

Elena N. Penskaya

# Fielding's Farces: Travesty the Historiosophical Discourse

As is well known, the genre of farce, burlesque, and travesty has a long history dating back to ancient times. The history of studying farcical forms in literature and art has a deep-rooted tradition in the humanities. A farce is commonly believed to be a comedy that aims to entertain the audience through situations that are highly exaggerated, extravagant, and hence improbable. Farce is also characterized by physical humor, the use of deliberate absurdity or nonsense, and broadly stylized performances. Farces have been written for the stage and film. Furthermore, a farce is often set in one particular location, where all events occur.

As a rule, a farce is a light comedy with purely exterior comedic techniques. Back in the Middle Ages, the word *farce* was also used to denote a type of folk theater and literature that was widespread around western Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Today, there is no essential disagreement among researchers about the genesis and evolution of farce. It is believed that farce matured within mystery plays and, in the fifteenth century, became an independent genre that would in less than one hundred years come to dominate theater and literature. It was not deliberate political satire but everyday urban life – portrayed informally and carelessly, with all its scandals, obscenity, rudeness and fun – that was the true element of farce. Despite its flexibility, plasticity, and changeability from one era to the next, farce has some invariable characteristics. Contemporary farce studies have shed light on the genre, its history, and its treatment by literary critics. In their research, scholars have examined the recurring themes in farcical comedies, including rebellion, revenge, and coincidence.

Farce elicits an immediate, elemental response from all age levels, cutting across national and intellectual boundaries. It dates back to people's first attempts to scoff in public at whatever their neighbors cherished in private: social prestige, eccentricities, virtues that are vices, friendships and enmities. It can be clearly seen how farce retains its properties from the classical Greek stage through English Restoration and French farce, to the young Hollywood of Mack Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd, the other silent farceurs of the Jazz Age, and on to W. C. Fields, Mae West, Sid Caesar, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, and Monty Python – including other luminaries along

the way, such as Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers.<sup>1</sup>

“Farce,” as the synopsis of Jessica Davis’s monograph on the topic puts it provocatively,

has always been relegated to the lowest rung of the ladder of dramatic genres. Distinctions between farce and more literary comic forms remain cloudy, even in the light of contemporary efforts to rehabilitate this type of comedy. Is farce really nothing more than slapstick – the “putting out of Candles, kicking down of Tables, falling over Joynt-stools,” as Thomas Shadwell characterized it in the seventeenth century? Or was his contemporary Nahum Tate correct when he declared triumphantly that “there are no rules to be prescribed for that sort of wit, no patterns to copy; and ’tis altogether the creature of imagination?”<sup>2</sup>

Farcical elements have been incorporated into non-comic drama ever since theater reemerged in the Middle Ages. Already at a very early stage, comic scenes proved to be popular additions to liturgical musical drama and, later, to religious plays in the vernacular. Some scholars believe that the genre of farce developed out of these farcical elements. Some researchers suggest that farces, similar to the stuffing (French: *farce*) of meat or poultry, was added to plays to increase audience involvement. Other researchers see quite different origins for the farce.<sup>3</sup>

It must be added that farce usually accompanies grand genres as a mobile, adjustable commentary. This commentary can perform diverse functions. It can play a deconstructive role vis-à-vis the text with which it enters into dialogue, or it can serve as a screen or mirror that reflects parodied or travestied works of various genres and authors.

The genre of farce developed rapidly in English literature and culture at the end of the seventeenth and during the first third of the eighteenth centuries. It became part of everyday life and of literary and intellectual processes, combining the objectives of artistic play with those of literary polemics and political and social satire. Farce catalyzed the relationships among art-events, history, and politics, its elements erasing the boundaries between the real figures of the historical stage and their parodic duplicates. Farce became a genre in demand, infecting more and more other genres and plots.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Albert Bermel. *Farce: The Comprehensive and Definitive Account of One of the World’s Funniest Art Forms*. New York: Touchstone Book, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Jessica M. Davis. *Farce*. London: Routledge, 2001, back cover.

<sup>3</sup> See Wim N. M. Hüskén, Konrad Schoell, and Leif Søndergaard. *Farce and Farcical Elements*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002.

Thus the political tragedy of the Elizabethan era and its farcical variant in England in the heyday of dramatic theater, from the 1580s and 1590s through the 1620s, used real historical events that mattered to contemporaries. In dramatic farce, elements of historical thought and philosophical and historiographical oeuvres receive new theatricalized interpretations and appear in their new 'costumes' of burlesque language.

Theatrical farce and, in particular, its dramatic variant invoked almost the whole available array of genres: epic, lyric poetry, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, etc. All of this shaped a vast field for ironical parallels between aesthetic and social vices, playwrights' 'crimes' against the Art and the abusive practices of politicians (or even social classes) to the detriment of the public good. Meanwhile, the more farce assimilated the potential of literary parody, the stronger its ambition to create a consistent, internally mature travesty model of a specific genre canon became.

While analyzing texts of this type, researchers normally first try to find the source works that were rewritten as farces. For instance, an epic romantic drama of the early seventeenth century provided the source and the paradigm for a tale of the heroic deeds of a grocer's apprentice (*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* by Francis Beaumont, 1607 or 1610/1611), and the adventures of Drawcansir in *The Rehearsal* (1671, by the Duke of Buckingham) represent an ironical parallel to the "heroic poems" by William Davenant and John Dryden.

*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* describes a derailed theatrical performance: what was originally conceived as a romance illustrating citizens' lives turns into a grotesque epic drama due to the interference of the audience. Francis Beaumont pokes fun at the incompetence of the spectators who decide that they are co-actors and co-playwrights in the play. In another metatheatrical play, the Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, the literary defects of a parodic play about two kings of Brentford and the valiant hero Drawcansir reflect the professional and personal vices that concentrated in the grotesque character of the fictional juror and playwright Bayes.

Drama as a self-looped product of a narrow professional environment is the object of mean sarcasm in Buckingham's play, where the protagonist Bayes uses the opportunity offered by the (fictional) creation of a play to demonstrate an array of techniques. These techniques are ironically opposed to the basic rules of Aristotle and Horace.

Many attempts to introduce new elements into the traditional structure of the genre of tragedy (e.g. to create a *proper* classicist tragedy without a love affair storyline, or a national tragedy modeled on the example of Shakespeare) quickly became a cliché at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, in *The Rehearsal*, Bayes mentions a book of drama commonplaces

that he compiled (“my book of Drama Common-Places”).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, real-life playwrights assimilated such commonplaces rapidly, their plays resembling eclectic collages of clichés. Thus Joseph Addison created his *Cato, a Tragedy* (1713) in accordance with the laws of classicism. His goal was to involve the audience in order to create inner turmoil; the spectator was supposed to weep over the legislative decay. However, the author failed to realize his intention fully and to avoid the love affair storyline: Cato’s civil tears were a good basis for rhetoric but not a source of plot development. In line with the tradition, the latter function was assigned to the intrigues of villains – Sempronius and Syphax – and to the self-deception of the young characters – the noble prince Juba and Cato’s sons, whose motives are a combination of the bitterness of one-sided love, jealousy, and rivalry. As a result, the enlightening tragedy on republican virtues is shot through by multiple romantic clichés, while the protagonist’s stoic courage erodes the baroque passions of the rest of the characters. Similarly, any serious drama has its own set of tragic commonplaces.

A rather paradoxical situation had arisen by the 1720s and 1730s. On the one hand, endless repetition of the same tragic clichés made their conventional, almost mechanical use less meaningful; on the other hand, that very mechanical nature contained a coercive power that had to be considered, whether the authors liked it or not. This conflict reveals one of the important factors of the heyday of farce. One of Fielding’s predecessors was John Gay, with his dramatic farce *The What D’Ye Call It* (1715). Most of his plays are farces, including the famous *Beggar’s Opera* (1728). Gay’s first theatrical burlesque *The Mohocks* (1712), devoted to the then-relevant matter of the crimes committed by a secret club of London revelers, imitated the epic tone of John Milton’s poems, while the characters’ nicknames (Abaddon, Molock, etc.) parodied the names of Satan’s apprentices from *Paradise Lost*. At the same time, farcical tragicomedy as such was ironically called “tragedy” in Gay’s sarcastic dedication of his *The Mohocks* to the critic John Dennis.

Using the widespread farce technique of the ‘theater inside the theater,’ Gay assigns the protagonists of the internal play the typical tragic roles of a maligned hero and a distressed heroine. They are surrounded by high-ranking villains and self-serving plotters, including the ‘second heroine’ possessed by passions. The plot is driven by fake news about the protagonist’s death, the heroine’s suicide attempt, a parade of five ghosts, and a wedding finale. Most lines are in Dryden’s heroic couplets, which had not yet been completely forced out of English tragedy

---

<sup>4</sup> George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. *The Rehearsal*, edited by Edward Arber. London: n.p., 1869.

of the early eighteenth century. The characters' words refer the reader to numerous tragedies, from Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth* to the plays of John Dryden and Joseph Addison.

The author's irony seeks to travesty the familiar tragic clichés, such as seeing ghosts. Traditionally, ghosts disturb the souls of villainous judicial officials, reminding them of the lives they have ruined. It is not the fates of nations but the daily life of a provincial parish that is the measure of villainy. The victims and their ruined lives fit this small scale perfectly: harassed recruits, the "child unborn," and the mother who never gave it birth (for fear of being sentenced to a severe punishment by lashing). Gay's mockery is ambivalent: rather than degrade the high for no good reason, it distorts the familiar by putting it into a false language and on a false scale, making a 'tragic' caricature out of life. In *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, the gap between the professional, genre-compliant thinking of actors and the incompetent, canon-breaking mind of the semi-educated apprentice is deflected in the deconstructed structure of the play-within-a-play, where all but one of the scenes involving Rafe (the apprentice) are clearly distinct from those involving Jasper (the merchant's assistant). The choice of the merchant's assistant and the merchant's daughter for the roles of a couple in love in the original actors' play was already an obeisance to shopkeepers. Yet, the 'play of the actors' communicates the familiar flattery to the public in the language of specific theatrical conventionality (dramatic art), which is violated in the scenes with Rafe. In Gay's "tragi-comi-pastoral farce," the author and the 'customer' have the same level of skill in the conventions of drama, yet their interests and goals are different. As Sir Roger bends over backwards to demonstrate all possible dramatic genres "in one play" to his ignorant neighbors (who have never been to a theater), his steward has a contrastingly different concern, that of turning the landlord's caprices to the benefit of his daughter, seduced by the landlord's son Thomas. This results in a classical 'wedding trick,' where the false wedding of Kitty and Thomas on stage turns into a real-life marriage. Theatrical conventionality serves as bait, which the steward uses to catch the simple-hearted landlord. Playing along with the landlord's mania ("Why, what's a Play without a Marriage?"),<sup>5</sup> the steward satisfies all of his theatrical whims in full obedience, only to destroy the illusion later, abruptly and intentionally. Subsequently, Gay's farces keep mixing genres and focusing on the objective grounds as well as the social connotations of the interactions between the high and the low in literature and theater. The techniques used by Gay in his farces (including the generalized model of the genre canon he created by building up parodic

---

5 I.9.21.

quotes from numerous works, the ‘theoretical’ preface, etc.) are picked up by the farce tragedies of Fielding.

The experience of Fielding, the author of a whole range of farces written in the 1730s and 1740s, appears to be fundamental to, and indicative of, not only his own era but also those that followed. The popularity of farce was higher at the turns of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Despite his dependence on predecessors, the young Fielding was quick to introduce a number of new subtleties to the long-established method of burlesque travesty. He provided quite unorthodox interpretations of metaphors and analogies typical of burlesque, from the travesty-based model of the theatricalization of life to the parallelism between certain social and historical types and specific roles of dramatic characters.

However, the most important thing is that the genre of farce, in the version developed by Fielding, became an active link in the process of exchange and cooperation between historical thought and theatrical aesthetics in the 1730s. The discourse of historical works began to borrow theatrical metaphors and symbols, and to reproduce the exchange of language and meanings between the everyday environment filled with discussion, debates, collisions, and intellectual conflicts, on the one hand, and theatricalized rituals and stage performances on the other.

The intense dialogue between the baroque and classicism manifested itself most vibrantly in the polemical space of philosophy of history in the second half of the sixteenth and first third of the seventeenth centuries. Even if we analyze only the historical and philosophical conceptions of that period, we see that their basic points were verified through a polemical exchange of treatises and epistles, which often resorted to the vocabulary of farce and theatrical language.

Here we are not attempting to conduct a detailed analysis of the genesis of the ideas and intellectual background of these disputes. What we would like to do instead is to demonstrate the coordinates of the theatrical system, and to represent theater as a place where ἡ κοινὴ διάλεκτος (*‘Koine language’*) exists as a common theatrical dialect, a *lingua franca* of the stage that serves as a framework for the exchange of ideas.

In the second half of the sixteenth and the first third of the seventeenth centuries, farces took on the function of a burlesque historiosophic commentary, which can be seen particularly clearly from Fielding’s travesty plays. Fielding was not the first to compare “the great people” of history and literature (including tragic characters) to ambitious politicians, nor the first to find personifications for this comparison. However, it was he who sharpened and sophisticated those parallels. In particular, his satirical figures of authors – “the great people” and “the great thinkers” – appear as a blend of genres on stage. Independent characters grow from fragments of famous treatises, quotations, and even stand-alone

phrases. A practice like this had already been used in burlesque satire, a mix of genres: *The Author's Farce with a Puppet-Show Called The Pleasures of the Town* (1730–1733), *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, and *Eurydice Hiss'd* (both dated 1737). One of the characters summarizes the method as follows: “in the first place, my piece is not of a nature confined to any rules, as being avowedly irregular.” Thus, “blending” is not only the object, but also a deliberate means of depiction.

The correlations between literary form and real life are stressed by using relevant hints and introducing real historical figures into the dramaturgical fabric. A deliberate conflict of fragments from different genres turned out to be indispensable in the genre of satirical revue, which equated literary realia to extraliterary ones ironically, and turned inside out not a specific style or genre but all popular genres and styles at once. It was, so to speak, a burlesque commentary on literariness as such, on the very historiosophy that had become irrelevant to the aesthetic and meaningful content of its own professional “tools.” Tragedy was beyond doubt the easiest target of such “precision” commentary burlesque. Tragic clichés turned out to be absolutely independent of any specific material in that context. From then on, it became possible to extract their quintessence, as Fielding did, for instance, with the historical and philosophical works of his contemporaries and predecessors in *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*.

As a playwright, Fielding consciously elaborated a burlesque tragic canon twice, in *Tom Thumb* and *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*; both were written in the early 1730s and have a relevant ironical genre subtitle describing them as burlesque tragedies. *The Tragedy of Tragedies* was an expanded and rewritten version of *Tom Thumb*; the rewrite was intended to make the satire more obvious. The play was first performed on 24 March 1731, at the Haymarket Theatre in London, with the companion piece *The Letter Writers*. Its printed edition was “edited” and “commented on” by Fielding under the pseudonym H. Scriblerus Secundus, who pretends not to be the original author. It contains a frontispiece by William Hogarth, which serves as the earliest proof of a relationship between Fielding and the painter and printmaker.

The printed edition was available on the opening night, and the notes included in the printed edition served as a way to explain the play. The print version of *The Tragedy of Tragedies* created two versions of the play, one that was performed and another that was to be read, and each contained instances of humor that catered to its respective medium. Fielding referred to these modern works as “laughing tragedies” and claimed that the only difference between his work and the modern tragedies was that his work was intentional in its laughter.

A textological analysis offers a clue to reconstructing the theatrical *koine* in its farce variant. We will give a brief description of the reconstruction process. We

compared several revisions of the play: the earlier one (I) and the later one (II), the one designed for stage (III), and the one designed for reading (IV). This allows us to consider the textological features of that farce. The versions differ in the number of real historical figures introduced, the methodology of scholarly commentary, and the volume and nature of incorporated quotes, allusions, and farce-specific historical and philosophical reminiscences. *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731) is considered one of Fielding's most outstanding pieces of burlesque drama. The first part of the name, which appeared only in the print publication of *Tom Thumb* (1731), is crucial for identifying the methodology of building the farce *koine* and the genre-specific features of the play, giving it the status of a "metatragedy" ("the tragedy of tragedies"). Woven from myriads of quotes, both hidden and open, *The Tragedy of Tragedies* was perceived as a grotesque depiction of the very genre of heroic tragedy, which involved characters based on real philosophers, such as Locke, Bacon, Hobbes, etc., who passed from one revision to another. Their presence is felt the most in versions I and IV, as the following list of dramatis personae attests:

- King Arthur – "A passionate sort of King, Husband to Queen *Dollalolla*, of whom he stands a little in Fear; Father to *Huncamunca*, of whom he is very fond; and in Love with *Glumdalca*." He has learnt by heart a fragment of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*.
- Tom Thumb the Great – "A little Hero with a great Soul, something violent in his Temper, which is a little abated by his Love for *Huncamunca*"
- Ghost of Gaffar Thumb (Lockehobbes) – "A whimsical sort of Ghost"
- Lord Grizzle – "Extremely zealous for the Liberty of the Subject, very choleric in his Temper, alter-ego of Francis Bacon, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount St Alban and in Love with *Huncamunca*"
- Merlin – "A Conjurer, and in some sort Father to *Tom Thumb*"
- Noodle and Doodle – "Courtiers in Place, and consequently of that Part that is uppermost," *Idola tribus and Idola specus*
- Foodle – "A Courtier that is out of Place, and consequently of that Part that is undermost," *Idola fori*
- Bailiff and Follower – "Of the Party of the Plaintiff"
- Parson – "Of the Side of the Church," again Francis Bacon, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount St Alban with his Masques and Triumphs, repeating "Dancing to song is a thing of great state and pleasure"
- Queen Dollalolla – "Wife to King *Arthur*, and Mother to *Huncamunca*, a Woman entirely faultless, saving that she is [a] little given to Drink; a little too much a *Virago* towards her Husband, and in Love with *Tom Thumb*"
- The Princess Huncamunca – "Daughter to their Majesties King *Arthur* and Queen *Dollalolla*, of a very sweet, gentle, and amorous Disposition, equally

in Love with Lord *Grizzle* and *Tom Thumb*, and desirous to be married to them both”

- Glumdalka – “of the Giants, a Captive Queen, belov’d by the King, but in Love with *Tom Thumb*.” It is remarked that “If this woman has milk in her breasts, it means she is with child.” The sentence is an example of the deductive method (evidence and conclusion) and can originally be found in Sextus Empiricus and elsewhere; it thus forms a contrast to the inductive method of Bacon’s *Novum Organum*.
- Cleora and Mustacha – “Maids of Honour, in Love with Noodle Doodle”
- Other characters include Courtiers, Guards, Rebels, Drums, Trumpets, Thunder and Lightning

Fielding turns Tom Thumb, the central fairytale character of his play, into a valiant commander, philosopher, historian, and, on top of that, a gallant heart-throb at King Arthur’s court. After defeating an army of giants and killing two dozen giant kings with his own hands, the hero wins the love of three grand ladies at once: the captive giantess Glumdalka, the Queen Dollalolla, and the Princess Hunca-munca. Despite the jealousy of the two royal ladies, the machinations of his rival Grizzle, and the ambivalence of the princess’s feelings, the hero is confidently approaching his marriage with the princess – only to fall prey, on the day before the event, to the terrible Leviathan (version I), a red cow that devours the brave young man without remorse. The “tragic” resolution is preceded by a clichéd tragedy action – the apparition before King Arthur of the shade of Locke-hobbes, Tom Thumb’s father (versions I, IV). “The Old Thumb” causes a stir, as befits a theatrical ghost, and confuses the king with his ambiguous predictions, which represent a mash of quotes from historiosophic works by Hobbes, Locke, Bacon, and others.

Meanwhile, the generally accepted conventionality is defamiliarized in a grotesque way: the ghost’s “dark” speeches linger on until the break of dawn only to get interrupted at the very beginning of the “practical” part, which nearly brings the monarch to insanity. Arthur has nothing left to do but curse all the philosophers, historians, and poets in the world, including the authors. The final “catastrophe” takes the lives of seven more characters – from the courtier Mr. Noodle, who brings the news of Tom Thumb’s death and gets killed by the Queen, mad with grief, to the King, who is the last to stab himself on the pile of aristocratic corpses, not forgetting to compare it to a scattered deck of cards.

The practical rationale of the burlesque effect lies in the conflict of two artistic models of reality: the monumentally heroic one and the playfully private one. In the new context, the characters’ “fatal” passions (including the giantess’s immeasurable grief over her twenty slain husbands and her desire for their fearless killer)

lose their “elaborate irrationality” typical of the baroque, taking up parodically the “natural scandalousness” of rococo. Indeed, Glumdalka’s endless grief excites a shade of envy among the other ladies, who have to make do with only one spouse each.

The printed version of *Tom Thumb* deploys the metatextual principle of the *Tragedy of Tragedies* even more consistently than the theatrical revision – thanks to an added burlesque foreword as well as notes that turn the scholarly commentary form inside out. The parodically playful attitude is imparted already in the “publishers’s” pseudonym – Scriblerus Secundus, which refers us to the grotesque style of the Scriblerians, the literary fellows of Jonathan Swift.

As a result, the text of *Tom Thumb*, as presented by Scriblerus Secundus, transforms into a “precursor text” and runs back to the era of Elizabeth, the era of the first flourishing of English dramaturgy. The “prototypical” property of *Tom Thumb* is here proved positively by countless in-text patterns echoing the tragedies of English poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Shakespeare to Dryden, from Thomas Otway to James Thomson and Nicholas Rowe.

Of course, the technique of quoting fragments was not at all new to the genre of burlesque, but dates back to Buckingham and Gay. Yet Fielding provided a new, ironic justification for this type of quoting within scholarly commentary, which replaced the former “clues” to burlesque texts. Notes on the tragedy pick up the game initiated in the main text, “accusing” the English playwrights of the previous hundred years of plagiarizing the unknown author of *Tom Thumb*. Scriblerus Secundus argues that the author could be Shakespeare himself, who has become an unshakeable authority for many dramatists and critics – an authority at least as powerful as Aristotle.

In most cases, Fielding finds it vital to emphasize the consistency of borrowing characters and expressions from tragedy authors; for this purpose, he uses a scholarly commentary, which stacks up endless “parallel quotes” to individual phrases from *Tom Thumb*. A sort of moral sentence pronounced by Locke/hobbes becomes a worthy ending to the *Tragedy*: “These instances, just like those, teach us/They teach us I don’t really know what.”<sup>6</sup> This way, the almost compulsory moral instruction becomes meaningless, reduced as it is to the “quintessence” of all final morals ever, but these senseless words are at the same time a quite conscious allusion to the “algorithm” of tragic endings in drama of Fielding’s time, as well as to the emptiness of the morals drawn from them.

The “editor’s” foreword to *Tom Thumb* performs an independent parodic and satirical function. In earlier burlesques, the figure of the Author often replaced

---

6 Final scene of version II.

volumes of critical commentaries. This critical commentary, on the contrary, is a successful implementation of the satirical figure of the Critic. In this context, the Critic, a character to whom Fielding grants relative independence, continues performing his general functions of burlesque as a form of ironical literary reflection. Not unlike his predecessors, Fielding mediates this reflection through satirical descriptions of the conditions that generate the literary and extraliterary clichés and commonplaces that flood historiosophic treatises. Besides, his reflection is supported even more by parallels between literary and extraliterary processes. It actually played the key role in developing the theatrical *koine* in the waning years of the baroque and throughout the Age of Enlightenment.

Burlesque tragedy was reanimated at the end of the eighteenth century, complemented by everyday social and occupational satire. The genre was resumed in the farce plays *Puss in Boots (Der gestiefelte Kater)* and *The Life and Death of Little Thomas (Leben und Taten des kleinen Thomas)*, written by Ludwig Tieck in the 1790s through 1810s, i.e. in the pre-Romantic era, when the source texts of famous fairytale plots, interpreted by Charles Perrault on stage, underwent a number of metamorphoses and transformations, finally presenting a whole in-built gallery of characters and a panorama of plots. Symbolically, Ludwig Tieck made Fielding – the author of the *Tragedy of Tragedies* about Tom Thumb – one of the central characters in his cycle of fairytale farce commentaries. Meanwhile, the methodology of blending scenes, quotes, figures, and texts into a farce did not need to be rediscovered. It could actually become a powerful tool, which Ludwig Tieck demonstrated skillfully. However, this is a topic for another essay, so we can only mention it in its bare outlines here.