

L. TIECK'S UNIVERSALDRAMEN: TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES AS THE BASIS FOR GENRE EXPERIMENTS

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Abstract

The article analyses how L. Tieck understood the phenomena of the traditional narratives. The article discusses the views Tieck had upon the chapbook, and its adaptations in his works, particularly the drama based upon popular material. Three of his dramatic works of that type, «Life and death of the St. Genievie» (1800), «Emperor Octavian» (1808) and «Fortunatus» (1815), especially the first one, initiated new genres of German Romantic drama called Universaldrama (drama of the universe), which are typologically close to mystery play. Tieck's literary program combined both the rejection of contemporary mass literature and the productive replacement of it with examples of new Romantic art. The contradiction between reality and fiction, which is accentuated in Tieck's comedies, weakens in his Universaldramen. The main theme of his plays is the interpretation of religion as a way to comprehend the world. The poet creates a kind of genre complex, where the drama of historical process is ironically removed. This is the basic principle of his two first big plays – “Life and death of the St. Genievie” and “Emperor Octavian”. His last play, “Fortunatus” is, however, rather a generalizing “ironic construct” which combines elements of several traditional genres and, at the same time, is a parody of the genre he created.

Key words: romanticism, drama, Tieck, chapbook, popular reading.

Introduction

Dramatic works of L. Tieck, based on the plots of chapbooks, namely “Life and death of the St. Genievie” (Leben und Tod der heiligen Genievie, 1800), “Emperor Octavian” (Kaiser Octavian, 1808), “Fortunatus” (Fortunatus, 1815) are important turning points in his work. Tieck gradually moves on from combining several almost equivalent storylines, fabulous in parallel with non-fabulous, as in “Ritter Blaubart” and its other fabulous dramas, to a more detailed interpretation of real fabulous, including folklore material, in which he neatly includes fairytale elements. Now the author's method consists in full immersion in the legend and maximum similarity of the dramatic form to the content.

For example, the drama “The Life and Death of St. Genievie”, which is based on the chapbook about St. Genievie, is as close as possible to the mystery: it is not divided into acts, the character of the heavenly envoy, in this case, St. Boniface, acts as a prologue and choir in it. He calls for a return to the past from the “godless” modernity and to see the true purity and the Christian faith there.

Universal dramas based on chapbooks are the results of Tieck's experiments with genres. In fact, the “universal drama” is practically any romantic drama because of its orientation to the image of concepts of global scale on the stage and because of its desire to be a “theater of the world”. However, traditionally, this definition refers to the drama of the romantics, based on the historical or mythological plot and possessing such features as maximum scale, panoramic image, and, most importantly, building a conflict on the most general, universal symbolism.

Literature Review

German researchers most often use the definition of “universal drama” (Universaldrama) or “legendary drama” (Legendendrama) (E. Ribbat, S. Scherer, K. Stockinger), “panorama of the world” (Weltpanorama) (G. Storz) or abstain in general from more precise genre definitions, replacing them with the author’s definitions: “tragedy” (Trauerspiel) in the case of “Genivieve” and “comedy” (Lustspiel) in the case of “Octavian” (E. Halter and many others). In the Russian tradition, A.V. Karelsky considers such literary phenomena of German and European Romanticism as complex with pronounced genetic and even hierarchical connections in his book “Drama of German Romanticism”. This complex includes the “mystery” and “universal-mysterical drama”, which serve as the basis for the later “philosophical drama”, as well as the “dramatic poem”. The mixture of the specific features of drama, epos and lyricism, which are present in them in different proportions, is characteristic of all these genres. The researcher relates the “Life and Death of Saint Genivieve” and “Emperor Octavian” Tieck to “mystery-universal dramas” [1, 77]. In this article, I will also use the term “universal drama”.

Methodology

The period of Tieck's work that is the topic of this article (the second half of the 1790s – the end of the 1820s) refers to his activities in the framework of the romantic era. At that time, Tieck, firstly, sharply debated with the leaders of popular culture; secondly, he put forward his own literary project, which included an appeal to the popular literature of ancient eras and to the "chapbooks." In addition, Tieck, like other romantics, was interested in folklore: folk songs, fairy tales and legends.

One of the most important themes of Tieck's dramatic work is the controversy with his contemporary trivial drama. The main purpose of Tieck's ridicule, as it can be concluded by analyzing the texts of his comedies preceding universal dramas, is their characteristic combination of both their inclination for thoughtless sensual pleasures, in particular, the thirst for touching, "sensitive" scenes, and the desire for "education" (Bildung), which is part of the culture of the Enlightenment. Spectators in Tieck's comedies (“Der gestiefelte Kater”, “Die verkehrte Welt”, “Prinz Zerbino”, “Prolog”) always demand a sensible, logical and understandable performance, reacting negatively to violations of theatrical illusion and the usual logic of action. Philistine, mass taste is always associated for Tieck with a lack of understanding of irony and self-irony.

Tieck's genre experiments are initially built on parodies. Thus, the line with the participation of the Hermit and loving couples in the play “Prinz Zerbino” is entirely built into the drama along with the main action. Its story is based on the vain search of the lovers, who are lost in the forest, for each other, and repletes with comic scenes: for example, one of the lovers constantly literally passes two steps from the hut, where the bride is waiting for him. As the German researcher H. Arntzen writes, the scene in the sixth act, in which the reunion of lovers takes place, is “a parody of family drama in its purest form”. Couples reunite, and the father of one of the girls invites everyone to his hut, as “the father of the family from the Iffland's play, inviting his new relatives to a country house” [2, 140].

Tieck offers carefully stylized chapbooks, brought in line with the requirements of the times, instead of clichéd trivial dramas. The first collection published by him under his real name was “Romantische Dichtungen” (“Romantic Works”), and Tieck's further work during the whole period was within the framework of the romantic movement (according to different estimates of the researchers, until about the 1820s).

Tieck talks about his affection for the chapbook in the preface to “Schildbürger”: he went to the Leipzig fair to look for chapbooks; however, he did not find anything until he wandered

into a tiny book shop where he found what he was looking for. The seller allegedly, with tears in his eyes, told Tieck about the amazement he experienced when he learned what exactly this enlightened lord, who would be supposed to despise these books, had come for [3, 7]. This story is most likely a hoax, but Tieck's position on popular books is clear. A chapbook becomes a possible source of updating modern literature for him, from which his numerous experiments with various prosaic and dramatic genres follow, where each experimental book is based on the plot of a particular chapbook.

The term "chapbook" was known before the romantics and was used by leaders of the Enlightenment to mean "literature for the people", "for everyone", "for the uneducated reader". They rated "chapbooks" extremely low, although they favored folklore and folk art. Thus, at this time, largely influenced by the currents of sentimentalism and "Sturm und Drang", various collections of folk songs and so forth are published, but the popular books are labeled "stupid, useless and even harmful", according to one of the headlines of the magazine "Berlinische Monatsschrift" in 1785. The chapbooks were subject to rather strict censorship. They were associated with the "literary garbage", which, in the opinion of Enlightenment, that set the goal of "educating people", should have been replaced by a more useful reading [4, 149].

A.V. Schlegel states the following about the "folk book" in the Berlin lectures: "The high, educated classes of our nation do not have their own literature; however, the people, the common man has it. It consists of nondescript little books, which by the very inscription "printed this year" on the cover say that they will never become obsolete, and they really never become obsolete "[5, 18-19]. Despite the fact that these books are the literature of the "simple man", they, according to Schlegel, deserve the best treatment: "They are incredibly poetic and eternal in their basis <...> Only a true poet is allowed to touch and update such books so that they will become gorgeous"[ibid].

It is worth noting that for romantics there is no methodological difference in the interpretation of texts belonging to different eras of the German "antiquity". Thus, both the texts relating to the Middle Ages and the texts of the early Modern Age are called "Old German" (altdeutsch). Because romantics are in them as samples of the early stages of literature development. According to G. Bollenbeck, it can be concluded that actual phenomena of trivial literature are also considered along with folklore and medieval works[4, 146].

Tieck, on the one hand, tries to popularize ancient texts. He speaks about his project "Books of Heroes" ("Heldenbuch") that he would like to make its texts "really popular, to put them in the hands of readers of all classes, and, if possible, of children" [6, 137]. On the other hand, Tieck transmits his worldview function to his own texts based on chapbooks [7, 137].

The ideological function of Tieck's drama, created on the basis of chapbooks (about which I. Szafarz speaks), really plays a significant role in his poetic program. Chapbooks begin to be understood as a special example of poetic art, which Tieck considers necessary to look up to.

The dramas "The Life and Death of Saint Genievieve" and "The Emperor Octavian" are based on plots depicting events of the Middle Ages, of "romantic" antiquity. Tieck defines the genre of "Genievieve" by the word "tragedy" (Trauerspiel), and "Octavian" by the "comedy" (Lustspiel). Usually, these terms denote the genres of folk theater, in contrast to the classical "Tragödie" and "Komödie". In "Genievieve" and "Octavian", the chronotope of the medieval mystery is reproduced, which brings the whole world to the stage, that is, according to Christian views, Earth, Heaven and Hell, but at the same time "fraught" with burlesque comic elements, mime tricks, jokes, etc.

"Genievieve" is the first in a series of romantic mystical dramas, which, according to A.V. Karelsky, were meant to embody the "thirst for optimistic confidence" of romantics. These are always "dramas of a comprehensive range" with a "comforting final", taken "in the eternal

struggle of tragic dissonance, but ultimately revealing the invisible guidance of the good providential will” [1, 77].

Taking the national book about the Trier Pfalzgräfin (“countess”), who in many versions of the book was understood as a purely secular figure, although symbolizing purity and piety, Tieck loads the plot with religious connotations following the example of the “Adoration of the Cross” by Calderon. At the same time, he adds to the play a large number of new actors, the total number of which reaches almost three dozen. The author also changes the plot of the play, placing it in the context of historical events - the war of the Franks with the Moors; moreover, he modifies the motivation of the love conflict between Golo and Genivieve, giving love the character of a test predetermined from above. In addition, he adds the prologue, pronounced by Saint Boniface, the “German Apostle,” inviting the readers of the play to leave the spiritless present and plunge into the atmosphere of those times when faith was still alive.

Not only the fate of the title character, but also the opposition of the heavenly and the earthly, passing through the whole story and “captured” by the tragic and at the same time blissful finale, makes “Genivieve” a “tragedy”. The relation of its plot to the German cultural substrate makes it “popular”.

In his next Universaldrama, “The Emperor Octavian,” Tieck, on the contrary, minimizes all religious elements in comparison with the text of the chapbook: they do not play a special role in the development of an action, but emphasize a special “medieval” atmosphere.

As in “Genivieve”, Tieck expands the popular plot, but does not change it and simply complements the introduction of a special prologue, as in the first drama. The prologue is an idyllic picture where Poetry, Faith and Love, as well as a dozen other allegorical characters like them urge the ancient world of fairy tales and legends to rise from oblivion. The plot of “Octavian” is presented as the sum of romantic poetry in general, ancient and eternally young.

At the same time, he reduces the number of religious motivations of the plot: thus, the happy birth of twins by Octavian and his wife Felicitas in the chapbook follows their pious deed - the construction of the monastery, while Tieck has no explanation for it.

The drama “The Emperor Octavian”, similarly to “The Life and Death of Saint Genivieve,” is based on opposition; however, it is not the earthly and the heavenly that are divided, but the high and the low. In this drama, there is the world of the nobility and the world of the poor, which at first exist in parallel, but then adjoin. According to Tieck, the presence of elements of “low” comedy associated with the “world of the poor” informs the nature of the performance of the Medieval theater. The difference from “Genivieve” is also expressed in the fact that here Tieck gives to his allegorical “world-theater” a character not of a real, but of a fairy-tale image, where the subject is the Middle Ages in its idealized form.

The tendency to assimilate the dramatic narrative to a fairy tale, the spirit of which, according to romantics, is opposed to rigid patterns of causal relationships, is noticeable in the depiction of time and place in Octavian. Tieck “blurs” the space-time outline of the chapbook, making the play look like a series of allegorical pictures. He mixes up the eras, fancifully combining events and characters from different centuries as part of the narration.

The emphasis from the content side in this drama is transferred to the formal one: for example, musicality plays an enormous role, which in “Octavian” is carried out primarily with the help of various stylistic devices, a variety of poetic dimensions and meters, and interesting phonetic combinations. Apparently, this implies a romantic notion of music as the basis of being and universe.

In the works of most researchers, Tieck’s “Octavian” appears as a kind of “sum” of Jena romanticism, while Tieck himself considered it the pinnacle of his work.

However, it seems that “Fortunat”, also created on the basis of the chapbook, should be

considered the “sum” of Jena romanticism.

“Fortunat” is apparently one of the most famous and influential dramatic versions of the legend of Fortunatus, and Tieck returns interest to the plot: The 19th century was marked by the release of several dramatic versions at once. The play is experimental in its nature and in terms of genre is an interesting construct that has little in common with other dramatic works of Tieck. It differs sharply from “Genivieve” and “Octavian” that were written in the early years of the 19th century. “Fortunatus” is associated with the search for a new dramatic form, necessary for the realization of the changed aesthetic views of Tieck as the dramatist.

The plot of “Fortunat” refers to the same period as the plot of the chapbook. The two main points of the play, transferred to it from the chapbook of 1509, are, firstly, the social aspect of the relationship between the characters, and, secondly, the financial aspect, the motive of the power of gold over human souls. Fortunat, the offspring of an impoverished noble family, exists between the two social strata, not belonging to any of them - neither the nobility nor the bourgeois.

Details associated with the theme of gold, which abounds in the chapbook, are more often found in the works of Tieck. Most of the events and actions are explained in the play by these motives: most often, it is either an acute need or a thirst for wealth (“Habgier”) in its purest form. In his wanderings, Fortunat understands that money is a tremendous force and that everything can be bought for money, and the one who has no money, on the contrary, loses everything. Therefore, from the gifts of Fortunat, he chooses wealth: “Give me the gold! Why do I need beauty and intelligence, / Long life for a poor man is just a long disgrace. / Why do I need power if I saw that everywhere / Gold alone holds a scepter?” [8, 132].

Such attention to social issues is absolutely atypical for Tieck’s dramaturgy. Problems that are close to social issues play a certain role in his satirical comedies, where ridicule of bourgeois philistine morality, enlightened philistinism, takes place, but it always concerns only aesthetic aspects: art, culture, and taste. For the first time, a kind of clash between the hero and the environment takes place in “Fortunat”.

It is also important that in the process of dramatizing the chapbook, Tieck carefully avoids the religious aspect that played a significant part in the chapbook. The action of “Fortunat” is devoid of religious motivation, on which, for example, the action of the mystery drama is built. The highest virtue in “Fortunat” is not the Christian humility or forgiveness (as in “Genivieve”), but wisdom; moreover, wisdom is more common. If we compare the text of the drama “Fortunat” with the text of the chapbook, we will notice that almost all the scenes about the pious actions of “Fortunat”, or the scenes with edifying maxims, are not in the drama.

Especially indicative in this respect is the scene in the St. Patrick’s purgatory. Both in the chapbook and in the drama Fortunat arrives in the north of Ireland, driven by curiosity. He learns about the local “sights”, a wonderful cave, where everyone who spends the night in it will be forgiven of all sins, and goes there because of his curiosity. Having lost his way in the dark, the hero of the chapbook is disappointed in the power of “gold and silver” and bitterly repents of his sins. He fervently prays to God for salvation, and so help comes. The hero of Tieck’s fairy-tale drama, when lost, only grieves at the futility of the magical artifact and awaits death with horror. The arriving help is not an award to the repentant sinner, but a happy coincidence, good luck.

The fact that “Fortunat” was contrasted with the mystery drama, which, as we know, was created after the model of the Catholic plays of Calderon, plays its role here. Tieck was certainly familiar with Calderon’s drama “St. Patrick’s Purgatory” (1640), which tells of the repentance of an inveterate sinner who had cleared himself in these caves. However, in “Fortunat”, Tieck openly ignores the Christian aspect of the legend, refusing to follow Calderon

and, therefore, the samples of the early mysterious mysterial drama.

Miraculous and magical reigns in the mystery dramas of Tieck as a manifestation of the common primordial goodness of being, while in "Fortunatus" the appearance of fantastic elements always creates an ironic contrast that violates the genre canons of fairytale narrative. The characters of the drama based on the chapbook, in which the influence of the fairy-tale genre was quite substantial, perceive everything magical, quite in the spirit of the trivial taste of the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, as something absurd and alien.

In "Fortunatus", there is not only a feeling of the possibility of the magic, but also a feeling of the presence of God's characters in life. This change of focus, from the miraculous to the ordinary, from the magic to the ordinary, is not typical of Tieck's dramaturgy and gives the impression of a bitter irony.

Unlike Tieck's previous dramas, "Fortunatus" is the only one with a tragic ending and an underlying unsolvable conflict.

Thus, L. Tieck, in the process of dramatic processing of the text of the chapbook of 1509, on the one hand, very carefully conveys its plot and, on the other hand, changes several important aspects of its design. For example, "Fortunatus" shows that Tieck masters a new dramatic form, which is based on a carefully recreated structure of the chapbook. Such an approach to literary and popular sources is Tieck's unconditional innovation.

Results

The dramas "The Life and Death of Saint Genievieve" and "Emperor Octavian" unite a peculiar genre complex (comedy-tragedy). The principles of universality and romantic irony, underlying the romantic mystery, make it possible to mythologize reality and, at the same time, to ironically remove, their inherent drama due to the removal of historical events. However, this same genre complex is used completely differently in the play "Fortunatus", where it becomes the basis for a new genre form.

Discussion

It can be argued that, in Tieck's understanding, the interest in the actualization of chapbooks as a model of popular literature, which is far beyond the reading circle of the modern reader, is closely connected with the romantic worldview. After the release of the collection "Fantasus" (1816), considered to be a kind of a milestone separating the romantic and post-romantic periods in the author's work (E. Ribbat and after him T. Meissner designate this collection as "reminiscence of romanticism", "erinnerte Romantik"), Tieck turns to the traditional material less often. The drama "Fortunatus", which summarizes Tieck's entire experience in dramatizing and stylizing texts of chapbooks, is the last major artistic work on this list. As shown above, he summarizes the results of his creative achievements and signals his skeptical interpretation of the artistic principles of his previous dramas, and of the romantic movement as a whole.

Conclusions

The project, which supposed the introduction of popular books in modern mass reading, according to Tieck, was not particularly fruitful. Until the end of his life, he was convinced of the need to renew mass culture, avoiding clichéd pseudo-art. In 20s-30s, being the head of the literary part at the Dresden Theater, and in his late 40s, as a production director and artistic director in Berlin, Tieck tried to influence the mass taste by introducing more productions classics, in particular the dramaturgy of Shakespeare, and refused to base the drama on the plot of the chapbook.

On the other hand, Tieck's drama, based on the plots of the "lower" literature, still constitutes the golden fund of German romanticism. It stands at the origins of the drama A. von Arnim, C. Brentano, F. de la Motte Fouquet and many others. Tieck managed to strengthen the "grassroots" plots in the field of "high" literature, causing a wave of imitations of more and less famous authors. He also brought these stories to the "high" stage, lifting them from the stage of the ridiculous theater. His prose works of chapbooks turned out to be less known, but they initiated the triumphal procession of "grassroots" plots in German Romantic literature.

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