

Feb. 18th (Student-generated):

Questions about Travesties:

1. There are lots of literary allusions in the play - what are they doing there? Why the Importance of Being Earnest, all the lines from Shakespeare's plays (how many different plays can you spot being used?)
2. Does the fact that at the end of the argument with Tzara about the causes of war and the meaning of art Carr falls into "We're here because we're here because we're here" p.23 ...mean that Tzara has won the argument? Does Stoppard endorse either of their views? What, exactly, are their views on art and are those views stable throughout the play?
3. Joyce and Tzara seem to be aligned by the play. Does Stoppard feel their art is equivalent - do you?
4. Tzara's adoption of the name Jake comes about because of Lenin's views on art. On p. 27-8 Tzara describes being in a nightclub where both the Dadaists and Zimmerwallerists are dining. Does he claim to be with both groups at once or did he start with the Dadaists and finish with the Zimmerwallerists?
5. Why does Stoppard place the play under "the erratic control of Carr's memory"? Is he trying to say something about the nature of memory or just using it as a device so he can mix up historical events, or both? Or neither?
6. Why the crazy limerick and song scenes?
7. What are all the references to Gilbert and Sullivan made by Carr supposed to mean?
8. What is the relationship between being a revolutionary and being an artist?
9. Does Stoppard align himself with the view that being an artist in Zurich in 1917 implies a degree of self-absorption that would have glazed over the eyes of Narcissus? Does the play pass any moral judgment on Swiss Neutrality?
10. What do you think the third thing that Carr learned in Zurich that he has forgotten is?
11. What was your favorite joke in the play?

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After first day of discussion, my email message of Feb. 19:

As promised in class, I have xeroxed 2 (two) handouts for each of you and put them in a "DAUCS" manila envelope on my office door. One gives Jim Hunter's local glosses (some helpful, some less so) on *Travesties*, the other gives you segments of Stoppard's earlier (performed 1974, published 1975) version of the play, so you can see the kinds of contextual materials (I'd say quite helpful) that he cut.

It's good to have your own go first, hence the choice not to distribute these earlier. But postmodern disorientation shouldn't be overwhelming--nor should the sense of not getting enough of the allusions. This isn't, of course, about knowledge as mastery, but as a beginning of more comprehensive understanding...

So take one of each, and enjoy!