

TRAVESTIES by Tom Stoppard

A rehearsed reading presented by the Adelaide University Literary Society with the advice and assistance of Gerry Elder.

CHARACTERS: Henry Carr, appears as a very old man and also as his youthful self.
Tristan Tzara, is the Dadaist of that name.
James Joyce, is James Joyce in 1917/18 aged 36.
Lenin, is Lenin in 1917: aged 47.
Bennett, is Carr's manservant. Quite a weighty presence.
Gwendolen, is Carr's younger sister; young and attractive...
Cecily, is also young and attractive... Also appears as her old self.
Nadya, is Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife: aged 48.

The play is set in Zurich, in two locations: the drawing room of Henry Carr's apartment, and a section of the Zurich Public Library. Most of the action takes place within Carr's memory, which goes back to the period of the First World War...

from Tom Stoppard's introduction:

"The reader of a play whose principal characters include Lenin, James Joyce and Tristan Tzara may not realize that the figure of Henry Carr is likewise taken from history. But this is so. In March 1918 (I take the following information from Richard Ellman's James Joyce), Claud Sykes, an actor temporarily living in Zurich, suggested to Joyce that they form a theatrical company to put on plays in English. Joyce agreed and became the business manager of the English Players, the first production to be that of The Importance of Being Earnest. Joyce became very active and visited the Consul General, A. Percy Bennett in order to procure official approval for the Players... Meanwhile Sykes was piecing together a cast ... As yet there was no one to take the leading role of Algernon Moncrieff. In an unlucky moment Joyce nominated a tall, good-looking young man named Henry Carr, whom he had seen in the consulate... Carr's performance ~~was~~ turned out to be a small triumph. He had even, in his enthusiasm, bought some trousers, a hat and a pair of gloves to wear as Algernon. But immediately ~~after~~ after the performance the actor and business manager quarrelled... The upshot was disproportionate and drawn out. Joyce and Carr ended up going to law, in two separate actions, Carr claiming reimbursement for the cost of the trousers, etc., and Joyce counter-claiming for the price of five tickets sold by Carr, and also suing for slander. These matters were not settled until February 1919. Joyce won on the money and lost on the ~~slander~~ slander, but he reserved his full retribution for Ulysses, where 'he allotted punishments as scrupulously and inexorably as Dante... Originally Joyce intended to make Consul General Bennett and Henry Carr the two drunken, blasphemous ~~and~~ and obscene soldiers who knock Stephen Dedalus down in the 'Circe' episode; but he eventually decided that Bennett should be the sergeant-major, with authority over Private Carr, who, however, refers to him with utter disrespect.' "