

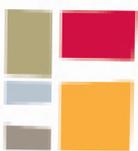
STUDY GUIDE

TRAVESTIES

BY TOM STOPPARD

TONY AWARD WINNING PLAY

Directed by
Jacob Tierney



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About this Study Guide

This study guide was compiled by Lucie Lederhendler for the Segal Centre for Performing Arts on the occasion of the Segal Centre 2015 production of *Travesties*, by Tom Stoppard, directed by Jacob Tierney. It may be used solely for educational purposes.

This guide intends to provide audiences a foundation of knowledge with which to approach this dense and referential work, but it is not necessary. As intelligent as *Travesties* is, it is also silly and slapstick. For this reason, I have elected to leave out a glossary, as the vocabulary that your students will be exposed to is intentionally abstruse. However, if you would like excerpts of the script with which to examine that language, please contact me.

Additionally, the American Conservatory Theatre issued a wonderful, in-depth guide for their 2006 production with a slightly different flavour. I encourage you to make use of that as well, with the link listed on page 18.

To reserve tickets at a reduced rate, or for questions, comments, citations or references, please contact me:

514 739 2301 ext. 8360 or llederhendler@segalcentre.org.



PRODUCTION CREDITS



WRITTEN BY
DIRECTED BY

Tom Stoppard
Jacob Tierney

CAST

HENRY CARR	Greg Ellwand
TRISTAN TZARA	Martin Sims
JAMES JOYCE	Jon Lachlan Stewart
GWENDOLEN	Anne Cassar
CECILY	Chala Hunter
VLADIMIR LENIN	Daniel Lillford
NADYA	Ellen David
BENNETT	Pierre Brault

CREATIVE TEAM

SET DESIGN	Pierre-Étienne Locas
COSTUME DESIGN	Louise Bourret
LIGHTING DESIGN	Nicolas Descoteaux
SOUND DESIGN	Dmitri Marine
STAGE MANAGER	Melanie St-Jacques
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Dawn Woods
APPRENTICE STAGE MANAGER	Kristen "Birdie" Gregor
ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR	Adam Daniel Koren





SYNOPSIS

IS THERE ANYTHING
OF INTEREST?

Act I

James Joyce, Vladimir Lenin, and Tristan Tzara work in the library, interrupted occasionally by the shushing of librarian Cecily Carruthers, who is doing administrative work for Lenin, as Gwendolen Carr (Gwen) is working for Joyce. Joyce and Lenin's manuscripts are identical, and are accidentally swapped.

Nadezhda Krupskaya (Nadya Lenin) enters to update her husband on the Russian revolution. Lenin overhears Joyce speaking some revolutionary keywords and they become friends.

Henry Carr, in his golden years, reminisces about war-time Zurich. Using highly abstruse language, he titles and begins dictating several personal essays, such as "Through the Courts with James Joyce" and "Further Recollections of a Consular Official in Whitest Switzerland..." He recalls Tzara and Lenin, Dada and Bolshevism, but his memories are not very precise. Bennett, his manservant, enters, as Carr reverts to his younger self of 1917.

Carr intends to go to the theatre that night, and tells Bennett which clothes to lay out. Carr asks Bennett what the significant news of the day is. The conversation repeats several times, with Bennett responding in different ways, with different significant moments of WWI. Carr experiences a flashback to combat once, and a bourgeois detachment another time.

Tzara has left a calling card for Carr. He visits, followed by Joyce and Gwen. Taking Joyce's lead, they engage in a debate on war, austerity, and art entirely in limerick form. Another flashback usurps Carr's memory, and the scene ends.

Tzara has spent the last week in the library. He notices sandwiches that Carr has laid out and learns that Gwen is expected to visit, which delights Tzara, as he intends to propose to her. Despite that fact that Gwen has also been in the library all week, Tzara has not been able to muster the courage to speak to her, as she is never without Joyce. Carr, furthermore, finds Tzara's library card deceptively names him "Jack." Tzara explains that he was obliged to conceal his true identity from Lenin.

Gwen and Joyce enter. Joyce has come to appeal to Carr for support in producing *The Importance of Being Earnest* in Zurich, in order to assert the superiority of English theatre.

Carr is intrigued, and they leave to discuss it.

Tzara approaches Gwen with a sonnet, and she reciprocates his feelings, though hers are predicated on admiration for Joyce's work. Elderly Carr reenters, and recalls a lawsuit Joyce filed against him—apparently the play created a great rift.

Act II

Lenin and Nadya have chosen to stay in Zurich because of the expansive library there. Cecily spots Carr watching them, and mistakes him for Tristan Tzara (thinking, as she does, that Tristan's name is Jack.) Playing the role of a dadaist, he charms Cecily with whimsy, even though she does not agree with his politics. She declines his invitation to have lunch, as she is occupied researching for Lenin.

Cecily, a devout follower of Lenin's philosophy, dismisses Oscar Wilde's work out of hand for being too bourgeois. A heated debate ensues before the scene restarts. The second time, Carr is too lustful to win her heart, but the third time he is successful. Tristan enters the library, furious that Carr is trying to be him.

Lenin and Nadya return to Russia with great difficulty, under stolen identities. Carr is torn between stopping their radical movement and being sympathetic to a man who he respects.

Cecily and Gwen meet in the flat, and Cecily asks Gwen to pay Joyce's overdue fees. When Carr enters, Gwen reveals that he is not Tristan, which reveals, in turn, that Tristan is not Jack. Before they leave, they ask for the critiques of their respective artists' works, which are not complimentary. The men say they lied for love, but the women hold to their principles and leave.

Carr and Tzara sit drinking champagne, listening to a glowing review of Carr's performance in *Earnest*. Joyce enters, demanding money that Carr does not think he owes. In the heat of argument, Carr insults Joyce's manuscript, but in a way that doesn't make sense. Upon inspection, they see that Joyce and Lenin's texts were switched. The couples are therefore able to reconcile.

Finally, Old Carr and Old Cecily are in the present, and she undermines Carr's memories. Gwen's name was Sophia, but Carr really did play Algernon. Lenin was not there.



THEMES

— THERE IS A PERFECTLY RIGHT
— SHILL NOJ NOLLINP TLEJ TENC

Artifice & disguise

“All poetry is a reshuffling of a pack of picture cards, and all poets are cheats.”

The word “travesty” comes from the Latin *trans* meaning “over” or “surpassing” and *vestire* meaning “to clothe,” which is the same origin as the English word “wear.” In French, *travesti* means “transvestite,” and in Italian *travestire* means “to disguise.”

In common English usage the word carries judicial undertones: a “travesty of justice” is an idiom often used when the system itself is being criticised.

In the play, characters fulfill certain roles inasmuch as they relate directly to Carr, and they assume different qualities, clothes, names, and moralities depending on who they are speaking to, and why.

The role of art in society

“Art is absurdly overrated by artists, which is understandable, but what is strange is that it is absurdly overrated by everyone else.”

The action of *Travesties* takes place surrounding the production of a play - a play commissioned specifically to communicate English culture to the international city of Zurich. That event is so profoundly etched into Carr’s mind and is the basis of his misremembering.

The characters within that plot are either fictional or artists themselves. In essence, they would not exist without art - everyone but Bennett, the least featured character in the play. It is ironic, then, that their conversation circles around the uselessness and irresponsibility of art in the context of a war-torn society, as they owe their lives to it.

Contradiction & hypocrisy

“On the one hand the strong and sincere protester against social injustice, and on the other hand the jaded hysterical sniveller ...”

Tzara is an unrepentant idealist who lies for weeks in order to gain the favour of Gwendolen. Carr, a consummate conservative, claims the cause of anarchy for the chance to spend time with Cecily. Joyce is well known for his interest in fashion but feels helpless to reestablish the order of his wardrobe, mismatching his coat and pants daily. Joyce and Tzara loudly proclaim that art is useless but they are tireless artmakers.

Furthermore, the impassioned arguments that occur throughout the play are subject to time jumps, in which the argument and its opposition are created by the same person, depending on what the other says in each new reenactment.



THEMES

- DON'T FORGET THE THEMES

War & trauma

“Even when there is war *everywhere else*, there is no war in Switzerland.”

The characters have all arrived in Zurich via vastly different routes, and the way they spend their time in safety differs just as much. Joyce, unable to fight, begins work on a story about the motherland that he has forgone and mounts a play in honour of it. Tzara, nationless on account of his Jewishness, becomes obsessed with meaning, or lack thereof. Lenin is simply biding his time in exile, building a revolution. Carr alone chooses to ignore the horrors occurring across every border, paying attention instead to haberdashery, but this is merely a defense, protecting him from the effects that memories of battle would have on him. Indeed, Old Carr's memories are so shielded from the incomprehensible truth they hold that the divide between fact and fiction is irrelevant.

Revolution & dissidence

“There can be no real and effective freedom in a society based on the power of money.”

The other thing that these characters taken from history have in common is the lasting effect that their revolutionary thinking had on global society.

Tzara's missionary work, preaching the cause of Dada led to surrealism, cubism, expressionism, and eventually the establishment of New York as the centre of the modern art world. Joyce's *Ulysses* was a post-modern novel that rethought the established standards of the novel and influenced modern writers such as Arthur Miller, Umberto Eco, and many more. The significance of Lenin's work to modern life cannot be overstated, as the nation that he formed had an effect on the world economy, military technology, and international relations that are still poignantly felt to this day.

These characters are revolutionary in their challenging of the status quo.

Memory & mortality

“We're here because we're here ... because we're here because we're here ... we're here because ...”

Old Carr, when we meet him in Act I, is weak but increasingly energetic as he constructs a world in his mind, literally reverting to his younger self. By the final scene of the play, when we meet him again, his frailty is palpable, and the world he has constructed vanishes, never to be recalled in the same way again.

WORKS REFERENCED

The Importance of Being Earnest was written by Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) and first performed in February 1895 at St. James' Theatre in London. It has been produced as a live play, a radio play, two films, and several television adaptations.

Written in the final years of the Victorian Era, *Earnest* can be read as a response to the austere moral codes that had been held paramount since the early 19TH century, such as chastity, modesty, and yes, earnestness.

The Importance of Being Earnest was to be Wilde's final work, and is considered by many to be his great masterpiece. Although widely considered hilarious, contemporary critics were split on whether or not this play was actually important as well. The play created debate among the cultured English and was rife with questions about the merit of satire, frivolity, and humour. The depiction of the leisure class struck a note with some, as the hypocrisy of such a stratified economy clinging to upper-class manners was very clear by this time.

Wilde's public personality, and the coincidence that "earnest" was often used as a euphemism for homosexuality, (as in, "Is he earnest?") resulted in a rumour of not just sexual, but homosexual undertones that would have been contrary to Victorian values. The humour in the term "bunburying," coined in this work by Wilde, and meaning the evasion of responsibilities for leisure, was not lost on a Victorian audience.

It was by barring the entrance of the Marquess of Queensbury into a performance of *Earnest* that Wilde incurred his wrath. A libel trial followed, under the intense scrutiny of the media and the public, in which Wilde was depicted as a lavish, depraved, decadent individual, who participated in every kind of illicit sexual activity.

He was sentenced to two years of hard labour on the charge of Gross Indecency. He lived three more years after his release, dying destitute in Paris of cerebral meningitis.

The Plot*

John Worthing lives a double life, as the serious-minded "Jack," who cares for his niece Cecily in the country, and "Ernest," an irresponsible party-boy, in the city. Those who know him as Jack think that Ernest is a troublesome brother who he is obliged to visit from time to time.

John's good friend, Algernon Moncrieff, has a similar fictional invalid friend "Bunbury" in the country who he uses as an excuse to get out of social commitments.

Algernon's cousin Gwendolen and her mother Lady Bracknell call on the two men at Algernon's flat. When left alone with Gwendolen, Ernest proposes to her, and she accepts. She is so fond of the name Ernest that he resolves to change his name officially. Lady Bracknell, however, forbids their marriage when she learns of his underclass origins, as a baby discovered in a handbag in the train station. The lovers decide to secretly meet at his country estate. Algernon eavesdrops and plans to visit the estate as well with the intention of wooing Cecily.

In the country, Algernon find Cecily studying and pretend to be Ernest, who Cecily thinks is Jack's urbane brother.

Jack arrives and, in a plan to escape the fiction that he has created, announces that his brother Ernest has died. Gwendolen and Cecily have already met and discovered that they are engaged to the same person, "Ernest," until the men reappear and the deception is exposed.

The ladies agree to marry the men. Lady Bracknell condones Algernon and Cecily's union, but Jack will not allow it until she agrees to condone his and Gwendolen's as well.

Cecily's tutor, Miss Prism, enters. Lady Bracknell recognizes her from 28 years ago when she worked as a nursemaid who stole a baby boy. Miss Prism explains that she was carrying a manuscript that she accidentally put in the baby carriage, putting the baby in a handbag that she left at the train station.

Jack, therefore, is Algernon's long-lost older brother, and a suitable match for Gwendolen. Gwendolen remains dead-set on marrying someone named Ernest. Lady Bracknell declares that his name is, in fact, Ernest--the name of his biological father.

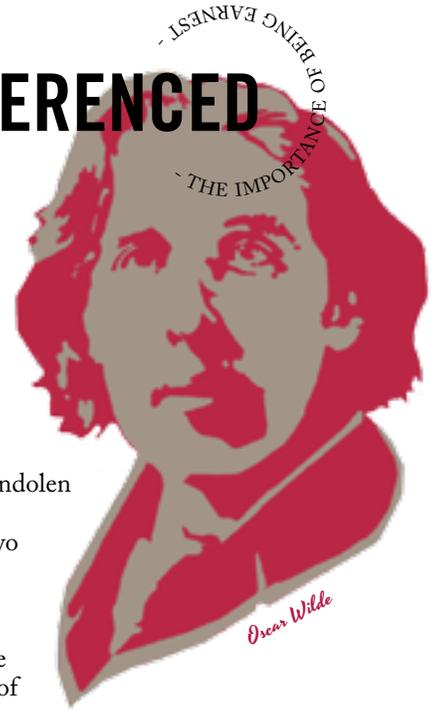


Image: Portrait of Oscar Wilde, New York, 1882, by Napoleon Sarony. From http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/18/Oscar_Wilde.jpeg

*The full text of *The Importance of Being Earnest* is available online through Project Gutenberg. See page 18 for link.

PROFILE

- 1941 - 1881 -
JAMES A. A. JOYCE

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was the eldest of ten children* of John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane Murray. Mary Jane was a gifted pianist and John sang and acted in his free time. John worked as a tax collector, and they lived in a fashionable town near Dublin. When James was nine years old, his father went bankrupt, and the family's descent into poverty was exacerbated by John's drinking.

James had to leave the boarding school in which he was enrolled, and changed schools several times until he enrolled in the University College Dublin, where he was able to study languages, theatre, and literature. He worked as a journalist, writing articles and reviewing plays.

Joyce enrolled in medical school in France, but dropped out and returned to Ireland soon after when his mother fell ill. Back in Ireland, he tried to publish but was continually rejected. In the months that he remained in Dublin after, drinking and philandering, and as it happened, meeting the individuals who would later inhabit *Ulysses*.

He left to the continent to elope with Norah Barnacle, and worked as an English teacher around western Europe. After a few years, he found work copywriting for a bank in Rome, but disliked it and returned to Dublin to visit his and Nora's family.

At 28 years old, Joyce and some business partners from Trieste, in Northern Italy (then the Austro-Hungarian Empire,) where he had spent time, opened the first cinema in Ireland, the *Volta Cinematograph*. The same year, he wrote *Dubliners*, which caused a fight with his publisher that caused him to leave Dublin for good.

He returned to Italy to teach English, but when World War I broke out, he lost most of his students to conscription. He relocated to Zurich in 1915, where he met many bohemian exiles, including his good friend, painter Frank Budgen, the English

writer Ezra Pound, and his benefactor, Harriet Shaw Weaver.

He received grants from the Royal Literary Fund and the Civil list, both agencies from the United Kingdom. They asked that he serve the British government by creating a British cultural presence in Zurich, such as patriotic journalism. Instead, Joyce and his collaborator Claude Sykes created a troupe called The English Players, who produced *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

He stayed in Zurich through the war, returning to Italy when it ended. Finding his old home too changed, and at the urging of Pound, he relocated to Paris, where he stayed for 20 years, until the Nazi threat compelled him to return to Zurich.

Through out his life, Joyce suffered from severe glaucoma that significantly affected his life, and underwent regular surgeries. His daughter Lucia was being treated for schizophrenia by Carl Jung, and she is said to have diagnosed her father with the same malady. Joyce died of a perforated ulcer in 1941, at 58 years old.



Image: James Joyce photographed by Alex Ehrenzweig, 1915. From http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ef/James_Joyce_by_Alex_Ehrenzweig_1915_restored.jpg

*The Joyce family may have had as many as 21 children, but records are unclear, and Joyce himself was unsure of the actual number.



WORKS REFERENCED



THE PLOT

On June 16th, 1904, Stephen Dedalus leaves his house early in the morning to teach a history class, after which he goes to collect his wages, but receives a lecture instead. He wanders the city until his midday appointment at the pub.

Leopold Bloom wakes in the house he shares with his wife Molly and leaves to run errands and attend a funeral before he begins his work as an ad salesman for a newspaper. He wanders the city, his route motivated by social awkwardness and suspicion, in turn.

Stephen goes to the library, where he has a conversation with the librarians and a poet. He and Bloom cross paths as he leaves. Stephen and a group of friends go to another pub, where Bloom sits morosely in the corner, writing his mistress a letter. After posting it, he goes to another pub for a meeting. While he is waiting, he is attacked by a nationalistic and anti-semitic man, who Bloom placates somewhat until he is able to escape. He sits alone on the beach as a woman flirts with him from afar, and he masturbates.

Bloom finds Stephen with his friends at the hospital, and the group of them go to a pub. After it closes, they go to a brothel. Stephen, intensely inebriated, experiences a traumatic hallucination, breaks a lamp, and runs into the street, where Bloom finds him in a fight with a British soldier.*

Bloom takes Stephen to a coffee shop to sober up, before inviting him over to his home. After Stephen leaves, Bloom finds evidence of his wife's affair.

Instead of confronting his wife, he recalls the events of his day and asks that she bring him breakfast in bed in the morning. She lies awake next to her sleeping husband, remembering her life, and finally, an intimate moment with her husband.

ANALYSIS

Joyce wrote to his translator, "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant,**" and he was not wrong. The outright Homeric references make the simple, though bacchant, obstacles and

interactions that Bloom has to face on his journey home utterly epic. Stream of consciousness writing, on the other hand, satirizes writing itself by jumping between styles, from copywriting to surrealism to the saccharine and sentimental verbosity of romance novels.

In the excerpt below, the final lines of the book, the reader listens in on Molly's thoughts as she tries to fall asleep. This is at the end of a single, unbroken paragraph that is 24,195 words long, or the length of an average Master's Thesis.***

the old windows of the posadas 2 glancing eyes
a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the
wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the
night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman
going about serene with his lamp and O that awful
deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson
sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the
figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer
little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses
and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums
and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a
Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my
hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red
yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and
I thought well as well him as another and then I asked
him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked
me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first
I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to
me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his
heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

Ulysses is still widely read in academic circles, though according to a 2009 poll of UK citizens, 25% of people who claim to have read *Ulysses* have not, making it the third most frequently lied-about book. "Bloomsday" is an event that has occurred around the world on June 16TH of every year for over a century, commemorating Joyce and his most famous character.

* Named Private Carr, not coincidentally, and quite unflatteringly.

** From a letter to Jacques Benoist-Méchin. From Murphy, page 16.(2003).

***The full text of *Ulysses* is available online through Project Gutenberg. See page 18 for link.

PROFILE

- 1963 -
- 1981 -
- TRISTAN TZARA -

Tristan Tzara was born Samy Rosenstock (a.k.a. S. Samyro) to a Jewish Romanian family, though due to discriminatory laws, he was not granted citizenship until 1918. While in high school, he and two friends created an art magazine called *Simbolul* which, although it only lasted for four issues in 1912, is still held as an accurate representation of the state of the arts in Romania during this transitional time.

As the war became more present in Europe, Romania adopted a policy of non-participation, and Tzara's political agendas began to appear. He moved, with his brothers, to Zurich, as a pacifist statement. Romania entered the war the next year.

In Zurich, Tzara made acquaintance of a community of artists, centred around poet and musician Hugo Ball and the Cabaret Voltaire, which he rented for performances, meetings, and readings. By 1916, the Cabaret Voltaire gained it fame as the birthplace of Dada.

Although he never accepted credit for inventing the name "Dada," Tzara was a spokesperson and promoter of the movement, setting up other artist communities to participate. He began another magazine at this time, called *Cabaret Voltaire*.

Tzara had a strained relationship with authority, and his shows were often at the centre of riotous behaviour.

In 1918, Tzara published a collection of poetry and met the French artist Francis Picabia. It is through that relationship that Tzara's idea of Dadaism became more associated with nihilism and anarchism. In 1919, Tzara and Picabia moved to Paris, where he continued to be at the centre of an experimental art community, including André Breton. Breton and Tzara fought frequently. Breton founded the surrealist movement in 1921, effectively replacing Dadaism.

Tzara's work evolved with the movement, and in 1931 he wrote *L'homme approximatif*, an epic example of surrealist poetry.

In 1934, Tzara became more more active in France's Communist Party. Continuing his commitment to experimental linguistics, the content of his work took on a decidedly political tint.

When World War II broke out in Europe, Tzara fled to Vichy-controlled southern France. Failing to escape Europe, he joined the French Resistance, for whom he continued to publish writings and broadcast on the radio. In 1942, he was stripped of his Romanian citizenship, and was granted French citizenship by the end of the war.

From the end of the war until his death, Tzara continued to support anti-colonial causes and engage in avant-garde art. He died in Paris in 1963.

je parle de qui parle qui parle je suis seul
je ne suis qu'un petit bruit j'ai plusieurs bruit en moi

un bruit glacé froissé au carrefour jeté sur le trottoir humide

aux pieds des hommes pressés courant avec leur morts autour de la mort qui étend ses bras sur le cadran de l'heure seule vivante au soleil

I'm talking about who talks who talks I am alone

I am nothing but a little noise I have a lot of noise in me

A noise iced and crumpled at the intersection thrown onto the wet sidewalk

underfoot starched men drifting with their deaths all around death who extends his arms

on the dial of the sun's lonely living hour.

*

Image: From a 1926 photo by André Kertész, from the Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris. Archives de France. From <http://www.archivesdefrance.culture.gouv.fr/action-culturelle/celebrations-nationales/recueil-2013/litterature-et-sciences-humaines/tristan-tzara/>

* Excerpt from *L'homme approximatif* (1931). Translation by Lucie Lederhendler.



WORKS REFERENCED

But supposing life to be a poor farce, without aim or initial parturition, and because we think it our duty to extricate ourselves as fresh and clean as washed chrysanthemums, we have proclaimed as the sole basis for agreement: art.

* Tristan Tzara

Dadaism was born out of Marcel Duchamp's "anti-art," a term he applied to his readymade works beginning in 1913. Anti-art exploits the standard modes of art consumption, such as a gallery or museum, by asserting that things are art simply by virtue of their context (such as, perhaps most famously, Duchamp's 1917 work *Fountain*, which was a unmounted urinal that was signed and displayed at a group exhibition in New York).

This contradiction can be considered absurd because it highlights the arbitrariness of the connections that give relationships meaning. Dada goes further, taking for granted that all relationships and associations are arbitrary, and therefore refusing to communicate any meaning at all. The word "Dada" is attributed to Tristan Tzara, and could either be an entirely nonsensical word or the Romanian word for "yes," repeated until it has no literal meaning anymore.

Hugo Ball, a contemporary of Tzara and a central figure in the beginnings of the Dada movement, said of his gibberish poetry that it intends to express "the conflict of the *vox humana* with a world that threatens, ensnares, and destroys it."** In the context of a world at war, the commitment to nonsense takes on qualities of trauma and escapism.

It is telling that Zurich, a neutral and polylingual city, was the incubator for Dada, which sought to be a great equalizer. The world that Dada envisioned was anarchic, with no hierarchies, nations, or distinct cultures. Without the "myth of organic essentialism" that language carries, meaning that a

word in German, for example, describes a thing or idea that is fundamentally more German, or at least fundamentally different, than the same basic thing, expressed in another language.**

Marcel Duchamp said that Dada captures the "spirit of expatriation." These neutral territories incubated anarchic tendencies in artistically-minded individuals who already cast a skeptical eye to the status quo. Many of them were escaping conscription, or, as in Tzara's case, the danger of being nationless and Jewish in early 20TH-century Europe.

...I was sure that there must be a few young people in Switzerland who like me were interested not only in enjoying their independence but also in giving proof of it.

** Hugo Ball

The paradox of Dada is between isolation and community. By making all communication meaningless, understanding is impossible. At the same time, the cabaret format, live performances, and the centralized, public venue of Cabaret Voltaire, necessitated a public. The result was a trans-national, trans-linguistic, dislocated clique, assembled exclusively by those who understand its proprietary vocabulary.



* Tzara (1918)

**Demos (2005).

Image: Detail of Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, 1919. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. From http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/6/6b/Hoch-Cut_With_the_Kitchen_Knife.jpg

(1870-1924) Влади́мир Ильи́ч Улья́нов

PROFILE



Vladimir Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in Ulyanovsk, Russia. We was the middle of six siblings to a half-Jewish mother Maria and father Ilya, who was a high-level school administrator. In 1887, when Vladimir was 16 years old, Ilya died, and his brother Aleksandr attempted to assassinate the Emperor of Russia, Alexandre III. Aleksandr was hanged for his part in the attempt, a trauma that is widely thought to be the cause of Vladimir's own radicalization.

After he was expelled from University for inciting a riot, Lenin reoriented himself to the study of law. It was at this time that he became a follower of Karl Marx's political philosophies.

When he was in his early 20s, he moved to St-Petersburg to join the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. In 1895, he was caught distributing communist literature and exiled to Siberia for several years. When he was released, he and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, relocated to Western Europe.

He returned to Russia briefly during the Revolution of 1905, which established constitutional monarchy, a multi-party system, and led to the drafting of the Russian constitution in 1906.

When it became clear that the events of 1914 would snowball into a world war, Lenin worked to reframe it as a Europe-wide proletarian revolution.

Tsar Nicholas II was ousted in February 1917, while Lenin was in exile in Zurich. Upon hearing the news in March, Lenin returned to Russia with great difficulty, and, likely, with the help of Germany, who stood to gain from political unrest in Russia during this time of conflict. Alongside Leon Trotsky, he replaced the provisional government with the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic in October of the same year.

With the abdication of the Tsar, the only military force in Russia was the standing volunteer corps. A civil war between this "Red Army" and its opponents included the annexation of neighbouring countries, forced food requisitions, and local uprisings that were met with violent force. In 1918, Lenin signed an execution order for nearly 800 individuals who were loyal to the former political structure, beginning what became known as the "Red Terror," a campaign of imprisonment, execution, and systematic oppression that killed between 50 thousand to two million people over the course of four years.

Lenin died at age 53 after suffering a series of strokes, caused, perhaps, by a bullet that had been left in his neck after a 1918 attempted assassination.

"There is a much reproduced photograph of Lenin addressing a crowd in a public square in May 1920 - 'balding, bearded, in the three-piece suit', as Carr describes him; he stands as though leaning into a gale, his chin jutting, his hands gripping the edge of the rostrum which is waist-high, the right hand at the same time gripping a cloth cap ... a justly famous image."



Image: from Portrait, 1920. By Soyuzfoto, Soviet News Agency. From http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Lenin_CL.jpg
Quote: from Stage directions in Act II of Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*.
Inset Image: Lenin at the Rally on Sverdlov Square. From <http://media-2.web.britannica.com/eb-media/06/96106-004-41CCE366.jpg>

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NOVOTOV
THE RUSSIAN REV

TIMELINE

1894 - Nicholas Alexandrovitch Romanov is coronated as the Tsar of Russia.

1904 - The Russo-Japanese War over East Asian holdings results in so many Russian casualties that Russians are “humiliated.”*

1905 - The Imperial Guard opens indiscriminate fire on a peaceful march to the Palace of Nicholas II to present him with a petition to improve working conditions for the labour class. In reaction, nearly half a million workers participated in a widespread strike, to which the autocracy responded with the execution, beating, and exile of an estimated 80-thousand peasants and workers.

1906 - The first Duma is formed, replicating the parliament of Great Britain.

1914 - Russia enters WWI to oppose German, Bulgarian, Turk, and Austro-Hungarian advancement on the “Eastern Front,” which would continue until the End of the War in 1918, resulting in millions of Russian casualties.

1915 - Nicholas II takes over control of the Russian army, leaving Rasputin in charge of looking after his family.

1917 - The effects of war on the Russian population are severe: food is scarce and costs too much, prohibition gets enacted, the lack of transportation resources affect importation, and much of the workforce was away at the battlefield. In desperation, peasants began to loot, to which the police respond with force, inciting riots. Within a month, 60,000 individuals, including many police forces, had joined the side of the revolution.

Nicholas II abdicates the throne.

A provisional government is established.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks take control in Petrograd, establishing the Soviet State.

1918 - A Russian Constitution is drafted, establishing the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

The abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861 left 75% of the population in debt for the small amount of land that they essentially rented from the government. With the growth of urban industry, many of these agricultural sustenance workers moved to the cities, where they had access to more amenities, and could work at factories where the harsh Russian winter had less effect on their livelihood.

The peasants who remained in the countryside were negatively affected by the wars, which took their human resources, supplies, and tools for the battlefield.

Meanwhile, urban workers were facing inhumane

conditions, despite a handful of government

mandates that limited the age of workers and

excessive working hours. Their wage was the lowest

of all industrial countries in Europe, they were often

illegally forced to work past the 11.5 hour limit,

and had to pay a fine for being late for their shift.

Workers in separate factories began to strike in

solidarity, which had the potential to shut down all

services in a city.

The first concession to the newfound united power of

the labour class made by the government was a new

council of ministers, who would draft a constitution.

The constitution stated that Russia was still an

Empire, under the absolute rule of the tsar, and made

no mention of the workers’ demands. The resulting

tension between the autocrats and the public was

grisly.

In this atmosphere of class warfare, leaders such as

Vladimir Lenin and Julius Martov, both followers of

Marxism, gained positions of influence and power.

Marxist thought begins by questioning the needs

of a society, and the means to achieve those needs.

It states that the unbalanced distribution of those

needs results in a polarized society, as far as property,

wealth, and relations. Lenin and the Bolsheviks split

from Martov and the Mensheviks over the practical

application of these theories to Russian evolution.

*Gray (2007) page 182.

OTHER REFERENCES

HENRY CARR is a real person, not of any great historical significance except in this work. He was invited by Joyce to play Algernon in *Earnest*, and remembered in *Ulysses* after a squabble over the cost of trousers. He was born in England in 1894, making him a mere 23 years old at the time of this action, and a ripe old 80 in the frame scenes. After the war he moved to Montreal for a few years and got married, before returning to England, where he spent the rest of his life.

HOOPSA BOYABOY HOOPSA! is taken from a well-known excerpt of *Ulysses*, and functions as an incantation encouraging fertility.

SHAKESPEARE'S 18TH SONNET is readily available online, and is one of his most famous.

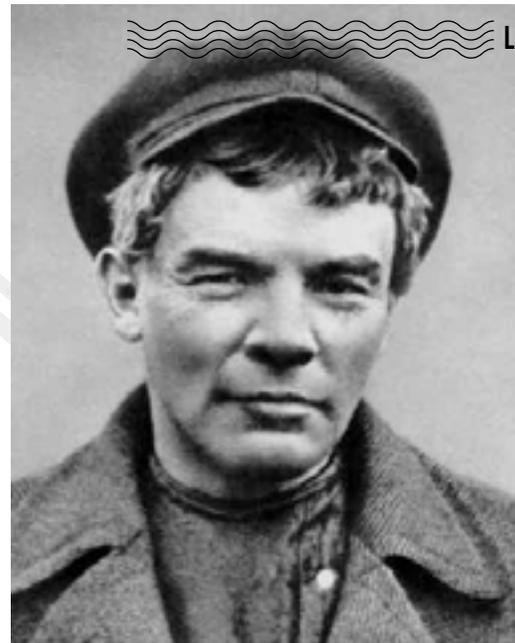
It compares the immortality of affection to the immortality of art: "So long lives this and this gives life to thee."

THE LIMERICK is a form of poetry following a strict syllabic structure and AABBA rhyming scheme, such as

*The limerick packs laughs anatomical
Into space that is quite economical
But the good ones I've seen
So seldom are clean
And the clean ones seldom are comical.*

As a genre, Limericks are funny, crude, and predictable, and are often combined into drinking songs. They are considered to hold a quintessential Irishness because of their name, despite evidence that they originated in North America.

LENIN'S FALSE PAPERS are used to great comedic effect in this play, but he and Nadya did, in fact, don wigs and play deaf mutes to travel under Finnish documents, as seen in the photo below.



LINK
4
LENIN'S
FALSE
PAPERS

LINK
1
ULYSSES

LINK
2
SONNET
18TH

LINK
3
BOOK
OF
NONSENSE

MR. GALLAGHER AND MR. SHEAN

In the final scene of the play, Cecily and Gwendolen fall into an absurd song of introduction and etiquette. This is the parody of a huge hit by the 1920s Vaudeville duo Gallagher and Shean. Groucho Marx, who was Shean's nephew, sang the song in the 50s, and it has been parodied many other times.

LINK
5
THE
ORIGINAL

1. *Ulysses* by James Joyce on project Gutenberg : <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300-h/4300-h.htm>
2. 18TH Sonnet by William Shakespeare : <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/18.html>
3. *Book of Nonsense* by Edward Lear : <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/982/982-h/982-h.htm>
4. Vilén, Lenin bewigged and clean shaven, Finland, 11 August 1917 : http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3e/Lenin_05d.jpg
5. *Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean* (Original Recording, 1922) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HH-BVputtM>



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Why did Stoppard title this play *Travesties*?

Tom Stoppard has said that if Joyce hadn't put on *Earnest*, but instead something darker (such as *The Lower Depths*, a pessimistic, unredemptive work by Maxim Gorky) he would have written *Travesties* to reflect that.

How much do the themes of *Travesties* rely on the conventions of farce?

How might those themes be communicated in a different structure?

Stoppard has also said, "I never try to invent characters [or plots]. All my best characters are clichés."

How does a play grounded in historical fact differ from a work of total fiction?

Why do you think these particular characters were chosen?

Can you find a political message in *Travesties*?

Think about the politics of the characters individually. Is there a fundamental message in the play that is different?

What is the function in the story or the characters of the World War I setting?

How does conceit of setting the play in Henry Carr's memory affect the structure of the story?

How do the various literary forms (lyric, stream of consciousness, etc.) function to drive the play forward?

Describe the characterization of the female characters. In their respective roles as supporting or motivating the men in the play, are they irrelevant? Is that a symptom of the way history is recorded, or is it inevitable given the premise of the play?

The humour in *Travesties* is at times hidden*. Did you find it funny? When?

The language in *Travesties* is often convoluted, sometimes leaving the English language all together. Did that affect your understanding of the work as a whole?

What is your opinion on the role of art in society? Of the artist in society? Did it change after seeing *Travesties*?

How did the staging of this production fit with the world of the play? Discuss the levels, the texture, the motion, and the visible backstage of the set. How did the music and sound cues fit into the story? The costumes?

* For example, this joke, from Tzara's opening lines: The randomized poetry, "Ill raced alas whispers kill later nut east, / noon avuncular ill day Clara!" read in a forgiving French accent, sounds like the descriptive and literal assertion, "Il reste à la Suisse parce qu'il est un artiste, / 'Nous n'avons que l'art,' il déclara."

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Sir Tom Stoppard (born Tomáš Straussler) was born to Jewish parents in Czechoslovakia. In flight from the dangers of World War II, his family and he moved to Singapore, Australia, India, and finally to England when he was nine years old. During this time, his father died at war and his mother remarried Maj. Stoppard of the British army, who was an adamant patriot.

Stoppard began working as a journalist instead of attending university, a career that he pursued passionately until the 1950s, when a wave of talent in the English writing pool seemed to crash onto the Royal Court Theatre in London. A young Peter O'Toole was part of the repertory company, and his work on stage is credited with giving Stoppard a new passion for theatre.

In 1962, a new magazine called *Scene* hired Stoppard as a drama critic, and, as it turns out, as a prolific staff writer under many pseudonyms.

A Ford Foundation grant allowed Stoppard to spend six months in Berlin, during which time he wrote a one-act verse play called *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*, which would be modified (into *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*) and presented at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1966. It garnered high praise, and was the first of a lifetime of creating theatrical milestones for Stoppard.

Travesties was Stoppard's third major work, inspired by the discovery of the trivia item that Joyce, Lenin, and Tzara were all in Zurich at the same time.

In 1977, Kenneth Tynan followed Stoppard to the University of Santa Barbara, and recalls this dialogue during the question period:

"Which of your plays do you think will be performed in fifty years' time?"

To which he replied,

"There is no way I can answer that question without sounding arrogant to the point of mania or modest to the point of nausea."*

But we know the answer: all of them.

SELECTED PLAYS

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1967)
The Real Inspector Hound (1968)
Jumpers (1972)
Travesties (1975)
The Real Thing (1980)
Rough Crossing (1985)
Arcadia (1993)

SELECT FILMS (Writer)

Brazil (1985)
Empire of the Sun (1987)
Shakespeare in Love (1998)
Enigma (2001)
Anna Karenina (2012)

SELECT AWARDS & HONOURS

Order of the British Empire
Knight Bachelor
Oscars (2)
Tony Award (4)
Golden Globe
Writers Guild of America



Image: from the playwright in 1967 <http://www.newstatesman.com/sites/default/files/images/2015%2B06%20Tom%20Stoppard%20jane%20bown.jpg>
*Tynan (1977) page108.



THE DIRECTOR

JACOB TIERNEY

Jacob Tierney is an actor, director and screenwriter. Jacob began his directorial career in 2002 with the comedic short film *Dad*, which he also wrote, produced and appeared in. His feature debut *Twist*, a modern take on Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, premiered at the Venice Film Festival and received Genie nominations for Jacob's screenplay, as well as for Best Actor and Supporting Actor, and won the Genie for Best Original Song. His second feature, the festival hit *The Trotsky*, starring Jay Baruchel, won the 2011 Genie Awards for Best Original Screenplay and Best Original Song, and picked up Best Writing and Directing awards at the 2010 Canadian Comedy Awards. Jacob also won the 2010 WGC Award for best feature film script. *Good Neighbours (Notre Dame de Grace)* is his third film, which premiered at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival. His latest film, *Preggoland*, written by and starring Sonja Bennett, premiered at TIFF 2014 and opens in Canada May 1st.



Image: Photo of Jacob Tierney by Leslie Schachter, 2015.



FURTHER READING

BILGE! IT'S UNERDABLE!

TRAVESTIES GENERAL MORE REFERENCES THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION DADAISM JAMES JOYCE EARNEST

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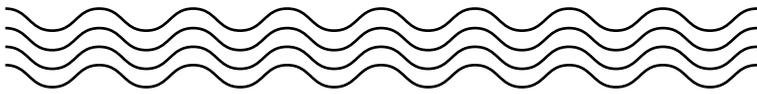
Koyunco, Nevin Yildirim. "Re-writing and Mystifying Wilde's 'Art for Art's Sake:' Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*." *The Oscholars Library*. Web. Retrieved 7 Jan 2015. <http://www.oscholars.com/TO/Appendix/Library/Stoppard.htm>

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#SEGALTRAVESTIES

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segalcentre.tumblr.com



llederhendler@segalcentre.org



SEGAL +

We invite you to our bold and engaging public programs, where you can hear first-hand from artists, experts, and your peers.

Sunday, April 12, 11 AM

Sunday @ the Segal: *“Committing Travesties,” a conversation with Andre Furlani, professor of Modernism and Postmodernism at Concordia University**

Wednesday, April 15; 7 PM

Class Act Theatre Club with Jacob Tierney, Director.

Monday, April 20 and April 27; after the performance

Monday Night Talkbacks with the cast.

Teachers can request a private or public talkback or post-show conversation with the purchase of 20 or more student group tickets.

THE THEATRE AND YOU:

Encouraging critical participation from your students.

Encourage students to think about the idea of engagement with a work of art. Upon attending the theatre, notice the demographics of the audience. Think about how the theatre is different from a concert, a movie, or a comedy show. Do you attend performances often? Which kind?

Are there art forms that you relate to more than others?

What does it mean to you to “relate” to something?

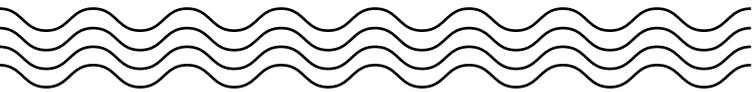
Theatres in particular often struggle with rejuvenating their audience, focusing much effort on bringing a young audience in, through choices in programming, activities, and partial or even total price reduction. What do you think the reason is that theatre audiences are older, and what would you do to counter that?

[Click here](#) to send an email to the Educational Programs Manager at the Segal Centre, or [here](#) to ask directly through our Tumblr blog.

If your students would like to address a specific member of the Segal staff or of the *Travesties* production team, please specify to whom the communication should be forwarded.

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts
c / o Lucie Lederhendler
5170, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine
Montréal (Québec) H3W 1M7
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f: 514-739-9340

* Sunday @ the Segal lectures are available through the Edge of the City Podcast, and posted on the Centre Stage Tumblr blog (see above.)

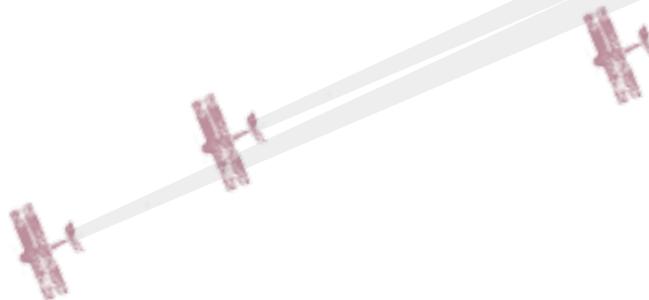


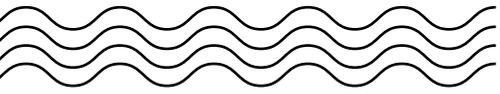
THEATRE ETIQUETTE



Please take a moment to go over the standards of theatre etiquette with your students before they come to the theatre.

1. *Travesties* will be performed in the main theatre of the Segal Centre. Performances at the Segal are for both groups and the general public. It is important that everyone be attentive (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Please do not unwrap candy, play with zippers, or play with your programme.
2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you and please do not climb over seats.
3. If you plan to take notes on the play for the purpose of writing a review, please do not try to write them during the performance. Seeing you do this can be distracting for the actors. Please wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections.
5. Absolutely no photos or video may be taken without the express consent of management. Violators’ devices will be seized and they will be removed from the theatre.
5. **Use of cell phones, iPods, tablets, or other self-illuminating electronics is strictly prohibited in the theatre.** The light from these devices is visible from the stage and in the audience. It is extremely distracting to the artists on stage and inconsiderate to your fellow audience members. Composing or reading text messages is forbidden.
6. Your seat is only guaranteed until the moment the theatre doors close. Late entry is very disruptive; if a patron is tardy we ask that they please follow the instructions of our front-of-house staff.
7. ENJOY THE SHOW!





THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK



Please take a moment to tell us about your experience organizing an educational outing at the Segal Centre. Use the form below or contact me at any time with any comments or concerns you might have.

Reply to:
Lucie Lederhendler,
Educational Programs Manager
Segal Centre for Performing Arts
llederhendler@segalcentre.org
groups@segalcentre.org
Tel: 514.739.2301 ext. 8360
Fax: 514.739.9340

Thank you,

1. How would you rate your experience?
Extremely positive 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely stressful
2. How much do you feel your group benefited from the experience?
Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Very Little
3. Would you recommend the experience to other group leaders?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
4. Will you consider bringing a group to the theatre again?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
5. What did you enjoy most about coming to see the play?

6. What aspect of coming to the theatre did you find problematic?

We welcome all additional comments.

This Study Guide was compiled by Lucie Lederhendler for the Segal Centre for Performing Arts, with contributions from Caitlin Murphy, Andre Furlani, Jean-Marc LeBlanc, and Keith Waterfield. It may be used solely for educational purposes.