Chapter One

A Theoretical Background to the figure of the Artist in Literature and Theatre

In an article published in Fall 2009, Csilla Bertha maintains that the central place an artist occupies within a work of art adds an additional dimension to plays, since the fictional artist's point of view, attitudes to the world and evaluation of phenomena, may double or multiply the layers of the connections between art and life. She then adds:

> If an artist is chosen to be the protagonist of a play or novel, that choice naturally leads to the thematization of questions and dilemmas about the existence of art and the artist; relations between art and life, art/artist and the world; the nature of artistic creation; differences between ways of life, values, and views of ordinary people and artists; relations between individual and community, between the subject and objective reality; and many other similar issues.[1]

No doubt, with the advent of highly sophisticated and challenging notions such as Formalism[2] and the death of the author,[3] it is hard to conceive the figure of the artist without paying attention to the interrelations between art and life in which the ideal and reality, subject and object, constitute sharp contrasts. Traditionally, this dialectical relationship forms "binary

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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] Formalism is a Russian literary movement which originated in the second decade of the twentieth century. Its leading figures were both linguists and literary historians such as Boris Eikhenbaum (1886-1959), Roman Jakobson (1895-1982), Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984), Boris Tomashevskij (1890-1957) and Jurij Tynjanov (1894-1943). Literature was seen by the Formalists as "a distinct field of human endeavor, as a verbal art rather than as a reflection of society or a battleground of ideas", *Twentieth-Century Russian Literary Criticism*, ed. Victor Erlich (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 11-12. As a literary school, Formalism was known by its opponents rather than by its adherents. One of the disagreements with the movement is its emphasis on forms only, "neglecting the content of literature, the role of the individual author and his worldview, and the relation between literature and society", See Jurij Striedter, *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 1.

[3] In "The Death of the Author", the French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes argues that writing destroys every voice and point of origin other than language. So, the author "enters into his own death". The real origin of a text is not the author, but language. Barthes rejects the dominance of the author in interpreting any literary text. It is the reader, not the author, who determines the ultimate meaning. Accordingly, the text becomes liable to different readings. He further claims that, "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing", Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 147. For further reading, see William H. Gass, "The Death of the Author", *Salmagundi*, no. 65 (Fall 1984), pp. 3-26.

oppositions".[4] Accordingly, one of the most painful dilemmas faced by the artist is social: how can the artist function as a member of a certain community and at the same time retain the distinctiveness of his role as an outsider whose social usefulness is based on his chronic estrangement from the ordinary concerns of society? I am referring to the perplexing dilemma the artist finds as he struggles to reconcile his private desires with public expectations. This dilemma requires us to take a comprehensive look at the function of art and the responsibility of the artist according to the two principles: 'Art for art's sake' and 'Art for society's sake'.

1.1 Art for Art's Sake

The Kantian cult of "art for art's sake"[5] represents the source of debate concerning the role and function of the artist in society. According to this paradigm, works of art "exist primarily to satisfy the needs of art".[6] The supporters of this approach view art as something which is enclosed within an ivory tower.

Theodor W. Adorno, a German philosopher, sociologist, and composer said, "'Art for art's sake' denies by its absolute claims that ineradicable connection with reality which is polemical *a priori* of the attempt to make art autonomous from the real. Between these two poles the tension in which art has lived in every age till now is dissolved".[7] [Adorno's italics]

As mentioned before, the relationship between art and life is dialectical. It is true that under the banner of 'art for art's sake', the artist is responsible only to his work, yet he cannot ignore human life. In an article entitled "The Responsibility of the Artist", Jacques Maritain, a French philosopher, argues, "To assume that it does not matter what one writes is permissible only to the insane; the artist is responsible to the good of human life, in himself and in his fellow men".[8] Thus, his dilemma originates from confronting the inevitable tension between moral responsibility to life and aesthetics. However, before arriving at that definition I will attempt to see how Formalists[9] view literature.

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[4] Csilla Bertha, "Visual Art and Artist in Contemporary Irish Drama", p., 347.
[5] For an elaborate discussion of this concept in aesthetic theory and its history see Dorothy Richardson, "Saintsbury and Art for Art's Sake in England", *PMLA*, v. 59, no. 1 (Mar., 1944): pp. 243-260.
[6] Ruben A. Gaztambide-Fernandez, "The Artist in Society: Understanding, Expectations, and Curriculum Implications", *Curriculum Inquiry*, v. 38, no. 3 (Jun., 2008): 242.
[7] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment", in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1997), p. 178.
[8] Jacques Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist* (Princeton: University of Princeton, N.J.,1960), http://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/etext/resart1.htm (accessed December 09, 2013).
[9] Historically speaking, Russian Formalism was split into two different groups: the Moscow Linguistic Circle which included such young scholars as Pëtr Bogatyrëv, Roman Jakobson, and Grigorij Vinokur, and the Petersburg OPOJAZ, whose pioneers were Boris Èjchenbaum, Viktor Šklovskij, and Jurij Tynjanov, among others. Even though they are closely related, the two groups approached literature from different perspectives.

To begin with, there is no direct link in Marx's writing between 'mirroring' or 'reflecting' and literature. For Formalists, literature is "an autonomous reality governed by its own regularity and more or less independent of contiguous spheres of culture". For this reason, "the vital issue for literary science was no longer the investigation of other realities that literary texts might reflect, but the description of what it was that made them a literary reality".[10] They emphasized on the independency of art from any social, economical and historical considerations. Under the aegis of this autonomy,

> art has made great strides, and today we are witnessing its undisputed reign in mysticism, surrealism, primitivism, and the cult of the unintelligible. It has captured the minds of our leading artists, for it numbers among its adherents, Eliot in poetry, Joyce in prose, Schoenberg in music, and Dali in painting. It has a direct and honored lineage from Poe and the French symbolists of the last century.[11]

Although the Formalists did not fully cling to the idea of autonomy, they did not reject it either. For the Russian theorist, critic and a leading figure in the Formalist tradition, Viktor Borisovich Shklovsky (1893–1984), art "was always free from life".[12] A similar view is expressed by Oscar Wilde, an Irish playwright, novelist, essayist, and poet, who claims that, "Art never harms itself by keeping aloof from the social problems of the day: rather, by doing so, it is more completely realized for us that which we desire".[13] More importantly, Wilde gives art a kind of priority over life in terms of imitation. As he puts it,

> Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life. . .. A great artist invents a type, and Life tries to copy it, to reproduce it in a popular form, like an enterprising publisher. . .. Life with her keen imitative faculty set herself to supply the master with models.[14]

Accordingly, "while the former argue that the historical development of artistic forms has a sociological basis, the latter insist upon the full autonomy of these forms", see Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 17-18.

[10] Ibid., p. 245.

[11] William J. Norton, "Modern Art and Social Responsibility", *The Journal of Philosophy*, v. 37, n. 12 (June, 6, 1940): 326.

[12] Cited by Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1968), p. 164.

[13] Oscar Wilde, "Essays and Lectures", in *The Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, ed. Peter Stansky and Rodney Shewan (London: Garland Publishing, INC., 1978), p. 128.

[14] Elisha Cohn, "Oscar Wilde's Ghost: The Play of Imitation", *Victorian Studies*, v. 54, n. 3, Special Issue: Papers and Responses from the Ninth Annual Conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association (Spring, 2012): 479.

At the same time, however, it is important to look back to the ideological pressure that made the Formalists emphasize the aspects of the "literariness" of literary work which "led to their increasing awareness of the interaction between literature and society, between literary evolution and the larger process of social and political change".[15]

Unlike most Marxists, who believe in the work of art as a record of social reality that "needs not only to be recognized but also to be understood," Leon Trotsky, a Marxist revolutionary and theorist, refers to the relative autonomy of art. In *Literature and Revolution* (1968), he insists that "art must be judged in the first place by its own autonomous laws – that artistic creation is a 'deflection, a changing and a transformation of reality, in accordance with the peculiar laws of art'".[16] This formulation, derived in part from the Russian Formalist theory that art engages a "making strange"[17] of experience, modifies Trotsky's notion of art as reflection. In this regard, he views art as a powerful means to destroy barriers and shape social reality. It is not a mere mirror. He argues that:

> Of course no one speaks about an exact mirror. No one even thinks of asking the new literature to have a mirror-like impassivity. The deeper literature is, and the more it is imbued with the desire to shape life, the more significantly and dynamically it will be able to 'picture' life.[18]

Reading Trotsky's essay on *Literature and Revolution* (1968), one can see that he implicitly does not mind that art equate with politics to serve ideological ends. On the contrary, art is interacted with the social context within which it is produced and consumed. As far as reflection is concerned, Trotsky conceives art more than as a mirror, but rather as a dynamic factor to shape social reality[19] as mentioned before.

The relationship between art and politics is investigated through the concept of 'commitment', which is controversial entity. In due course I will return to this notion for further consideration. But as a reaction to the painful experience that comes from political loyalty to a particular ideological system, some writers have changed their attitudes towards commitment. As far as theatre is concerned, Eugène Ionesco, a Romanian-French playwright who wrote

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[15] Jurij Striedter, *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered*, p. 3.
[16] Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 175.
[17] Cited by Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1976), p.51.
[18] Cited by Cliff Slaughter, *Marxism, Ideology and Literature* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1980), p. 112.
[19] Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, p. 137.

mostly in French, and one of the foremost figures of the French avant-garde theatre, is one of those who is sceptical of commitment. In *Notes and Counter Notes*, Ionesco argues that "without the guarantee of total freedom, the dramatist will never be himself, he will say nothing except what has already been formulated [by the ideological system]: my own intention was not to recognize any laws except those of my imagination …."[20] He adds:

> we are trapped and immobilized by Sartrism, in the chains and dungeons of a commitment that was meant to bring freedom. All these 'commitment' of yesterday and to-day have already led and could still lead straight into the camps of the most varied and antagonistic fanatical doctrines, or to the physical and intellectual supremacy of regimes …[21]

In saying this, Ionesco is in agreement with Martin Esslin, a Hungarian-born English producer, dramatist, translator and critic, whose takes the view of "a serious artist dedicated to the arduous exploration of the realities of the human situation, fully aware of the task that he has undertaken, and equipped with formidable intellectual powers".[22] His plays depict the struggle against tyrannical and dogmatic systems and ideology that becomes idolatry. Referring to his view of the theatre, he says, "The theatre must teach people that there are activities which do not serve any purpose, which are gratuitous".[23]

It is certainly interesting to note here that art is a double-edged sword. It may be positive and negative, respectively. On the positive side, art is necessary to life especially when it is put to use by human beings without constraints. The negative side of art is when it is used as a form of propaganda for false ideology. Then, the artform will be a mere means for espousing a particular ideological viewpoint. This reflects the totalitarian claim that the artist "must be completely subservient"[24] and controlled by the state. In this terrible reality, artists have no free will. They are dictated to and forced to follow particular rules, legislated by the state itself. As Hitler's and Stalin's regimes have shown, creative activities are accountable to the existing regime. Accordingly, those artists have a moral obligation towards politics, which reveals their submissive nature to the state. Even their creativity must comply with aesthetic tenets set forth

[20] Eugène Ionesco, *Notes and Counter-Notes*, trans. by Donald Watson (London: John Calder, 1964), p. 47.
[21] Ibid., p. 148.
[22] Walter Wager, *The Playwrights Speak* (UK: Longmans, Green, and Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 111.
[23] Ibid., p. 134.
[24] Jacques Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist*, p.1.

by the state "which claims to express and protect the needs of the people".[25] In doing so, they will not enjoy freedom of expression. Recent examples of lacking this trait, among others, can be found in China, Cuba and the Middle East. In China, for example,

> Communism, as a primarily economic system, is much quieter on the issue of individual human rights. Two conflicting positions on these freedoms arise with analysis of communist theory. The first is an argument against individual freedoms. In a communist society, the individual's best interests are indistinguishable from the society's best interest. Thus, the idea of an individual freedom is incompatible with a communist ideology. The only reason to hold individual speech and information rights would be to better the society, a condition which would likely be met only in certain instances rather than across time, making the default a lack of freedom.[26]

In accounting for the role of the artist and art in real life, Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, playwright, novelist, and literary critic, insists on the social responsibility of the artist and the intellectual in general. This is quite clear in his rejection of 'art for art's sake'. Today, the writer "should in no case occupy himself with temporal affairs. Neither should he set up lines without meaning nor seek solely beauty of phrase and imagery".[27] For Sartre, the artwork always carries a special power which finds expression in free communication without alienation or objectification. It is one side of art's spontaneity. In this sense, the relationship between the artist and the public is intimate and reciprocal. The work of art is a mediator between them.

Some writers go a step further, declaring that the artist is no longer solely responsible for the production of a literary work. In other words, the work of art does not gain its significance without the inclusion of the audience. What is important, as the editor Adrian Page says, "is not who the author is, but what he or she wrote. The author may therefore create a consistent persona in their work which can be inferred from discourse, but this does not necessarily imply that he or she can determine exactly how the persona is interpreted".[28] This is, in turn, one reaction of Russian Formalism "against the one-sided focus on the author as a person that had

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[25] Ibid., p. 6.
[26] *Censorship and Freedom of Speech: Capatilist vs. Communist Theory on Speech and Press Freedoms* https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs201/projects/communism-computing-china/censorship.html (accessed March 21, 2017).
[27] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* trans. by Bernard Frechtman (London: Routledge, 1978), p.18.
[28] Adrian Page, "Introduction: The Death of the Playwright?" in *Modern British Drama and Literary Theory* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1992), p.20.

dominated literary criticism from Romanticism onward".[29] Jurij Striedter, a scholar of Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism argues:

> This reaction strengthened the Formalists' interest in those realms of verbal art where the person of the author is not dominant – for example, folklore (particularly folktales and fairy tales), the structure of verse and narrative prose, and the theory and history of literary genres. This interest enabled them to correct the lopsided stress on literary production (the author) by focusing on the product (the work) together with its perception (by the reader).[30]

This leads us to another aspect of art which "serves the public world of human responsibility, not the narrow, private world of art for art's sake,"[31] to use Fricke's words. What is needed here is a kind of equilibrium between the aesthetic and immediate needs of society.

1.2 Art for Society's Sake

In an article entitled "Dilemma of the Contemporary African Artist," H. Ato Delaquis, an artist, rightly said that art should be "inspired by the present environment" within society. Despite its great aesthetic appeal, art "cannot be divorced from the spiritual aspirations of the community".[32] Thus, the artist devotes himself to the social life without neglecting the aesthetic qualities of his work. In doing so, his dilemma lies in finding a form of expression to distinguish beauty from ugliness to the public's face. In this regard, the social responsibility of the artist is not only to improve the public's taste but also to reflect reality. The artist then "acts upon the taste of the public [and] his audience is a field where the fruits of his art ripen".[33] Society becomes his realm to talk about. Needless to say, the effects of that realm on the mentality of the artist cannot be denied. Therefore, instead of remaining enclosed in his ivory tower, the artist feels morally obliged to think of human beings. This moral obligation depends on his inner constraints which firmly bind him to society.

As far as reflection is concerned, Bertolt Brecht, a German poet, playwright, and theatre director, gives it due attention. In *A Short Organum for the Theatre*, Brecht maintains that "if

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[29] Jurij Striedter, *Literary Structure, Evolution, and Value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism Reconsidered*, p. 2.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Douglas C. Fricke, "Art and Artists in 'Daniel Deronda'", *Studies in the Novel*, v. 5, no. 2 (summer 1973): 220.
[32] H. Ato Delaquis, "Dilemma of the Contemporary African Artist", *Transition*, no. 50 (Oct., 1975-Mar., 1976): 20-23.
[33] Howard Richards, "The Social Responsibility of the Artist", *Ethics*, v. 76, no. 3 (Apr., 1966): 221.

art reflects life it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic by changing the proportions".[34] In saying this, Brecht denies the corresponding relationship between social reality and representation involved in producing a work of art. So breaking the mirror or "changing the proportion" do not mean that the work of art is not realistic. On the contrary, it will "heighten it".[35] Brecht's insistence on art being political and the artist having social and political responsibility finds expressions in Piscator's views on the responsibility of the writer and political theatre.

If we take the views of the German theatre director and producer, Erwin Piscator on political theatre, we shall get an accurate summary of British left-wing drama during the 1970s. For Piscator, the function of the writer is primarily political. He must put his own ideas aside and devote himself to bring out "the ideas which are alive in the psyche of the masses".[36] Theatre always responds, more directly and abruptly, to the present moment by conveying messages. For him "man portrayed on the stage is significant as a social function".[37] In agreement with John Arden, he asserts that "man is not made into a political animal by political theatre, however, but by a social world which ineluctably charges him with political significance".[38] He adds:

> We, as revolutionary Marxists, cannot consider our task complete if we produce an uncritical copy of reality, conceiving the theatre as a mirror of the time. We can no more consider this our task than we can overcome the state of affairs by theatrical means alone, nor can we conceal the disharmony with a discrete veil, nor can we present man as a creature of sublime greatness in times which in fact socially distort – in a word, it is not our business to produce an idealistic effect. The business of revolutionary theatre is to take reality as its point of departure and to magnify the social discrepancy, making it an element of our indictment, our revolt, our new order.[39]

Piscator calls for a revolution in theatre. The theatre should reflect reality with its positive and negative aspects. But Piscator's theatre was subject to the same problems which afflicted contemporary British drama. These problems can be summed up in the matter of government

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[34] John Willett (ed), *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 204.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre: A History 1914-1929*, trans. by Hugh Rorrison (New York, 1978). p. 47.
[37] Ibid., p. 187.
[38] C. W. E. Bigsby (ed.), *Contemporary English Drama* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1981), p. 36.
[39] Cited in C. W. E. Bigsby (ed.), *Contemporary English Drama*, p. 37.

subsidy. Within this, there is a profound debate about the function and morality of art itself. The writer "fears that he may be an accomplice to a process of manipulation which is perceived in the external world, but which invades an art which no longer has the autonomy proposed by modernist aesthetics".[40] It certainly focuses on the dilemma of the playwright who, on the one hand seeks directness without restrictions, and on the other hand, formal experiment. However, the affinity between political commitment and aesthetic experimentation has always proved difficult.

In addition to the importance of art on social life, the significance of the writer's active involvement in politics has had a considerable impact on the notion of 'commitment'. However, the relationship between politics and art has found expression in the belief that art has a decisive role in advancing and effecting change. In his speech about aesthetic autonomy within political commitment, Terry Eagleton, a British literary theorist, critic and public intellectual, argues that art is "conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness".[41] At the same time, Eagleton argues for art's function as a revolutionary means of change. The concept of autonomy, to quote Eagleton:

> is radically double-edged: if on the one hand it provides a central constituent of bourgeois ideology, it also marks an emphasis on the self-determining nature of human powers and capacities which becomes, in the work of Karl Marx and others, the anthropological foundation of a revolutionary opposition to bourgeois utility.[42]

Seen in this light, I feel that it is apt to concentrate on the concept of 'commitment' since it provokes so many debates among thinkers and writers. It, in turn, has a close relationship with the role of the artist and art in society. In aesthetic theory, Adorno claims 'commitment' should be distinguished from 'tendency'. Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to "generate ameliorative measure, legislative acts or practical institutions … but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes".[43] Here, every commitment to the world must be abandoned to

[40] C. W. E. Bigsby (ed.), *Contemporary English Drama*, p. 22.
[41] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (UK: Blackwell, 1990), p. 9.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment", in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ronald Taylor, p. 180.

meet the ideal of the committed work of art. In his study of *The Author as Producer* (1973), Walter Benjamin, the German-Jewish philosopher and cultural critic, insists that 'commitment' is expressed in one's art not only by presenting political opinions but also "it reveals itself in how far the artist reconstructs the artistic forms at his disposal, turning authors, readers and spectators into collaborators".[44]

However, coming back to Jean-Paul Sartre, we see that he is one pioneering writer who devotes his efforts to explaining the notion of commitment and the role of the artist in society. In his book, *What is Literature?* Sartre claims that the process of writing is a form of acting in the world. Consequently, the author should assume responsibility for the effects it produces. He asserts that each writer is inevitably committed since "writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once [the writers] have begun, [they] are committed, willy-nilly".[45] The commitment, here, implies a conscious affirmation of the writer's function as an agent of freedom. He also emphasizes the mutual relationship between literature and human beings. Accordingly, literature should serve as a catalyst to provoke people to change the world in which they live and, in turn, change themselves.

Interestingly, Sartre draws a distinction between 'prose', which can be committed, and 'poetry', which cannot. He argues that "prose is a purposeful reflection of the world, whereas poetry is an end in itself".[46] This means that the language of prose is more comprehensible for the audience than poetry, which is symbolic. It depends on associations and references which are figuratively difficult. Sartre's personal preference is for descriptive and unembellished language which express the more immediate issues of the time.

Moreover, Sartre draws our attention to the importance of totality in literature to deal with human beings. He claims that literature is alienated when it forgets or ignores its autonomy and places itself "at the service of the temporal power, dogma and mystification".[47] It is the writer's task to move away from inertia, ignorance, prejudice and false emotion. The writer should not devote himself to a certain class of people. On the contrary, his function is to act in such a way that nobody can be marginalized or neglected.

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[44] Cited by Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p.62. For further analysis, see Walter Benjamin's *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1973).
[45] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* trans. by Bernard Frechtman, p. 49.
[46] Ibid., p. 203.
[47] Ibid., p. x.

Similarly, Peter Weiss, a German writer, painter and graphic artist, is interested in the human situation of oppressed people. He speaks of himself as a "political playwright" and states that "he could not write a play without powerful political content and motivation".[48] Today, he calls for theatre to be a political institution, performed by non-professional actors in public places. Weiss also aspires to the production of works with an international impact beyond just one country or era. That is to say, the types of plays that touch the fundamental, timeless human condition. His play, *The Investigation* (1965), which is about the Holocaust, is an example of his political message.

Likewise, John Arden, an English Marxist playwright, argues that it is "impossible to avoid being a political playwright or a sociological playwright".[49] He regards man as a political animal, adding: "Any play that deals with people in a society is a political play".[50]

The issue of political commitment is made more complicated in the works of the English dramatist Trevor Griffiths, who shows an extensive interest in dramatizing political issues. This, in turn, reveals the artist's dilemma in one way or another. To only commit oneself to political issues or particular politics means that other social issues are ignored. In this sense, the moral responsibility of the artist towards society is diminished. Griffiths has spoken in detail about the dilemma he has confronted in his personal life in trying "to reconcile his left-wing politics with [his] seemingly bourgeois professional career".[51] This shows that the risk of conflict between political and aesthetic criteria cannot easily be avoided. This kind of conflict is repeatedly explored in Griffiths's plays such as *Occupations* (1970), *Sam Sam* (1972), *The Party* (1973) and *All Good Men* (1974).

However, to be devoted in your writing to aristocratic or middle class, for example, at the expense of the other means that the creation of enduring works of theatrical art becomes problematic. Such works of art would not be a true reflection of the full spectrum of society. In this context, Griffiths says, "I don't feel proud of the fact that I got enjoyment out of writing for the theatre and yet I can't lock into what is particularly efficacious about it. And I don't at all because I'm Northern, working-class and puritan by origin anyway, and developed to some extent, I feel rather guilty …"[52] So he justifies his writing for television because television is

[48] Walter Wager, *The Playwrights Speak*, p. 125.
[49] Ibid., p. 204.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Austin E. Quigley, "Creativity and Commitment in Trevor Griffiths's Comedians", in *Contemporary British Drama 1970-90*, ed. Hersh Zeifman and Cynthia Zimmerman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 244.
[52] Ibid.

the medium of the masses, unlike theatre, which is exclusive to the middle and upper classes. Consequently, a large segment of the population is involved in developing important political and economic awareness about the nature of society. In this respect, Alvin Toffler, an American writer and Futurist, admirably states, "The arts cannot thrive unless they are organically related to the needs of the surrounding society, unless the arts reach out far beyond their traditional audiences …"[53] In doing so, both the social factors and the aesthetic elements should be fused in the artist's committed works. The artist as a human being cannot separate himself from the society in which he lives. He is the spokesman of humanity. In comparison to this view, some writers think that the role of the artist has been minimized at the present time. In desperation, or perhaps because of the problems the artist has faced with the modern age, "he has been deprived not only of his exalted status but also of his social function".[54]

1.3 Theatre and the Role of the Artist

In this section I shall consider the role of theatre in exploring the artist's relationship with society. Due to several factors, not least amongst them its validity and relevance, theatre has been seen as a miniature version of real life wherein the subject and object meet face to face. In one sense theatre "can benefit from its ability to visually or audibly introduce works of art".[55] Then, through raising intriguing questions about the representation of real life, the actor on stage can contribute to increasing the self-reflexivity of art. In doing so, the artist's human and artistic dilemmas expressed in the dialogue and monologues of the main characters "are not simply illustrated or reinforced through the visibility of the artworks, but … multiplying the layers of meaning".[56]

Therefore, art's aesthetic, ethical, psychological, social and religious functions work either directly through the figure and the plight of the fictional artist, or indirectly, through the effect of art on the characters. In either case, the experience of the audience is enriched and doubled through the self-reflexivity of the artist on stage. Unlike other genres of literature, drama represents the meeting place of art and life since it deals, in the words of Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian politician, journalist and activist, "not merely with man, but with social man, with man

[53] Cited in Elmer H. Duncan, "The Artist in Contemporary Society: Report of an International Symposium", *Leonardo*, v.10, no. 1 (Winter, 1977): 73.
[54] Charles I. Glicksberg, "The Artist in the Twentieth Century", *Prairie Schooner*, v. 28, n. 4 (Winter 1954): 323.
[55] Csilla Bertha, "Visual Art and Artist in Contemporary Irish Drama", p. 347.
[56] Ibid., p. 365.

in his relation to God and to Humanity".[57] On the one hand, in theatre, art has a very limited lifespan. But on the other hand, time plays a significant role in the dramatic action. As soon as the play is over, it is gone for ever. The only thing that remains is the impact in the hearts of the spectators. Although the role of the artist as the ancient shaman who carried out the healing of the community has vanished in this age of militant nihilism, nevertheless, he can still show partial "images of wholeness in the theatre".[58] In *Theatre and Politics* (2009), Joe Kelleher, a Professor of Theatre and Performance, envisions theatre as a political arena where the people are represented. Theatre reflects us "in ways that can persuade us to make judgments on the quality and fidelity of those representations and to make critical judgments too on the lives that are so represented".[59] As a result, the play stirs up conflict in the immediate social body, that is, the audience. This theme of an organic relationship between theatre and the audience brings to mind Brecht's V-effect.

Undoubtedly, Brecht's influence on the art world is undeniable. In his book, *Brecht on Theatre*, John Willett portrays an extensive picture of Brecht's view of theatre and the style that should be adopted by the artist in order to acquire the audience's attention. In his prologue to the epic theatre, Brecht states, "This theatre justified its inclination to social commitment by pointing to the social commitment in universally accepted works of art".[60] Theatre represents an organic body which cannot be isolated from social life.

Likewise, in his answer to a question relating to the function of the artist, Arthur Miller commented that when writing plays, "I am trying to account as best I can for the realistic surface of life as well as Man's intense need to symbolize the meaning of what he experiences".[61] As a playwright, Miller is highly affected by the problems of his society which become a fertilizing material for his plays. Interestingly, Edward Albee, an American playwright, looks at all plays as a form of social comment. He claims, "Some playwrights are conscious critics, intentional social critics … some do it more intuitively".[62]

As far as British theatre is concerned, Howard Barker, a British playwright and theorist, provides a significant contribution to the argument about the role of theatre in a changing society. He also shows the relationship between the artist and his external environment. Barker

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[57] Oscar Wilde, "Essays and Lectures", in *The Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, ed. Peter Stansky and Rodney Shewan, p. 139.
[58] Csilla Bertha, "Visual Art and Artist in Contemporary Irish Drama", p. 364.
[59] Joe Kelleher, *Theatre and Politics* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.10.
[60] John Willett (ed), *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 179.
[61] Walter Wager, *The Playwrights Speak*, p.6.
[62] Ibid., p. 38.

reveals his idea about the artist and theatre, arguing that in an age of populism, "the progressive artist is the artist who is not afraid of silence".[63] In his view, an artist uses "imagination to speculate about life as it is lived, and proposes, consciously or unconsciously, life as it might be lived".[64]

In his speech about theatre, Barker affirms that the great responsibility of the actor is to attract the audience by showing them "the unknown life that exists in the text".[65] In other words, the writer and the actor conspire to entice the mind into a deeper analysis of what has been observed.

The function of the dramatist becomes not to educate through his superior political knowledge, but to lead the audience into moral conflict through his superior imagination. If we make a comparison between the function of the dramatist and the poet, we can see that the function of the dramatist is doubled. The poet's function, however, "is to charm the spirits of his listeners" by creating a joyful atmosphere without instructing them. The dramatist, in addition to offering pleasure, should serve as "a preacher of morality and a political advisor".[66] Then, the audience itself must be encouraged to discover meaning in the play and thus begins some form of moral reconstruction.

In his theory of the 'Theatre of Catastrophe', Barker points out that, like tragic theatre, the theatre "insists on the limits of tolerance as its territory".[67] In other words, it "has never aimed for solidarity but to address the soul where it feels its difference".[68] Here Barker wants theatre to be an efficient means of testing existent principles in order to make new ones. In this kind of theatre, the function of the dramatist is to show the ordeal of the audience in a language which exposes the entire range of human emotions and experiences.[69] Commenting on the reception of Barker's *In The Depths of Dead Love* (Print Room, 2013), Holly Williams states:

> The action outside the Print Room proves considerably more lively and vital than what's on stage: on press night, a substantial protest was held against the casting of white actors in Chinese roles in Howard Barker's play. The issue of 'yellowface' was raised when the casting was announced,

[63] Howard Barker, *Arguments for a Theatre* (London: John Calder, 1989), p.11.
[64] Ibid., p. 33.
[65] Ibid., p. 34.
[66] Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), pp. xii-xiii.
[67] Howard Barker, *Arguments for a Theatre*, p. 54.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., p.27.

> prompting the Print Room to release an astonishingly tangled and tone-deaf statement.[70]

The above lines reveal Barker's belief in theatre as an ordeal which is experienced by the audience after they watch the play. This is exactly the role of Barker's theatre.

For Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher, the role of theatre is associated with the romantic idea of an aesthetic revolution which manifests itself in changing not only the mechanics of the state and laws, but also the sensible forms of human experience. For him, reform of the theatre means the restoration of its character as the assembly of the community. Theatre is "an assembly in which ordinary people become aware of their situation"[71] through discussions of their dreams and interests. This is the type of theatre he aspires to create.

In the past, Rancière argues, the stage was thought of as a magnifying glass through which spectators could see the virtues and vices of their fellow human beings in fictional form. That vision, in turn, was supposed to prompt changes in their minds.[72] This aspect of the stage is now required in order to stimulate people to revolt against the wrongful elements of society. In his view about commitment, we see that Maxim Gorky, a Russian and Soviet writer, a founder of the socialist realism literary method, and a political activist, is in agreement with Rancière. Gorky argues, "Literature should free man not only from false ideology or superstition, but also from moral vices such as greed, envy, sloth and aversion for labour".[73]

Rancière also emphasizes the effects of modern techniques, embodied in film and television, on theatre. Although theatre is "a community site", the conditions of the spectators' reception of film and television are different. He argues that spectators must become "active interpreters, who develop their own translations in order to appropriate the story and make it their own".[74]

1.4 The Artist in the Economy

A second dilemma of the artist is economic: How can an artist practise his art? This dilemma has two facets. On the one side, there is the fact that art is subsidised via the public budget. On the other side, there is the fact that the society in which the artist lives is materialistic by nature.

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[70] Holly Williams, Review of "In The Depths of Dead Love", London: 20 Jan 2017 <http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/reviews/in-the-depths-of-dead-love-print-room_42694.html> (accessed March 21, 2017).
[71] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 6.
[72] Ibid., p. 60.
[73] Maxim Gorky, *On Literature* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 28.
[74] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 22.

Significantly, the status of the artist passed through two different stages. In the period ranging from the 1970s to the 1990s, we see that during the cold war, artist is censored by Communist party, especially in Europe (Communist bloc). While in Western Capitalism, censorship is less obvious but market forces constrain the artist. Indeed, the dilemma that faces radical artists nowadays is that popular forms of communication are often controlled by the conventional and commercial forces at work in society. The materialistic side of society has a negative impact on the artist in a way that inhibits his creative activity since his aim of writing is secular. As a result, the art world is corrupted by the market's inflated prices and by the dreams of artists. The market has taken the edge off the art world. The art world is guided by the investors. The consequences of this are that even art "which starts as a critique of society becomes depoliticized, objectified, institutionalized,"[75] consumed by those who have money. Thus art is seen as a commercial product, consumed by a customer. Here, the artist has a problem posed by the outside world.

In a review of "The Natural History of German Life (1856), George Eliot makes a distinction between two types of artists. The first one is the dedicated artist who devotes his efforts to creating beauty within the realms of social and moral responsibility. The second is the self-absorbed artist who uses art either as a means for financial gain or as a means to escape or reject duty and responsibility in the real world of human problems.[76] In both cases he will lose his function as a true artist. Compared to the theatre playwright, the dilemma faced by the modern poet is that he feels impoverished and enfeebled because he is alienated from nature as well as from society. In such a competitive society, he feels uprooted, alone, without purpose or hope of creativity. Unable to escape from stifling reality, the modern poet has gradually lost "the purity of his vision and whatever faith he once had in his vocation".[77] The source of inspiration is distorted by lack of moral cohesion. Moreover, the modern industrialized environment has robbed the modern artist of "his inspirations and defeated his efforts to communicate with [others]".[78] As a result of this situation, the resultant art will be merely a romanticized picture of life which does not touch reality.

The second aspect of the dilemma is concerned with the public subsidization of art. It is true that in an economic inquiry, artists cannot be expected to pursue a large range of social changes

[75] Carol Becker, *Social Responsibility and the Place of the Artist in Society* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1990), p. 16.
[76] Douglas C. Fricke, "Art and Artists in 'Daniel Deronda'", p. 220-221.
[77] Charles I. Glicksberg, "The Artist in the Twentieth Century", p. 325.
[78] Ibid., p. 326.

in society. The arts are always in need of outside support if they are to continue to exist. Therefore, subsidies are important in order for the arts to be sustained. But the problem lies in the fact that to depend entirely on public subsidization, art lends itself to the establishment as a means through which the establishment can market its policies. And through this process it takes away from the real situation of human beings. The artist, in turn, becomes a mere propagandist. As far as British theatre is concerned, debates about theatre and subsidy take two directions which clearly reveal people's attitudes towards art. Many people feel that it is wrong for taxpayers' money to go to those who are against "the political status quo; young people should not be paid to bite the hand that fed them".[79] Here, theatre is politicized to achieve particular aims far from the immediate needs of society. Others believe that a healthy and vigorous theatre is the one which reflects all shades of opinion as well as preserving all aesthetic forms, "and those in receipt of subsidy should not be discriminated against on the grounds of their politics".[80]

In her 1982 book, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain since 1968*, Catherine Itzin, a critic specializing in alternative theatre and later an advisor on women's issues, talks about political theatre in Britain and the difficulties surrounding it. The theatre, whether it is conventional or commercial, has been the domain of the bourgeoisie. The economic and cultural system lie in their hands. So, if the political playwright, to quote David Mercer, an English dramatist, "does not write for the bourgeoisie … [his] plays cannot be seen"[81] because the bourgeoisie own the means of production, without which no play comes into existence. With the domination and hegemony of the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and his duty towards his natural allies – the working class – on the other hand, this has led the dramatist to feel bewildered and vulnerable.

However, it is not only money which is the source of the artist's economic dilemma but rather the paucity of good audiences. In other words, how can art stimulate "publics in adequate numbers with appetites for excellence and authenticity [and at the same time] provide the social setting in which art can thrive?"[82] Although at times the economic predicament seems immediate, subsidy is not the serious problem. Nowadays, art can be subsidized by different

[79] Michelene Wandor, *Drama Today: A Critical Guide to British Drama 1970-1990* (London: The British Council, 1993), p.3.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain since 1968* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 95.
[82] Edmund B. Feldman, "Dilemma of the Artist", *Studies in Art Education*, v. 4, n. 1(Autumn 1962): 5.

veins such as local and federal governments, foundations, universities, corporations and even some communities. With such rapid industrialization and the development of science and technology, the artist's real problem is to find "enough interested people [who are willing] to give their time to art".[83] Under such perilous circumstances, the artist's genuine dilemma lies in confronting the *Zeitgeist*, the general intellectual and moral tendencies of an era, which can be evasive and intangible.

Moreover, the emergence of modern means of communication, such as television and cinema, has been one of the challenges for the role of theatre and people's perception of real life. Although it is to a certain degree true, theatre still remains a magical place. Referring to the different reasons why audiences are attracted to the theatre, compared to the cinema and television, David Edgar, a British playwright, states that what sets the theatre apart is "the play of the imagination in the presence of the event in front of you".[84] In the theatre the audience is put into the picture spontaneously. The event, which is being witnessed collectively, gives an opportunity for people to share opinions and views. The theatre has the ability to engage its audience in a live conversation. Similarly, in his comment on the importance of location, Tom Stoppard says, "If you are not there, you miss [the enjoyment of experiencing it]".[85]

It is assumed that no artist can escape the general mood of the society in which he lives. He affects and is affected as well. If the mood is negative, he will reflect a negative picture of reality. In her 1990 book, *Social Responsibility and the Place of the Artist in Society*, Carol Becker sums up the situation of the artist in America, which reflects the dilemma of the artist in general. She argues that we unconsciously envisage the artist as a marginalized figure, cut off from mainstream society, operating out of what Freud calls "the Pleasure Principle" while people struggle within "the Reality Principle", or within its present manifestation, "the Performance Principle".[86]

In the 19th century, American writers such as Walt Whitman, Herman Melville and others envisioned the artist-writer as the voice of democracy and "integral to the daily life of a pluralistic society".[87] This vision actually came to fruition when, in the 1930s, the economy collapsed and artists aligned with workers and intellectuals to form a strong progressive

[83] Ibid., p.6.
[84] David Edgar, "State of Play: new work in the contemporary British theatre", *RSA Journal*, v. 141, n. 5440 (June 1993): 458.
[85] Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London, Methuen Drama, A and C Black Publishers Limited, 2011), p. 11.
[86] Carol Becker, *Social Responsibility and the Place of the Artist in Society*, p. 7.
[87] Ibid., p. 13.

movement and call for their rights. However, Becker states her disappointment in "modern art" because it has often existed outside the lives of many people. Although it reflects the ontological changes of daily life, most people find the art world incomprehensible and obscure because it cannot be understood by the masses. Thus, when post-modernists attempt to use popular imagery to break down the distinction between high and low culture, they fail because many outside the art world see such works "as a joke, a scam loaded on them by artists".[88] In doing so, artists have often remained silent, unwilling or unable to explain their work to a popular audience. Hence people feel they are deceived by the art world which excludes and mocks them as well. The frustration with audience response that dominates the discussion has made "artists feel alienated, misunderstood, and definitely unsupported by the mainstream of society".[89]

1.5 The Development of Contemporary British Theatre

It is now time to consider the position of British theatre in the later half of the 20th century to see how the dilemma of the artist is represented. To do this, it is necessary to be acquainted with the main developments in British theatre following John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) at the Royal Court Theatre, which ushered in a new period of important playwriting. The great subject of post-1956 British theatre was the limits of the democratization of British society during the war. The role of the first wave of new playwrights, from John Osborne and Arnold Wesker to the early Edward Bond, was to "confront the cultural consequences of working class empowerment".[90]

If we take a historical glance at British theatre after the 1960s, we see that it had reached its fulfilment. The social and political changes, together with technological advances, had left their imprint on British theatre. Motivated by new ideologies, from Marxism to feminism, playwrights took on the tasks of political and cultural change. Their efforts were crowned by the foundation of the National Theatre and the abolition of state censorship of the theatre in 1968. Having realized the importance of theatre in life, questions were raised "about the function of drama, the nature of its reception and the relationship between form and content".[91]

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[88] Ibid., p. 14.
[89] Ibid.
[90] David Edgar, "State of Play: new work in the contemporary British theatre", p. 456.
[91] Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1.

From 1970s onwards, a whole new phase of British theatre seemed to unfold. British theatre has changed in many respects:

> Numbers and kinds of venues; a variety of approaches to the making of drama; attitudes to public subsidy; searches for new audiences; enthusiastic playwrights, especially the new cultural voices of women and ethnic writers; realism and politics; above all the agenda … which debates the relationship of the individual to his/her society.[92]

The political and cultural conditions which gave rise to the flowering of British theatre could not come into existence without the figure of Jennie Lee, Britain's first Minister for the Arts. As a result of her policy of public funding to attract new audiences for the arts, and to encourage young practitioners, more than 100 theatre venues were built during the mid-1960s.[93]

As far as theatre is concerned, funding was its main source. It increased steadily to match the demands of a variety of new work. Government financial aids increased, not only to the principal companies but also to an increasing number of 'fringe' or alternative[94] theatres as they appeared in the late 1960s. So, theatre became a powerful attraction for the new young writers and "those interested in propagating social theories".[95]

However, the period from 1968 to the mid-1970s witnessed the rise of a politically committed theatre. The major thrust of contemporary British theatre at that time was overtly political. Thus, a great deal of 'agit-prop' plays (agitation-propaganda) emerged. In one sense, they reflected the function of theatre and playwrights during that time.

Therefore, the function of the playwright is influenced by the state, in the form of government subsidy. Conversely, we have a situation where a radical drama is "being subsidized by the state it wishes to destroy".[96] As a left-leaning drama in Britain, it inevitably associates itself with its main source of nourishment. As a result, it attests to its apparent lack of confidence in

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[92] Michelene Wandor, *Drama Today: A Critical Guide to British Drama 1970-1990*, p.1.
[93] Ibid., p.2.
[94] The "alternative" theatre exists to democratize the social division in the theatre by initiating flexible and collaborative work methods. It proposes an alternative to the way of theatre organization, production and distribution. In this theatre, new audiences are introduced by "representing the experiences and interests of groups of oppressed and exploited people whose lives and emotions and hopes they felt had not been adequately represented on the mainstream stage", Wandor, *Drama Today: A Critical Guide to British Drama 1970-1990*, p. 13. See also John Allan, *Theatre in Europe* (Eastbourne, 1981).
[95] C. W. E. Bigsby(ed.), *Contemporary English Drama*, p. 16.
[96] Ibid.

its ability to effect change. The playwright cannot exceed the role assigned to him. David Hare is quoted in the National Theatre programme for *A Map of the World* as having said, "As a playwright, I can't offer a solution to the world's problems. What I can do is [just] make people think about them".[97] Most writers are constrained by a particular point of view which does not necessarily reflect their own. In this context, theatre as a highly visible and social practice makes clear the consequences of state interference in a way that no literary or visual arts can.

It is worth noting that one of the reasons for the absence of women playwrights during the 1960s has been ascribed to the cultural climate of British society. C. W. E. Bigsby, a British literary analyst and novelist, suggests that "women avoid drama as a social art requiring the strength and personal acerbity necessary for sustaining one's views in a public arena".[98] The playwright has to battle with the producer, director and actors for his plays to see the light.

As a result of the world recession in the mid-1970s, provoked by the oil crisis, Britain underwent a period of economic decline, culminating in the British 'winter of discontent' in 1978, which led to a period of acute industrial strife.[99] This situation cast its shadow over different aspects of life and theatre was no exception. Accordingly, by the second half of the 1970s, the Arts Council "sought to rationalize and relocate responsibility for funding".[100] So, debates emerged concerning the amount of money earmarked for theatre. In doing so, theatre was discriminated against, according to particular 'standards' which determined the levels of state subsidy. One explanation for this action is that theatre is seen as a place of investment. It is in turn subject to market forces.

This paved the way for commercially-driven in mainstream theatre in the UK with Margaret Thatcher's election to the post of Prime Minister in 1979. During the Thatcherite period, the market was seen as "the sole motor of arts development". Under its discipline, the theatrical world found itself forced to "provide what its consumers wanted".[101]

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[97] Peter Buckroyd, "British Drama 1975-1985", *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, v. 40, n. 1/2 (1986): 51.
[98] C. W. E. Bigsby(ed.), *Contemporary English Drama*, p. 16.
[99] Cited by Baz Kershaw, "Discouraging Democracy: British Theatres and Economics, 1979-1999", *Theatre Journal*, v. 51, n. 3, Theatre and Capital (Oct., 1999): 271.
[100] Michelene Wandor, *Drama Today: A Critical Guide to British Drama 1970-1990*, p. 3.
[101] David Edgar, *State of Play: Playwrights on Playwriting* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 14.

In his book, *State of Play: Playwrights on Playwriting* (1999), David Edgar puts forward the theory that the new spirit dominating British theatre was no longer political emancipation but "economic liberalism".[102] Theatres had become commercialized.

In her encouragement of the culture of enterprise and free-market economics, Thatcher sowed the seeds of competition, which was hostile to innovation. In justifying this new policy, Thatcher's first Arts Minister, Norman St John-Stevas, stated that sources of "private funding not only provide 'an alternative source of finance' but also had the merit of 'avoiding or neutralizing some of the dangers of state patronage, such as censorship and conformity and the promotion of what I might venture to call 'establishment art'".[103]

The impact of changing economics on British subsidized theatres during Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister raises crucial questions about the role of theatre in society and the relationships between the artist and the state. I address these questions through an investigation of the challenges that confronted British playwrights in the 1980s.

One of those challenges was a lack of public subsidy. This fact is reflected in the amount of funding the theatres received from the public budget. Moreover, the cultural climate in which British theatre operated during Thatcher's reign created a new kind of theatre and discourse. It became increasingly open to 'free' market forces.[104]

However, looking at the relationship between Thatcher's view of artists and the artists themselves, we see that there was a mutual sense of suspicion. Referring to artists as 'intellectuals'[105], Thatcher was suspicious of their allegiances and efficacy. Meanwhile the creative artists saw "in Thatcher the cultural sensitivity of a Philistine with learning difficulties",[106] as Evans puts it. In such a vindictive atmosphere, artists found themselves in direct conflict with a new regime which accused them of thinking more than doing. Consequently, and in line with Thatcher's belief in decreasing state support, the government subsidy for the arts was reduced. This policy of reduction can be seen from the very beginning of her election. As D. Keith Peacock notes, just one month after Thatcher's election, the arts budget was reduced to £5 million.[107]

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[102] Ibid., p. 10.
[103] David Edgar, "State of Play: new work in the contemporary British theatre", p. 453.
[104] Baz Kershaw, "Discouraging Democracy: British Theatres and Economics, 1979-1999", p. 273.
[105] Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 140.
[106] Ibid.
[107] D. Keith Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre: British Theatre and Drama in the Eighties* (Westport: Greenwood, 1991), p. 43.

Thatcher's policies, with regard to all areas and especially arts subsidy, stirred up artists' resentment. As such, a great number of comedies and satires were produced which ridiculed the vulgarity of money-making ethics. There were also raw films such as *Made in Britain* (1983) written by David Leland and *High Hopes* (1988) by Mike Leith, which examined the contradictions in 1980s society.

As far as theatre was concerned, it was gravely affected by the government's attitude to arts funding. This could be felt in the new guidelines of the Arts Council which gave subsidies only to those who made money back at the box office. Consequently, grants for theatres which were unable to meet that condition were cut. Thus the outcomes of state policy were eloquently manifested in theatre. And, as Kershaw states, "as a highly visible – and often expensive – social practice, theatre makes manifest the consequences of state policy in ways that the literary or visual arts do not".[108]

Perhaps one less notable phenomenon of the 1980s was the rise in the movement of self-help and education for playwrights, which came about as a direct response to the reduction in state support for art. The other prominent phenomenon was the active role of women playwrights. In the period "between 1956 and 1980, eight per cent of the plays presented at the Royal Court were written by women."[109] They developed an examination of the internal worlds of social issues which were caused by Thatcher's philosophy. In this way, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982) and *Serious Money* (1987) are both critical of Thatcherism. Another female dramatist who reveals her opposition to Thatcher's policy is Kay Adshead with her play, *Thatcher's Women* (1987, Tricycle Theatre) which discusses prostitution as a direct result of unemployment. However, female playwrights will be tackled in depth in my chapter about Timberlake Wertenbaker.

In such a cultural atmosphere, artists were forced to fit into a service-oriented economy, which met the needs of the market out of the realm of everyday life. On one side, their dilemma was embodied by confronting the materialistic attitude of the age. On the other side, they were faced with having to compromise between their personal needs as artists and the political demands that were imposed on them. In order to survive, the artist found himself obliged to follow certain standards which had mostly been rejected by the leftist dramatists of earlier

[108] Baz Kershaw, "Discouraging Democracy: British Theatres and Economics, 1979-1999", p. 269.
[109] David Edgar, "State of Play: new work in the contemporary British theatre", p. 454.

decades. So, as a theatrical strategy, the artist resorted to the ambiguity of the message. In doing so, he hoped to address his audiences without being censored.

The resentment of Thatcher's policy was not exclusive to male playwrights. On the contrary, the prominent phenomenon of the 1980s was the emergence of female playwrights. Christopher Innes titles his final chapter of *Modern British Drama, 1890-1990* as 'Present tense – feminist theatre'[110] to refer to the potential energies of female dramatists. Sarah Daniels is one of those women playwrights who anticipated the feminist movement with *The Devil's Gateway*, which was presented at the Royal Court in 1983.

However, Innes is not alone in drawing attention to the emergence of feminist theatre. Playwright David Edgar, for example, signals "the explosion of new women's theatre"[111] in the 1980s. The playwrights develop an examination of the internal worlds of social issues which were caused by Thatcher's philosophy as mentioned before.

The writers who emerged in the 1990s had experienced the ebb and flow of Thatcherism. They had been brought up with "the belief that profit was the ultimate test of anything's worth"[112] and this was something they repudiated completely when they started writing. In her book, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1990s*, Aleks Sierz states that "[t]he effect of cuts in state subsidy during the Thatcher-led 1980s was twofold: first, it made the whole theatre system increasingly driven by commercial objectives and, second, it encouraged an embattled psyche".[113] This psyche is governed by a competitive mentality of people who are after commercial success. However, in 1990, the Arts Council remained the main source of arts funding with an increasing role for business sponsors. But the constant cuts in state subsidy during the 1980s had a negative impact on new writing at the start of the 1990s. This pessimistic mood is summed up by Michael Billington, who said in May 1991: "New writing for theatre is in a state of crisis".[114] In the same vein, the playwright David Edgar recalls that there was a general consensus that "new work had run out of steam".[115] Therefore, British theatre began to look to American theatre as well as Irish theatre for inspiration. Edgar maintains, "The two

[110] Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990*, p. 448.
[111] David Edgar, "Provocative Acts: British Playwriting in the Post-war Era and Beyond", (ed.) David Edgar, *State of Play: Playwrights on Playwriting*, p. 8.
[112] Michael Billington et al, "The State of British Theatre Now: An Interview with Michael Billington", *Atlantis*, v. 26, n. 1 (June 2004): 89.
[113] Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1990s* (London: Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2012), p., 31.
[114] Michael Billington, *One Night Stand: A Critic's View of Modern British Theatre* (London: Nick Hern, 1993), p., 360.
[115] David Edgar, *State of Play: Playwright on Playwriting*, p., 19.

texts that really turned things around were Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and David Mamet's *Oleanna* in 1993 – they reminded British theatre of the sort of play we used to do so well".[116] By the end of the decade, theatre was completely commercialised. The box office became the driving force of writings which "should be assessed on their social impact".[117]

In the 2000s, a new and unique approach emerged in British theatre. The first development was that theatres came to be run by artistic directors rather than producers who were in immediate contact with the dilemmas from which the playwrights suffered. The second development was that theatre manifested its ability "to respond quickly to current events, much more so than television and cinema".[118] This, in turn, reveals theatre's ability to reflect reality. A good example of this was a series of early evening staged forums by the Royal Court on the Iraq War. This was an interesting way to see how debates are waged among different writers. As part of this, Martin Crimp wrote a wonderful satire called *Advice to Iraqi Mothers* (2003). Likewise, Caryl Churchill wrote a factual piece, *Iraqdoc*, which relied on exchanges between Iraqis and Americans in an online chatroom. The development of Verbatim theatre became a popular form in the early years of the 21st century in "dealing with The Big Topics".[119]

Concerning state funding, the arts enjoyed a golden period. As Aleks Sierz argues, "Under New Labour, theatre got more money than ever before and there was more new writing than ever before".[120] Similarly, in "Theatre in the 2000s", Andrew Haydon states that "British theatre enjoyed something of a qualified 'golden age' in the 2000s, both artistically and economically".[121]

In the first decade of the new millennium, British theatre seemed preoccupied with different issues such as the war on terror, immigration, social fragmentation, cultural segregation and national identity. All these issues created new responsibilities for artists to deal with. Moreover, the rising interest in podcasts, oral histories, voice studies, new sound technologies and immersive theatre practices encouraged both playwrights and directors to focus on the new function of theatre in which hearing and sound played a great role in theatrical performance and audience reception.

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[116] Quoted in Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1990s*, p., 66.
[117] Ibid., p. 34.
[118] Michael Billington et al, "The State of British Theatre Now: An Interview with Michael Billington", p., 93.
[119] Andrew Haydon, "Theatre in the 2000s", ed. Dan Rebellato *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013), p. 45.
[120] Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today*, p. 1.
[121] Andrew Haydon, "Theatre in the 2000s", ed. Dan Rebellato *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009*, p. 45.

As this study will show, the artist figure is often in conflict, torn between the claim of artistic 'purity', economic survival and political commitment. Playwrights such as Tom Stoppard, Howard Barker and Timberlake Wertenbaker are preoccupied not only with presenting those dilemmas but also with finding common ground between art and life. Their transcendent end conveys the truth to the audience by the fictional characters they use. All three playwrights are thematically linked. While Stoppard uses the figure of the artist to investigate the freedom of the artist under communism, Barker is through capitalism. In case of Wertenbaker, using artist figure is meant to highlight different issues of women artists. They also want to reflect the changeable circumstances of their time. As Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe says, "Those artist characters mirror the unrest of their time. Different groupings of the artists try to develop the form of art most suitable to express the revolution, with its fundamental changes of inner and outer life".[122]

By considering several political and aesthetic theories on the role of the artist and the function of art in society, this thesis attempts to take a middle stance. Rather than championing Brecht's political committed of art to a society over Wilde's aesthetics of a literary work, for example, I argue for a kind of equilibrium. Two traits of commitment to social and literary issues should be manifested in a literary work of art.

Furthermore, I would like to suggest that it is precisely by means of presenting of visually and textually combining political, historical and cultural references that theatre becomes the medium which can reveal the potential dilemmas artists confronted through their trajectory.

[122] Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe, *Biographical Plays about Famous Artists* (Cambridge Scholar Press, 2005), p. viii.