

Slapstick: An Interdisciplinary Companion

Edited by
Ervin Malakaj and Alena E. Lyons

DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-057079-3
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-057198-1
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-057097-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021938530

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2021 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Cover image: Luiza Folegatti and Cleo Wächter
Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com



Acknowledgements

This project began as a random exchange among colleagues about the striking commonality of some texts of the German-language late classical, romantic, and the Biedermeier period: “slapstick” seemed to us at that moment the most obvious description for the sometimes comic, sometimes tragic excesses in works by, among others, Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1823), or Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797–1848), which usually only relate loosely to each other. It was this fortuitous find that brought us in conversation with excellent scholars across fields and at different stages of their careers.

We are deeply saddened by the untimely death of Laura Isakov in 2020, who was a PhD Student at the University of British Columbia and served as research assistant, as well as translator from German into English for a number of the contributions in this volume. Portions of this project would not be in the shape they are were it not for Laura’s dedication to the work. We write with gratitude and will cherish our memories of working with Laura on this project.

We are grateful for a number of institutions, which in various ways supported the research, writing, and editorial work of this project. First, we would like to thank the Department of Central, Eastern, and Northern European Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC). In particular, we would like to express gratitude for the UBC Scholarly Publication Fund, which helped offset publication costs for the volume. We would like to thank the UBC Faculty of Arts for providing additional funding for research assistantships.

Next, we would like to thank our colleagues at De Gruyter: Myrto Aspioti, Marcus Böhm, Stella Diedrich, Anja-Simone Michalski, and Antonia Mittelbach. They have supported our project at various stations over the course of four years. Their review, recommendations, and the organization of an anonymous peer review of the volume all improved the book exponentially. Here we would also like to thank Luiza Folegatti and Cleo Wächter for the cover image.

Maggie Hennefeld’s chapter in our volume, titled “Slapstick Comediennes in Silent Cinema: Women’s Laughter and the Feminist Politics of Gender in Motion,” was initially published as Chapter 13 of *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, edited by Kristin Lené Hole, Dijana Jelača, E. Ann Kaplan, and Patrice Petro. We would like to thank the editors of the Routledge volume, as well as Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group for permission to reprint the chapter in our volume.

Our special thanks go to the contributors to this volume who have shared their perspectives, research, and ideas with great openness to collaborative and interdisciplinary work. Through their diverse scholarly backgrounds, they have facilitated the coming together of literary studies, film history, theology, musicology,

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110571981-202>

queer, Jewish, and disability studies, and the visual arts. We thank them all for their contributions, as well as the good, intensive collaboration and for their patience.

Ervin Malakaj would like to express his gratitude to Siham Bouamer, Katia Bowers, Kyle Frackman, and Ilinca Iurascu for their ongoing support. Their friendship and expert guidance were invaluable in navigating the work that went into this volume. Most importantly, Ervin would like to thank his partner, Gary Kuja-winski, whose unyielding support made the work on this volume possible. Finally, Darlene has been an inimitable research companion and, as such, deserves to be recognized.

Alena E. Lyons's gratitude goes to those dear friends and colleagues who have accompanied the progress of this project with exciting conversations, good wine, unabated interest, and a large portion of positive energy, especially Anne Brannys, Katrin Gellrich, Ingrid Oehm, Arno Schmittel, Michel op den Platz, Maik-Sören Hanicz, Daniela Reich, and Markus J. Roick. She is deeply indebted to Luiza Folegatti for allowing her extensive insights into her projects, her ideas, and thoughts over the years. Folegatti was patiently available for short questions as well as long conversations and generously provided a number of her photographs to be reproduced in this volume. Finally, she would like to thank those people who, in truth, cannot be thanked, and who know what a slapstick life is: her mother Edeltraud Lyons and her sister Wiebke Lyons, without whose extensive support, great kindness, and above all love and humor, neither the work on this project would have been possible nor the ideas that have been incorporated here.

Contents

Acknowledgements — V

Ervin Malakaj & Alena E. Lyons

Introduction: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Slapstick — 1

Part I: History of Slapstick

Alena E. Lyons & Ervin Malakaj

Introduction — 11

Paul Michael Babiak

The Descent of Slapstick — 15

Peter Edwards

Ideology, Performance, and Ironic Distance in Musical Slapstick — 37

Carolyn Struwe-Rohr

Sinking and Falling Bodies: The Beginnings of Literary Slapstick in the Pre-Modern Era — 53

Part II: Instruments of Slapstick

Alena E. Lyons & Ervin Malakaj

Introduction — 73

Sebastian Hauck

The Broken Mirror: From *Commedia All'Improvisato* to Slapstick Comedy — 79

Courtney Andree

Harold Lloyd and the Reappearing Hand: Disability, Embodiment, and Slapstick — 101

Addie Tsai

**Wardrobe Malfunction and Slapstick Humiliation in The Lonely Island's
Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping — 121**

Alena E. Lyons

Gazing at Slapstick with Luiza Folegatti's Drag King Series *O Deleite da Mulher Barbada* — 139

Part III: Narrative Structures of Slapstick

Alena E. Lyons & Ervin Malakaj

Introduction — 161

Alexander Kling

**Telling and Showing: Slapstick in Stephan Schütze's Comic Theory
and Heinrich von Kleist's *Der zerbrochne Krug* — 165**

Claudia Sassen & Stefan Schroeder

**A Constraint-Based Approach to the Slapstick Seriality in Larry Semon
Comedies, 1918–1920 — 187**

Claudia Sassen

**The Anonymized Randomness of Vicco von B.: On Chaos and Order
in Lorient's Agfa Advertisements — 215**

Part IV: Bodies of Slapstick

Ervin Malakaj & Alena E. Lyons

Introduction — 245

Caroline Frank

**The Tragicomic Body: On the Relation between Tragicomedies
and Slapstick — 249**

Irina Hron

'Or Words to That Effect': The Antimetaphysics of Slapstick — 269

Valerie Weinstein

Gender and Jewish Difference in Early German Slapstick — 293

Part V: Politics of Slapstick

Ervin Malakaj & Alena E. Lyons

Introduction — 311

Maggie Hennefeld

**Slapstick Comediennes in Silent Cinema: Women's Laughter
and the Feminist Politics of Gender in Motion — 315**

Ervin Malakaj

Lubitsch's Queer Slapstick Aesthetics — 333

Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado

**The Slapstick of Greater Mexico: The Poetics and Politics of Eugenio
Derbez — 351**

Jiří Hoblík

**Interpersonal and Social Sensibility in Slapstick from the Perspective
of Religious History — 367**

Part VI: Sticking to the Slap: The Contact Points of Slapstick

Alena E. Lyons & Ervin Malakaj

Closing Remarks: Creating Openings — 389

Anne Brannys

Each One, Who Falls – A Conversation — 391

Contributors — 407

Index — 411

Caroline Frank

The Tragicomic Body: On the Relation between Tragicomedies and Slapstick

This chapter seeks to apply the concept of slapstick describing a cinematic form of physical comedy to an analysis of dramatic texts and their stage productions. Although this application seems incompatible at first sight, this intermedial transfer can be justified by the fact that filmic slapstick borrows some of its essential elements from comedy theater. In the *commedia dell'arte*, the 'slap stick' (the 'bataccio') was originally a device with which the comic characters hit each other on stage. Moreover, the ribald comedy and its often grotesque situations typical of slapstick can be traced back to the genre of the burlesque in theater (see von Ahnen 2006, 179). Thus, in this article I recover slapstick for the analysis of dramatic texts and their stage productions in order to be able to define the dramatic genre of tragicomedy in a more differentiated way than literary studies has done so far. I will demonstrate the centrality of slapstick, particularly as it relates to the description, interpretation, and typologisation of body-related comedy (amongst other things between the poles of [corporeal] identity and the grotesque).¹ In doing so, the chapter approaches dramatically staged slapstick in terms of both literary history and genre theory.

I will begin with the examination of two examples in literary history from the end of the eighteenth and from the beginning of the nineteenth century, namely Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz's (1751–1792) *Der Hofmeister oder Vortheile der Privaterziehung* [*The Tutor, or The Advantages of Private Education*, 1774] and Heinrich von Kleist's (1777–1811) *Amphitryon* (1807). My reading of both texts focusses on the specific Shakespeare reception in this era, which fostered the intense theoretical engagement with tragicomedy. Because of its open form, this genre was regarded as a literary form adequate to modern consciousness. Next, I will examine two tragicomedies from the twentieth century by way of comparison, Gerhart Hauptmann's (1862–1942) *Die Ratten* [*The Rats*, 1911] and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's (1921–1990) *Die Physiker* [*The Physicists*, 1961], which exemplify the renewed interest in the genre after 1900. The question regarding the function of slapstick – not only for the tragicomic plot and the character constellation but also for the emotional impact of tragicomedy on the spectators – is of central importance for my analysis and comparison of the dramatic texts and of selected

¹ My study contrasts the work of Guthke (1968) and Zipfel (2017) in this regard.

stage productions from approximately the last thirty years. In the final section, I will assess to what extent tragicomedies, written in different epochs of literary history, show different qualities of slapstick as well.

1 Tragicomedy as a much-discussed genre and its relation to slapstick

The rather low number of comprehensive scholarly publications on tragicomedy indicates an academic uneasiness with examining the genre. An explanation for this can be found in literary history. Since Plautus's (approx. 254–184 B.C.) *Amphitruo* (no exact date), the first known text that was called a tragicomedy by its author, there have always been authors who deliberately marked their dramatic texts as tragicomedies. Far more often, though, there have been polemics against the genre especially from a poetological perspective, which denied tragicomedy any kind of literary quality. In the German-speaking world, Martin Opitz (1597–1639) and Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766) provide examples in this regard. For instance, in his enlightenment-oriented, rule-governed poetics, Gottsched refers to Plautus's genre designation only to declare it unworthy of discussion in just a few sentences: "Plautus called his *Amphitryon* a tragicomedy, because he thought that only royal characters are allowed in tragedy. But tragicomedy is such an inappropriate term, as if I were to say funny lament. It is a monster" (1973, 351–352).² In order to limit the rule violation, Plautus had to invent a genre that would unite tragedy and comedy. However, in Gottsched's poetics such a genre cannot exist: the happy ending of the play automatically makes it a comedy, even though it violates the estates-clause.³

This restrictive perspective on the genre of the tragicomedy in the German-speaking world slowly becomes more relaxed in the course of the intense Shakespeare reception during the eighteenth century. Following the Spanish author Felix Lope de Vega (1562–1635), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) becomes

² "Plautus hat seinen *Amphitryon* eine Tragikomödie genennt; weil er glaubte, daß königliche Personen allein für die Tragödie gehörten. Allein eine Tragikomödie giebt einen so ungeordneten Begriff, als wenn ich sagte, ein lustiges Klagelied. Es ist ein Ungeheuer." All translation, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

³ The *Ständeklausel* (estates-clause) was a principle in poetic theatre by which attempts were made to transfer the principles of Classicist French drama into German theatre. It stated that only kings, princes, and other people of high rank were to be shown in tragedies and that those of the middle classes could only be shown onstage in comedies.

one of the first dramaturgs to connect tragicomedy to the mimesis argument. For Lessing, tragicomedy's combination of the tragic and the comic could be seen as an imitation of nature's diversity. However, and this is one of Lessing's central points of criticism in his comments about tragicomedy in the seventieth part of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* [*Hamburg Dramaturgy*, 1767–1769], it is only an imitation of nature's phenomena that fails to consider the nature of human perception. According to Lessing, it is an elementary human faculty to perceive and experience the diversity of nature by 'isolation' and 'selection' in the first place. Thus, it is a central task of art "to relieve us in the domain of beauty of this isolation and to help us focus our attention" (Lessing 1981, 361).⁴ Lessing uses this as an argument to justify why playwrights should avoid writing tragicomedies, if possible. However, in some special cases it is permitted and even necessary if "seriousness creates laughter, sadness creates joy or vice versa so immediately that the abstraction of the one or the other becomes impossible for us" (361–362).⁵

The dramatic texts examined in the following all have in common that they merge the tragic and the comic in the way described by Lessing; however, none of the texts exhibit a clear inclination toward either genre, at least not from the perspective of the reader.⁶ Dramatic texts that combine tragic and comic elements have an affinity to slapstick-like physical comedy in the tradition of Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977). In this sense, slapstick-like physical comedy can be considered as a *pars pro toto* of the tragicomic. The very early slapstick films focused on aggressive forms of comedy like the struggle between human beings

⁴ "uns in dem Reiche des Schönen dieser Absonderung zu überheben, uns die Fixierung unserer Aufmerksamkeit zu erleichtern."

⁵ "der Ernst das Lachen, die Traurigkeit die Freude, oder umgekehrt, so unmittelbar erzeugt, daß uns die Abstraktion des einen oder des andern unmöglich fällt."

⁶ Unlike *Amphitryon* with its intertextual reference structure or *The Rats* with its explanatory subtitle, *Der Hofmeister* and *Die Physiker* are not explicitly marked as tragicomedies. Their attribution to the genre can be made plausible, however, by poetological statements. See especially Lenz's remarks about comedy in the *Rezension des Neuen Menoza*: "Comedy is a painting of human society, and when it gets serious, the painting cannot be laughable. [. . .] Therefore, our German comedy writers must write comic and tragic at once" ["Komödie ist Gemälde der menschlichen Gesellschaft, und wenn die ernsthaft wird, kann das Gemälde nicht lachend werden. [. . .] Daher müssen unsere deutschen Komödienschreiber komisch und tragisch zugleich schreiben."] (1966, 419). Similarly, Dürrenmatt writes in *Theaterprobleme* that tragedies in the classical sense cannot exist anymore because of society's collective guilt which can no longer be expressed as the guilt of individual tragic heroes in the theatre. Nevertheless, the tragic is "still possible, even if the pure tragedy is no longer possible. We can achieve the tragic from within the comedy, bringing it forth as a terrible moment" ["immer noch möglich, auch wenn die reine Tragödie nicht mehr möglich ist. Wir können das Tragische aus der Komödie heraus erzielen, hervorbringen als einen schrecklichen Moment"] (Dürrenmatt 1955, 37).

and things, custard-pie battles, chases or beatings in which the bodies of the actors possess, as Susanne Marschall has shown, a “cartoonish ability for regeneration” (Marschall 2011, 657; Andrin 2010, 231). With the tramp, however, Chaplin establishes a central symbolic character that can be read as genuinely tragicomic and that had a lasting effect on filmic slapstick. The tramp navigates highly diverse social roles while remaining a “likeable, graceful loser of modernity” (Marschall 2011, 657). This navigation confers sociopolitical dimensions to Chaplin’s films, which present social differences in a humorous, comic manner.

In order to outline some similarities, I examine tragicomedies with respect to their use of specific forms of slapstick-like physical comedy. In doing so, it is necessary to develop a working concept of slapstick, which is broad enough to contain both filmic and theatrical forms of physical comedy, but which also considers the specific character of dramatic texts. Whereas filmic slapstick unfolds its tragicomic character mainly visually and acoustically, dramatic texts are limited to the semiotic system of language. Early slapstick films, strongly influenced by the cinema of attractions (see Gunning 1986), employ specific cinematographic techniques like stop motion, reverse motion, time lapse or incongruence between image and sound in order to cinematically create scenes of physical comedy.⁷ Furthermore, the classic slapstick film consists of a succession of comic situations rather than of a coherent plot (cf. Seeßlen 1982, 31) whereas slapstick-like comedy in dramatic texts may be functional for the plot but is normally only used in certain situations. That is why slapstick-like situation comedy is often only hinted at in the dramatic text, for instance by means of information given in the stage directions or in combination with forms of verbal comedy, comedy of disguises, or comedy of mistaken identities. Because a stage production also offers theatrical possibilities for staging slapstick, in the following every text will also be compared with a recording of a stage performance.

Slapstick in dramatic texts may well contain paradigmatic elements of filmic slapstick like the struggle between human beings and things, chases, bodily mishaps, falls and other acrobatic forms of physical comedy. However, far more often dramatic forms of slapstick are subtler and only implied, for instance in the conflict between ego identity and corporeal identity, in forms of travesty or role refusal, in the (physical) resistance against (supposed) social constraints or in the unleashing of sexual drives (see Marschall 2001, 660). In the following, I will especially focus on such text passages and will examine them with regard to

⁷ For different cinematic techniques of creating slapstick, see Brandlmeier (1995, 52). About the importance of the relation between image and sound for filmic physical comedy, see Seeßlen (1982, 27).

tragicomic slapstick inherent in physical situation comedy. However, as is typical for filmic slapstick, the physical or emotional pain caused is semantically over-coded and can be read as a symbolic condensation of the individual’s subjection to social or other forces beyond its control.⁸

2 *Der Hofmeister* and *Amphitryon*: slapstick and the search for identity

Although the historiography of German literature classifies Lenz’s *Der Hofmeister* as a *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*) drama and Kleist’s *Amphitryon* as a romantic drama, a comparative analysis of both tragicomedies with regard to their slapstick-like elements seems useful nevertheless. Both texts were written at a time when the combination of tragic and comic elements was encouraged by the influence of William Shakespeare’s plays on German theater and their effective erosion of boundaries between genres (see Patterson 2003). At least implicitly the two plays are disassociated from classical enlightenment texts that banned physical comedy as conveyed by characters like Hanswurst or Harlequin from the stage (see von Ahnen 2005, 182).

Lenz calls *Der Hofmeister* a comedy but regards comedies as “pictures of human society” [“Gemälde der menschlichen Gesellschaft”] which usually are also serious and oblige the writer of comedies to write “comically and tragically at the same time” [“komisch und tragisch zugleich”] (Lenz 1966, 419). Tragic elements are mainly found in the central plot around the tutor Läufer and his (imagined) love for his pupil Gustchen. Latent tragedy can be found in the description of the precarious situation of private teachers in aristocratic or bourgeois houses, who are treated, as the text says, like “servants” [“Domestiken”] (Lenz 1987, 46). Furthermore, tragedy – in the sense of painful occurrences which, at least from the situational perspective of the characters, cannot be averted – develops in the main plot by Gustchen’s unwanted pregnancy, by her and the tutor’s escape, by the Major’s attempt to kill Läufer and take revenge for the dishonoring of his daughter, by Läufer’s self-castration by which he wants to get rid of his uncontrollable drives, and by Gustchen’s suicide attempt which only at the last minute is foiled by her father (cf. Wiessmeyer 1996, 331).

⁸ Following Alan Dale, I use the term “slapstick” as synonymous with “physical comedy” in order to apply it beyond filmic usage. Dale justifies this by the fact that most early slapstick entertainers came from vaudeville or the music hall traditions (2000, 30). For the possible origins of American slapstick in the comedy of the British music hall see Dixon (2010).

However, the comedic denouement at the end of the play fulfills a special function for the play. Here physical comedy, hitherto mainly restricted to the subplot around the character of Pätus, now also spreads to the main plot. The happy ending, which is (seemingly) satisfactory for all characters, is introduced by a string of rather unlikely coincidences: a sudden lottery win reunites Pätus and Fritz with their fathers. Just at the moment when grief-stricken Gustchen wants to take her life her father appears and rescues her. In spite of the self-castration, Läufer finds a new girl for whom physical love is not important, and so on. The final scene surpasses these coincidences with further unlikely occurrences: slapstick-like moments of physical comedy develop from the increasingly fast-paced plot, as several couples and family members get together in quick succession. Different from the preceding scenes, the stage directions here include several hints at the characters' spatial distribution and at their abrupt and thus comedic body movements. First Gustchen and the maid Rehaar hide in the adjoining room, then Fritz falls on his knees before his father, the Privy Councilor. The father, however, quickly lifts Fritz up again (Lenz 1987, 118) and embraces him, which concludes the first reconciliation. Directly afterwards, the Privy Councilor becomes the (spatial) organizer of the other pairings (119):

PRIVY COUNCILOR: I see – Don't you want to step into that chamber for a moment? (*Leads him to the door.*)

PÄTUS (*opens and shrieks back, holding his head with both his hands*): Jungfer Rehaar – At your feet – (*Behind the scene.*). Am I so fortunate? Or is it just a dream? A Delirium? – An enchantment? –

PRIVY COUNCILOR: Let's leave him. – (*Turns to Fritz.*) And you are still thinking of Gustchen? [. . .] Here! (*Leads him into the chamber.*)

FRITZ (*off stage, screaming loudly*): Gustchen! – Do I see a shadow image? (Lenz 2019, 86–87)⁹

9 "GEHEIMER RAT: Ich merke – Wollen Sie [Pätus] nicht auf einen Augenblick in die Kammer spazieren? *Führt ihn an die Tür.*

PÄTUS *macht auf und fährt zurück, sich mit beiden Händen an den Kopf greifend*: Jungfer Rehaar – Zu Ihren Füßen – *Hinter der Szene.* Bin ich so glücklich? oder ist's nur ein Traum? Ein Rausch? – Eine Bezauberung? –

GEHEIMER RAT: Lassen wir ihn! – *Kehrt zu Fritz.* Und du denkst noch an Gustchen? [. . .] Hier! *Führt ihn in die Kammer.*

FRITZ *hinter der Szene mit lautem Geschrei*: Gustchen! – Seh ich ein Schattenbild?"

Here comedy is created by the repetition and by the euphoria of the characters about the new pairings which is not directly correlated to their former behavior. It is further enhanced when, in the same scene, the old Pätus becomes reconciled with his mother and both the Major and the old Pätus are reunited with their children. Everyone is in each other's arms in no time, which creates an effect of physical comedy which can be described as decidedly slapstick-like since it has the function of implicit social criticism and shows that the search for identity and happiness is only superficially successful. All characters find a partner: the female characters are handed over like marionettes (see Lappe 1980, 16) to the male ones who, however, in spite of their comical physical movements, remain passive themselves in this orgy of reconciliation. They are pawns in the hands of the Privy Councilor, who, in turn, is merely a victim of the ironic coincidences at the end of the drama.

The play's final scenes almost demand an exaggerated staging that makes use of physical comedy. Hence it may at first be surprising that the theatre film *Der Hofmeister* (1975/1976), based on Bertolt Brecht's (1898–1956) version and directed by Harry Buckwitz (1904–1987), makes no use of slapstick. Compared to Lenz's drama, the lack of slapstick is particularly apparent in the final sequences: they only deal with the union of Fritz and Gustchen, which, unlike in the play, is not organized by the Privy Councilor and which centers on Fritz's decision to accept Gustchen's child as his own. The film evokes comedy only through the staged mawkishness, which culminates in the Majoress's singing of a schmaltzy Christmas minuet in celebration of the happiness of the new family.¹⁰ The adaptation in the form of a theatre film, which makes recourse to Brecht's reworking of Lenz's drama conveys social criticism directly by the characters' discourse; however, by not using physical comedy, *Der Hofmeister* deprives itself of a subtler way of provoking in the viewer a critical reflection about the action and the deplorable state of social affairs by means of tragicomic proxemics.¹¹

By contrast, different forms of social criticism complement each other in Lenz's dramatic text. First, the conflicts of social position and identity that are addressed in the play are solved only superficially: Läufer's deep identity

10 See 1:48:23–1:49:24. Different than in Lenz's drama this is not the last, but the next-to-last scene of the theatre film. The last scene unites the tutor and Lise, and Wenzeslaus has to admit that he was wrong about Läufer. With this change in the temporal chronology of the scenes the film focusses on Läufer's fate and, unlike the dramatic text, does not let it merge into a fatalistic and at the same time highly questionable comedic finale which concerns all the characters.

11 Erika Fischer-Lichte defines the proxemic signs of the theatre as gestural signs, which however can only be attributed with a meaning if they are related to the surrounding space at the same time (1983, 87).

crisis, which leads to castration, is marginalized by his finding a future wife, Lise, who does not seem to care about his emasculation. Furthermore, the solution of the tutor problem, so central to the play, appears ridiculous: in the last scenes, the critical depiction of the profession of the tutor goes up into comedic smoke, not least because of the slapstick. This is carried to extremes by Fritz von Berg when he accepts the child fathered by Läufer as his own and ends the play with the sardonic sentence: "At least, my sweet boy, I shall never have you educated by tutors" (Lenz 2019, 89).¹² The exaggeration of the comedic ending articulates that the problems of the contemporary educational system, which the text addresses and which are based on social hierarchies, cannot be solved in this manner.

In all his plays, Lenz shows the "ridiculous contrast between the bourgeois individual's demand for self-realization and the constraints of society" (Winter 2000, 58).¹³ In *Der Hofmeister*, Lenz succeeds in expressing this very specifically by using slapstick-like physical comedy, which becomes a *pars pro toto* for the tragicomedy constitutive for the play. At first glance, the slapstick of the ending is only amusing; but it is in fact a text-immanent embodiment of the "ridiculous" ["lächerlich[e]"] (Winter 2000, 58) and tragicomic failure of the (bourgeois) individual due to social constraints.

In *Der Hofmeister*, the search of the bourgeois individual for an identity fails because of the unalterable social structures or it is declared obsolete by a chain of unlikely coincidences. Kleist's *Amphitryon* also deals with the question of ego identity, though not in the sense of expounding problems of social constraints – the drama maintains a broader ontological scope. The gods Zeus and Mercury assume the form of the Theban commander Amphitryon and his servant Sosias; Zeus desires Alkmene, Amphitryon's wife. Neither their wives nor the Thebans recognize Amphitryon and Sosias as themselves because their other, false selves played by the Gods, who represent them more convincingly than they themselves do. For Amphitryon and Alkmene in particular this series of mistaken identities becomes tragic: Alkmene betrays her husband without knowing it. Consequently, she suffers when she realizes that she has mistaken another man for her husband and feels the mistake is irreconcilable. Even when she finds out that it has been Zeus, the Father of the Gods, who has lain with her, her fainting in the last scene leaves open whether she can absolve herself of her guilt. Amphitryon, by contrast, at first suffers so much from the suspicion of Alkmene's infidelity and the

¹² "Wenigstens, mein süßer Junge! werd ich dich nie durch Hofmeister erziehen lassen" (Lenz 1987, 123).

¹³ "Lächerlichen Kontrast zwischen dem Selbstentfaltungsanspruch des bürgerlichen Menschen und den Zwängen der Umwelt."

loss of his ego identity that he contemplates suicide. However, his suffering and the tragedy related to him only last until he learns that Zeus had taken possession of his identity. When, furthermore, his wish for a demi-god as a son is fulfilled and his honor is restored, he willingly accepts the now untragic role of the cuckold. Thus, at the end of the play it is possible for him to take the perspective of the readers who, because of their informational advantage, see *Amphitryon* right from the beginning as part of a "playfully arranged" ["spielerisch aufgestellten"] (Zipfel 2017, 144) character constellation.

While the plot around the characters of *Amphitryon* and *Alkmene* has features of tragedy, the subplot around *Sosias* and his divine alter ego, *Mercury*, is comic. Here the dominant verbal comedy, ranging from wordplay and witty phrasing to stichomythia, is complemented by various forms of situation comedy: apart from the comedy of mistaken identities and the comedy of disguises¹⁴ there are also physical stage actions containing motion comedy. This is even augmented by the repetition of the course of action in the encounters of *Sosias* and his doppelgänger *Mercury*. The events surrounding the servant character *Sosias* and thus also the scenes of physical comedy carry special importance for the play in spite of being classified as parts of the sub-plot. For instance, the first scene starts with a monologue of *Sosias*; in the whole play he speaks more verses than any other character (see Zeiringer 1996, 555). This is also important in so far as *Sosias* defines himself basically via his material corporeality and his bodily needs, and is also defined by other characters this way. Hence, with the character *Sosias*, Kleist manages to reinstate corporeality as a dramatic topic, which had been frowned upon in the German theater since Gottsched.

The first scene of Act I begins in medias res: by means of a (role) play within the play *Sosias* practices how he could, at the behest of *Amphitryon*, deliver the good news of the victory over the Athenians to *Alkmene*. In doing so, he not only assumes his role as a messenger but also plays the role of *Alkmene*, imagined by him and represented by a lantern as a placeholder. He also takes the role of a "stage director" when he again and again gives himself laudatory instructions. In this way, he anticipates the central topic of the play – the question of the stability of identity. Even if Kleist's stage directions do not contain any information about how *Sosias* positions himself on stage during this enacted dialogue, the adoption of both speaking parts including the directorial instructions is a clear indication that this scene may or even must be played using physical comedy. Furthermore,

¹⁴ Unlike Harald Fricke and Angela Salvisberg, I consider the comedy of disguises and the comedy of mistaken identities as belonging to the supercategory of situation comedy, as disguises and mistaken identities are usually bound to specific situations (see Fricke and Salvisberg 1997, 279).

Sosias's body becomes an object of the action quite directly when he uses the palm of his hand as a prop for showing the imagined Alkmene the course of the battle on a map: "My gracious lady, I am at your service. About this victory I can, I flatter / myself, provide you with a full report. / Imagine, then, if you will be so kind, / Pharissa standing over on this side – / (*He indicates the places on his hand.*)" (Kleist 2002, 95; emphasis in original).¹⁵

The incorporation of objects into the role play also has a slapstick-like effect, even though at this point of the play one cannot yet speak about a "cussedness of things" [Tücke der Objekte] (Zeyringer 1996, 560), as Klaus Zeyringer calls it in anticipation of the diadem which is evidence of the adultery.

The potential for slapstick inherent in the first scene's monologue was fully exploited in the production of *Amphitryon* at the Münchner Kammerspiele in 1999. Sosias, played by Lambert Hanel, changes his position on stage in quick alternation: when he plays Sosias, the herald of the victorious battle, he stands at the entrance of Amphitryon's palace; when he represents Alkmene, he runs down several steps on the staircase each time. Physical comedy is created not just by the fast movements of the actor, but also by his theatrical acting, rich in gesture and therefore hyperbolic,¹⁶ and by altering his voice.

Even more conspicuous physical comedy is evoked in the dramatic text in the following scene, the second scene of Act I. Mercury, in the guise of Sosias, denies Sosias access to the palace. The verbal duel in which the two characters

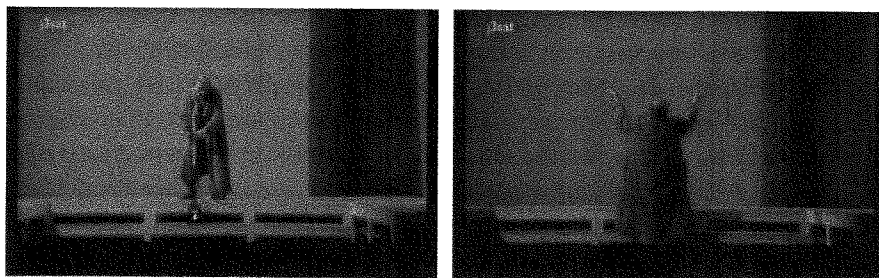


Figure 1–3: Sosias in quick alternation plays Alkmene (right, 05:43) and himself (left, 03:42).

¹⁵ "Ich bin zu euern Diensten, gnäd'ge Frau. / Denn in der Tat kann ich von diesem Siege / Vollständ'ge Auskunft, schmeichl' ich mir, erteilen: / Stellt Euch, wenn ihr die Güte haben wollt, / Auf dieser Seite hier – / *Er bezeichnet die Örter auf seiner Hand.* / Pharissa vor" (Kleist 1991, 385; emphasis in original).

¹⁶ Muriel Andrin points out that slapstick often also appears in hyperbolic gestures: slapstick "shares with melodrama one of its constitutive rhetorical figures, the expression or representation of actions, characters, and gestures in excessive or exaggerated ways" (2010, 227).

speak quietly to themselves in rapid alternation and loudly to one another climaxes in a scene of physical violence: Sosias approaches the entrance of the palace and Mercury stops him from entering by giving him a thrashing. Although Sosias complains of back pain afterwards, his ironic comment about this incident ("Some glorious embassy I've made of it!" [Kleist 2002, 105; "Das war mir eine rühmliche Gesellschaft" (Kleist 1991, 395)]) indicates that his body, as is known from characters in slapstick films, has a "cartoonish ability for regeneration" (Marschall 2011, 657).

The physical comedy transported in the first two scenes by Sosias's double role as himself and Alkmene and by Mercury in the role of Sosias can be read as a key to an understanding of the entire text. The central issue is already addressed here with slapstick-like defamiliarization strategies: the fragility of ego identity and its dependence on attestation by a counterpart. The explicit physical comedy, which tones down the tragedy of the instability of identity, is not without effect on the more tragic main plot. With Sosias, Kleist develops a character who sets Amphitryon and Alkmene an example of a different behavior variant. In the course of the play, the focus on material corporeality and on his bodily needs seems to relieve Sosias of the problem that his ego identity has become fragile. Instead of insisting on his uniqueness and its attestation by others, Sosias accepts that he was "de-sosiated" ["entsosiatisiert"] (Kleist 1991, 454). And while the quarrel between Zeus and Amphitryon for the position as legitimate husband of Alkmene comes to a head, Sosias increasingly refers to his body and its needs, for example for food consumption (see Jauß 1979, 237). By defining his body more and more from a material and less from an ideational perspective, he succeeds in toning down the tragedy of identity loss. He experiences it not solely as tragic, but also as (physically) comic. Kleist's *Amphitryon* therefore offers a more explicit solution for the modern individual's increasingly problematic search for identity than Lenz's *Der Hofmeister*. In the play, the slapstick-like physical comedy can be interpreted as a different way of dealing with the imminent identity loss, one that protects the individual from existential uncertainty.¹⁷

¹⁷ This text-immanent interpretation of the slapstick-variant chosen by Lenz correlates with Miriam Hansen's proposition concerning slapstick-films, which assumes that slapstick opens an aesthetic horizon in which "the traumatic effects of modernity were reflected" (1999, 69).

3 *Die Ratten* and *Die Physiker*: slapstick and the grotesque

Since the middle of the nineteenth century and especially after 1871, nationalist currents promoting a “national unification” take ground in Imperial Germany, leading to an officially supported “affirmative art production” in the form of, for example, patriotic dramas (Sandig 1980, 131). With ongoing industrialization and the multiple problems resulting from it for a newly developing industrial proletariat, especially naturalist authors turn to the literarisation of social injustices. Often, social injustices are no longer shown in the texts as purely tragic and therefore unavoidable, but they are combined with comic elements that sometimes even reach the grotesque and which often only serve to enhance tragedy.¹⁸

Gerhart Hauptmann explicitly called his drama *Die Ratten*, which premiered in 1911, a “Berlin tragicomedy.” With this subtitle, Hauptmann not only referred to the combination of the tragic and the comic but also to the metropolitan setting: in a multi-level tenement building in Berlin two social groups encounter each other. Hassenreuter, a former theatre director with a bourgeois background, stores his costume stock in the tenement’s attic and gives lessons to drama students. One floor below lives Frau John, a cleaning woman who takes care of the attic. She kidnaps a new-born child in order to save her marriage and to cope with the death of her son who died from diphtheria. The plot around Frau John and the other characters from the Berlin proletariat is tragic at its core: some characters cannot, others do not want to escape from their milieu and its determinations. By contrast, the plot around Director Hassenreuter is dominated by comic situations, which at times tend towards slapstick-like physical comedy.

In the first act already, the tragic and the comic meet right away in the space of the attic. The detailed description of the spatial circumstances in the stage directions anticipate the eerie atmosphere of the action. In the attic, there is only “uncertain light” [“ungewisses Licht”], the room has no windows, and is full of costumes which have a mysterious quality in the half-light (Hauptmann 1965, 735). This oppressive atmosphere is reflected in the dramatic plot through the talk between Henriette John and Pauline Pieperkarcka. With a vested interest

¹⁸ For the development of the tragicomic genre since the turn of the century see Guthke (1968, 141–144). Apart from Hauptmann, Peter Sprengel categorizes Frank Wedekind (1864–1918), Carl Sternheim (1878–1942), and Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931) among the group of authors who at the turn of the century develop a preference for tragicomic modes of writing (Sprengel 1994, 265).

Henriette tries to convince the apparently suicidal and pregnant Pauline to hand over the baby, the result of an affair, to her after giving birth. However, after an “uncanny interlude” [“unheimlichen Zwischenspiel”] (Zipfel 2017, 185) with Henriette’s brother, who will later become the murderer of Pauline, a comedic part follows. Hassenreuter meets his lover in the attic; earlier, his daughter Walburga, who has a date with her secret boyfriend Spitta, hid from her father in an adjacent chamber. Into the same chamber, from which the characters can follow the events in the attic at least acoustically, Frau John has fled with Pauline, who is in labor and in the course of the scene secretly gives birth to her child. Soon thereafter, Hassenreuter’s lover hides in another room of the attic when Spitta meets Hassenreuter. As in *Der Hofmeister*, in this scene of *Die Ratten* slapstick comedy is created by the various room changes in quick succession, with the comic effect being increased by dialogue comedy and comedy of disguises.

In the 2008 Michael Thalheimer (*1965) production of *Die Ratten* at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, the oppressive atmosphere of the room is reflected by Olaf Altmann’s stage design: an overhanging wooden construction reaching to the edge of the stage represents the attic and forces the actors to perform the entire play in stooped posture. The stage lighting underlines the glum mood of scenes, as the rear of the stage is entirely in the dark and only the front is lit harshly, so that in the first act the characters in their “hiding place” can only be seen up to their hips. The slapstick created by the actors fleeing to the rear of the stage in quick succession intensifies in this stage production by the grotesque corporeality of Hassenreuter – played by Horst Lebinsky – who undresses rapidly and approaches his lover in a boorish and lecherous manner, only to be kept from having sex by Spitta’s arrival.

At the end of *Die Ratten*, similar to *Der Hofmeister* and *Amphitryon*, tragedy and comedy meet directly, with physical comedy being of central importance. Frau John can no longer conceal that she kidnapped a child; her previously unsuspecting husband, as well as the accidentally visiting Hassenreuters, have learned the truth in

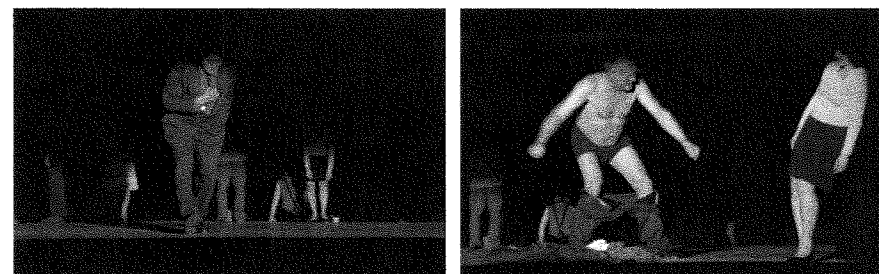


Figure 2: Left: “Hide and seek” (10:11). Right: Hassenreuter in lecherous action (12:40).

the meantime. She sees no other way out than to kill herself along with the child. In this extremely dramatic scene, the ensuing slapstick has a grotesque effect, as it evokes dread and laughter at the same time (see Meyer 2007, 297). Hassenreuter and Spitta “throw themselves in the way of the desperate woman” [“werfen sich der Verzweifelten entgegen”] and Hassenreuter begins a comic, elliptic monologue, in which he turns himself into the director of this scene of situation comedy:

Stop! I intervene at this point! Here I am responsible! Whom the boy may belong – [. . .]
Forward march, Spitta! Fight, Spitta! Here your characteristics are well in place! Come on!
That's the way! Bravo! As if it were the baby Jesus! Bravo!¹⁹ (Hauptmann 1969, 830)

Hassenreuter and Spitta intentionally do not stop Frau John, who then takes her life by defenestration. While in this way the plot around Frau John has the most tragic outcome imaginable, the plot around Hassenreuter has all the features of the ending of a comedy: Walburga and Spitta get together and Hassenreuter becomes a theater director again. Different from *Der Hofmeister* and *Amphitryon*, the comic is not preferred over the tragic at the end of the drama. The slapstick-like comedy in the last scene rather functions as a *pars pro toto* for the sobering message of the play: the social differences clash mercilessly, and the bourgeoisie cannot or does not want to see the multiple material and psychical problems of the lower class, not to mention solving them.²⁰ The slapstick exposes Hassenreuter to ridicule as a representative of this ignorant educated bourgeoisie. By its immediate combination of tragedy and comedy, slapstick explicitly asks the reader to reflect on the action. Therefore, in *Die Ratten*, too, the few slapstick elements are of special importance as they convey in nuce the intended effect on the reader, who has to tolerate the grotesque contradictions.

The grotesque has an even more central role in *Die Physiker*. In *Theaterprobleme* [Theater Problems] (1955), Dürrenmatt explicitly states that the grotesque comedy in his plays, which often also manifests physically, is supposed to have an effect on the reader. Especially because his plays mostly end in disillusionment, comedy – regarded by Dürrenmatt as a combination of the tragic and the comic – functions as “a mousetrap into which the audience falls again and again” [“eine Mausfalle, in die das Publikum immer wieder gerät”] and by which they “can get attacked, seduced, cheated” [“angegriffen, verführt, überlistet werden kann”]

19 “Halt! Hier greife ich ein! Hier bin ich zuständig! Wem das Knäblein hier auch immer gehören mag – [. . .] Vorwärts, Spitta! Kämpfen Sie, Spitta! Hier sind Ihre Eigenschaften am Platz! Vorwärts! Vorsicht! So! Bravo! Als wär' es das Jesuskind! Bravo!”

20 For the tragicomic “blindness” of the characters around Hassenreuter, see Sprengel (1994, 265; 1984, 146).

(1955, 39). While physical comedy is foremost entertaining, it is nevertheless meant to make the reader reflect on the sociocritical message of the texts without even noticing.

On the one hand, *Die Physiker* is a fictionalized criticism of the nuclear development, on the other hand it is also a devastating survey of the present times: “In the face of coincidence reducing the freedom of action to absurdity, the question of the responsibility of the individual scientist becomes irrelevant”²¹ (Grimm 2013, 113). The plot is highly tragic in a nihilist sense, as Möbius cannot revoke the world formula that he has thought up. His knowledge is in the world and can thus be misused by Frau von Zahnd. The plot around three patients of a mental institution, who are finally revealed to be a physicist in the possession of the world formula and two physicists acting as secret agents, contains a variety of grotesque scenes. Not all of these have slapstick-like character, however. A grotesque and entertaining impression is often rather created by a series of apparently absurd coincidences such as the murder of the three nurses. Physical comedy is mostly used by supporting characters, whose movements are reminiscent of slapstick, for example the “giant-like” [“riesenhaft”] male nurses who lay the table for the three physicists in a sort of rehearsed spatial choreography and who behave as nimble and agile servants of the physicists in spite of their physiognomy (Dürrenmatt 1963, 326–327). Likewise, mention must be made of the scene in which Möbius plays the madman in front of his family after a whimsical musical interlude by his sons. There he positions himself with fast and apparently uncontrollable movements in different places of the room (304–305). Physical comedy underlines the grotesque situation comedy, comedy of disguises, and dialogue comedy of the play. It is one comic element among various others in the play.

The relative importance of comic elements is quite different in the stage production of *Die Physiker* at the Schauspielhaus Zürich, which after 2013 was revived in February 2018. In this production, almost every movement is grotesquely exaggerated and slapstick-like. The stage, which represents a neon-green psychiatric cell, contains hidden trampolines by which the actors jump onto and behind the stage sets in acrobatic stunts. Over and over they catch their fingers in the door or trip over the too long sleeves of their straitjackets.²² Similar to filmic slapstick, they do not show any physical reactions and behave like mechanically controlled rubber dolls, who can only move their bodies with

21 “Angesichts der vom Zufall ad absurdum geführten Handlungsfreiheit wird die Frage nach der Verantwortung des einzelnen Naturwissenschaftlers irrelevant.”

22 For a description of the acrobatic stunts, see Fellmann (2013).



Figure 3: Inspector after falling, Möbius and Zahnd climbing (122:50).

grotesque distortions and theatricality. The stage sets, as well as the actors' bodies, turn out to be obstacles that, in the end, cannot be overcome.

Different from the dramatic text, the originally intended effect of a sparing use of slapstick is lost. The audience gets to see a very physical and extremely entertaining stage production, but the slapstick gags in their grotesque exaggeration can only insufficiently convey the tragedy of the play.

4 Conclusion: slapstick as a *pars pro toto* of the tragicomic

Of course, it was not the aim of this chapter to conclusively answer the question of the role of slapstick in modern German language tragicomedies. The selected examples of texts and stage productions only allow to outline some tendencies: all four tragicomic texts contain various scenes with implicit or explicit slapstick comedy. In all cases, the slapstick scenes can also be interpreted as a *pars pro toto* of the tragicomic plot, as they bring together – with different emphasis – the tragic and the comic. A comparison of the texts, however, makes substantial differences in quality evident: in *Der Hofmeister* and *Amphitryon*, the slapstick-like scenes revolve around the central identity problem. The character Läufer in *Der Hofmeister* fails in his search for a (bourgeois) identity; however, this search is declared obsolete by the accumulation of coincidences and the happy pairings in the last scene. In spite of the happy, comedy-like ending, the slapstick quality of the reunion scene is latently tragic as it can only superficially camouflage but not overcome the social injustices addressed in the course of the play. In *Amphitryon*, the slapstick embodied by the (supporting) character Sosias is a text-internal solution variant of the ontic identity dilemma. This variant is only tragic because it represents an adaptation to an imposed identity loss.

In the end, though, both tragicomedies are resolved into a comedy-like ending whose slapstick can only indirectly be read as a sociocritical drama element.

This makes for an important difference to the two plays written after 1900. In spite of some comic elements in these dramas, they end tragically, and they can more obviously be seen as expressions of the social injustices diagnosed by Hauptmann and Dürrenmatt and of the major social issues of modernity. In both texts, slapstick can be read as a *pars pro toto* of the grotesque quality of the plays: the tragic and the comic clash unchecked, but in the end the laughter sticks in the readers' throats in the face of the inexorable tragic developments.

Disregarding these differences in the quality of the slapstick, all four tragicomedies have in common that, unlike classic slapstick films, they contain only a few slapstick scenes. However, these scenes carry special importance for an understanding of the texts: by means of situation comedy they condense the raised issues of the individual's position in and its responsibility for society, and they make them visually tangible in a stage production. If, however, as in Harry Buckwitz's *Hofmeister* production, slapstick is entirely renounced or if, as in Fritsch's *Physiker* production, there is too much slapstick, the subtle overtermination of slapstick implied in the texts is lost.

Bibliography

- Amphitryon* (D 1999, Münchner Kammerspiele). Director: Dieter Dorn. Stage and Costumes: Jürgen Rose. Actors: Michael Maertens (Jupiter), Oliver Næle (Merku), Jens Harzer (Amphitryon), Lambert Hamel (Sosias), Sibylle Canonica (Alkmene). 3Sat. Television Recording 2000. 150 mins.
- Andrin, Muriel. "Back to the 'Slap.' Slapstick's Hyperbolic Gesture and the Rhetoric of Violence." *Slapstick Comedy*. Ed. Tom Paulus and Rob King. New York: Routledge, 2010. 226–235.
- Ahnen, Helmut von. *Das Komische auf der Bühne: Versuch einer Systematik*. Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2006.
- Becker-Cantarino, Barbara. "Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz: *Der Hofmeister*." *Interpretationen: Dramen des Sturm und Drang*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986. 33–56.
- Brandlmeier, Thomas. "Lachkultur des Fin de siècle." *Slapstick & Co: Frühe Filmkomödien. Early Comedies*. Ed. Helga Belach and Wolfgang Jacobsen. Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1995. 16–75.
- Dale, Alan. *Comedy is a Man in Trouble: Slapstick in American Movies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Der Hofmeister* (D 1975/1976). Director: Harry Buckwitz. Camera: Werner Rosemann. Actors: Anita Lochner (Gustchen), Hans Helmut Dickow (Major von Berg), Ernst Jacobi (Läufer/Hofmeister). Hessischer Rundfunk. Television Recording. 117 mins.

- Die Ratten* (D 2008, Deutsches Theater Berlin). Director: Michael Thalheimer. Stage: Olaf Altmann. Costumes: Michaela Barth. Music: Bert Wrede. Actors: Constanze Becker (Frau John), Regine Zimmermann (Pauline Piperkarcka), Horst Lebinsky (Harro Hassenreuther). ZDF-Theater-Edition. Belvedere: 99 mins.
- Die Physiker* (D 2013). Director: Herbert Fritsch. Stage: Herbert Fritsch. Actors: Mathilde von Zahnd (Corinna Harfouch), Milian Zerkawy (Möbius), Gottfried Breitfuß (Einstein), Jean Pierre Cornus (Kommissar). ZDFkultur: 105 mins.
- Dixon, Bryony. "The Good Thieves. On the Origins of Situation Comedy in the British Music Hall." *Slapstick Comedy*. Ed. Tom Paulus and Rob King. New York: Routledge, 2010. 21–36.
- Dürrenmatt, Friedrich. "Die Physiker." *Komödien II und frühe Stücke*. Zurich: Arche, 1963. 283–355.
- Dürrenmatt, Friedrich. *Theaterprobleme*. Zurich: Arche, 1955.
- Fellmann, Christoph. "Die Slapstickformel." https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8647:die-physiker-herbert-fritsch-teilchenbeschleunigt-friedrich-duerenmatts-apokalyptische-komoedie-am-urauffuehrungsort-in-zuerich&catid=38:die-nachtkritik&Itemid=40 (accessed 5 March 2019).
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Semiotik des Theaters: Eine Einführung. Vol. 1: Das System der theatralischen Zeichen*. Tübingen: Narr, 1983.
- Fricke, Harald, and Angelika Salvisberg. "Bühnenrede." *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft. Vol. I: A–G*. Ed. Klaus Weimar. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997. 279–282.
- Gottsched, Johann Christoph. *Ausgewählte Werke. Vol. 6, Part 2: Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst: Anderer besonderer Theil [1730]*. Ed. Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973.
- Grimm, Gunter E. *Friedrich Dürrenmatt*. Marburg: Tectum, 2013.
- Guthke, Siegfried. *Die moderne Tragikomödie: Theorie und Gestalt*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968.
- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avantgarde." *Wide Angle* 8, 3–4 (1986): 63–70.
- Hansen, Miriam. "The Mass Production of the Senses. Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism." *Modernism/Modernity* 6.2 (1999): 59–77.
- Hauptmann, Gerhart. "Die Ratten." *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Hans-Egon Hass. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965. 731–831.
- Jauß, Hans Robert. "Poetik und Problematik von Identität und Rolle in der Geschichte des Amphitryon." *Identität*. Ed. Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle. Munich: Fink, 1979. 213–253.
- Kleist, Heinrich von. "Amphitryon. Ein Lustspiel nach Molière." *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe. Vol. 1: Dramen 1802–1807*. Ed. Ilse-Marie Barth and Hinrich C. Seeba. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991. 377–461.
- Kleist, Heinrich von. *Heinrich von Kleist: Plays*. Ed. Walter Hinderer. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Lappe, Claus O. "Wer hat Gustchens Kind gezeugt? Zeitstruktur und Rollenspiel in Lenz' Hofmeister." *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 54 (1980): 14–46.
- Lenz, Jakob Michael Reinhold. "Der Hofmeister. Oder Vorteile der Privaterziehung." *Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*. Ed. Sigrid Damm. Vol. 1. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1987. 41–124.

- Lenz, Jakob Michael Reinhold. *Selected Works by J. M. R. Lenz: Plays, Stories, Essays, and Poems*. Ed. Martin Wagner and Ellwood Wiggins. Rochester: Camden House, 2019.
- Lenz, Jakob Michael Reinhold. "Rezension des Neuen Menoza [1774]. Von dem Verfasser selbst aufgesetzt." *Werke und Schriften I*. Ed. Britta Titel and Hellmut Haug. Stuttgart: Goverts, 1966. 414–420.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* [1767]. Ed. Klaus L. Berghahn. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981.
- Marschall, Susanne. "Slapstick." *Reclams Sachlexikon des Films*. Ed. Thomas Koebner. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2011. 657–661.
- Meyer, Urs. "Groteske." *Metzler Lexikon Literatur*. Ed. Dieter Burdorf, Christoph Fasbender, and Burkhard Moennighoff. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007. 297–198.
- Patterson, Michael. "The Theater Practice of the Sturm und Drang." *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*. Ed. David Hill. Rochester: Camden House, 2003. 141–157.
- Sandig, Holger. *Deutsche Dramaturgie des Grotesken um die Jahrhundertwende*. Munich: Fink, 1980.
- Seeßlen, Georg. *Klassiker der Filmkomik. Geschichte und Mythologie des komischen Films. Mit einer Filmografie von Peter Horn und einer Bibliographie von Jürgen Berger*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1982.
- Sprengel, Peter. *Gerhart Hauptmann. Epoche – Werk – Wirkung*. Munich: Beck, 1984.
- Sprengel, Peter. "Gerhart Hauptmann: Die Ratten (1911)." *Interpretationen. Dramen des Naturalismus*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994. 243–282.
- Wiessmeyer, Monika. "Gesellschaftskritik in der Tragikomödie: Der Hofmeister (1774) und Die Soldaten (1776) von J.M.R. Lenz." *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz im Spiegel der Forschung*. Ed. Matthias Luserke. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1995. 368–380.
- Winter, Hans-Gerd. *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2000.
- Zipfel, Frank. *Tragikomödien. Kombinationsformen von Tragik und Komik im europäischen Drama des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017.
- Zeyringer, Klaus. "'Wo kömmt der Witz mir her?' Eine 'Lustspielfigur par excellence.' Zu den Sosias-Szenen in Kleists Amphitryon." *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 70 (1996): 552–568.