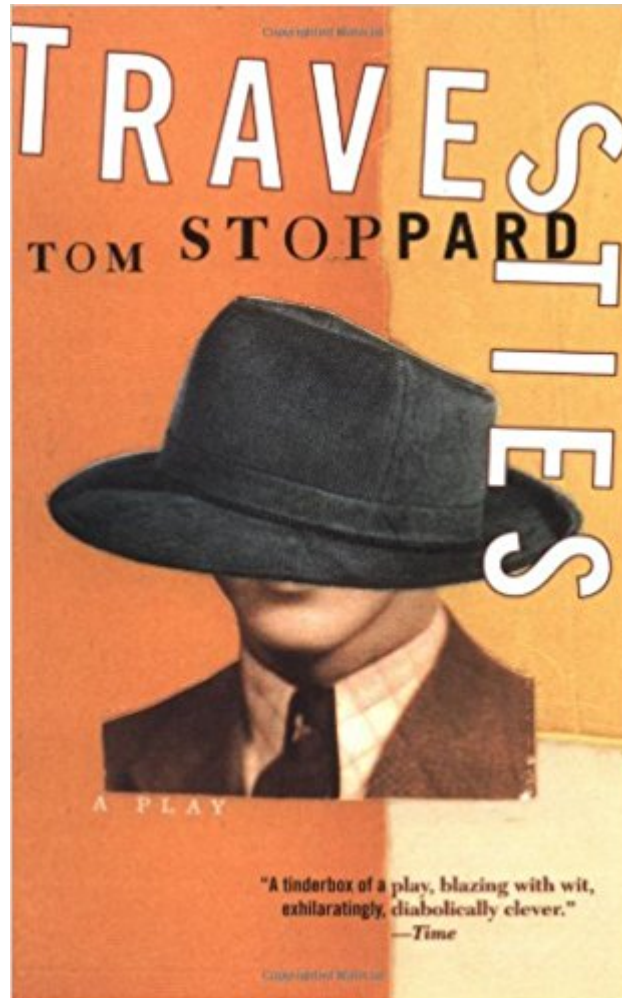


The book was found

Travesties



Synopsis

Travesties was born out of Stoppard's noting that in 1917 three of the twentieth century's most crucial revolutionaries -- James Joyce, the Dadaist founder Tristan Tzara, and Lenin -- were all living in Zurich. Also living in Zurich at this time was a British consular official called Henry Carr, a man acquainted with Joyce through the theater and later through a lawsuit concerning a pair of trousers. Taking Carr as his core, Stoppard spins this historical coincidence into a masterful and riotously funny play, a speculative portrait of what could have been the meeting of these profoundly influential men in a germinal Europe as seen through the lucid, lurid, faulty, and wholly riveting memory of an aging Henry Carr.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tom Stoppard was clearly showing off when he wrote "Travesties". In his research he cleverly discovered that V.I. Lenin, James Joyce (then young and in the midst of writing Ulysses), and Tristan Tzara, one of the leaders of the dadist movement, were living in Zurich simultaneously. Teamed up with Gwendolen and Cecily, two characters from Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Ernest", and Henry Carr, a former member of the British Consular Service, Stoppard wrote a theoretical account of their interactions in 1917. The result is "Travesties", a wildly intelligent and humorous play. The play is set in the faulty memory of Henry Carr as he reminisces about his experiences in Zurich (yes, he was there too) during "The Great War". As it was, Henry Carr, a non-fictional historical figure, played the role of Algernon in "The Importance of Being Ernest" in a

play company owned by James Joyce. When James Joyce refused to reimburse Carr for the few hundred pounds he spent on his trousers in his overzealous attempt to "become" Algernon, a lawsuit ensued, which Joyce ultimately won. Indeed, Joyce indeed attained total victory by writing Carr into Ulysses as a drunken soldier. So, as one might imagine, the play is full of small stabs at James Joyce, namely by the elder Carr (at present during the play it is 1972). The integration of Lenin and his wife, as well as Cecily, Gwendolen and Tzara, is fantastic and extremely imaginative, and the experience would, no doubt, be enhanced by first reading all of the works alluded to in the play. Despite Tom Stoppard's obvious attempt to promote his own genius in "Travesties", the outcome is so fantastic, so interesting, and so, honestly, funny, that all is forgiven.

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