

Intertextuality: Der Stricker, Hermann Bote (?)’s *Till Eulenspiegel*, and Modern (Children’s) Literature

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of intertextuality in light of the interrelationship of Der Stricker’s early-thirteenth-century Middle High German *Pfaffe Amis* and Hermann Bote’s Early Modern German *Till Eulenspiegel*, first printed in 1510/1511. Medieval perspectives prove to be highly effective for the exploration of the theoretical model of intertextuality because in the pre-modern world, innovation or poetic genius was of no real value. Bote utilized a handful of tales already fully developed by Der Stricker, but he adapted them for his own purpose, transforming his sources to some extent and incorporating them into his own framework. Whereas *Amis* operates only like a rogue to collect money for his parish back home in England where he keeps an open house out of a great desire to demonstrate the most possible degree of hospitality, *Eulenspiegel* is the rogue per se. Intertextually, there was a direct line from the medieval work to the early modern collection, but the careful comparison also indicates significant transformations and adaptations of the original source. Since the publication of *Till Eulenspiegel*, a new literary tradition emerged which has been alive and very creative until the present in countless manifestations in translations, adaptations, children’s books, novels, musical compositions, artwork, movies, and so forth. By means of intertextuality, we can deepen our understanding of the dependency of Bote’s work on his medieval source, and then trace the history of reception of *Till Eulenspiegel* until today.

Keywords

Intertextuality, Der Stricker’s *Pfaffe Amis*, Hermann Bote’s *Till Eulenspiegel*, History of Reception

1. Introduction

It might be unnecessary today to examine specifically the meaning of intertextuality,

but it is a seminal concept underlying much of world literature in past and present. Examining the evolution of medieval literature, for instance, we easily recognize the enormous utility of comprehending the intertextual strategies at work in many different narratives. This paper will highlight the intertextual strategies connecting two contributions to the history of medieval and early modern German literature, Der Stricker's *Pfaffe Amis* and Hermann Bote (?)'s *Till Eulenspiegel*. This will also illustrate the phenomenon of a surprisingly strong continuity of medieval literature even well beyond the Gutenberg Galaxy, i.e., beyond the transition from a manuscript to a print culture. But let us first consider a variety of striking examples from throughout literary history to lay the groundwork for our comparative analysis.

When Gottfried von Strassburg composed his famous *Tristan und Isolde* (ca. 1210; [Gottfried von Strassburg, 2020](#)), he was keenly concerned with finding the right story. He knew some elements, but he was not sure what source to trust. As he tells us in the prologue, he searched far and wide in many different libraries across Europe until he finally discovered the true, original story written by Thomas of Britain. The assumption here is that a story was derived from an *ur* text, and that only a few writers/poets had been competent enough to draw from it correctly and to render it properly in their own versions. In a way, Gottfried argued, like all his contemporaries, that there was an absolute truth in the written word, like the Bible. However, with all due respect, the previous poets made only half-baked efforts: "They didn't tell it correctly the way Thomas of Britain did" (7). Hence, Gottfried needed to track down that original book and ultimately found it, which made it possible for him finally to tell the true story in its full meaning: "Everything I read about this love story I now present freely to noble hearts, that they might occupy themselves with its content. It will do them good to hear it read to them" (7; cf. [Stevens, 2003](#); [Tomasek, 2007](#)). This proves to be the perfect example of literary intertextuality, an open comment about the poet's desire to connect to earlier sources and to establish his own authority in response to the "original."

Although Gottfried appears to criticize his contemporary, Wolfram von Eschenbach, when he belittles an anonymous poet who was frantic like a rabbit in developing his story (v. 4640; Whobrey 64-65), the latter embraced a very similar concept in composing his Grail romance. In fact, Wolfram pursued the same goal of identifying the "true" story of his *Parzival* (ca. 1205), referring to the Provençal Kyot, who in turn had read the "true" story in Toledo, which had been written down by the Syrian Jew Flegetanis, who in turn had read the true one in the stars ([Classen, 2005](#); [Hartmann, 2015](#): pp. 23-25). In short, for medieval poets at large, it was necessary to situate themselves in a wider context, to cite some authorities, and hence to demonstrate their familiarity with the highly respected tradition and thus their own learnedness. This has been expressed with the convenient formula, "not the what but the how mattered in medieval literature" ([Wehrli, 1984](#): pp. 95-107).

Modern critics have discovered this phenomenon only fairly late, but they then immediately used the opportunity to develop the theory of intertextuality which

has deeply challenged the tradition of the concept of the literary genius so prevalent since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Emmelius, 2015). Already Ernst Robert Curtius had alerted us in his seminal study *Europäische Literatur im lateinischen Mittelalter* about the central need to examine western literature through the lens of comparative studies because the topoi and tropes that he identified had been passed down from late antiquity to the twentieth century (Curtius, 1948, trans. 1953, 1983, 1990). Indeed, we cannot do serious literary research without always keeping in mind the endless scaffolding, or the narrative ladder consisting of countless rungs upon which most texts depend, irrespective of any type of fictional innovation, thematic invention, or the novelty of motifs and topics. Henri Bergson had called it the “fabulatory function,” and Curtius picked up that idea and developed it into his concept of European literature as a holistic unit or shared cultural entity from late antiquity virtually to the present (Curtius, 1990: pp. 9-16).

A simple example would be the long-term reception history of the Doctor Faustus motif drawing from the historical alchemist, astrologer, and magician Dr. Georg Faustus (ca. 1480 or 1466-ca. 1541) whose life was eternalized by an anonymous poet who published the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* in 1587. That one became the source for Christopher Marlowe’s play *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1601), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust* (conceived and developed between 1772 and 1775, a fragment was published in 1790, Part One was published in 1806, with further revisions later, and Part Two was published only posthumously in 1832), and even Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde* (1947), not considering many other attempts to come to terms with this universal idea of signing a pact with the devil in order to gain deeper, perhaps even divine insights (Frenzel, 1992: pp. 218-226).

If we turn our analytic lens around and consider modern-day literature, we easily realize the extent to which it has been deeply influenced by a vast body of medieval literature (Grosse & Rautenberg, 1989; as to the presence of the Middle Ages in modern movies, see Harty, 1999; Driver & Ray, 2002; the reception of medieval literature has already been discussed from many different perspectives; see, for instance, Booher & Gunn, 2020; Classen, 2023). In short, intertextuality, the concept of poets talking to each other across continents, languages, religions, cultures, and ages proves to be an essential aspect of all literary processes (Kristeva, 1969; Pfister, 1985; Roozen, 2015). After all, virtually every writer or poet throughout time has gone through a learning process, has studied his/her predecessors, and was hence influenced by the various sources. The range of possibilities in that whole process is enormous, extending from a complete translation to an adaptation, paraphrase, partial quotes, allusions, occasional references, or only name droppings. Even in the case of a direct translation, such as Hartmann von Aue’s *Iwein* (ca. 1190; see Hartmann von Aue, 2001), we tend to notice significant changes, cuts, additions, or subtle transformations (see, for instance, Trimborn,

1985; Cormeau & Störmer, 1993).

We could go so far as to identify literary studies at large as being deeply determined by the concern with and interest in the investigation of intertextuality (Plett, 1991; Allen, 2011; Mason, 2019; Carter, 2021). The best illustration is provided, for example, by the Bible in its myriads of influences on writers, artists, composers, filmmakers, sculptors, and others ever since its original composition in ancient times (Old Testament) and early at the beginning of the modern counting of time (New Testament; cf. Knipp, 2024), or, respectively, the Qur'an. However, there is also a theoretical risk involved when we subscribe completely and excessively to the ideas of intertextuality. Famous critics such as Lacan have argued that all texts are fragments and depend on pre-text and co-text, emphasizing that there is no absolute "original" and that the intertextual relationships are based on randomness, hence contingent on chance. According to Derrida, there is no center or origin in the entire literary and linguistic process, a phenomenon he called *différance*, which mirrors a "chain of differing and deferring substitutions."

As Helen Regueiro Elan (Elan, 1993: p. 621) observes, "In the absence of an origin that would guarantee presence, meaning, and voice, there can be no originals—only copies. And without a univocal and transcendental referent, all texts refer to one another—translate one another—in infinite and utterly random ways" (cf. also the fairly comprehensive and well-documented article at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality>; last accessed on Aug. 24, 2024). The arbitrariness of this definition, the deliberate ignorance of the historical dimension of all intertextuality, and the desperate but wrong effort to make all texts equal to each other are clearly noticeable today. Later texts do not have the ability to influence earlier ones, for instance, unless we apply modern interpretations, and there is undoubtedly a certain hierarchy of textual authority.

Irrespective of the fact that Goethe raised more or less the same issue as the anonymous author of the *Historia D. Johann Fausten*, this does not entail that the difference between them would be minimal, or that both observed and pursued the same intellectual, literary, philosophical, or historical values. If we accept a more discriminating concept of intertextuality, acknowledging its web-like characteristic and historical structure, it will continue to carry significant epistemological weight.

2. Intertextuality in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age

At the risk of carrying the proverbial owls to Athens regarding individual parts of this study, this paper intends to highlight a most intricate and relevant stream of literary traditions from the early thirteenth century when the Austrian/Bavarian poet Der Stricker first composed his collection of prank stories about the English priest Amis to the famous collection of *histori* about *Till Eulenspiegel*, probably by the Brunswick toll official Hermann Bote (first printed in 1510/1511), and from there to modern children's literature which has offered only bowdlerized versions

of the medieval texts. Here we encounter a perfect example of intertextuality which will allow us to examine not only the history of reception of this famous text in a myriad of different manifestations. We suddenly also face the enormously important realization that we must know the medieval past if we want to understand and analyze correctly contemporary literature which feeds on pre-modern literature more often than we might have assumed.

3. Till Eulenspiegel/Dil Ulenspiegel

Scholarship has been deeply engaged with Bote's *Eulenspiegel* not only because it contains so many intriguing cultural-historical components, but also because it is determined by countless anthropological features and also demonstrates a stunning heresy undermining virtually all social structures, values, and authorities (Blume, 2009). Most important also proves to be the enormous popularity of this corpus of texts that take us loosely from Eulenspiegel's birth to his death in ninety-six *histori* (Lindow, 1966, 1978, 1990). Since the time when the work was printed for the first time in 1510/1511, *Eulenspiegel* has experienced continuous popularity in new editions, translations, literary adaptations, and transformations. There is no modern medium in which the figure of this prankster would not have found some type of manifestations (for an excellent overview, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Till_Eulenspiegel), so we face here an ideal case for the study of intertextuality (for the history of research, see Classen, 1995, reissued 1999: pp. 185-212). Before we examine those aspects more in detail, and hence the opportunity to consider the intertextual references, a brief reflection on some of the major themes in this work would be in place.

Eulenspiegel, from his earliest childhood, is not a constructive member of his society; instead, he only pursues pranks and makes sure that he can operate effectively as a rogue. He fools and laughs about almost all other people, and many times mocks them by taking their statements verbatim, which hence leads to utter confusion and damage. No one is safe from his pranks, neither peasants nor craftsmen in cities, neither lords nor priests, neither scholars nor Jews, neither men nor women. Interestingly, children hardly ever appear in these tales, and if so, Eulenspiegel is among them and suffers from an adult's mistreatment. Much of the humor contained in this large collection of tales is predicated on transgressions in physical excremental terms, but the really significant feature consists of a meticulous examination of the shortcomings and conflicts hidden in human language. For instance, whereas most people use metaphorical expressions, Eulenspiegel takes every utterance verbatim, and thus exposes the opaqueness of those statements.

However, insofar as he always has a sort of explanation ready, a pseudo apology, Eulenspiegel continuously manages to get out of the worst scenarios, even if he has to overcome his own disgust. But he is not a criminal and never targets his victims with the purpose of harming them, except for gaining some money. Moreover, Eulenspiegel commonly plays with his own body's excrement practically

without any hesitation or discomfort, which makes his contemporaries feel rather horrible and repulsed. But he has never had any erotic relationship, neither with a woman nor with a man. And he specifically avoids children because they threaten to steal his show in public, so to speak (no. 21). Hence, sexuality does not seem to matter to this curious person, so we do not hear of any marriage or erotic affairs, although much of contemporary literature was deeply concerned with those aspects. Eulenspiegel initially appears competent in various professions but never commits to any. He has no social contacts or family bonds after becoming a teenager and is not associated with any social group or institution, making it difficult to grasp the ultimate meaning of these highly popular tales (for the print history in the sixteenth century, see [Gotzkowsky, 1991](#): pp. 574-583). The only point we can confirm as being well established by scholarship is that the author wanted to entertain his audience and was willing to transgress almost all moral and ethical norms and ideals for that purpose. There is, undoubtedly, a considerable degree of disgust, but the readers are actually invited to laugh about the rogue breaking various taboos, which obviously provided some relief to the countless readers who had to submit under their own social limitations and constraints.

Considering the enormous history of reception, we can only confirm that none of the transgressive acts had ever had a negative impact on the popularity of these tales. The worse Eulenspiegel acts, the better for the literary entertainment, maybe as a form of compensation for the repressions by cultured society since the rise of the early modern world ([Arendt, 1978](#); for recent discussions, see the contributions to [Schwarz, Drittenbass, & Schnyder, 2010](#), especially by Kipf and Schwarz). To be sure, *Till Eulenspiegel* belonged to the most popular works in the early-modern book markets across Europe during the sixteenth century (see now the contributions to [Schlusemann, Blom, Richter, & Wierzbicka-Trwoga, 2024](#)). However, the author was not necessarily original, and unless we apply an intertextual lens, we would do injustice to his sources and make the wrong claim on originality.

4. Playing Pranks on the Back of the Sick

One of the best-known and popular tales, no. 17, provides a drastic illustration of Eulenspiegel's ruthlessness and rhetorical skill which allow him to earn easy money and to get away with it in time before the truth of his prank is revealed. In Nuremberg, the protagonist announces publicly that he is an extraordinary medical doctor who can heal every illness. The director of a hospital naively believes his pompous claim and asks for his assistance so that he could send home many of his sick people all recovered and healthy again. The cost would be 200 gold ducats, but only on the condition that he would have real success with the sick. The director pays him twenty ducats as an advancement, which already amounts to much money.

At any rate, Eulenspiegel tells every sick person that he would need to identify the one who is the worst off, whom he then would burn to death and use the remaining powder/ashes to heal all the others. He simply terrorizes them psycho-

logically and thus knows how to manipulate all of them. No one dares to stay behind when he, standing at the entrance door to the hall housing the sick, calls out and asks all who are well to leave. Whatever anyone might have suffered for many years, they all get up, disregarding their illness, and run out of the hospital because they do not want to be burned to heal all the others. Eulenspiegel then receives his payment for this miracle healing, but already within three days, all the sick people return to the hospital because they have not been healed at all and actually now suffer even worse than before. The director realizes only then that he had been cheated by Eulenspiegel, having lost his money and facing, once again, all the sick people, who create costs and are nothing but a burden on the director's budget: "und was das Gelt verloren" (54; and the money was lost).

5. The Intertextual Source: Der Stricker

The direct source for Bote's tale was Der Stricker's *Der Pfaffe Amis* (Schilling, 1994; vv. 799-924; for bio-biographical information, see Malm, 2013; Classen, 2021). Scholars have noted that fact already several times, but then have been content with this observation without studying the theoretical and practical implications concerning the creative process involved. It is, to be sure, a clear case of intertextuality, although some of the details are different (for an English translation, see Classen, 2024a; with the relevant bibliography and commentary; my translations below are new ones to focus more specifically on the individual passages). The editor of the 1515 edition explicitly referred to Der Stricker's *Pfaffe Amis* as one of the important sources for Hermann Bote (?). Altogether, the tales nos. 17, 27, 28, 29, and 31 are all based on the narratives by the thirteenth-century poet (Schilling, 1994: pp. 200-201; older research is listed there). Der Stricker, who flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century, presents in his text a different kind of character than Eulenspiegel, although the outcome of the pranks is virtually the same. Amis is an English priest who is deeply committed to entertaining guests free of charge to demonstrate the ideal of Christian hospitality. However, he is not only challenged in that by his own bishop who is jealous of the priest's generosity, but also by money woes. In the first part of the collection of tales, Amis succeeds in defeating the bishop in his own intellectual game; in the second part, we observe the priest traveling around Europe, getting as far east as Constantinople. He regularly succeeds in deceiving rich and foolish people, both kings and princes, wealthy merchants and simple folks, so he can accumulate much wealth, but he proceeds in such a way that we feel without mistake deep disgust, even anger and frustration because the victims are innocent, though also naive and gullible. We might even claim that there is a level of absurdity we won't experience only in post-modern literature (Classen, 2024b).

Amis claims to the Duke of Lorraine that he is the best medical doctor here on earth (vv. 806-07), which the former immediately believes because he is in desperate need of help for all his sick friends and relatives. The fake doctor boasts about his miraculous skills, though he makes an exception regarding those who suffer

from leprosy or have an open wound (vv. 819-20). To the duke, Amîs insists that he would not take any reward unless he would achieve the desired results with the sick. But in contrast to the version in *Eulenspiegel*, he does not intend to burn the sickest person to death and use the ashes for the healing process. Instead, Amîs intends to kill him and use his blood to treat the patients and thus restore their health.

Der Stricker, much more sophisticated than Bote ca. three hundred years later, presents the thinking process of all the sick people who are deeply scared that they might be identified as the one whom the doctor could kill for his blood, so they swear an oath both to the doctor and then to the duke that they are completely healed. However, since they had promised to Amîs to keep quiet for a whole week before revealing the cause of their healing (vv. 838-42), this then gives the rogue enough time to depart and return to England after having received his rich reward of three hundred marks silver.

The duke learns the truth only six days later and shares it with his court where they all agree that Amîs is a master of pranks (v. 923-24). In *Eulenspiegel*, the director of the hospital realizes that he and the sick were all victims of an evil trick, but since the clever man has already disappeared, the money paid out is a loss (54). Whereas Der Stricker concludes with a rather ambiguous comment about the prank: “wer mit kargen listen weis” (924; wise in his deceptive strategies), Bote does not remark in any way about the terrible outcome of this fake doctor’s work and leaves us with the brutal impression that *Eulenspiegel* is nothing but a criminal, although we are still invited to laugh about his strategy because the director was so eager to believe this foreign doctor and because the patients in the hospital are so desperate to pretend that they are completely well again so that they would not be burned as the one victim for all the others.

6. The Invisible Pictures

One of the most famous stories in *Till Eulenspiegel*, which has a deep impact on modern society as well concerning the idea of the naked emperor (the emperor with no clothes on; cf. Robbins, 2003; for a contrastive political view, see Wood, 2007), takes place at the palace of the Hessian landgrave (no. 27). *Eulenspiegel* pretends that his paintings could be seen only by those who had been born legitimately, which the landgrave and then all his courtiers simply believe. Of course, they see only naked walls and no paintings, but they are all afraid of being exposed as illegitimate individuals who had been born out of wedlock (“Hurenkind,” p. 79; the child of a prostitute). One of the landgravine’s maids, who has identified herself as a fool, blurts out the truth, and so eventually the “painter” is exposed, but he still receives part of his promised salary and then escapes before it dawns the prince and his court that they have all been tricked and abused in their gullibility believing *Eulenspiegel*’s words at face value out of fear that their own social status might be at risk.

Der Stricker had developed this tale already much earlier, and there are some

differences. Amís goes to the king of France and offers his service, but he emphasizes that only those would be able to see them who would be of legitimate birth (“ekint,” 525; child of a legitimately married couple). He demanded to be left undisturbed for six weeks, and then the court company would be allowed to enter and marvel at the pictures. The king accepts this condition and adds that every knight would then have to pay a fee to enter the hall with those amazing pictures. Hence, the king wants to test his entire group of courtiers and threatens to deprive them of their property if they could not see the paintings, and hence, they would be exposed as bastards.

Again, when the moment of truth arrives, the king is the first one allowed in, and he is deeply shocked and dismayed about the “fact” that his mother must have slept with another man when she had conceived him. To hide this shame, the king reflects upon his options and decides to hide what he has “realized,” which is the result of a considerable internal debate. Der Stricker enjoyed psychologizing his narratives, including quiet monologues in which the protagonist debates with himself what to do in a certain situation. To be sure, the king simply believes what the “artist” had claimed and now finds himself in a devastating situation: “daz ist mir gar ein totslak” (644; that is a deadly strike against me).

While Amís “painted” scenes from the Old Testament, the story of Alexander the Great, the kings (emperors) of Rome and Babylon, Eulenspiegel had “created” images of the Hessian landgrave’s dynasty down to the founder of the family. The effect, however, is the same in both stories. The priest then departs as soon as he can, while the queen and her maids are allowed to enter the hall the next day only, which gives Amís extra time to send his newly acquired treasure back home to pay for more hospitality and to disappear from view to avoid being exposed as a fraud. The entire court society has a hard time to realize that there are really no paintings on the wall. Der Stricker outlines in painstaking details how first one squire, then another, and so forth, finally acknowledges that the walls are just empty, and then slowly, the older people chime in until the entire chorus is loud enough to bring about the recognition that they have all been duped.

Only the king is the lone holdout, refusing to admit that he has been fooled, and it takes everyone in attendance to force him to live up to the truth. In short, the poet uses this situation to illustrate the discursive nature of communication and the difficulty of establishing truth among a large group of people who are all filled with fear that their social status and role at court might be in danger. Hermann Bote used the narrative motif only to present a hilarious scenario in which the collective fear dominates. Indeed, only when the landgrave finally asks them all to admit the truth, to which they respond with silence, does the truth come out to the embarrassment of the entire company. The landgrave comments that he had never wanted to have any business with Eulenspiegel, of whose pranks he must have heard enough already, but that the latter then had haunted him after all. They lament the loss of money, but it is clear that from then on Eulenspiegel would no longer be allowed to enter the Hessian territory. Der Stricker targeted the king

much more specifically who proved to be the true culprit in this entire business, not willing to look at reality, which then leads to him being mocked by everyone: “Do wart ein vil grozer spot/da zu hone im ein schal” (794-95; there was loud mockery and much taunting).

Despite some differences in the setting and the perspectives, there is no doubt that Der Stricker’s tales were quite familiar still in the late Middle Ages (the text has survived in ten full manuscripts and three fragments from the end of the thirteenth century to ca. 1525; see <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/368>; last accessed on Aug. 25, 2024; and Schilling, 1994: pp. 180-185; it was also printed, see the incunabulum printed by Johann Prüss in Strassburg, ca. 1478, Staatsbibliothek Munich, Rar. 422; digitized at:

<https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0003/bsb00034781/images/index.html?id=00034781&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=1>; see also a second copy, 4 Inc.s.a. 1719 m).

Altogether, hence, it was an almost natural choice by Bote to draw from this popular collection of tales to develop his own figure, Till Eulenspiegel, continuing with a literary tradition that was already three hundred years old or more. The notion of intertextuality serves us well in comprehending this phenomenon better, but it is also not really surprising in light of much previous research on both narratives. As I noted above, however, we cannot talk about randomness or arbitrariness in this case, especially because Der Stricker was obviously more sophisticated in relating stories about this deft, reckless, smart, and curious English priest Amís, whereas Till Eulenspiegel operates more like a careless entertainer who simply delights in pulling people’s legs because of their naivité and careless use of language. In other words, there is a clear historical hierarchy, which then continued far into the present world.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed numerous adaptations of Bote’s collection, but in essence, the intertextual perspective indicates to us that the narrative scaffold extends to the early thirteenth century, and from there further back because even Der Stricker was not completely innovative or a literary genius as modern classicist poets liked to identify themselves (Goethe, Schiller, etc.). We cannot fully tell what sources he might have drawn from, but there are some indications that he might have been familiar with pre-courtly goliard epics, such as *König Rother*, *Herzog Ernst*, or *Oswald*, where often rather drastic humor is coupled with heroic and courtly elements. Other possible sources might have been the Medieval Latin *Unibos* (second half of the eleventh century; cf. van der Kooi, 2010) and the Middle Low German *Reinhart Fuchs* (ca. 1180; cf. Schilling, 1994: pp. 188-190). In many cases, however, Der Stricker’s narratives appear to be the origin of many later literary accounts about pranks and rogues from the Middle Ages onwards until today, although the connection often seems to be obscured or forgotten (Schnyder, 2007: pp. 13-89). The poet of *Pfaffe Amís* never refers to any sources, but no medieval poet composed his/her work in a literary vacuum. However, those pranks performed by Amís do not find any concrete parallels in

earlier texts.

7. Modern Perspectives

Even though since the early modern period Der Stricker's *Pfaffe Amis* was lost or forgotten (it was published again only as late as in 1841, 1875, and 1965; cf. Grosse & Rautenberg, 1989: p. 261), a number of the pranks by the priest Amis survived and have been popular ever since through *Till Eulenspiegel* (McDonald, 2001). Possibly, Hermann Bote's version appealed more extensively to the audience, and since Der Stricker's work had been composed in verse, it disappeared from public view. In 1867, the Flemish author Charles De Coster, drawing from the late medieval narrative, created a novel under the title *La Légende et les Aventures héroïques, joyeuses et glorieuses d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak au pays de Flandres et ailleurs* in which the protagonist becomes a folk hero in the Dutch struggle for independence from Habsburg Spain (ca. 1566/1568-1648). Alfred Jarry, author of *Gestes et opinions du Docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien* (1911), created a literary monument to Eulenspiegel in an appendix entitled "Les poteaux de la morale."

This was followed by the famous German author Gerhard Hauptmann when he created a comic version in verse, *Des grossen kampffiegers: landfährers, gauklers und magiers Till Eulenspiegel abenteuer, streiche, gaukeleien, gesichte und traume* (1927; see Büttrich, 1992). In 1945, Ray Goossens created a comic strip based on *Tijl Uilenspiegel* (https://www.lambiek.net/artists/g/goossens_ray.htm; last accessed on Aug. 25, 2024). Concerning the notion of intertextuality, we also have to remember musical adaptations, such as Richard Strauss's tone poem, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, Op. 28 (1894-1895). A number of film directors also utilized the material from *Till Eulenspiegel*, such as Christian Theede in his film *Till Eulenspiegel* (2014).

Contemporary authors such as Daniel Kehlmann, famous for his novel *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005), also recognized the many potentials of the *Eulenspiegel* stories when he published his new novel *Ty!* in 2017, which proved to be a rather curious, if not failed mishmash of literary figures, topics, themes, motifs, historical materials, often combining aspects, names, characters, or texts from different cultural periods in such a way that the meaning is in danger of getting lost (cf. Classen, 2020; Eickholt & Schwengel, 2021). Nothing works well in that text, with Eulenspiegel playing a rather curious role as a child in a very different world of the Thirty Years' War, realizing the absurdity of all those military operations and then of life by itself. As much as Kehlmann demonstrated his extensive research of the history of pre-modern German literature, the result proves to be, at least in my estimation, a failed effort to create a *bricolage* of topics that ultimately do not make much sense. Ironically, here we face the situation of an intertextual approach that went astray, combining, for instance, Eulenspiegel with Oswald von Wolkenstein (ca. 1376/77-1445), Baroque poetry with medieval lyrics, taking the protagonist all over Germany without any sense of time and space, a whirlwind through the history

of German literature comprehensible only to academically trained experts.

One of the most provocative responses to the late medieval story collection proves to be Yoko Tawada's short story "Futakuchi otoko" (1998; *The Man with Two Mouths*; cf. Mitsutani, 2013) because here a group of Japanese tourists encounters Eulenspiegel during their trip through Lower Saxony, Germany. Eulenspiegel does not only use his excrement to shock others, he also uses his anus to talk to people. Famous East German writer Christa Wolf also felt inspired by *Till Eulenspiegel*, when she published, together with her husband Gerhard Wolf, an eponymous novel in 1972. Here, the protagonist is a smart but impoverished peasant boy who witnesses the horrors of the Peasant War in Germany in 1525. Observing all the shortcomings among people from all social classes, he satirizes them and gains new lessons in human wisdom. The Wolfs use the literary-historical figure as a character who mirrors the ups and downs of society, who comments on all the failures and moral decline of his time, and who, in subtle ways, undermines the traditional feudal power structures, which altogether has very little to do with the *Eulenspiegel* by Hermann Bote (Wolf & Wolf, 1972). The vast popularity of the original narrative throughout the centuries has made it available to any modern writers, like a literary quarry, irrespective of the historical specifics of the 1510/1511 edition.

The same phenomenon comes through in modern literature for children and young readers, such as in Joachim Kupsch's *Das tolldreiste Dutzend des Till Eulenspiegel* (Kupsch, 1974) where Eulenspiegel talks to his readers about his miserable life and his sexual adventures in which he tends to fail. Even when he is about to experience sexual fulfillment, a chastity belt defies his efforts (for a critical analysis of this myth, see Classen, 2007). Kupsch simply revives the old stereotype of this contraption and uses it for his own sexual fantasies, but neither the historical Eulenspiegel nor the historical context prove to be correct. Instead, this narrative stands out because of its populist, sexual, drastic, vulgar language and at times, even pornographic interests, but it does not have much to do with Hermann Bote's work. The focus rests on the protagonist's relationships with women and his dreams of sexual satisfaction, which is often not possible.

Many other modern authors happily subscribed to the general concept of Eulenspiegel's pranks and created their own versions, such as the famous author of books for young readers, Erich Kästner, *Erich Kästner erzählt Till Eulenspiegel* (1938), who simply retold twelve of the most famous examples casting them in modern terms and making them appropriate for children and teenagers, adding his own satirical perspective (Kästner, 1938). There are virtually countless modern adaptations of *Till Eulenspiegel* for children (e.g., Bintig, 2012; Walbrecker, 2013; Roloff, 2022), but the darker and dirtier sides of this prankster are then mostly removed and the entire text is substantially sanitized. Hardly anyone among the modern readers, young or old, remembers or would know of Der Stricker, hence the medieval tradition, but Hermann Bote's work enjoys incredible popularity. The web of intertextuality exists, but the deeper sides, historically determined, are

often forgotten (McDonald, 2001).

8. Conclusion

As the case of Der Stricker and Hermann Bote indicates, intertextuality proves to be an excellent concept for a literary phenomenon that we can observe throughout time, at least in vertical terms, when one narrative becomes the source of inspiration for a later text. This was very much the case throughout the entire Middle Ages and far into the seventeenth century. At closer analysis, we discover further indications of intertextuality also in early modern and modern literature, as we have seen already with regard to the story of Dr. Faustus (version from 1587, Marlowe, Goethe, Mann, etc.). If we consider the idea of world literature, where writers, poets, or playwrights from across the world influence each other, additional dimensions of intertextuality become visible. As our examples have indicated, Der Stricker's *Pfaffe Amis* was highly influential on Hermann Bote when he compiled his *Till Eulenspiegel*. This one in turn has exerted a vast influence on German and European literature until the present, although many times the name of the prankster is all left from the original narrative, whereas the focus rests on different themes and concepts. Nevertheless, the nexus remained in place, even if the modern authors only evoke the memory of this prankster in their own works.

Curiously, of course, the reception process could go through strange, at times perhaps inexplicable twists and turns. For instance, why did the interest in the *Pfaffe Amis* peter out by the early sixteenth century when it had been such a popular text until then? Bote's *Eulenspiegel* picked up the slack and engendered a new tradition, now completely in prose, and determined by new strategies to offer crude literary entertainment, emphasizing much more the human body and its excrement. The public taste had become much more coarse in the early modern period (*Grobianismus*), scatophilia playing an increasing role in public entertainment, so Der Stricker's highly intellectual ruminations and his psychological strategies increasingly failed to appeal to the public, whereas *Eulenspiegel*, often operating with feces, definitely overshadowed the medieval work. For him, traditional ethics and morality matter very little, as long as he can make fun of people in all social classes and expose their foolishness and narrow-mindedness. But in some cases, two of which I have examined here, the same literary tradition continued to be present, facilitating the perpetuation of intertextuality. Considering the enormous longevity of some of the literary themes, then we can conclude, intertextually speaking, that the Middle Ages continued to be impactful, though the framework and some of the ethical, moral, and physical criteria changed considerably (Frenzel, 1992: pp. 208-212; though without any reference to Der Stricker and hence the intertextual nexus back to the high Middle Ages).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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