Chapter Two

Tom Stoppard: The Amorality of the Artist

Maintaining a balanced sense of loyalty, whether to art or society, poses a dilemma. How can the artist serve a political function in society without sacrificing the aesthetic values of his work? In other words, the lifelong awareness of failure, which derives from the concept of the artist being caught between painful social realities and the need to create beauty, becomes an urgent preoccupation for the artist to resolve. Within the framework of this dilemma, the question of the responsibility of the artist and the relationship between art and politics is illuminating. In drama, this dilemma can be represented by the fictional characters in a play.

It is worth mentioning here that, although the dilemma of the artist may refer to the personal questions that the actual playwright poses to himself, I am going to focus on the dilemmas experienced by fictional characters. Having artists as an integral part of the drama on stage involves "far more than simply thematic considerations".[1] The representation of the artist-protagonist on stage can contribute to the question of self-reflexivity in art. This means that, lacking wholeness and harmony with his environment, the artist finds himself alone against reality. As a result, he experiences a chasm between his desires and the demands of real life. Herbert Marcuse argues that "as soon as the artist demands individual fulfilment in his/her environment, s/he immediately experiences the curse of a culture, in which the ideal and reality, subject and object form sharp contrasts".[2] In such a situation, the artist finds himself obliged to accept this pressing duality due to his sense of responsibility to society, although it goes against his desires. Accordingly, the source of the artist's dilemma comes from confronting the inevitable tension between the moral responsibility to real life and the aestheticism of the literary work. This dialectical relationship forms part of Tom Stoppard's pronouncements on art as we shall see.

Undoubtedly, Tom Stoppard has been a unique voice within British theatre from the 1960s and 1970s, and up to the present day. Since then his plays have gained significant recognition, particularly after the 'fringe' and 'alternative' movements in Britain came to prominence.[3] Tim

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[1] Csilla Bertha, "Visual Art and Artist in Contemporary Irish Drama", *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (HJEAS), v. 15, no. 2 (Fall, 2009): 347.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Horst Höhne, "Liberal Intellectualism in The Theatre: Tom Stoppard's Controversial Career as Dramatist", *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok/ Hungarian Studies in English*, v.14 (1981): 6. For more elaboration, see Simon Callow's article, "This is my playground", *The Guardian*, January 8, 2003. Here he states that "for many of us,

Brassell rightly states in his book, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, that, "Tom Stoppard is unquestionably a major power in the contemporary theatre both in this country [Britain] and, increasingly, in America".[4] After his breakthrough success with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), the door was widely opened for him to become a prominent figure in the world of theatre. Similarly, a *Newsweek* article of 15 August 1977 paid homage to Stoppard, indicating the good reputation he had earned:

> Britain may be plagued by strikes, unemployment, inflation, a sinking pound and rising racial tension, but one of its institutions appears to be immune to 'the British disease.' British theatre is alive and well and living off the fruitful imagination of more than a score of talented playwrights. Of them all, Stoppard is the most highly praised and widely exported British playwright since Harold Pinter and John Osborne. His plays have been performed by more than 350 companies in nineteen countries – from Hungary to Japan, from South America to South Africa – and they have been translated into 30 languages. He is one of the few living playwrights whose works ... are studied in universities around the world.[5]

Born in Prague (3 July 1937) near the end of Czechoslovakia's brief period of independence, Tomáš Straüssler lived in Singapore and Darjeeling, northern India, before his arrival in England. Having been a refugee in three different countries, Stoppard was thrown into three alien cultures. As a result, this colourful background and cultural heritage helped to form his frame of mind. Because his life was heavily influenced by political forces, such as Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, he is against communist repression and censorship of the artist.

When Stoppard first entered the London stage in the mid-1960s, William W. Demastes, an American author, states that the theatrical trends of British theatre "[were] dominated by two distinct 'schools' of drama, one being the [sic] kitchen-sink realism embroiled in social consciousness-raising initiated by John Osborne and his landmark *Look Back in Anger*, and the other the distinctly anti-realistic 'absurdist' minimalism initiated by Samuel Beckett and his landmark *Waiting for Godot*".[6] By using the kitchen sink setting and everyday language, British theatre moved away from farce to a more serious tone which explored new issues and questions.

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the fringe was where our theatrical hearts lay. It was our laboratory, our playground; it was where we made our statement, where our voices were heard. It was experimental by definition, in production, writing and acting".

[4] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), p.1.

[5] Op. cit., p.35.

[6] William W. Demastes, "Portrait of an Artist as Proto-Chaotician: Tom Stoppard Working His Way to Arcadia". Narrative v. 19, no. 2 (May 2011). http://0-muse.jhu.edu.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/journals/narrative/v019/19.2.demastes.html

Theatre is also influenced by a cultural atmosphere in the 1960s of experimentation – Pop art, Conceptual art, etc. in which art itself began to be questioned. By emphasizing on art as an idea or concept, varied questions about art and its relationship to other artistic activity are raised. The question of *The Independent* on whether Carl Andre's *Bricks* (1966)[7] is art, summed up the debate. Similarly, in "Conceptual Art, Conceptualism, and Aesthetic Education", Steven Leuthold states, "Conceptualism does not constitute a philosophy of art in the same way that expression, institutional, or formalist theory does, because it does not distinguish art from nonart or clearly establish a basis for aesthetic value in art".[8]

In order to place Stoppard and his work in its historical, social and aesthetic context, it will be helpful to give a historical overview of the nature of the theatre which he entered.

2.1 British Theatre in the 1970s

In *Modern British Playwriting: The 1970s*, Chris Megson's quotation on theatre in the 1970s reads: "If the Sixties were a wild weekend and the Eighties a hectic day at the office, the Seventies were a long Sunday evening in winter, with cold leftovers for supper and a power cut expected at any moment".[9]

As mentioned before, the unremitting gloom which is described in Francis Wheen's view of the 1970s found expression in Britain's social and political environment at that time, characterized by "a formidable economic downturn; unemployment and inflation".[10] Although this air of gloom threw its shadow over different aspects of life, theatre seemed far beyond its reach.

Looking back over British theatre since the late 1950s, we can see that the seeds of change had already been planted, as Tim Brassell notes: "Since the advent of the English Stage Company and the arrival of Osborne, our theatre, if not transformed, has been remarkably rejuvenated." He adds:

> British playwrights have advanced on several fronts: taking a more direct approach to social and political issues; bringing the language of their characters much closer to ordinary speech … Above all, perhaps, in reaching

[7] Rosie Millard, "Is Andre's 'Bricks' a pile of old bricks or a magnificent piece of art? We still can't decide", *The Independent, Friday 1 February 2013* <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/is-andre-s-bricks-a-pile-of-old-bricks-or-a-magnificent-piece-of-art-we-still-can-t-decide-8477668.html> 17/03/2017.
[8] Steven Leuthold, "Conceptual Art, Conceptualism, and Aesthetic Education", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, v. 33, n. 1 (Spring, 1999): 37-38.
[9] Quoted in Chris Megson, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1970s* (London: Methuen Drama, 2012), p.34.
[10] Ibid.

> new audiences through the work of the 'fringe' and community theatre groups which have sprouted up across the country.[11]

Unlike mainland Europe, during the swirling whirlpool of the 1960s, which witnessed riots and student protests,[12] Britain increased state subsidies for the arts. Consequently, this action led to theatrical expansion in regional and alternative theatres. Megson points out that:

> There were two events in the late 1960s that contributed to the exponential growth in alternative theatre at the start of the new decade. First, the Theatre Act (1968) abolished the state censorship of theatre and removed the powers invested in the Lord Chamberlain to license plays for performance ... Second, there was a large expansion in public subsidy for theatre at the end of the 1960s.[13]

This paved the way, therefore, for more freedom in discussing issues with topical and satirical content which had previously been restricted. Far from "only the most timidly naturalistic plays,"[14] the British stage was now free to present plays with new theatrical discourses and non-naturalistic settings.

Furthermore, there is no need to say that the European authors and their bolder approach to stagecraft and theatricality in general had a radical effect on British theatre during the 1960s and 1970s. Within European theatre's attacks on naturalism, two opposing points emerged: "The Brechtian world-view, stressed man's role as an integral part of society, and the second, the Theatre of the Absurd, stressed man's role as a psychological outcast from society".[15] However, Brecht's influence during the 1960s and 1970s is most discernible in that of his intellectual champion of politically committed drama.

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[11] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, p.25.

[12] In late 1955 a group of students at Moscow State University (MGU) began publishing *The Literary Bulletin*, a newspaper that featured lively discussions of controversial political issues as well as literary topics. Attempts were made to suppress the newspaper, but the students managed to circumvent their efforts. Social agitation in the USSR increased markedly in 1956 with public disorder and demonstrations. Mass disturbances broke out in Tbilisi and other Georgian cities in early March 1956, as students, workers and intellectuals joined together to protest against the growing criticism of 'our great leader Stalin'. Thus, when the revolution began in Hungary in late October 1956, the politicians made a stand against the uprising as they "were concerned that students and intellectuals in the Soviet Union might try to provoke similar disturbances at home". Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings", *Journal of Contemporary History*, v. 33, n. 2 (Apr., 1998): 197. See also Paweł Machcewicz, "Intellectuals and Mass Movements: The Study of Political Dissent in Poland in 1956", *Contemporary European History*, v. 6, n. 3 (Nov., 1997): 361-382.

[13] Chris Megson, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1970s*, p.37.

[14] Tom Phillips, "Fifty Years of British Theatre," Contemporary Review, August 2002, www.findarticles.com/p.articles/mi_m2242/is_1639_281/ai_91210883 (11 February 2015)

[15] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, p. 30.

Aside from social realism, the 'epic' and 'agitprop'[16] plays stimulated their audiences to become involved in political activism. This was achieved through a broad range of styles and images which discussed contemporary concerns. David Edgar states that:

> Most of the new playwrights of the 1970s came into the theatre at a time when there was a consensus between play-makers and their audiences that British society was rotten at the root, and that it was the proper business of the theatre to anatomise its rottenness and point the way to radical change.[17]

In the same vein, Bruce Birchall, playwright and artistic director, argues that:

> The post-1968 break-away movement became absorbed into the theatrical mainstream by state funding, and [...] what had begun as a piece of political practice ended up as a job, with the result that cultural workers began to see themselves as "left-wing artists", rather than as socialists who used artforms for political ends.[18]

Politically speaking, British theatre basically split into two camps. On one level, it presented a politically-active, left-leaning vision that change can be achieved via logic and reason – like those companies of Bruce Birchall's West London Theatre Workshop, the General Will, 7:84 and North West Spanner. On another level, some believed that "logic and reason had exhausted themselves and had in fact generated cataclysmic outcomes [represented by two world wars]".[19] As previously mentioned, Stoppard commenced his success as a playwright in 1967 at a time when "dramatists were increasingly judged by their political commitment and approximation to social truth, by their willingness to tackle anything from the class system to Vietnam".[20] So, in an environment where socially and politically committed drama had long been valued, Stoppard's theatrical works set him apart from most of his contemporaries. Taking the imaginative boldness of the Absurdists and their philosophy, Stoppard pursued his "own paths of formal experimentation along non-naturalistic lines".[21] His philosophical and scientific

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[16] 'Agitprop' – which is a combination of the words 'agitation' and 'propaganda'– means "a form of touring left-wing theatre intended to mobilize working-class audiences, especially at times of industrial struggle". Chris Megson, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1970s*, p.44.
[17] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An A*ssessment, p. 30.
[18] Quoted in Chris Megson, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1970s*, p.59.
[19] William W. Demastes, "Portrait of an Artist as Proto-Chaotician: Tom Stoppard Working His Way to Arcadia." Narrative v. 19, no. 2 (May 2011). http://0-muse.jhu.edu.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/journals/narrative/v019/19.2.demastes.html
[20] Michael Billington, *Stoppard: The Playwright* (London: Methuen Inc., 1987), p. 10.
[21] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, p. 33.

inquiries into the role of the artist and the relationship between art and politics resulted in a dramatic form rich in pastiche and parody.

2.2 Pastiche and Parody

Undoubtedly, one of the artist's priorities in the process of playwriting is how to capture the audience's interest by adopting a suitable form of writing. To do this the artist employs different styles and techniques, such as parody and pastiche, both of which are used by Stoppard. In his article, "The Literature of Replenishment", John Barth refers to these two techniques as true manifestations of the new approach which dominated the post-war literary trends where "artistic conventions are likely to be re-tried, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work".[22] As a literary form, pastiche offers a ready-made style or model, which is already proven. It is "a technique that borrows rather than invents as the writer combines, alters, or restructures existing form".[23] In *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2006), pastiche as a technique implies two main meanings. The first kind of pastiche is the one whereby the artist "seeks to recreate in a more extreme and accessible form the manner of major writers. It tends to eliminate tensions, to produce a more highly coloured and polished effect, picking out and reiterating favourite stylistic mannerism, and welding them into a new whole which has a superficial coherence and order." The other meaning of pastiche, however, carries a negative connotation. Its use "is not reverential and appreciative, but disrespectful and sometimes deflationary". Here, instead of "ironing out ambiguities in its source(s)" the writer highlights them".[24] Stoppard found this technique irresistible and so it was heavily used at the beginning of his career as a writer. On a personal level, pastiche also "solves his problem in working out plots and originating characters, always a difficulty for him",[25] to use Ira B. Nadel's words. Due to its flexibility, Stoppard discovered that working on an existing story could prove to be easier than originating a new one. So, Stoppard relies on the portrayal of stereotypes to breathe new life into the characters he presents. This technique of characterization is indicative of his confidence and commitment to stimulate his audience.

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[22] Quoted in Elaine B. Safer, "The Essay as Aesthetic Mirror: John Barth's "Exhaustion" and "Replenishment", *Studies in American Fiction*, v. 15, n. 1, Spring 1987: 109.
[23] Ira B. Nadel, "Writing the Life of Tom Stoppard", *Journal of Modern Literature*, v. 27, no. 3 (Winter, 2004): p. 26.
[24] Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 168.
[25] Ira B. Nadel, "Writing the Life of Tom Stoppard", *Journal of Modern Literature*, p. 27.

Due to its importance as a form of imitation, pastiche has become a central concern of aesthetic production in the postmodern arts. Ingeborg Hoesterey argues that because of the existence of the vast archive of artistic tradition, "the postmodern writer, visual artist, architect, composer consciously acknowledges this past by demonstratively borrowing from it, particularly from the classical archive".[26] The post-Marxist critic, Fredric Jameson, refers to postmodern pastiche as "blank parody", no more than "a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language",[27] whereas Richard Dyer takes a contrasting view. In Dyer's words, "pastiche embraces closeness; it accepts the possibility of being seduced, penetrated, dependent or ventriloquised, without seeing this as a significant and anxiety producing loss of autonomy".[28] In other words, Dyer looks at pastiche as a unique form that imitates and quotes the original works without being mocked or expunged. On the contrary, pastiche, in Dyer's view, "balances thinking and feeling by simultaneously positioning the audience both emotionally inside and analytically outside of its structure".[29] This reveals, in particular, Stoppard's early fascination with pastiche. His use of visual as well as verbal pastiche in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1967), *After Magritte* (1970), *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972) and *Travesties* (1974) illustrates this fact. Therefore, for Stoppard, pastiche is a playful technique for imitating or borrowing freely from one text to another in order to formulate a new one. Ira B. Nadel states that, "Whether he draws from or imitates *Macbeth* in *Cahoot's Macbeth*, or Agatha Christie in *The Real Inspector Hound*, or borrows lines and themes from Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in *The Real Thing*, the pastiche is a breezy strategy for creating the Stoppard style".[30]

In addition to the use of pastiche, however, Stoppard also embraces parody as a method for using antecedent ideas. Through parody he not only celebrates but also regenerates borrowed materials. In so doing, Stoppard "succeeds in making the borrowed elements his own, altering and developing them to suit his own ends".[31] His originality lies in the fact that he takes the parodied materials and puts them in a new context which is suitable for the audience's interest. In hindsight, Yury Tynyanov, a Russian writer and literary critic, stresses the constructive aspect of parody. For him, "parody fulfills [sic] a dual task: (1) it mechanizes a particular

[26] Ingeborg Hoesterey, "Postmodern Pastiche: A Critical Aesthetic", *The Centennial Review*, v. 39, n. 3 (Fall 1995): 496.
[27] Quoted in Ingeborg Hoesterey, "Postmodern Pastiche: A Critical Aesthetic", *The Centennial Review*, 508.
[28] Richard Dyer, "Pastiche", Reviewed by Martha P. Nochimson, *Cinéaste*, v. 33, n. 1 (Winter 2007): 85.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ira B. Nadel, "Writing the Life of Tom Stoppard", *Journal of Modern Literature*, p. 27.
[31] Stoppard's originality has been widely appreciated by important drama critics. Christopher Bigsby has said that despite the highly derivative nature of his work, "he has emerged as a writer of genuine originality". C. W. E. Bigsby, *Tom Stoppard* (London: Longman, 1976), p. 4.

device; and (2) it organizes new material, in which is included the old, now mechanized, device".[32]

However, before turning to Stoppard's plays, and in particular the ones which are most closly concerned with the dilemma of the artist, namely, *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972) and *Travesties* (1974), it is important to establish Stoppard's views on different issues such as the responsibility of the artist and the relationship between art, life and politics. An investigation of these views will lead to a fuller understanding of the dilemmas the artist faces in playwriting.

Tom Stoppard is well known for his ambiguous views on aesthetics as well as ethical and political issues. This is due to the lack of an absolute "certainty about almost anything".[33] His plays do not give particular answers and can frustrate the audience with paradoxes and contradictions. During an interview in 1972, Stoppard maintained that, "I write plays because dialogue is the most respectable way of contradicting yourself".[34] And during another interview in 1979, he affirmed, "I don't write plays with heroes who express my point of view. I write argument plays. I tend to write for two people rather than for One Voice".[35] To Stoppard, writing plays is not only meant to entertain but to stimulate people's thinking. So, in his theatre, audiences are invited to consider, debate and select. In other words, both the playwright and the audience interact to resolve the codes of the play and unify the apparently disparate elements. Theatre, for Stoppard, "is first and foremost a mysterious lived experience to be shared by an audience in the theatre".[36] From that experience in the theatre we are ultimately able to create "the moral matrix from which we draw our values about what the world ought to be like".[37]

On many occasions, Stoppard has confessed that he loves theatre since it gives him an opportunity to lay out multiple sides of any argument and does not force him to take sides. His method of writing can be epitomized thus: "When a playwright is putting lines down on paper, all he's thinking about is that people shouldn't leave early".[38] It can therefore be argued that

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[32] Jurij Striedter, *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 42.
[33] Quoted in Evelyn Cobley and Tom Stoppard, "Catastrophe Theory in Tom Stoppard's 'Professional Foul'", *Contemporary Literature*, v. 25. n. 1 (Spring, 1984): 53.
[34] Cited in Paul Delaney and Elissa S. Guralnick, "Structure and Anarchy in Tom Stoppard", *PMLA*, v. 106, n. 5 (Oct., 1991): 1171.
[35] Ibid.
[36] David Kornhaber, "Nietzsche, Shaw, Stoppard: Theatre and Philosophy in the British Tradition", Philosophy and Literature, v. 36, n. 1 (April, 2012): 91.
[37] Mel Gussow, *Conversations with Stoppard* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), p. 20.
[38] Cited by William W. Demastes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.35.

Stoppard is fascinated by Catastrophe Theory[39] "because he can dramatically exploit dilemmas arising out of conflicting control factors … [and] it describes accurately the fundamental process of his art".[40] This process combines both entertainment and thinking. Thus, he keeps his audiences entertained by creating suspense.

While Stoppard has championed elements of writing, form and content, the aesthetics of the work is an important element of the play's construction. For Stoppard, a writer's only responsibility is "to write well,"[41] regardless of the play's social content. Saying this does not mean that the plays are devoid of ideas. On the contrary, the style is used as a catalyst, in the hands of the playwright, to dig deep into reality. Terry Eagleton argues that:

> To write well is more than a matter of 'style'; it also means having at one's disposal an ideological perspective which can penetrate to the realities of men's experience in a certain situation ... and it can do it, not just because its author happens to have an excellent prose-style, but because his historical situation allows him access to such insights.[42]

This view is shared by Thomas R. Whitaker, a theatre critic who asserts that while Stoppard champions style, it is not an end in itself. His stylistic display and theatricality are always connected to, and in service of, some firmer ideas and meaning.[43] For Stoppard, the form and content are merged in such a way as to serve the overall literary work. They are organically related. As Karl Marx explicitly declares, "Form is of no value unless it is the form of its content".[44] In order to take this argument a step further, it is necessary to shed light on the relationship between form and content.

The relationship between form and content is a source of debate between Georg Lukács, a Hungarian Marxist philosopher and aesthetician, and Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and theatre director. This debate is further investigated through its relation to Formalism. In his essay, "The Evolution of Modern Drama" (1909), Lukács points out that, "The truly social

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[39] Catastrophe Theory was originated by René Thom in the 1960s, and became very popular due to the efforts of Christopher Zeeman in the 1970s. Stoppard's position on art is best expressed by Thom's question: "Might not a work of art simply be a refusal to make any choices?" in René Thom, "At the Boundaries of Man's Power: Play," *Sub-Stance*, 25 (1979): 18. For an elaborate discussion of Catastrophe Theory see Martin Gardner, "The Charms of Catastrophe", *New York Review of Books*, v. 25, n. 10 (June 15, 1978), p. 31. See also Alexander Woodcock and Monte Davis, *Catastrophe Theory* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), p.1.

[40] Evelyn Cobley and Tom Stoppard, "Catastrophe Theory in Tom Stoppard's 'Professional Foul'", *Contemporary Literature*, p. 63.

[41] Roger Hudson, Catherine Itzin, and Simon Trussler, "Ambushes for the Audience: Towards a High Comedy of Ideas", *Theatre Quarterly*, v. 4, n. 14 (May 1974): 68.

[42] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1976), p. 8.

[43] Thomas R. Whitaker, *Tom Stoppard: Modern Dramatists* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.10.

[44] Quoted in Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1990), p. 210.

element in literature is the form".[45] He gives priority to form over content. For Lukács, the form-content relationship is embodied within the literary work itself and "the true bearers of ideology in art are the very forms, rather than abstractable content ... We find the impress of history in the literary work precisely as *literary*, not as some superior form of social documentation".[46] [Lukács's italics] Here, Lukács has avant-gardism[47] in his mind with its use of unconventional forms that are "the expression of the blindness of bourgeois intellectual vis-à-vis real historical counter forces, working towards transformation of society".[48] So, these unconventional forms are not a true reflection of society since they are determined by commercial forces, imposed by the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, Lukács, in his book, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1958), argues that "modern writers should do more than merely reflect the despair and ennui of late bourgeois society; they should try to take up a critical perspective on this futility, revealing positive possibilities beyond it".[49] The task of the modern writer therefore is not only mirroring society but going deeper into the possibilities of social and political change.

Responding to Lukács's critical realism, Terry Eagleton accuses this critical realism of being a new phase of Formalism since "it is academic and unhistorical, drawn from the literary realm alone rather than responsive to the changing conditions in which literature is produced".[50] This opinion has its resonance in Brecht's concept of realism which is not "a mere question of form", but "a kind of art which discovers social laws and developments, and unmasks prevailing ideologies by adopting the standpoint of the class which offers the broadest solution to social problems".[51] Brecht's main disagreement with Lukács, however, is embodied in their differing views of reality. While Lukács looks at it as "fixed, given and unchangeable", Brecht "posits the view that reality is a changing, discontinuous process, produced by men and so transformed

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[45] Quoted in Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 20.
[46] Ibid, p. 24.
[47] As a movement, Avant-Garde "appears in Russia around 1910 with the first glimmerings of abstraction in painting and Futurist experimentation in poetry ... Painters were exhorted to forget the material world and to obey no laws other than the intrinsic laws of their art." So, instead of producing literary works, writers were urged to concentrate on language as a utilitarian value. Tzvetan Todorov and Arthur Goldhammer, "Avant-Gardes and Totalitarianism", *Daedalus*, v. 136, n. 1, On Nonviolence and Violence (Winter, 2007): 53. In another article entitled "Avant-Garde (1984)", *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*, v. 7, n. 1 (Autumn, 1984): 24, Richard Kostelanetz defines avant-garde as an "art that is 'ahead of its time'– that is beginning something – while 'decadent' art, by contrast, stands at the end of a prosperous development". For more explanation of Avant-Gardism, see Leslie Woolf Hedley, "Retreat of the Avant-Garde", *The Georgia Review*, v. 24, n. 4 (Winter, 1970): 441-452. Here, Woolf Hedley argues that "the avant-garde is no longer an independent series of movement, but an Establishment, a financial power," p. 443.
[48] Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 86.
[49] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 53.
[50] Ibid., p. 71.
[51] Ibid., p. 72.

by them".[52] So the play is an experience which involves both the playwright and the audience in a process of critical thinking about different possibilities.

Although Lukács's proclamations on art are arguable, his insistence on the interrelationship between a work of art and other prior existing forms of art finds a sense of truth in Stoppard's use of parody. This view is clearly shared by Viktor Shklovsky, a Russian writer and theorist, who claims that "a work of art is perceived against a background and by way of association with other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other forms existing prior to it ..."[53] This view gives reason for more intense investigation. Accordingly, Lukács celebrates certain writers and calls for them to be imitated.

The relationship between form and content within literary works takes more significance in the functionality of the art itself and its relationship to life. Although Leon Trotsky, one of the Marxists who preoccupied themselves in the unsolved debate about Formalism, grants art a certain degree of autonomy, he never denies its effect by life. A close reading of his treatise on *Literature and Revolution* (1968) reveals he firmly believes that art serves ideological ends even though he does not declare this explicitly. For Trotsky, there is no contradiction between art for its own sake or the social context within which it is produced and consumed. The two laws often overlap. Accordingly, "artistic creation ... [is] a changing and a transformation of reality, in accordance with the peculiar laws of art".[54] This truth forms an essential part of Stoppard's social and political debate, especially in his later works. Stoppard comes to realize that there is no way out of life. Although he believes in the romantic view of the objectivity of art, the link between art and life is inextricable. Surprisingly, in his commentary on Stoppard's situation, Anthony Jenkins, an actor and director, argues that, "His dilemma is that of Yeats' *Sailing to Byzantium*, where the artist, seeking an objective distance from the 'sensual music' of everyday life, finds that creative artifice, in order to be art, must still 'sing/To lords and ladies of Byzantium/Of what is past, or passing, or to come".[55] Whether the artist is imaginative or skilful, life is a realm which cannot be ignored. In this sense, the question of the usefulness of art and the role of the artist in society is significant to Stoppard's writing.

Earlier in his career, Stoppard does not deny the close relationship between aesthetic and political commitment. In a piece dated 5 January 1961 entitled "Critic and his Credo", Stoppard discusses the inseparable link between aesthetics and commitment. "You cannot divorce art

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[52] Ibid., 65.
[53] Ladislav Matejka and Krystyana Pomorska (eds) *Reading in Russian Poetics* (Cambridge-Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 17.
[54] Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1968), p. 175.
[55] Anthony Jenkins, *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 114.

from politics and life," he argues in defence of art.[56] In a similar vein, he challenges the idea that art holds a mirror up to life, instead suggesting that "art influences, interacts, and intertwines with life in ways the mirror metaphor fails to include".[57] Though Stoppard has pursued enquires into philosophical questions of language, time, perception, etc. and avoided engagement with contemporary politics, his most recent play, *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006), reveals more obviously political engagement. The relationship between art and politics is clearly manifested by emphasizing on the role of art as a socially changing motive. This close relationship was not admitted plainly in Stoppard's earlier works, as we shall see.

2.3 Art and Politics

As far as politics is concerned, Stoppard tried hard to avoid any involvement in political debate, especially in his earliest work. On the one hand, it is not the case that he was not interested in politics as such, but rather he preferred to question it than to create a fixed ideological position. In his speech about *Jumpers*, for instance, two years after its first production in 1972, Stoppard vehemently rejected the notion of the play as a political or ideological piece, but said that "it reflects my belief that all political acts have a moral basis to them and are meaningless without it".[58] In fact, Stoppard firmly adheres to the idea that morality is inherent in human existence, and that, "all political acts must be judged in moral terms".[59] On the other hand, Stoppard's refusal to become involved in politics can be ascribed to his feelings of gratitude. James Saunders has said of his former friend's politics, "He's basically a displaced person. Therefore, he doesn't want to stick his neck out. He feels grateful to Britain, because he sees himself as a guest here and that makes it hard for him to criticize Britain. Probably the most damaging thing that could be said about him is that he's made no enemies".[60]

As a result, Stoppard has frequently been criticized for a lack of political engagement and his conservatism. His reaction to these public criticisms finds expression in his self-conscious statements which defensively stress the artifice of his work and his ambivalent attitude: "I'm not impressed by art *because* it's political, I believe in art being good or bad, not relevant art

[56] Katherine E. Kelly, *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 86.
[57] William W. Demastes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.61.
[58] Roger Hudson, Catherine Itzin, and Simon Trussler, "Ambushes for the Audience: Towards a High Comedy of Ideas", *Theatre Quarterly*, p. 12.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Cited in Katherine E. Kelly, *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard*, p. 117.

or irrelevant art. The plain truth is that if you are angered or disgusted by a particular injustice or immorality, and you want to do something about it, *now*, at once, then you can hardly do worse than write a play about it".[61] [Stoppard's italics] In the same vein, Oscar Wilde concentrates on the imaginative power of art to transcend conditions of thought which is determined by time and place to "a free sphere of ideal existence".[62] In her comment on Wilde's sense of history, Rajani Alexan points out, "[…] imagination—and its best manifestation, art—were the means to find and know oneself, not immersion in life".[63]

To Stoppard, art deals with different important issues and he is against those who see immediate social change as the sole reason or purpose of art.[64] In contrast, radical social change requires a long-term commitment. His playwriting is done with the perception that "lasting change requires altered attitudes prior to – or simultaneous with – political legislation".[65] He suggests that social change must go hand in hand with political change. And art is unique in its ability to alter existing laws and "generate a 'moral matrix' from which change can flow".[66]

Stoppard's belief in the potential of art to nurture social change led him to become an active human rights supporter, condemning injustices and the violation of liberty. He has criticized any act which represses and limits free expression in writing.[67] Stoppard's works in the late 1970s and early 1980s are a true reflection of his political commitment. The recurring subject of several of his plays, such as *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* (1977), *Professional Foul* (1977), *Squaring the Circle* (1979), *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979) and *The Coast of Utopia* (2002) is the violation of human rights in Eastern Europe. He focuses on individual freedom. People should be left free to choose. He argues that, "individuals should be able to negotiate with the authorities or legislators even though a possible agreement is not expected".[68] His politics derive from his humanist views, which are clearly embodied in his continuous championing of human rights, his continued friendship with Václav Havel, the Czech playwright whose theatre

[61] Roger Hudson, Catherine Itzin, and Simon Trussler, "Ambushes for the Audience: Towards a High Comedy of Ideas", *Theatre Quarterly*, p. 14.
[62] Quoted in Rajani Alexander, "Oscar Wilde: A Sense of History", *India International Centre Quarterly*, v. 11, n. 1 (March, 1984): 77.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Paul Delaney, *Tom Stoppard: The Moral Vision of the Major Plays* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990), p. 6-7.
[65] William W. Demastes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppard*, p. 114.
[66] Ibid., 35.
[67] Ira B. Nadel, *Double Act: A Life of Tom Stoppard* (London: Methuen, 2002), p. 422.
[68] Michael Hinden, "After Beckett: The Plays of Pinter, Stoppard, and Shepard", *Contemporary Literature*, v. 27, n. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 405-406.

work and political activism Stoppard highly admired, and his attack on the Soviet regime by supporting the Czechoslovakian dissidents in the Charter 77 movement.[69]

For Stoppard, Havel was a living example of the group of artists who refused to infuse their work with the "obligatory optimism"[70] imposed by the party in power. Even when attempts were made to set Havel free from jail and bring him to the Public Theatre in New York, he agreed on the condition that the Czech government also released all dissidents. In fact, he spent his life defending freedom of expression. The point I want to clarify is that those artists stayed true to a personal political vision that kept them alive in the eyes of the Czech people. Carol Becker maintains, "These dramatic changes are living proof that the role of the artist is an historical, social, construction. It is not an eternal fixed role. It is not romantic. It is not without context ... It changes, evolves, grows, diminishes, dictates and is dictated to by history and by the market economy".[71] In other words, the creative vision of the artist can be utilized to further change society, depending on the prevailing political system. Thus, the dramatic tension in Stoppard's subsequent plays becomes centred on the role of the playwright as the mouthpiece for the ideas that the plays embrace, or at least seek to discuss.

As such, the questions relating to the main roles, responsibilities and aims of the artist and the position they undertake in society, form a genuine part of Stoppard's internal debate. John Fleming writes in his book *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order Amid Chaos*:

> Questions about the social responsibilities of the artist, journalist, and politician appear in plays that examine the role and nature of art, the relative merits of a free press, and the injustices and human rights violations of pre-perestroika Eastern Bloc politics ... Cumulatively, Stoppard's work has been concerned with the social, moral, metaphysical, and personal condition of being human in an uncertain world.[72]

However, Stoppard's inquiry into the nature and function of art is never complete without looking at his portrayal of the artist in the light of rights and responsibilities which will, in turn, reveal the possible dilemmas the artist may confront. So, he followed *Jumpers* with two meditations on the nature of art and the role of the artist. These plays are: *Artist Descending a*

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[69] Ira B. Nadel, *Double Act: A Life of Tom Stoppard*, p. xvii. Charter 77 was a petition drawn up by a few Czechoslovakian writers and intellectuals who demanded the Communist government of Czechoslovakia to recognize some basic human rights. For more elaboration, see Aurel Braun, review of "Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia by H. Gordon Skilling", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, v. 15, n. 4 (December 1982): 850-852.

[70] Carol Becker, *Social Responsibility and the Place of the Artist in Society* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1990), p. 17.

[71] Ibid., p. 19.

[72] John Fleming, *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order Amid Chaos* (USA: University of Texas Press, 2001), p. 2.

Staircase (1972) and *Travesties* (1974). Ronald Hayman, a British critic and dramatist, maintains, "The mainspring of both [plays] is the debate about art which has been going on for years inside Stoppard's brain. Is art useless? Should it have a social purpose? Anyway, what is it? Does the artist need a special skill, or can anyone produce anything he pleases and then see whether other people are gullible enough to accept it as art?"[73] These enquiries represent the dilemmas which the artist works hard to understand and which I will examine, with respect to Stoppard's plays, in this chapter.

2.4 Traditional versus Avant-garde Art: *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972)

Stoppard's *Artist Descending a Staircase* (henceforward *Artist*) is originally a radio drama which centres its plot around these arguments about art, and the role of the artist in society. It tells the story of three aged artists who have lived together for years at the top of a house. Donner has been discovered dead at the bottom of the stairs by Beauchamp and Martello, each of whom is gravely suspicious of the other. Having deduced from the sounds of a tape-recording unmistakable evidence of foul play, both are suspects. Beauchamp infers from the sounds on the tape that Martello surprised the snoring Donner and murdered him by pushing him through the balustrades. Martello, however, accuses Beauchamp of killing Donner as he is certain that he was not in Donner's room at the time. Towards the end, we learn that it was an accident whereby Donner fell to his death after unsuccessfully chasing a fly.

As it develops, the purpose of the play goes further than the solving of Donner's death and becomes a serious discussion about the responsibility of the artist in society and a "simultaneous satire on trends in modern art over some fifty years".[74] Stoppard is interested in the relationship between the artists and their art to life in its worldly capacities. Thus, the artists he investigates are painters: Beauchamp, Martello and Donner. Significantly, their names as Beauchamp (French name), Martello (Italian), and Donner (German) are used as symbols to reflect a universal European message. They share the same concerns for art and the responsibility of the artist.

The first scene opens with Martello and Beauchamp, who are now old, having a heated discussion over the reliability of their art. Martello makes a comparison between his art and Beauchamp's tonal art, which reveals the ironic tone of Stoppard himself:

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[73] Ronald Hayman, *Contemporary Playwrights: Tom Stoppard* (Heinemann: London, 1979), p. 110.
[74] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, p. 165.

> Martello: […] – no wonder I have achieved nothing with my life! – my brain is on a flying trapeze that outstrips all the possibilities of action. Mental acrobatics, Beauchamp – I have achieved nothing but mental acrobatics – *nothing!* – whereas you, however wrongly and for whatever reason, came to grips with life at least this once, and killed Donner. (p. 16)[75]

As already mentioned, the above lines reveal Stoppard's belief, especially in his later works, that imaginative and skilful art has nothing to do with reality if it does not touch human life. To Martello, killing Donner is an indication of concrete evidence of the reality with which the artist is preoccupied. Therefore, Martello celebrates Beauchamp's talent as an artist even though he is not completely satisfied with his art since it lacks truth:

> Martello: […] I tell you, Beauchamp, it's no secret between us that I never saw much point in your tonal art. I remember saying to Sophie, in the early days when you were still using gramophone discs, Beauchamp is wasting his time, I said, there'll be no revelations coming out of *that*; no truth. And the critics won't listen either. And they didn't. But this time you've got them by the ears. It has the impact of newsreel. In my opinion it's a *tour de force*. (p. 16)

The mystery with which the play opens is testament to Stoppard's interest in inciting tension in his listeners by generating theatrical suspense. What ensues is a wide-ranging discussion of the relevance and methods of modern art during the 20th century. This is manifested even in the structure of the play. Its format, which takes the form of a V-shaped movement into the past, is strategically designed. Referring to the structure of the play when it first appeared, Michael Billington argues, "I can, for instance, think of no radio play in history constructed quite like this one".[76] Its eleven scenes are precisely arranged. The first and last scenes are set in the present; scenes two and ten a couple of hours ago; three and nine last weeks; four and eight in 1922; five and seven in 1920 and the lowest point of the V-shape represents the pivotal scene six which is set in 1914 during the first year of the First World War.

As mentioned above, the play, among other things, is "a conversation about modern art".[77] This piece of wisdom is emphasized by Sophie, a blind woman:

> But surely it is a fact about art – regardless of the artist's subject or his intentions – that it celebrates a world which includes itself – I mean, part of what there is to celebrate is the capability of the artist. (p. 38)

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[75] Tom Stoppard, *Artist Descending a Staircase and Where Are They Now?: Two Plays For Radio* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 20. All further quotations from the play will be cited in the text, with reference to this edition.
[76] Michael Billington, *Stoppard: The Playwright*, p.93.
[77] Thomas R. Whitaker, *Tom Stoppard: Modern Dramatists*, p.7.

In a series of flashbacks, we are taken back to the early days of the three artists. We know that the three men have been friends for sixty years. Beauchamp is composing a "masterwork of accumulated silence", (p. 17) on a tape recorder using tonal art, whereas Donner has returned to "serious" art: "I very much enjoyed my years in that child's garden of easy victories known as the avant-garde, but I am now engaged in the infinitely more difficult task of painting what the eye sees", (p. 19). Donner's rejection of the avant-garde and return to traditional values suggest his accord with Sophie's taste and Stoppard's attempts to address "the problem of artistic innovation".[78] As mentioned before, the 1960s saw the rise of conceptual and pop art where anything could be art. Carl Andre's *Bricks in the Tate* (1966) is a case in point. Here, art requires no artistic craft or skill.

In an article entitled "Avant-Garde (1984)", Richard Kostelanetz, an American artist, author and critic, argues, "One reason why avant-garde works should be initially hard to comprehend is not that they are intrinsically inscrutable or hermetic but that they challenge the perceptual procedures of artistically educated people ... [So] in order to begin to comprehend them, people must work and think in an unfamiliar way." In doing so, the audience learns to accept innovative works "in what they had previously perceived as noise"[79] just like the beginning of Stoppard's *Artist*. But, because avant-garde is directed towards a limited audience, as Michael Kirby observes, "The avant-garde artist is writing [initially] for a very limited audience whose experience, understanding of historic developments and current concepts in the field, and interest make it possible for it to appreciate points that are unavailable to a general audience".[80] Therefore, the creative attempts of the avant-garde are bound to fail so long as their achievements are limited to a small group of people who have their own philosophy. As a result, their art will be a mechanical work devoid of truth. So Donner, unlike Beauchamp, comes to realize that the responsibility of the artist is to reflect reality, which encompasses all human beings. Accordingly, he devalues Beauchamp's art since it is floated by imagination:

> Donner: Those tape recordings of yours are the mechanical expression of a small intellectual idea, the kind of notion that might occur to a man in his bath and be forgotten in the business of drying between his toes. You can call

[78] William W. Demastes, "Portrait of an Artist as Proto-Chaotician: Tom Stoppard Working His Way to Arcadia". Narrative v. 19, no. 2 (May 2011). http://0-muse.jhu.edu.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/journals/narrative/v019/19.2.demastes.html

[79] Richard Kostelanetz, "Avant-Garde (1984)", *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*, v. 7, n. 1 (Autumn, 1984): 25.
[80] Ibid., p. 33.

> it art if you like, but it is the commonplace of any ironic imagination, (p. 19-20)

Beauchamp justifies his attitude towards tonal art as a new means of communication which does not necessarily engage a commitment to a society. To quote Kostelanetz again: "It was a radical innovation of modernism to regard art as primarily about art and only incidentally about something else, and every genuine avant-garde has endeavoured to refine this peculiarly modernist understanding".[81] To Beauchamp, in spite of greater mystery, his tapes represent a new innovation and it is potentially revolutionary. He insists:

> If you played my tape on the radio, it would seem a meaningless noise, because it fulfils no expectations: people have been taught to expect certain kinds of insight but not others. The first duty of the artist is to capture the radio station. (p. 20)

Accordingly, as a revolutionary means, the first responsibility of the artist is to take the radio station, i.e., change and take control of public discourse – take over politically. In his argument about the radio as a means of communication, Brecht foresaw in a piece of writing that, "The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him".[82] Actually, he anticipated the Internet.

The discussion of the essential questions of art and society in our time goes on among the three artists. Arguably, they take different sides concerning the theories of art and their own practice. Beauchamp makes use of avant-garde tapes of unmelodious music, insisting that they could polarize millions of audiences if only the BBC would support them. Martello sees that the artist cannot teach people to think in a unique way without being "paint[ed] an utterly simple shape in order to ambush the mind with something quite unexpected about that shape by hanging it in a frame and forcing you to see it, as it were, for the first time -", (p. 39). So the essential difference between them lies in the capability of the artist to make art imaginative. Although Donner insists that the artist is "someone who is gifted in some way which enables him to do something more or less well which can only be done badly or not at all by someone who is not thus gifted", (p.21) he downplays non-intentional avant-garde art:

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[81] Ibid., p. 34.
[82] "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication", in *Brecht On Theatre* translated by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 52.

> Skill without imagination is craftsmanship and gives us many useful objects such as wickerwork picnic baskets. Imagination without skill gives us modern art. (p. 21)

In describing the poverty of modern art, Stoppard seemingly rejects non-representational art. In other words, Stoppard's yearning for a return to a transcendent aesthetic in this play "is simply a particular manifestation of his general yearning for transcendent values that can be used to guide human conduct as well as to evaluate art".[83] Both aesthetics and ethical elements are required in art. However, Stoppard's eclecticism caused him to debate the nature of art before turning to *Travesties*. And *Artist* marks a turning point in Stoppard's career for two reasons. Firstly, "the problem he considers here is more specialized than those of his previous plays, and, second[ly], a wide variety of clues … suggests he is moving toward firm commitment, toward certain beliefs". [84]

This fact is clearly shown in this play which expresses Stoppard's growing interest "for being a verbal rather than a visceral playwright".[85] In the play, however, Stoppard gives Donner the most direct critique of modern art which anticipates his own attack. During the programme *Arts Commentary*, which was broadcast by BBC Radio Three on 10 November 1972, Stoppard asserted to Richard Mayne, "I'm a very square, conservative and traditional sort of mind." He added, "Donner is me".[86] Stoppard demonstrated his agreement with Donner's discussion of art compared with Beauchamp's tape recordings. He admitted, "I think that when Donner says that much modern art is the mechanical expression of a very simple idea which might have occurred to an intelligent man in his bath and be forgotten in the business of drying between his toes, that is me".[87] In addition, in his reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, from which Stoppard parodies the title of *Artist*, Donner ironically agrees that:

> 'There are two ways of becoming an artist. The first way is to do the things by which is meant art. The second way is to make art mean the things you do.' What a stroke of genius! It made anything possible and everything safe! – safe from criticism, since our art admitted no standards outside itself; safe from comparison, since it had no history; safe from evaluation, since it referred to no system of values beyond the currency it had invented. (p. 24)

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[83] Katherine E. Kelly, "Tom Stoppard's 'Artist Descending a Staircase': Outdoing the 'Dada' Duchamp", *Comparative Drama*, v. 20, n. 3 (Fall, 1986): 199.
[84] Joan Fitzpatrick Dean, *Tom Stoppard: Comedy as a Moral Matrix* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), p. 71.
[85] Ira Nadel, *Double Act: A Life of Tom Stoppard*, p. 236.
[86] Op. cit.
[87] Paul Delaney, ed., *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 37.

The above lines also show Stoppard's ironic tone of the avant-garde "assumptions about the nature of art and the merits of anti-art".[88] The preference for the abstract and the mechanical distances it from human life.

Looking for something tangible, however, Donner wants art to meet a social purpose by making it edible: "How can one justify a work of art to a man with an empty belly? The answer, like all great insights, was simple: make it edible", (p.25). For Donner, art should have something to give. Moreover, Donner is wary of art that appeals to the eye instead of the mind. Like Beauchamp, with his curious defence of his recordings: "[…] I'm trying to liberate the visual *image* from the limitations of visual *art*. The idea is to create images – pictures – which are purely *mental*…", (p. 36). By presenting Beauchamp as the author of exclusively aural compositions, Stoppard has Duchamp in his mind once more. In Duchamp's *Nude*, "The aim of art in our time is the creation not of 'beauty' but of rare experience; the effect of innovative art is not 'pleasure' but universal perception".[89] So, Donner wants art not only to entertain but also to motivate people's minds. Thus, the responsibility of the artist goes beyond 'art for art's sake' to 'art for society's sake'. In doing so, social factors should be fused with aesthetic elements in the artist's works. The artist as a human being cannot separate himself from the society in which he lives. Surely, society is the place where the artist is inspired.

The discussion is taken further by the introduction of the character of Sophie and her debate about the art of paintings. Again, flashbacks take us back to the times of the first avant-gardist art exhibition in London and most of the dialogue is devoted to the social and aesthetic value of various trends of modern art. Dramatically, Sophie is presented as a champion of an anachronistic tradition of painting which has been "discredited in the eyes of the fauvists, cubists, and futurists for confining its subject and method to the slavish imitation of nature and for striving to please the eye above all other human sense and intelligence".[90] In her speech with Martello about naturalistic art, Sophie concentrates on the aesthetic aspect of art to create imagination:

> Sophie: I think every artist willy-nilly is celebrating the impulse to paint in general, the imagination to paint something in particular, and the ability to make the painting in question … The more difficult it is to make the painting, the more there is to wonder at. (p. 38)

[88] Katherine E. Kelly, "Tom Stoppard's 'Artist Descending a Staircase': Outdoing the 'Dada' Duchamp", p. 192.
[89] Richard Kostelanetz, "Avant-Garde (1984)", *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*, p. 31.
[90] Katherine E. Kelly, "Tom Stoppard's 'Artist Descending a Staircase': Outdoing the 'Dada' Duchamp", p. 196.

Martello, on the other hand, insists on the type of art which deals with reality:

> Martello: […] I insist: painting nature, one way or another, is a technique and can be learned, like playing the piano. But how can you teach someone to *think* in a certain way? […] And what, after all, is the point of excellence in naturalistic art–? How does one account for, and justify, the very notion of emulating nature? The greater the success, the more false the result. It is only when the imagination is dragged away from what the eye sees that a picture becomes interesting. (p. 39)

In his discussion with Sophie about the art of painting, Martello calls for simplicity and spontaneity in art which surprises the viewer. In spite of its simplicity, this art has a deeper significance. As such, Martello repeats Duchamp's inquiry with "not art, but what lay behind art".[91] Accordingly, the above lines imply Martello's dissatisfaction with naturalistic art which involves a subjective representation of nature or people with the least possible distortion or interpretation. This representation is a mere imitation of nature, covered by imagination which lacks shock value. Sophie, however, thinks that it is more interesting to the artist to have a sense of the history of art, the history which she looks at as an ideal:

> Sophie: I think it is chiefly interesting to the artist, and to those who respond to a sense of the history of art rather than to pictures [….] I am glad that I saw much of the pre-Raphaelites before my sight went completely. (p. 39)

Despite championing both sides of the argument, Stoppard makes Sophie the spokeswoman who calls for a return to the past where art reflected the seriousness of life. In presenting the character of Sophie, Stoppard adopts her opinions of art to the extent that even the form of the play is a part of his argument. In agreement with Oscar Mandel's interpretation of *Artist*, Elissa S. Guralnick is persuaded that, "Stoppard may be said to side with Sophie (i.e., traditionalism, not with Donner and company (i.e., avant-gardism)".[92] This fact is felt by Donner himself throughout his relationship with Sophie when he comes to realize that "the human factor in itself forms a dividing line between skilled talent and artistic truth, though whether the artist can have any direct impact on life continues to be the nagging question at the centre of Stoppard's work from this point on".[93]

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[91] Jindřich Chalupecký and Paul Wilson, "Marcel Duchamp: A Re-Evaluation", *Artibus et Historiae*, v. 6, n. 11(1985): 128.
[92] Oscar Mandel and Elissa S. Guralnick, "Tom Stoppard's Artist Descending a Staircase", *PMLA*, v. 106, n.1 (Jan., 1991): 125.
[93] Anthony Jenkins, *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard*, p. 113.

The significance of Sophie's character comes from the fact that she is like an axle in the centre of the three artists. All of them have fallen in love with her. However, as she is blind, she, like the audience, needs to be kept informed about what is happening around her. As we learn, Sophie had fallen in love with an artist she dimly saw standing in front of a black and white canvas. Later, by the time she had lost her sight, she asked about the artist who had painted the black and white picture. Due to her poor vision, she had misinterpreted the picture as a snowscape rather than a thick, white fence. In doing so, she determined that her lover "would be the aloof abstractionist Beauchamp rather than the love-struck Donner and led indirectly to her probable suicide".[94] Metaphorically speaking, Sophie's death is indicative of her resistance to "the shifting ambiguities of the modernist aesthetic".[95] She remains loyal to her ideal of art – traditionalism.

Throughout *Artist*, Stoppard grapples with Beauchamp's avant-gardism and Sophie's traditionalism. Accordingly, the argument between the role of the artist and his responsibility towards society is unsettled. The use of conventional or innovative styles to convey moral values becomes a point of argument. Within these two principles, Stoppard "tests the role of the artist and his value in a society and culture that is being destroyed".[96]

Beauchamp repeats Stoppard's unsolved questions: "[…] how can the artist justify himself? in the community? What is his role? What is his reason?" (p. 43) In a passage which Stoppard has frequently referred to as an accidental fortune of the playwright, Beauchamp justifies the role of the artist to himself by emphasizing that:

> The artist is a lucky dog. That is all there is to say about him. In any community of a thousand souls there will be nine hundred doing the work, ninety doing well, nine doing good, and one lucky dog painting or writing about the other nine hundred and ninety-nine. (p. 43)

In the above lines, Beauchamp surrenders to the fact that there is no need to justify his place in society. As such, the responsibility of the artist is to talk about his people as he has distinctive characteristics and traits.

The open-endedness of the mystery with which the play opens and ends is a clear suggestion that Stoppard does not introduce simple answers to questions related to the value of modern art and the responsibility of the artist. Instead, his ironic tone complicates the matter. But this complex issue fades away if we consider Stoppard's intentional taste for ambiguity, which is

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[94] Katherine E. Kelly, "Tom Stoppard's 'Artist Descending a Staircase': Outdoing the 'Dada' Duchamp", p. 197.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ira Nadel, *Double Act: A Life of Tom Stoppard*, p. 239.

clearly reflected in his comment to Mel Gussow, an American theatre critic, in 1972, in the same year that *Artist* was broadcast: "I write plays because dialogue is the most respectable way of contradicting yourself".[97] After all, the implications of *Artist* implicitly declare that "the artist's responsibilities are ultimately to his own sense of truth",[98] which becomes the centre of the debate in *Travesties*.

2.5 Neutrality and the Function of the Artist: *Travesties* (1974)

Stoppard's *Travesties*, first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London (June 1974) and then in New York (October 1975), is a continuation of the debate about art which runs throughout *Artist*. And it is in *Travesties*, not in any other plays, where the interplay of history, revolution, politics and art most successfully presents Stoppard's vision of the role of the artist and art in society. In fact, most critical treatments of *Travesties* have characterized the play as a debate between art and politics.[99] However, although Stoppard had always striven to exclude politics from his plays, *Travesties* "meet[s] the jibes about his refusal to commit himself to direct political and social statement head-on".[100] Here, Stoppard begins to address the role of politics in art.

Through an imaginary gathering of real historical figures that have accidently met in Zurich in 1917, Stoppard presents mutually opposing viewpoints on social and aesthetic revolution. Although Stoppard uses his characters to discuss ideas of art and politics, he is really trying to preoccupy himself with a personal dilemma. This dilemma is concerned with the amorality of the artist – an issue which had troubled him long before *Travesties*.[101] Throughout his earlier works, Stoppard asserts that the artist should distance himself from politics. In all his plays, he describes the artist as one who lives in seclusion remaining impartial and neutral. This neutrality is reflected in the setting of *Travesties* – Switzerland – a country which remained neutral in both the First and Second World Wars. It became a refuge for many artists and leaders, including James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, Ulyanov Lenin and Henry Carr. More than simply a setting for the action, Zurich is used symbolically to refer to art as isolated from

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[97] Quoted in Elissa S. Guralnick, "Artist Descending a Staircase: Stoppard Captures the Radio Station-And Duchamp", *PMLA*, v. 105, n. 2 (Mar., 1990): 293.
[98] Anthony Jenkins, *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard*, p. 115.
[99] David K. Rod, "Carr's Views on Art and Politics in Tom Stoppard's Travesties", *Modern Drama*, v. 26, n. 4 (Winter 1983): 536.
[100] Anthony Jenkins, *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard*, p. 115.
[101] Gabriele Scott Robinson, "Plays without Plot: The Theatre of Tom Stoppard", *Educational Theatre Journal*, v. 29, n. 1 (Mar., 1977): 42.

politics. It has become, as Joyce remarks, "the theatrical centre of Europe"[102] because of the war. Being a neutral place, the world war is transformed into the war of art. Similarly, Zurich and the artist are directly opposed to war since "'neutrality,' uninvolvement, is the artist's placidity in the face of life commitments".[103] So, "to be an artist *at all*", Carr remarks, "is like living in Switzerland during a world war", (p. 38). Preferring to be there, the artists reject their responsibility as the mouthpiece of humans. In other words, it is a kind of escapism. So, the play asks "whether an artist has to justify himself in political terms at all".[104] To put another way, *Travesties* poses the question: Is it morally acceptable for the artist to be politically 'neutral?'

Again, like *Artist*, we have four figures with contrasting views on the issue of art and politics. Each one has clearly defined functions: Joyce is the champion of art for art's sake; Tzara represents Dadaist anti-art, which advocates the destruction of traditional views of art; Lenin is the political revolutionary who calls for art as a vehicle for social change in his own special opinion; and Henry Carr heralds a new function for the artist as being in the service of class and nation. As Stoppard juxtaposes the divergent opinions of his characters on Dadaism, Modernism and Marxism, "he wishes to give the impression of straddling the fence in the art-politics debate".[105]

Travesties begins in the Zurich Public Library with Joyce, Tzara and Lenin, who are engaged in the act of writing. The stage direction tells us that the three major characters are preoccupied with "*books*, *papers*, *pencils* ...", (p. 17). Amusingly, the opening scene gives a short literary background to the three characters through the language they use. Tzara has just composed a Dadaist poem out of an English one by taking a large pair of scissors and cutting out each word, putting them into a hat, emptying out the pieces and then reciting it in a Romanian accent; Joyce dictates to Gwendolen fragmented words from *Ulysses*; and Lenin talks in Russian about the revolution in St Petersburg. What is commonplace among these three artists, as Kinereth Meyer remarks, is that "writing is central".[106] This in turn refers to the interrelationship between art and politics.

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[102] Tom Stoppard, *Travesties* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 51. All subsequent references in the text are to this edition.
[103] Howard D. Pearce, "Stage as Mirror: Tom Stoppard's Travesties", *MLN*, v. 94, n. 5, Comparative Literature (Dec., 1979): 1154.
[104] Tom Stoppard, "Ambushes for the Audience: Towards a High Comedy of Ideas", *Theatre Quarterly*, v.4 (May-July 1974): 16.
[105] Katherine E. Kelly, Elissa S. Guralnick, and Paul Delaney, "Tom Stoppard: Craft and Craftiness", *PMLA*, vol. 107, n. 2 (1992): 354.
[106] Kinereth Meyer, "It Is Written: Tom Stoppard and the Drama of the Interext", *Comparative Drama*, vol. 23, n. 2 (Summer 1989): 107.

As the events continue, we discover that we are actually witnessing events in Henry Carr's memory. The conflicting notions about the value and purpose of art are presented through the jumbled and erratic recollections of Carr, whose memory of the three characters constitutes the backbone of the play: "James Joyce As I Knew Him", (p. 22) "Lenin As I Knew Him", (p. 23) and "*Memories of Dada by a Consular Friend of the Famous in Old Zurich: A Sketch*", (p. 25). Interestingly, all the events are seen within Carr's eye. The play makes it clear that the aesthetic-political views presented are a projection of his deteriorated memory. Carr, who is a minor official of the British Consulate in Zurich, finds himself in contact with these great men without realizing it. Through Carr's memory, Stoppard has brought together three archetypical attitudes to the debate on art and politics.

Carr's character wins our admiration because of his twin roles. He reflects Stoppard's character, "the spectator as hero".[107] Carr introduces the three participants in the aesthetic-political debate without ignoring his own position. By contrast, he defends himself against the opposing views of Tzara, Joyce and Lenin. His role as prompter and catalyst enriches this, "as his trenchant and reactionary views fuel … the various stages of the debate".[108] Furthermore, his active participation, embodied in *Travesties*, reveals his "centrality to the aesthetic-political debate and a clearer picture of the position he espouses".[109]

In Act I, Carr's views are contrasted with those of Tzara and Joyce. In a series of limericks, the dialogue among the three characters establishes their position about art and artists which will be developed later. Each character has a clear-cut contribution to the debate. This debate is started by Tzara who protests against the artistic and classical tradition represented by Joyce. Tzara scorns Joyce's self-absorption and rejects both the artist and the civilization he represents: "[….] It's too late for geniuses! Now we need vandals and desecrators, […] to reconcile the shame and the necessity of being an artist!", (p. 62). On the contrary, Joyce asserts the value of his own work. He calls himself "[a] fine writer who writes caviar/for the general, hence poor -" (p. 33) Carr takes the middle ground since both opinions are liable to more careful examination. Therefore, Carr's opening discussion with Tzara represents his first attempt to discuss extensively the aesthetic and political issues in *Travesties*.

Tzara's view of art and artists is connected with history and war. He argues, "The war has made a mockery of the values and the schemes of logic and causality which have served as the

[107] This is the title of the fourth chapter of *Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon*.
[108] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, p. 141.
[109] David K. Rod, "Carr's Views on Art and Politics in Tom Stoppard's Travesties", *Modern Drama*, v. 26, n. 4 (Winter 1983): 536.

basis for traditional art".[110] Tzara does not believe in logic as the prompter of art. Instead, he looks at art as no more than nonsense:

> Tzara: I am sick of cleverness. The clever people try to impose a design on the world and when it goes calamitously wrong they call it fate. In point of fact, everything is Chance, including design.
>
> Carr: That sounds awfully clever. What does it mean? Not that it has to mean anything, of course.
>
> Tzara: It means, my dear Henry, that the causes we know everything about depend on causes we know very little about, which depend on causes we know absolutely nothing about. And it is the duty of the artist to jeer and howl and belch at the delusion that infinite generations of real effects can be inferred from the gross expression of apparent cause. (p. 37)

In contrast with Tzara, who sees war as a capitalist project, Carr comes back with the fact that wars are fought not for words but for civilized ideals and making the world safe for artists. He argues that, "[….] The easiest way of knowing whether good has triumphed over evil is to examine the freedom of the artist", (p.39). Obviously, much of Carr's views reflect Stoppard's perspectives on art where he rejects anything restricting art or the artist. It suggests that, "the playwright shares, on artistic matters, many of Carr's values".[111] Lacking freedom of expression can be found in countries that follow totalitarian system. Stoppard was sympathetic with Ahmad Salman Rushdie, a British Indian novelist when he was threatened by death, issued by Iranian leader, Khomeini in 1989.[112]

As it is evident in the debate between Carr and Tzara on the origins of war, attitudes towards the artist diverge as well. The traditionalist Carr starts with the claim that, "[….] An artist is someone who is gifted in some way that enables him to do something more or less well which can only be done badly or not at all by someone who is not thus gifted", (p.38).

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[110] Ibid., p. 537.
[111] John Fleming, *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order Amid Chaos*, p. 109.
[112] In 1988, Salman Rushdie published his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, a complexly textured novel which became the centre of a global controversy both within the Islamic community and between the geo-political centres of Islam and the Western world. "Though *The Satanic Verses* is set in the 1980s, its central characters experience a transformation and become the major figures in Rushdie's literary treatment of the Prophet Mohammed's Revelation, the uniting of the Koran and related historical circumstances". Consequently, the novel is condemned by a number of Moslems, notably in India, Iran and Pakistan as blasphemous. This led the late Ayatollah Khomeini, on February 4, 1989 to condemn Salman Rushdie for spiritual treason, pronounced a death sentence upon him and offered a reward of $3,000,000 for his death. Rushdie's human rights and artistic freedom are defended and supported by literary communities which condemned censorship and terrorism. See "Introduction: A Dialogue on the Satanic Verses", *The Black Scholar*, v. 20, n. 2, Black Culture (March/April, 1989): 14. < http://www.jstor.org/stable/41067614> Accessed: 15/03/2017.

Tzara expands the definition of art to: "[….] Nowadays, an artist is someone who makes art mean the things he does", (p. 38). Significantly, the same quoted lines, used in *Artist Descending a Staircase*, are repeated here. This is meant to show how Stoppard is concerned with the role of the artist and the function of art in society. Tzara hopes that art can regain its role as an improver of the human condition and the artist in the role of healer:

> When the strongest began to fight for the tribe, and the fastest to hunt, it was the artist who became the priest-guardian of the magic that conjured the intelligence out of the appetites. Without him, man would be a coffee-mill. Eat-grind-shit [....] The difference between being a man and being a coffee-mill is art? (p. 47)

The above lines reveal Tzara's belief in the negative and positive roles of the artist. Although Tzara sees art as an active and superior quality, it can be used to divagate humanity. "Art created patrons and was corrupted", Tzara raves. "It began to celebrate the ambitions and acquisitions of the paymaster. The artist has negated himself: paint-*eat*-sculpt-grind-write-*shit*", (p. 47). Furthermore, Tzara states that making 'art' mean whatever he wants it to mean corresponds to what the Establishment does with "words like *patriotism, duty, love, freedom*, king and country", (p.39). This view of art resulted from the artist's reaction to the horrors and meaningless nature of the atrocities of war.[113] In this sense, Dadaism comes from betrayal of meaning that dominated Europe during the First World War.

For Tzara, the negation of the artist is manifested in his rejection of art's autonomy. So, "anti-art is the art of our time", (p.39). For him, everything is governed by pure chance. Accordingly, "All poetry is a reshuffling of a pack of picture cards, and all poets are cheats. I offer you a Shakespeare sonnet, but it is no longer his. It comes from the wellspring where my atoms are uniquely organised, and my signature is written in the hand of chance", (p.53).

As far as Joyce is concerned, the responsibility of the artist is essentially devoted to the belief in art for art's sake. Here, the artist is lost in the labyrinth of the work of art to "achieve permanence and stillness, but at the expense of life".[114] Significantly, it is important to know that *Travesties* is set during the years of the First World War – a devastating war which caused major destruction and despair. After the First World War, a new vision of the world emerged. While socialist and communist ideas were strongly embraced in Eastern Europe, the old ruling classes became weakened. In this respect, the art which flourished in Switzerland seemed far

[113] Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1965), p. 25.
[114] Howard D. Pearce, "Stage as Mirror: Tom Stoppard's Travesties", p. 1155.

removed from the political realities of the time. Thus, the artists remained enclosed within their ivory towers. Undoubtedly, the aesthetic position represented by Joyce reflects this fact.

Although Joyce was not included in the original plan of the play, Stoppard bases *Travesties* on Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Following a friend's remark that Dadaist Tzara, Lenin and perhaps Freud were living in Zurich in 1916, Stoppard decided to write "a two-act thing, with one act a Dadaist play on communist ideology and the other an ideological functional drama about Dadaists".[115] When he discovered that James Joyce was also in Zurich during the First World War, Stoppard's attitude towards his initial material changed. Historically, James Joyce was also in exile from turmoil of Ireland in early 1920s and the events which followed: war of Independence 1919-1921 and the Civil War 1922-1923. However, Stoppard justified this modification by the fact that he wanted to know "whether the artist and the revolutionary can be the same person or whether the activities are mutually exclusive … How would you justify Ulysses to Lenin? Or Lenin to Joyce?"[116] However, Stoppard declares, "I have no sympathy at all with Tristan Tzara". By contrast, "Joyce is an artist I can respect" and admire as "the finest practitioner of a style of literature with which I temperamentally agree".[117]

Through his sympathy with and admiration of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Stoppard shows his concurrence with Wilde since the play "centres around the doctrine of art for art's sake, that art exists for the sake of its beauty and that it need not serve any political, didactic, or other purpose".[118] But the question that is worth asking is, is it possible to do that?

The inclusion of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is to show Stoppard's belief in the double activity of writing. Earnestness, in the title, which refers to both the quality of being serious and the quality of being sincere, is the play's primary object of satire. For Stoppard, the use of the character of Joyce in which the word 'earnest' is associated with, is an embodiment of Stoppard's satirical tone. This satirical tone clarifies Stoppard's fascination with style, which he expresses through pastiche and parody.

Near the end of Act I, Joyce and Tzara engage in a heated argument which reflects their views on art:

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[115] Mel Gussow, "Stoppard Refutes Himself, Endlessly", *New York Times* (26 April 1972): 54.
[116] Mel Gussow, *Conversations with Stoppard* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995), p. 20-21.
[117] Paul Delaney, *Tom Stoppard: The Moral Vision of the Major Plays*, p. 62.
[118] Nevin Yildirim Koyuncu, Re-writing and Mystifying Wilde's 'Art for Art's Sake:' Tom Stoppard's Travesties <http:www.oscholars.com/TO/Appendix/Library/Stoppard.htm> Accessed on 05/02/2015.

> Tzara: [….] Your art has failed. You've turned literature into a religion and it's as dead as all the rest, it's an overripe corpse and you're cutting fancy figures at the wake.
>
> Joyce: You are an over-excited little man, with a need for self-expression far beyond the scope of your natural gifts. This is not discreditable. Neither does it make you an artist. An artist is the magician put among men to gratify – capriciously – their urge for immortality. The temples are built and brought down around him, continuously and contiguously, from Troy to the fields of Flanders. If there is any meaning in any of it, it is in what survives as art, yes even in the celebration of tyrants, yes even in the celebration of nonentities. What now of the Trojan War if it had been passed over by the artist's touch? Dust. (p. 62)

Joyce's argument with Tzara proves his status as a champion of the traditional approach to art. In the above lines, Joyce celebrates the artist as a human with high qualities who cares for human beings and art alike. The power of the artist to immortalize history is the main responsibility of Stoppard's Joyce, which is clearly manifested in the play by references to mythical events and poets such as William Shakespeare.

Act II brings in another attitude to art. It begins with Cecily lecturing on Marxism with reference to Lenin and history:

> Lenin was convinced, like Marx, that history worked dialectically, that it advanced through the clash of opposing forces and not through the pragmatic negotiation of stiles and stepping-stones. He was a hard-liner. (p. 68)

In fact, Stoppard makes it clear that *Travesties* is an attack on Lenin's Marxism. His materialistic perspective on art and history is ridiculed by Stoppard who asserts that "a materialistic view of history is an insult to the human race".[119] For Stoppard, "Marx got it wrong", since his theories on art, value and revolution have all been refuted by modern economics and history. In an apologetic tone, Carr reports to Cecily that Marx "was the victim of an historical accident", which "made a monkey out of him", (p.76). Carr believes that history has taken a wrong turn. So, Marx's whole theory was based on the "false premise […] that people were a sensational kind of material object and would behave predictably in a material world", (p. 76-7).

Cecily, Lenin's acolyte, opens Act II by reading lines from Lenin's actual speech which reveal his views on the relationship between art and politics. The presentation of Lenin and

[119] Tom Stoppard, "Ambushes for the Audience: Towards a High Comedy of Ideas", *Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 4, n. 14 (May 1974):13.

Nadya is usually verbatim from primary historical sources. Art acquires a vital role in his philosophy and this philosophy is expressed by Cecily, who maintains that art is valuable only if it is used as propaganda for political ends:

> The sole duty and justification for art is social criticism […] we live in an age when the social order is seen to be the work of material forces and we have been given an entirely new kind of responsibility, the responsibility of changing society. (p. 74)

Therefore, she dismisses any form of non-political art, including Joyce's traditional and Tzara's revolutionary forms. This attitude is shared by Lenin in his speech to the Russian crowd:

> Today, literature must become party literature. Down with non-partisan literature! Down with literary supermen! Literature must become a part of the common cause of the proletariat, a cog in the Social Democratic mechanism … (p. 85)

Although Lenin celebrates art as a superior value, it is with a limited and conditional version. What is important here is that Stoppard is keen to show how art can be affected and dominated by political ideologies. In this sense, it becomes a means for politicians to achieve a political agenda, sacrificing the rights of individuals in the name of a given dogma. Stoppard shows the conflict between Lenin's personal and political responses to art. Surely, Lenin places the party before art. He proclaims that the freedom of the artist must be constrained by the requirements of the party.

Lenin's philosophy draws its origin from the doctrine of "socialist realism" which teaches that the writer's duty is "to provide a truthful, historic-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development", taking into consideration "the problem of ideological transformation and the education of the workers in the spirit of socialism".[120] Accordingly, literature should be tendentious, "party-minded" writing which reveals its ideologies and future plans.

Tendentiousness has been connected with the idea of commitment. Although the earlier Marxists did not deny the politicization of art, they believed in the aestheticism of literary work. Engels states that if "the opinions of the author remain" implicit, "the work of art" will be

[120] Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 38.

better.[121] In same fashion, the later Marxists, such as Benjamin and Brecht, hold clear views about tendentiousness. In his study of *The Author as Producer*, Benjamin points out that:

> The tendency of a work of literature can be politically correct only if it is also correct in the literary sense. That means that the tendency which is politically correct includes a literary tendency. And let me add at once: this literary tendency, which is implicitly or explicitly included in every correct political tendency, this and nothing else makes up the quality of a work.[122]

Rejecting the connection between art and politics is difficult. Even those who argue against the politicization of art find it difficult to do so since "nowadays nothing alive escapes politics".[123]

Lenin's contradictory thoughts reveal his schizophrenic nature. Stoppard deliberately uses Lenin's remarks about Beethoven's *Appassionata* to prove this fact:

> I don't know of anything greater than the Appassionata. Amazing, superhuman music. It always makes me feel, perhaps naïvely, it makes me feel proud of the miracles that human beings can perform. But I can't listen to music often. It affects my nerves, makes me want to say nice stupid things … (p. 89)

Art is seen as counter revolution. The humanizing factor of art is looked upon by Lenin as a negative force. So, artists should be put under strict measures. Lenin is made to ruthlessly follow his revolutionary aims regardless of the intrinsic values of art which he considers with suspicion or even hostility when it cannot be used as a political weapon.[124]

The interchange between Cecily, Lenin's spokesperson, and Carr, shows their disagreement. Unlike Lenin, Carr does not believe in the complete subordination of art to political ends. He also rejects Lenin's philosophy of art as a means of social criticism. As a whole, Act II points out the contrast between Carr's and Lenin's views of art, just as Act I sets up the polarity between Carr and Tzara on one hand and Carr and Joyce on the other.

The play concludes with Carr's philosophy:

> I learned three things in Zurich during the war. I wrote them down. Firstly, you're either a revolutionary or you're not, and if you're not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly, if you can't be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary … I forget the third thing. (p. 98-99)

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[121] Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (eds), *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art* (St Louis: Ielos Press, 1973), p. 114-116.
[122] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. by Anna Bostock (London: NLB, 1973), p. 86.
[123] Thomas Mann, *Letters of Thomas Mann*, trans. by R and C Winston (London: 1971), p. 165
[124] Horst Höhne, "Liberal Intellectualism in The Theatre: Tom Stoppard's Controversial Career as Dramatist", p. 29.

At the end, Carr holds the view that the revolutionary and the artist are two separate entities. However, I think that both of them are two sides of the same coin. They interact in such a way that we cannot separate art from life. In so doing, the artist is a revolutionary against any wrongful things in society. The third thing which is forgotten by Carr is the reciprocal relationship between art and life. Accordingly, art functions in quite different ways: for Joyce, art's purpose is "scandal, provocation and moral outrage through art", (p. 60). To Carr, the duty of the artist is exclusively "to beautify existence", (p. 37) a fact which is valued by the artists.

Art becomes a constant truth in human life not only for its ability to beautify life but also to change society. However, Carr's assertion of the importance of art is contrasted with Stoppard's confession. His scepticism about the importance of art in effecting specific change in the short-term makes him feel embarrassed and guilty. In this regard, Paul Delaney maintains:

> Still, this is where we see Stoppard on the horns of a dilemma. He sees art as timeless, celebratory, and universal in the way that Joyce does and recognizes its capacity to immortalize whom it will. But at the same time he balances Joyce's flights of imagination against the less exalted view of a Carr, … which emphasizes the present, the here and now and the importance of such concerns as political freedom.[125]

It is clear that, within the political domain, the dilemma of the artist lies in the fact that artists have no free will to speak. They are gagged by the political system. Consequently, "Art is absurdly overrated by artists, which is understandable, but what is strange is that it is absurdly overrated by everyone else" (p. 46) since it has lost its close ties with reality. Although the four characters have different views on art, all of them agree that the artist enjoys a high degree of quality.

Finally, it seems to me that although Stoppard does not adopt a clear-cut position on the role of the artist, he supports the views represented by the fictional characters. It is clear that he concentrates on those ideas in a number of plays which share the same themes. In an interview, Stoppard affirmed the thematic and stylistic similarities between *Artist* and *Travesties*. Thematically *Artist* offers what Stoppard called "a dry run" for ideas that appear extensively in *Travesties*. It was "two bites at the same apple. Sometimes the same bite at the same apple, actually".[126] Thus, certain sections of the latter play are a clear development of ideas first

[125] Paul Delaney, *Tom Stoppard: The Moral Vision of the Major Plays*, p. 74.
[126] Nancy Shields Hardin and Tom Stoppard "An Interview with Tom Stoppard", *Contemporary Literature*, v.22, n. 2 (Spring, 1981): 156.

explored in the former. Both plays present identical statements on the artist's privileged position in society. But perhaps the most important link between the two is the definition of the artist as a gifted person, which is first uttered by Donner in *Artist Descending a Staircase*, p. 21 and then by Henry Carr in *Travesties*, p. 38. In both plays, Stoppard asserts the freedom of the artist. But while he is traditional about form, he is also playful, satirical and innovative.

The intellectual debate about the dialectical relationship between art and politics is not over in Stoppard's works. He usually returns to it, as in *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006). His insistence on the subject of political freedom of the artist may be ascribed to his early perilous atmosphere he has experienced before moving to England. The hard times surrounding his family which led them to leave Czechoslovakia, as the Nazis were taking control of the country in 1939, made him live in exile. This truth shaped "his vision of the world as well as his art".[127] Under communism, Stoppard looks at the ruling political party as a constraint which restricts the artist's freedom of expression. He is very opposed to Communism and the Communist control and repression of the artist. This theme is taken further in Howard Barker's plays. Not only the political party, the capitalism in its emphasis on free market ethics serves as a bandage for freedom of expression and censorship. Barker, like Stoppard, upholds the idea of radical freedom for the artist but in a different mode, as we shall see in the next chapter.

[127] William W. Demastes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppord*, p. 14.