

Betwixt Respect and Disregard: Pigs in Medieval German Secular Literature

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Pigs (*swîn*) are often found in medieval profane German literature. Pigs are certainly among those animals, mostly mentioned in literature from the twelfth to the fifteenth century: in epic poetry, lyric, Arthurian poetry, courtly novels, fables or didactic literature. Brave men are compared to wild boars (*wilde eberswîn*), knights fight powerful boars, pigs (domestic) are described as dirty and adulterers are referred to as pigs. Good and bad characteristics are ascribed to pigs; on the one hand they are respected because of their power and, on the other hand, pigs are treated with contempt because they are considered muddy or unchaste.

The positive and negative evaluation of pigs refer to the pig in action or the pig as metaphor and contrast – the two possible ways of integrating them into medieval profane German texts.¹ For example, a pig plays an active role in the anonymous Arthurian novel “*Prosa-Lancelot*” of the thirteenth/fourteenth century² where the brave pig attacks the knight Lancelot and injures him:

*das swin lieff yn an und hiew yn hinden in ein beyn
und macht im ein groß wunde [...] (line 11-12)³*

As opposed to the example above, Heinrich Wittenwiler (fourteenth/fifteenth century), author of the satirical didactic poetry “*The Ring*,”⁴ draws a comparison between humans and pigs when he states in his text that someone could learn from chickens cackling and pigs smacking:

pei hüenren lernt man gatzgen,/
pei sweinen seuwisch smatzgen./ (line 4859-60)⁵

¹ Wilfried Schouwink, *Der wilde Eber in Gottes Weinberg: Zur Darstellung des Schweins in Literatur und Kunst des Mittelalters* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1985), 55.

² Joachim Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 225.

³ *Lancelot*, ed. Reinhold Kluge, vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), 809.

⁴ Thomas Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 262-63.

⁵ Heinrich Wittenwiler, *Der Ring*, trans. and ed. Horst Brunner (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991), 284.

Authors of profane medieval German literature normally describe pigs as negative, except for the wild boars and wild pigs. In particular, epic poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth century is full of comparisons between brave heroes and wild boars or wild pigs.⁶ These animals are supposed to be personifications of power and courage and they mostly find approval. It must be pointed out that mainly in the Late Middle Ages courtly poetry is also received by the urban upper class but only on the condition of an aristocratic self-conception.⁷ In this context may also the comparison to a boar be seen in the “*Weltchronik*” by Jans Enikel (thirteenth/fourteenth century). The Viennese patrician, writing for the citizens of his hometown⁸ describes a pagan warrior as brave as a boar.⁹

The respected pig

The anonymous author of the heroic epos “*Nibelungenlied*” (about 1200),¹⁰ compares the hero Dankwart to a boar when he fights against the enemy, that is, the Huns. There he goes in front of the enemy as a boar in front of dogs in the forest; how could he be more venturous:

*do gi er vor den vienden als ein eberswin/
ce walde tvt vor hvnden; wi moht er chvener gesin!//* (B, 1943, line 3-4)¹¹

Dankwart finds himself in a situation very similar to that of a boar surrounded by attacking hounds. He confronts the warriors, as a boar does the hounds. The comparison of hero and boar shows the high status of this wild animal. It was considered to be a heroic animal, courageous, powerful and eager to fight, developing its dangerous qualities especially during the hunt.¹²

In Germanic literature, the relation of the boar to acts of war is very important. The authors of medieval German heroic epics and early courtly poetry often adopt a positive attitude towards boars as far as battles are con-

⁶ Schouwink, *Der wilde Eber in Gottes Weinberg*, 63.

⁷ Horst Wenzel, “Aristokratisches Selbstverständnis im städtischen Patriziat von Köln, dargestellt an der Kölner Chronik Gottfried Hagens,” in *Literatur – Publikum – historischer Kontext: Beiträge zur Älteren Deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Gert Kaiser, vol. 1 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977), 10.

⁸ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 350.

⁹ Jansen Enikels *Weltchronik*, ed. Philipp Strauch, Monumenta Germaniae Historica XXX (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1900), 202 (line 10660-61).

¹⁰ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 203; Max Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), 393.

¹¹ *Das Nibelungenlied: Paralleldruck der Handschriften A, B und C nebst Lesarten der übrigen Handschriften*, ed. Michael S. Batts, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971), 593.

¹² Klaus Speckenbach, “Der Eber in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters,” in *Verbum et Signum: Beiträge zur mediävistischen Bedeutungsforschung*, ed. Hans Fromm, Wolfgang Harms, and Uwe Ruberg, vol. 1 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975), 449.

cerned; their texts are influenced by Germanic but also antique traditions.¹³ These traditions contrast with the Jewish-Christian view of the boar as in Ps 80(79):14: The boar destroys the Lord's vineyard, thus, this animal is regarded as a symbol of evil.¹⁴

The medieval authors of courtly poetry, in particular of the twelfth and thirteenth century, ascribed positive values to wild boars and to wild pigs in general. Like the wild boar in particular, wild pigs in general are thought to fight with brave knights and were compared to courageous, strong heroes. In the early courtly poem "*Alexander*", written by the cleric Lamprecht in the twelfth century,¹⁵ the warriors who defend the city of Tyrus against the army of Alexander the Great are compared to wild pigs. The heroes of Tyrus, greedy for life, fought as wild pigs, but their lives shouldn't last longer.

[...] *di helede von Tyre,/*
des lebenes vil gîre,/
di fuhten sô di wilden swîn,/
wene daz nit solde sîn/
ir lebenes dô mê./ (line 1315-1319)¹⁶

These men feel cornered and pressed by Alexander's men. Their fight is a matter of life and death. The defenders of Tyrus show an enormous fighting spirit and in this life-threatening situation, the author compares them to wild pigs, fighting for their lives.

Comparisons with wild boars and wild pigs alike are used until the fourteenth century; authors of late heroic epics still contrast these animals with heroes. This comparison slowly loses plausibility during the thirteenth century, though.¹⁷ The lyric poet Neidhart of Reuenthal (thirteenth century), for instance, uses this comparison ironically referring to boars in song 91. He comments on some young men with disrespect who suppose to be stronger than wild boars but are only able to defeat a kettle filled with beans:

[...] *das ist Gumpp vnd Eppe Gosprecht vnd der Engelmair die düncken/*
sich noch scherppffer denn die willden eberswein sie bestunden wol einen
kessell bonen vol [...] (song 91, X, line 5-8)¹⁸

¹³ Speckenbach, *Der Eber in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 445.

¹⁴ Speckenbach, *Der Eber in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 462–63; Wera von Blankenburg, *Heilige und dämonische Tiere: Die Symbolsprache der deutschen Ornamentik im frühen Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Wienand, 1975), 158.

¹⁵ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 65.

¹⁶ *Das Alexanderlied des Pfaffen Lamprecht (Strassburger Alexander)*, ed. Irene Ruttman (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974), 35.

¹⁷ Speckenbach, *Der Eber in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 461–62.

¹⁸ *Die Berliner Neidhart-Handschrift c (mgf 779)*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz-Behr (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1981), 218.

The author compares simple farmers instead of audacious knights with wild boars, thus degrading the heroic nature of the animal.

The disregarded pig

Normally, authors of medieval profane German literature show disregard and lack of respect towards pigs (and in particular domestic pigs) in general, regardless of literary genre and date of origin. The positive interpretation of the wild boars and wild pigs in heroic epics and in early courtly poetry in connection with fights is an exception.

Walther of the Vogelweide (12th/13th century)¹⁹ claims to be as lazy as a sow in one of his poems:

*ich bin verlegen als ein sū,/ [...] (book III, song 52, V, line 1)*²⁰

The anonymous author of the satirical didactic poem "*Des Teufels Netz*", an example for urban literature of the fifteenth century,²¹ refers to the unchaste behavior of pigs:

*sich flist menger das er unkünsch well sin,/ mit urlob, als ain swin./ (line 747–48)*²²

Although many texts from the twelfth until the fifteenth century comprehend negative views of domestic pigs, the argumentation against them is restricted to only a few bad qualities. Most of these negative, "typical" characteristics or topoi of pigs are repeated frequently: Pigs are considered to be dirty, lazy, greedy and unchaste.

This evaluation is rooted in the bible and passed on by exegetical writings.²³ For example, the comparison of the pig aspiring to mud and the adulterer has to be viewed in connection with 2 Pt 2:22: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (KJV) Like other medieval German authors, Herger (twelfth century)²⁴ and Heinrich the Teichner (fourteenth century)²⁵ also vary this scriptural passage in their poetry. Herger writes in one of his lyrics:

¹⁹ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 124-25.

²⁰ Walther von der Vogelweide, *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*, ed. Christoph Cormeau, 14th ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 170.

²¹ Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, 261.

²² *Des Teufels Netz: Satirisch-Didaktisches Gedicht aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Karl August Barack (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1863), 26.

²³ Susanne Wolf, "*Die Tiersymbolik im Mittelalter*" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1965), 58.

²⁴ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 88.

²⁵ Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, 104.

ez [the pig] lâten den lûtern brunnen/ und leit sich in den trûeben pfuol./
(song V, 3, line 5-6)²⁶

Heinrich the Teichner mentions in his didactic poem number 34:

*[...] swein/
daz ab schoenen angerlein/
an ein poessew hulben gat,/ [...] (line 57-59)*²⁷

Both authors compare the pig's behavior to that of a man who two-times his wife. Herger writes of the man who has a good wife but meets another woman:

*swel man ein guot wîp hât/
unde zeiner ander gât,
der bezeichent daz swîn./ (song V, 3, line 1-3).*²⁸

The Teichner means that although a man's wife is his proper companion he still goes into the stable, to a dishonorable woman:

*er geleicht auch wol dem swein/
[...] der ein rain chonn hat/
und get von ier in ein stal/
zu einem weib an eren smal./ (poem 34, line 57 and line 60-62).*²⁹

The predominantly negative prestige of the pig in medieval profane German literature is also expressed by another quite popular scriptural passage relating to this animal: "neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Mt 7:6, KJV). Medieval authors refer to this passage, repeat again and again that pigs do not appreciate treasures and, thus, signal their contempt for animals who love to wallow in mud. Wirnt of Grafenberg (twelfth/thirteenth century)³⁰ knows that pigs will not be pleased about red gold and gemstones and prefer muddy puddles ("Wigalois," Arthurian novel):

*[...] swer rôtez golt under diu swîn/
werfe und edel [ge]steine:/
des vreuwent si sich doch kleine:/
si wâren ie vûr daz golt/
der vil trûeben lachen holt;/
dâ bewellent si sich inne./ (line 76-81)*³¹

²⁶ *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, ed. Hugo Moser and Helmut Tervooren, 37th ed. (Stuttgart: Hirzel, 1982), 53.

²⁷ *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, ed. Heinrich Niewöhner, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), 40.

²⁸ *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, 53.

²⁹ *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, 40.

³⁰ Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 220.

³¹ Wirnt von Gravenberc, *Wigalois der Ritter mit dem Rade*, ed. Johannes Marie Neele Kapteyn, vol. 1 (Bonn: Fritz Klopp Verlag, 1926), 4.

Freidank (twelfth/thirteenth century)³² prophesies in the didactic poetry “*Bescheidenheit*” that pearls thrown before pigs will not be clean for a long time:

swer berlîn schüttet für diu swîn,/
diu mugen niht lange reine sîn./ (123, line 6-7)³³.

Michel Beheim (fifteenth century),³⁴ author of courtly didactic poetry, calls someone who throws nutmeg and cloves to the pigs a fool:

[...] wer wurffet für dy swein/
muschat und negelein,/
den gleich ich ainem toren./ (poem 319, line 80-82)³⁵

Authors such as Wirnt of Grafenberg, Freidank and Michel Beheim also make allusions to the fact that pigs do not highly value things humans consider precious. These animals are associated with dirt and base instincts. Pigs are not capable of looking beyond their mud hole.

While the repertoire of negative attributes of domestic pigs is limited, the literary examples are numerous, from the twelfth until the fifteenth century. Although valuable as a food source and living as they do close to people, domestic pigs are generally evaluated negatively in the Germanic profane literature. There are only very rare characterisations in a positive sense. Hugo of Trimberg (thirteenth/fourteenth century)³⁶ describes pigs as helpful in his didactic poetry “*Renner*.”³⁷

pfaffen und münche sölten sîn/
gehülfic ein ander als diu swîn:/ (line 3047-48),

while Heinrich the Teichner even calls them faithful in poem 195:³⁸

ich waenn daz icht getrewerz sey/
denn dw swein: [...] (poem 195, line 12-13).

These references do not change the general pattern that dirty, lazy, greedy, and unchaste domestic pigs are contrasted to wild boars, which are described as brave, courageous, powerful and heroic.

³² Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, 332.

³³ *Fridankes Bescheidenheit*, ed. Heinrich Ernst Bezzenberger (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1872), 179.

³⁴ Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, 98.

³⁵ *Die Gedichte des Michel Beheim: Nach der Heidelberger Hs. cpg 334 unter Heranziehung der Heidelberger Hs. cpg 312 und der Münchener Hs. cgm 291 sowie sämtlicher Teilhandschriften*, ed. Hans Gille and Ingeborg Spriewald (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), 644.

³⁶ Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, 112.

³⁷ Hugo von Trimberg, *Der Renner*, ed. Gustav Ehrismann, vol. 1 (1908; repr., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 126.

³⁸ *Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners*, 219.

MEDIUM AEVUM
QUOTIDIANUM

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KREMS 2015

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

niederösterreich kultur

Titelgraphik: Stephan J. Tramèr

ISSN 1029-0737

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, 3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. – Druck: Grafisches Zentrum an der Technischen Universität Wien, Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, 1040 Wien, Österreich.

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Vorwort

Der erste und umfangreichste Beitrag des vorliegenden Heftes beschäftigt sich mit einem Thema und Forschungsansatz, die recht weit von alltagsgeschichtlichem Interesse entfernt erscheinen. Göttlicher Zorn und seine Rezeption und Umsetzung durch mittelalterliche Menschen stellen jedoch einen Bereich dar, welcher regelmäßig in schriftlicher und bildlicher Überlieferung auftritt und mit dem sich Jeder konfrontiert sehen konnte. Die kritische Analyse von Mihai Dragnea zum Wendenkreuzzug von 1147 zeigt deutlich, in welchem Maße politische, religiöse und wirtschaftliche Konfrontationen und Krisensituationen einerseits Hand in Hand auftraten und andererseits nicht nur die in den Quellen genannten handelnden Protagonisten betrafen, sondern natürlich gravierende Einflüsse auf alle Gruppen der Bevölkerung hatten, die sich der Krisensituation ausgesetzt sahen. Der Aufsatz stellt daher einen wichtigen Beitrag zu auslösenden Faktoren für einen „Alltag in der Krise“ dar.

Die drei weiteren Beiträge beschäftigen sich mit einem bedeutenden alltagsbestimmenden Thema, mit welchem sich *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* schon des Öfteren beschäftigte: der Beziehung von Mensch und Tier im Mittelalter. Eine Spezies, die in unterschiedlichsten Überlieferungstypen regelmäßig in oft kontrastierender Bewertung auftritt, ist das Schwein. Ingrid Matschinegg und Angelika Kölbl widmen sich einerseits Tierkunden und andererseits weltlicher deutscher Literatur des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters und untersuchen die Rolle des Schweines in den Aussagen dieser Quellengruppen. Mein Beitrag beschäftigt sich schließlich mit der sichtbaren Rezeption der Tierillustrationen in einer der wichtigsten naturkundlichen Enzyklopädien des endenden Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit, dem *Hortus Sanitatis*.

Gerhard Jaritz