

# Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

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## Travesti

Fra et italiensk ord for “omkledning”, “kle ut”. Komisk etterligning av en alvorlig tekst (eller et annet verk) ved å trekke innholdet ned på et “lavt” nivå. En travesti “devalorizes and trivializes a “noble” text” (Stam 1992 s. 26). Dette er en type intertekstualitet.

En travesti er en trivialisering (Genette 1982 s. 291), og innebærer satirisk spott av et betydningsfullt estetisk verk (Herding og Gehrig 2006 s. 113). I motsetning til parodien bevarer travestien alltid mye av innholdet og gjengir det på en annen, upassende og latterlig måte, ved å skape et sprik mellom form og innhold (Herding og Gehrig 2006 s. 113). Travesti er en latterliggjøring som plasserer noe alvorlig og høyverdig inn i en annen, ofte hverdagslig sammenheng. Det er platt fordreining av noe høytidelig, f.eks. om Adam og Eva på epleslang.

En travesti flytter en tekst fra sin opprinnelige stil til en annen stil som gir en komisk effekt (Gérard Genette gjengitt fra Dousteyssier-Khoze 2000 s. 122).

“(1) Play, novel, poem, skit [= sketsj], film, opera, etc., that trivializes a serious subject or composition. Generally, a travesty achieves its effect through broad humor and through incongruous or distorted language and situations. Examples of works that contain travesty are Cervantes’s *Don Quixote de La Mancha* and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (the Act V staging of Pyramis and Thisbe by the bumbling tradesmen). Literary works that mock trivial or unimportant subjects are not travesties; travesties mock only serious, dignified, or noble subjects. (2) A work in literature, music, or art that is so poorly done that it fails to meet even the minimum standards for style, technique, form, etc. (3) Any gross distortion or misrepresentation of a procedure, a custom, an approach, a method, a system, or a course of action. For example, a trial in which the judge is incompetent and the jury is biased may be termed a travesty.” (<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xLitTerms.html>; lesedato 09.03.15)

Travesti er “in literature, the treatment of a noble and dignified subject in an inappropriately trivial manner. Travesty is a crude form of burlesque in which the

original subject matter is changed little but is transformed into something ridiculous through incongruous language and style. An early example of travesty is the humorous treatment of the Pyramus and Thisbe legend in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96). After 1660, travesty became a popular literary device in England as seen in John Phillips's *Don Quixote* (1687), a vulgar mockery of the original work" (<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/603663/travesty>; lesedato 26.02.15). Det må alltid være en tekst (en modell) som latterliggjøres, f.eks. gjennom bruk av anakronismer, vulgære uttrykk og digresjoner. Digresjoner om uvesentlige detaljer er et vanlig komisk virkemiddel i travestier. Digresjoner kan også være komiske ved at det er så mange av dem at handlingen ikke drives framover.

“Ital. *travestire*, theatrical language: to dress, disguise [...] which uses earlier, original material but changes the stylistic level drastically. The wit and effect of a travesty result from the discrepancy between an old content and the new, lowly mode of presentation. A 1984 photograph by Claire Santrot may serve as an instantly persuasive example. Thirteen good-looking young boys are sitting or standing behind a lengthy table, in the middle of which is an outstanding figure, gesturing with open hands – a travesty of the Last Supper. As to literary travesty, it presupposes, like parody, a polemical relationship of the later author to the canonical work engaged” (Hoesterey 2001 s. 15).

Mange likestiller mer eller mindre parodi og travesti, f.eks. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra som skriver: “A travesty, of course, is a grotesque parody of the original.” (1995 s. 127) Ludvig Holbergs komiske epos *Peder Paars* (1719-20) er både en parodi på et epos og en travesti. Den dansk handelsmannen Peder Paars snakker, tenker og handler “lavt” i et epos. Han reiser med båt til Ålborg for å besøke sin forlovede, men forliser underveis. Etter lange omveier når han fram, slik Homers helt Odyssevs også til slutt nådde sitt mål og kommer tilbake til Penelope. *Peder Paars* er primært en epos-parodi (på Homer og Vergil), men har også innslag av travesti. Den amerikanske regissøren Allan A. Goldsteins film *2001: A Space Travesty* (2000) henspiller allerede i tittelen på Stanley Kubricks film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Men knapt noe av Kubricks innhold er bevart i Goldsteins film, og det er ingen tydelig parallell mellom de to filmene.

“Travesty and mock epic are now most widely understood as oppositions: travesty is high subject matter dealt with in a low manner, mock epic is a low subject in a high manner.” (Dyer 2007 s. 37) En hverdagslig krangel mellom Bibelens Josef og jomfru Maria er et eksempel på travesti, mens en “mock epic”-historie kunne latt to esler snakke bibelsk språk.

“The term travesty comes from the Italian *travestire*, to dress or disguise, and suggests the idea of one mode being dressed in the guise of another. In practice this meant a serious mode dressed in a frivolous. It became a current usage in the

seventeenth century, notably with the publication of Giovanbattista Lalli's *Eneide travestita* 1634 [...], which took the classical epic most admired at the time, the *Aeneid*, and retold it in a light, comic manner." (Dyer 2007 s. 38)

Den engelske dikteren Lord Byrons *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) er en travesti, et langt dikt som "relates not to any of the works of classical antiquity but to a poem by one of its author's contemporaries. It burlesques *A Vision of Judgment* (1821) by [den engelske dikteren Robert] Southey. [...] Byron thought *A Vision of Judgment* a presumptuous poem because it told God what he ought to do with [den britiske kongen] George III; he detested it as a Tory poem, the work of one whom he considered a bigoted renegade; and he knew it to be a bad poem, inflated, tame, stilted, and preposterous. A travesty covering very much the same ground in an aggressively familiar style seemed the obvious corrective. [...] He sets his poem where much of Southey's is set, just outside the gate of heaven; but instead of aspiring to a Miltonic dignity and generality he renders his setting and characters in the most familiar and prosaic of particular terms [...] Byron travesties Southey's poem." (Jump 1972 s. 5-7). I Byrons dikt framstilles englene som tory-tilhengere. En av djevlene bærer på Southey, som djevelen har tatt med seg mens han skrev på *A Vision of Judgment*, og Southey insisterer deretter på å lese diktet sitt høyt.

"Burlesque and travesty have been variously defined. In the *Spectator*, Joseph Addison observed that burlesque "describes great Persons acting and speaking like the basest among the People" (15 Dec. 1711), but modern critics rather argue that "a low treatment of high subjects is better termed a "travesty" (or "low" burlesque)" (Schoch 17-18). [...] the terms "burlesque", "burletta", "travesty" and "extravaganza" were used interchangeably by nineteenth-century playwrights [...] "travesty, or burlesque, was a favourite form in the nineteenth-century theatre", as Stanley Wells observes (i, vii). All kinds of drama, including classical plays and opera, were burlesqued at that time, and not only in London. In England, John Poole set the fashion for parodistic treatment of Shakespeare's plays with his *Hamlet Travestie* of 1810. That the thriving popular stages should have turned to Shakespeare and exploited his popularity is not surprising: numerous acting editions of his plays were being published at that time, theatres competed with each other in staging his works with star actors such as David Garrick, John Kemble and Edmund Kean appealing to large audiences. *Hamlet* in particular caught everybody's attention, so that Poole argues in the Preface to his travesty: "no tragedy in the English language [is] better adapted to receive a burlesque than "HAMLET [...] from its being so frequently before the public, so very generally read, and so continually quoted" (ed. Wells, i, 6). And it also became "the most frequently burlesqued Shakespearean play" (Schoch 10) in nineteenth-century England." (Manfred Draudt i <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/>; lesedato 04.05.15)

Den britiske politikeren og dikteren Richard Gurney skrev *Romeo and Juliet Travesty* (1812), et skuespill i tre akter. Den skotske journalisten og dramatikeren

Andrew Halliday skrev også en travesti på *Romeo and Juliet*. En kritiker kalt stykket “a species of sacrilege”. Engelskmannen Charles Mathews fikk framført sitt skuespill *Othello, the Moor of Fleet Street* (1833). Litteraturforskeren Manfred Draudt nevner også de anonymt utgitte *Romeo et Paquette, traduction amphigouricriticomique de Romeo et Juliette* (1788) og *Othello-travestien Arlequin Cruello* (1792).

Tyskeren Johann Friedrich Schink var “the author of one of the first German *Hamlet* travesties, the burlesque “puppet play” *Prinz Hamlet von Dännemark* (1799). In this, Old Hamlet is a ludicrous fat ghost in a nightcap, the Queen is grey, wrinkly and toothless, and the “To be or not to be” soliloquy is transformed into a satirical attack on critics and the theatre, beginning with the line “To be printed or not to be printed? That is the question”. A happy ending is secured by drastic changes: Oldenholm, the Polonius counterpart, is merely thrown out of a window by Hamlet, and the King is saved by an antidote. Schink’s burlesque was preceded by Karl Ludwig Giesecke’s *Der travestirte Hamlet, Eine Burleske in deutschen Knittelversen mit Arien und Chören* (a burlesque in German doggerel with arias and choruses), first performed in Vienna in 1794, in which the action is transferred to a lowermiddle-class setting and the elevated language of the original is translated into the local vernacular – Hamlet being also metaphorically reduced in stature to “Prince of Liliput”.” (Manfred Draudt i <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/>; lesedato 30.04.15)

Den tyske dramatikeren Susanne Wolf fikk i perioden 2004-06 framført to Shakespeare-travestier i Wien, *En wiensk sommernattsdrøm* (*Ein Wiener Sommernachtstraum*) og *Som dere vil ha det* (*Was Ihr Wollt’s*). “Both travesties written in the Viennese vernacular and featuring all the traditional characteristics of the genre were created by a young author, Susanne Wolf, who was born in Mainz (Germany) and came to Austria in 1992 to study at the drama department of Vienna University. In two more respects Wolf’s plays are remarkable: first, because they are rare examples of travesties of comedies; and secondly, because they transfer the action not to the present day but to the recent past, the end of the Habsburg monarchy. Her travesty may also appear oldfashioned at first sight, because, in the manner of the Restoration adaptations, particularly those of Davenant, she supplies a counterpart to Puck, Naseweis (“Jackanapes”), a fairy attending on Hippolyta, who assists her mistress in her revenge by mischievously casting a spell on Oberon that gives him hiccups, and with whom Puck eventually falls in love. Theseus, characteristically lowered in his social standing, is a civil servant of the monarchy, a municipal clerk (“k. und k. Amtsrat”) with the outmoded comic Christian name Thaddädl. His beadle (“Amtdiener”) is Bottom (“Zettel”), who secretly supports the eloping lovers. In spite of the setting in a remote period (which helps to maintain the basic hierarchical structure of the original) there are numerous topical allusion to the present day: to political parties, the present mayor of Vienna, and current slogans of Vienna tourism. In at least one further respect – in addition to its timeless spoofing of bureaucracy and civil service – the travesty satirises topical

issues: feminism and emancipation.” (Manfred Draudt i <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/>; lesedato 04.05.15)

I Wolfs *En wiensk sommernattsdrøm* “Titania (doubled with Hippolyta), insisting on being a self-reliant fairy (“eine selbständige Fee”) who for many years has been involved in the fairies’ movement and fought for the fairies’ emancipation, [...] wonders how she can ever have agreed to become dependent on Oberon (doubled with Theseus) and describes her marriage to him (for 300 years!) as her biggest mistake. Feminism and gender issues are taken up again in the Lysander–Hermia relationship, in which the original gender relations are reversed, Hermia being the audacious one who looks forward to the adventures (also erotic ones) in the Vienna Woods and boldly starts kissing Lysander when they are alone, whereas he proves cowardly and timid, afraid of the noise of birds (which he mistakes for vultures) and dropping off to sleep while she is fondling him. Hermia’s rigorous order that Lysander should instantly sit down close to her provokes Puck to compare her to Xanthippe (in a comic coining: “Xanthyperin”). To Shakespeare’s happy ending Wolf at least adds a question mark. The spell that Naseweis has cast on Oberon is not removed from him in the end, which means that he still gets hiccups whenever he secretly fancies a woman, for example when looking at Helena. Similarly Titania, when she has been released from her spell and is reconciled with Oberon, regrets in an aside that her husband is not a bit more animal-like and, recalling her adventure with the “ass” (Zettel), in the final scene confesses that she would fancy a little donkey.” (Manfred Draudt i <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/>; lesedato 30.04.15)

Wolfs *Som dere vil ha det* “is in principle quite similar: again set in the late nineteenth century, as particularly the forms of address suggest, the travesty is located in Nussdorf, then an outlying district of Vienna situated on the Danube (in which Viola and Sebastian are almost drowned) and well-noted for its vineyards and wine-gardens. Olivia is transformed into the owner of one of these vineyards with a winery (“Weingutsbesitzerin”) and Orsino into a high-class shoemaker (“Nobelschuster”) from Alsergrund, one of the inner districts of Vienna. Both professions become the origin of original metaphors and wordplay, the wine-cellar a suitable place for Rülp (Sir Toby Belch) and his friend Christoph von Bleichenwang (Sir Andrew Aguecheek), a master glazier from Ottakring (another suburb), who derives his claim on Olivia from the fact that wine and glasses go together. As in “Ein Wiener Sommernachtstraum”, where, apart from Zettel, the other mechanicals have been cut, Feste, Fabian, Antonio, etc. are omitted, but new counterparts to other characters are created: not only Viola is disguised as a man, Vickerl, but also Sebastian, who gets stranded with only one stray suitcase containing women’s clothes, is disguised as a woman, Seraphine, and becomes a companion reading literature to Olivia. Seraphine’s confession, “Shakespeare is very close to me” (“Shakespeare ist mir sehr nahe”), in fact has a deeper meaning and correctly suggests that these burlesques are close to Shakespeare, much closer than many post-modern productions, translations or acting versions which all claim

to represent Shakespeare but in fact turn out to be radical adaptations sailing under false colours.” (Manfred Draudt i [https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/ desterro/](https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/); lesedato 30.04.15)

“Travesties and burlesques, once categorically rejected by critics, have become a well-established genre, particularly in Austria, and are distinguished from adaptations and acting versions, if at all, only by the greater degree of localization and topicality, the greater prominence of trivial activities such as eating or drinking, and a creative use of language; what was once an intrinsic feature of burlesques, the reversal of genre, can nowadays be found also in adaptations and “productions” of Shakespeare.” (Manfred Draudt i <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/>; lesedato 04.05.15)

“[T]he humour arises from the simple mismatching of two incongruent elements. However, travesty has also been understood in terms of lowering, either in the sense of bringing something down to a more familiar level or of debasing it. Classic travesti like Lalli’s [hans travesti på den romerske dikteren Vergils epos *Aeneiden*] made its epic points of reference feel more familiar by, for instance, the use of short (readily grasped, umpty-tumpty) poetic lines rather than long (nobler, expansive) ones, vernacular language, and familiar, and hence often anachronistic, references (Genette 1982: 67). The effect is liable to be comic, but is also a way of allowing contemporary readers to feel at home with the remote qualities (in time and rank) of the classical tradition. This may though also have the effect of debasing the noble tone and pretensions of the original. Richmond Bond, in a study of eighteenth century English ‘burlesque poetry’, suggests that travesty ‘lowers ... by applying a jocular, familiar, undignified treatment’ (1932: 4, quoted in Rose 1993: 56), often by including elements of deflating common sense and lewdness.” (Dyer 2007 s. 38)

“Travesty, principally poetic in the seventeenth century, became dramatic in the eighteenth century and also operatic (Offenbach, Gilbert and Sullivan) in the nineteenth. Theatrical travesty may have been prefigured by the satyr plays in ancient Greek theatre, which came after and deflated performances of the tragedies and typically presented ‘a famous mythological character in a grotesque situation rich in comic possibilities’ (Sutton 1980: 3; quoted in Dentith 2000: 42). One of the modern forms is the British *Carry On* film series, in which a stock company of performers are put in a variety of generic settings: *Carry On Cowboy* (Westerns), *Cleo* (epics), *Emmanuelle* (soft porn), *Henry* and *Don’t Lose Your Head* (costume drama), *Screaming* (horror), *Spying* (James Bond), *Up the Jungle* (Tarzan), *Up the Khyber* (imperialist adventure) and so on [...] [skuespillerne i disse filmene spiller] as if there had been no change of time, setting or genre. Sometimes there is a parody of the genre in question, but most of the time the performer’s stock characters and string of verbal and visual (and usually dirty) puns carry on regardless. The effect of the comic disparity between characters and gags and the relatively serious subject matter is deflationary, bringing the latter down to the stereotypical and lavatorial level of the former.” (Dyer 2007 s. 38-39) “There are

not dissimilar series in other countries: the Marx Brothers (USA), Totò (Italy), Uuno (Finland) and so on.” (Dyer 2007 s. 50) Marx Brothers-filmen *Go West* (1940) har blitt kalt en western-travesti (Dyer 2007 s. 94).

Travesti er “that type of humorous composition which has a model constantly in mind, retains its characters and much of its subject matter, and systematically ridicules both. [...] Without doubt the Restoration [på 1600-tallet] with its lawlessness and licence made it easy for travesty to gain a foothold in England, and once the pernicious weed got a start it was bound to find ready admirers among tavern poets and their numerous friends. Considerable influence may have come from abroad but there is evidence that the seeds were already in English soil before this foreign influence began to make itself felt. In a volume of jocosse verse entitled *Wit Restored*, written by Sir John Mennes and James Smith and published in 1658, there occurs a bit of verse surprisingly like the efforts of Scarron [den franske forfatteren Paul Scarron skrev *Virgile travesty*, 1648-51]. As V. L. Jones has pointed out, this poem, *The Innovation of Penelope to Ulysses*, was probably written in or before 1640. [...] Penelope, anxious at Ulysses’ failure to return from the war, writes him a letter beginning:

My pretty Duck, my Pigsnie, my Ulysses  
Thy poor Penelope sends a thousand Kisses” (Sturgis E. Leavitt i [https://archive.org/stream/jstor-4171745/4171745\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/jstor-4171745/4171745_djvu.txt); lesedato 30.04.15)

Briten Charles Cotton publiserte i 1664 verket *Scarronides*, en travesti på Vergils *Aeneiden*. I Vergils epos begår dronning Dido selvmord etter at Aeneas har forlatt henne. Hos Cotton beskrives hennes vurderinger før selvmordet slik:

“In Mind she weigh’d as she sat crying,  
What kind of Death was best to die in.  
Poison she thought would not be quick,  
And, which was worse would make her sick.  
That being therefore waiv’d, she thought  
That neatly cutting her own throat  
Might serve to do her business for her:  
But that she thought upon with Horror,  
Because ‘twould hurt her; neither could  
She well endure to see her Blood.  
The next came in her Thoughts was drowning,  
That way she thought ‘twould be a done thing

But then again she fell a thinking,  
She should be somewhat long in sinking,  
Having been ever light of members;  
And, to dissuade her more remembers,  
‘Twould spoyl the Cloaths might do someone

Credit when she was dead and gone.”

Den romerske dikteren Ovid “came in for his share of ridicule in the *Ovidius Exulans*, 1673. Its author was not sufficiently proud of his work to sign his name to it, but the pseudonym “Naso Scarronomimus” is enlightening. Scarron is mentioned again in the preface: “I was going to give you a character of myself as Scarron has done, but knowing how far I come short of his wit, ... I shall upon better consideration leave my picture to be drawn by somebody else.” The author of this travesty rises above the coarseness of most of his contemporaries, but beyond this there is nothing to recommend the work. The usual anachronisms are dragged in by the heels, Leander swims the Thames instead of the Hellespont, and references are made to London Bridge, Gravesend, etc.” (Sturgis E. Leavitt i [https://archive.org/stream/jstor-4171745/4171745\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/jstor-4171745/4171745_djvu.txt); lesedato 04.05.15)

Den franske komponisten Jacques Offenbachs operette *Den skjønne Helene* (1864) kan oppfattes som en travesti på deler av handlingen i Homers epos *Iliaden*. Personene i operetten uttrykker seg delvis vulgært, delvis pompøst. Noen av Homers helter opptrer hos Offenbach som snøvlende fyllefanter.

Den irske forfatteren James Joyces roman *Ulysses* (1922) har blitt oppfattet som en travesti fordi den “renders in a thoroughly unheroic manner a story paralleling that of the *Odyssey*” (Jump 1972 s. 10).

“Cornelius Jakhelln (30) vant den nordiske konkurransen om beste samtidsroman. [...] Det er Odin som fører ordet, enda handlingen er lagt til vår egen tid. Tusen år etter at de norrøne gudene mistet taket på befolkningen er de fortsatt i live. De er på kjøret og gjør seg saftige observasjoner av sine omgivelser. [...] “Gudenes fall” er en travesti (en ofte humoristisk omskriving av en velkjent tekst). De kaller boka både burlesk, grotesk, pubertal, anal og svært morsom. Selv om romanen har sine irriterende sider, måtte juryen til slutt legge seg flate og innrømme at den er gjennomtenkt og grenseløst konsekvent. [...] Musikken står sentralt også i romanen. Odin spiller for eksempel black fuckingshitmetal på takterrassen i Valhall.” (*Adresseavisen* 25. mai 2007 s. 10)

Den kolombianske kunstneren Fernando Boteros maleri *Mona Lisa* (1987), der hun er svært tjukk, har blitt oppfattet som en “grotesk travesti” (Herding og Gehrig 2006 s. 114).

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