women all came from the same sinful clay, and whether rich or poor, they are all fragile, weak, and bound to die; for Lutherans the didactic implications of this about proper behaviour were ambiguous.

The most memorable images of the universality of humanity as mortal and frail are those associated with the Dance of Death or *Totentanz*. Depictions of the ubiquity of death, which showed the skeletal forms sneaking up on unsuspecting victims in grim delight, were by no means unique to Lutheran Germany (Illustration 4). Horrifying yet comedic with their leering skulls, the skeletons sometimes don the apparel of their victims, whilst individuals are hauled away by fistfuls of their clothes. The images are macabre but with grinning skeletons and stereotyped figures, the images have an element of dark playful entertainment as they explore themes about vanity, consumption, and mortality. The most famous Dance of Death

⁴⁹ Kresten Thue Andersen, 'The Lutheran Faust: Repentance in the Augsburg Confession and the German *Faustbuch*', in van der Laan and Weeks (eds), *The Faustian Century*.

⁵⁰ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fo. C3^r.

series was produced by Hans Holbein in 1538.⁵¹ Caspar Scheidt, who first translated *Grobianus* into German, produced a German edition of the Gilles Corrozet verses which often accompanied the Holbein *Totentanz* with shoddier copies of the images. Scheidt or his publisher situated the verses within a more obviously pedagogical framework about living and dying well, publishing them alongside advice from Urbanus Rhegius as well as sermons by Cypriani and John Chyrstosom.⁵² In many ways, these *danses macabres* seemed to fit particularly well with a Lutheran ethic, and Joseph Koerner has argued that the quintessentially abject view of human nature that developed in the Lutheran Reformation can be recognised in *Totentanz* images.⁵³ They encapsulated the narrative of the Fall of man and the arrival of death and sin in the world with the temptation of Adam and Eve. The *Totentanz* depicted Adam and Eve in the wilderness, almost naked, ashamed, and mortal. Adam works side by side with Death, while Eve suckles an infant (Illustration 5). Such visual topoi about the consequences of human desire were reflected in the satirical literary works, which emphasised the inevitable demise of man, his desire for money, or lusts of the flesh, and they provided uncertain lessons about how to avoid sin as individuals face up to the challenges of mortality and ambition. In the fictionalised introduction to Scheidt's translation of *Grobianus*, which framed the work as the rule book of an imaginary brotherhood overseen by Master Grobian, a spoon maker from Lourdemont, Grobian expresses a desire, encouraged by his wife, to leave a lasting legacy since Atropos might cut the thread of life at any time.⁵⁴

The continuing importance of satire and fictionalised, humorous flights of fancy reveals much about the emotional culture of Lutheran discipline. Humorous literature functioned by engaging in fascination with concerns about the body, clothes, food,

⁵¹ Alexander Goette, *Holbeins Totentanz und seine Vorbilder* (Hamburg, 2010, reprint; 1897).

⁵² *Der Todtendant, durch alle Stende vnnnd Gechlecht der Menschen, darinnen jhr herkoemen vnd ende, nichtigkeit vnd sterbligheit als in eim Spiegel zu beschawen, fuergebildet, vnd mit schoenen Figuren geziert* (Cologne, 1577).

⁵³ Koerner, *Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 292–3.

⁵⁴ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fos. 6^r–7^r.

knowledge and understanding; it relied on laughter and fantasy, as well as anxiety and fear. It was supposed to be enjoyed as entertainment, but it also belonged to a broader moralising culture in sixteenth-century Germany, which had traditionally relied on gross, shocking, and aggressive metaphors as well as comedic ones. Lutherans brought varied literary repertoires to bear on the problem of Protestant moralising, but Lutheranism did not advocate a neat connection between sin and damnation, or virtue and heaven. By laughing at bodily and behavioural wrongs, which varied according to age, gender, and social position, Lutheranism could at once emphasise the inherently sinful nature of humanity but also provide a framework where shame, anxiety, and mocking might contribute to a culture of discipline. This did not rely on a simple set of dichotomies of popular and elite, or right and wrong, nor did it function simply to name and shame certain sins. Works such as *Grobianus* derided and mocked forms of corporeality, but also grappled with deeper concerns about sin and salvation. A short, printed marginal note in the conclusion of Scheidt's version of *Grobianus* stressed that his anti-hero was not an exception. Scheidt broke the fourth wall and moralised directly to his reader, underscoring that there existed 'an infinite number of Grobians'. All men and women could potentially be Grobians, and if an individual is not careful, he might be reduced to similar behaviour and become an 'unreasoning' animal.⁵⁵

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However glittery Faust's gold, in the end it could not save him. Behind the empty façade of his errors lay not necessarily a deeper knowledge about how to behave but just the emptiness of death and human sinfulness. The themes of Lutheran literature were not unique to Lutheranism — transience, mortality, the golden mean, bodily excess, the carnival, and even devils — nor were the forms of satire and aggressive humour specifically Lutheran, but

⁵⁵ *Grobianus. Von groben sitten* (1551), fos. K7v–K8r.

in these books and images, such themes were situated within a theology which emphasised human sinfulness and dismissed good works. In Dedekind's drama about the Christian knight, the Pharisee tells the doubtful Christian knight that he should take care to reform his behaviour since in the end Death, the great leveller, comes to us all, but good works and good behaviour could be no guarantee in Lutheranism.⁵⁶ Consequently, food, dress, and the body became sites for emotional conflict as objects both of desire and revulsion, and examining how these conflicts were represented helps us understand the changing emotional matrices of late sixteenth century Germany. Lutheran culture was productive, imaginative, and creative in both literary and visual forms, underlining a sense of mankind's enduring and omnipresent potential of mankind to sin and his inevitable thirst for achievement. Satirical and fictional works which deliberately explored different responses to objects, knowledge, ambition, and the body captured the complexity and emotional ambiguity of Protestant moralising, which emphasised, as Luther, Friderich and others said, that in the end we are nothing more than filthy bags of maggots.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Der Christliche Ritter*, fo. C4^r.

⁵⁷ *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar and Vienna, 1883–1999), viii, 685.