INTRODUCTION
"IN A NUTSHELL"

A. CONTEXT

Confusion reigns in the drama classroom mainly because there is no clear perception of the complexity of this genre and its potential in the classroom. The result is, the lack of an effective pedagogy. Some teachers see the drama text as one more text to be finished before the examination, others see it as a rich resource for language teaching, and yet others as a piece of literature to be analysed with scholarly erudition and due veneration. Some teachers are conscious of the performance dimension while others consider that its chief value lies in its ability to provide a dress rehearsal for life. As for the student, he mirrors all these attitudes and one more: he sees the drama text as one more obstacle in the race for a degree, to be avoided altogether if possible, by using a substitute text.

To enter the field of drama is to enter a minefield of controversy, because these attitudes in the classroom reflect a much larger phenomenon. Drama, a multifaceted, multidimensional, complex art is viewed by so many from a single angle to the exclusion of all other angles. From the point of view of the psychologist and the educationist, "all the world's a stage" and drama is the manifestation of a natural human instinct with useful therapeutic and educational functions. For the language expert it is a useful resource for teaching language. For the literary critic the emphasis is on "words, words, words". Most of the critics see it as a genre of literature to be read, analysed and enjoyed in the privacy of the study. As for the votaries of the theatre such as directors and actors, "the play [performance] is the thing," and the text is a mere blueprint for performance, incomplete without its incarnation on stage.

B. AIM AND SCOPE

This research is specifically concerned with the study of drama texts in the English classroom and it posits, that to view a drama text from a single angle to the exclusion of all others is to approach it with 'blinkers' on,
leading to an absurd reduction of this complex, vital and unique art form. It therefore seeks a rationale for a more holistic, integrated approach to enhance and enrich the study of drama in the classroom and proceeds to spell out this open, experiential, communicative approach in terms of a coherent method and consistent techniques.

"Promise - crammed" in the title serves as a reminder of the immense possibilities of drama. It also suggests that this potential remains a 'promise'. waiting to be realized. An integrated approach to the study of drama is an attempt to explore this potential.

The approach is called Integrated because it integrates or combines into an organic whole, the perceptions of what drama is, and why it should be studied from the point of view of theatre men, literary critics, language experts, psychologists and educationists and then proceeds to systematize into a method, some of the effective techniques employed by the above mentioned.

Though written from the standpoint of the teacher, the title refers to "the study" rather than "the teaching" of drama because it envisages the classroom interaction as a joint enterprise between teacher and student. Learning is seen as a two-way process, not the one-way transmission promoted by the lecture mode.

However, it may be useful to draw the boundaries more clearly by stating the areas not examined by this research.

1. Since the manifestations of drama are too many and varied to be contained within the scope of this study, no such gargantuan task is attempted. Though chapter 2 takes a look at the complexity of drama, this research confines itself to the study of such drama texts as are prescribed as part of the General English course at the undergraduate level in this university. Currently they are Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and All My Sons by Arthur Miller (Appendix A).

2. This study, being essentially pragmatic, does not dwell on the policy or the process of selecting texts for study or the formulation of the evaluation system since both are outside the scope of the individual
teacher and it is a case where "readiness is (not) all," that is required for change. However a few thoughts on these areas, prompted by the survey are included in the conclusion.

3. An alternative approach and method are spelt out in terms of tangible techniques, but this study cannot furnish facts and figures to establish their effectiveness. It must be added however that most of the techniques have been tried and tested in the classroom and are based on fairly sound educational principles. Further, while the approach is strongly advocated, methods and techniques must be evolved or adapted by the individual teacher to suit the ethos of the individual class. Each teacher is the expert in her own classroom and each class has its own special needs and strengths which she can gauge best.

4. Though the techniques are drawn freely from students and practitioners of drama, there is no elaborate attempt to trace every technique to its original source in order to assign or divide credit because most of them are widely accepted techniques in education, theatre or psychology.

5. This study also makes two assumptions, which one hopes are not presumptions, because if they are, they limit the scope of the study to such classroom situations where such assumptions may be made. The assumptions are:

   a) that students, given the incentive, are capable of expressing themselves at least minimally in English.

   b) that the teacher is willing and able to build on the suggestions made by this research, for a valid and viable method must evolve from within every classroom, it cannot be imposed from without.

6. Lastly, though four angles of approach to drama are examined, no in-depth study is made of all four. In the final analysis this research is from the angle of the English teacher who seeks to enrich the study of drama in the classroom by taking a more open, communicative approach.
C. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION: "IN A NUTSHELL"

This sets forth the aim and scope, the organization, origin and tools of research, along with an overview of the work done in this field and the conventions of quotation used in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 1. "ALL IS NOT WELL"

Anchored as it is in the reality of the classroom, this research begins with an analysis of some of the problems of studying drama in the classroom and perceives that many of the problems stem from 'blinkerred' attitudes to the complex nature of drama, narrow and inadequate perceptions of its potential in the English classroom, the lack of a well-informed and effective pedagogy and of course, the constraints of the educational system.

CHAPTER 2. THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

This chapter proceeds to remove the 'blinders' by viewing this complex and multifaceted art from four different angles and examines the inherent qualities of drama, in order to understand better, some of the problems that arise in the teaching of it, and to perceive more clearly why it should be studied in the classroom.


PART A "PROMISE-CRAMMED".

This section examines what drama can accomplish in the classroom and spells out the aims and objectives of studying drama.

PART B. "... YET THERE IS METHOD IN IT".

An integrated approach is defined and translated into a method and some tangible techniques.

PART C. "THE READINESS IS ALL"

The advantages to be gained from such a method are listed and the new roles for teacher and student are examined.
CONCLUSION: "THAT'S FOR THOUGHTS"

The conclusion provides a retrospective summary and indicates further areas that need to be explored in depth, offers a few thoughts on the syllabus and evaluation and ends with further suggestions to teachers and students to enrich the study of drama.

D: ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH: "OBSTINATE QUESTIONINGS"

In the classroom (as a teacher)

The sense of dissatisfaction and inadequacy when teaching Hamlet, was overwhelming, inspite of the fact that all the spade work deemed necessary had been completed. The text had been studied several times and individual perceptions bolstered by the best of critics: A.C. Bradley, Wilson Knight, Caroline Spurgeon, Dover Wilson, Granville Barker, Jan Kott and Charles Marowitz. Here was a committed teacher who loved drama, an acknowledged masterpiece as a text, and a class full of eager, enthusiastic, young minds, yet the chemistry did not work. The text seemed endless, the students restless, and the examination meaningless.

Questions and doubts arose that would not be quelled. Colleagues seemed to share the same perplexity, but the most common attitudes were either stoic fortitude: "Ours not to reason why, / Ours but to do and die", or fear of being thought inadequate for voicing the feeling that something was wrong (what may be termed ‘the emperor’s new clothes syndrome’). Had it been any other play, one could resort to the standard ploy of blaming the play and those who prescribed it, but whom does one pillory when the text is Hamlet?

In the theatre (as a student)

The second reason for undertaking this research dates back to student days and two productions, etched forever in the memory. The first was a Bangalore Little Theatre production of Waiting for Godot and the second, a college production of The Glass Menagerie.

The first play had seemed so interminable and repetitive in the classroom, The critics with their endless speculation on what the play
meant, threw light on just one passage when Vladimir and Estragon decide to pass time by abusing one another (act 2).

*Vladimir*: Moron!

*Estragon*: Vermin!

*Vladimir*: Abortion!

*Estragon*: Morpion!

*Vladimir*: Sewer-rat!

*Estragon*: Curate!

*Vladimir*: Cretin!

*Estragon*: (with finality) Critic!

In the darkened auditorium, transferred from the page to the stage, the play was excruciatingly funny and painfully immediate. The visual images alone proved potent enough to haunt the imagination: two men waiting interminably beside a skeleton of a tree for someone who never came; one man leading another tied to the end of a rope; four men stumbling over one another in a sequence that borders on the farcical. What better way to convey that life is endless waiting; that blind and dumb we stumble through life exploiting and being exploited; that life is a see-saw alternation of laughter and tears, hope and despair, tragedy and farce?

The theatre was a potent reminder of a fact often forgotten in the classroom: that the words are but one dimension of the play, that the word is incarnated or made flesh on stage.

It would seem logical at such a point to conclude all too easily that "the play is the thing" and that it has meaning only on stage. The absurdity of such a conclusion came home with the production of the *The Glass Menagerie*. This exquisite, fragile and poignant play, so moving in the classroom was reduced to a farce on stage. The genteel southern belle Amanda became the kind of caricature aptly described by Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, as "... a large Wagnerian mother / With a voice that shatters glass...".

Her aria on her seventeen gentlemen callers (sc.1.) lost its tragic undertones and became a source of pure merriment. With a cast that
Included an Amanda who weighed not an ounce less than two hundred pounds and an obtrusively crippled and clumsy Laura, the play lay shattered like its central symbol, the brittle glass menagerie.

The realization struck home, that the study of a play in the classroom may have its own limitations, but the theatre is not a panacea for all evils. It can kill a play as effectively as the classroom, and while it opens many doors, it closes others. Now the question is, how does one combine the potent, experiential dimension of the theatre with the cold, analytical strength of the study?

At the Examination Centre (as an examiner)

After seven years of ‘apprenticeship’ one is given the ultimate responsibility of valuing papers at the public examination centre. Sleepless nights were spent re-reading the text, the critics and the copious notes in the margin. Bleary-eyed and nervous, one listened to the most unexpected answers expected from the students in the discussion on ‘expected’ answers conducted by the chief examiner. Novices scribbled furiously while veterans sat back, secure in the knowledge that the answer would always be a paraphrase of the plot, no matter what the question happened to be.

Certain ‘choice’ phrases that cropped up with relentless regularity in the papers valued, led to the MCC Digest and Subhas Digest, “friend, philosopher and guide” to all students alike. A whole new horizon opened up, the study of a play as a text prescribed for the examination, not to be confused with either the play as literature or as performance.

New questions began to surface: why should students wrestle with a voluminous and difficult play when they could not see its relevance or enjoy the process of studying it, and above all, when the very evaluation system did not require it of them?

In the world (as an individual)

Voices floated up, “You be Papa and have the boy babies, I'll be Mama and have the girl babies”. The children were rehearsing their future roles in life. Though a trifle confused in their idealistic concept of the literal division of ‘labour’, their imitation was authentic. ‘Papa’ read his papers, ate
breakfast and rushed off to his office in his car. 'Mama' grumbled and muttered incessantly about the quality of domestic help, cleaned and reprimanded the 'baby' for not eating up the vegetables. This was instinctive 'mimesis', the art of the theatre of life and a child's means of self education. This perception opened up a whole field of educationists who advocate role play and improvisation as a form of learning (educational drama) and of psychiatrists who use 'psychodrama', 'role rehearsal' and 'role reversal' in psychotherapy.

All this led to speculation on the possibility of exploring the different dimensions of drama by using a prescribed drama text as the focus of all activity. This study is an attempt to articulate all those "obstinate questionings", to trace the path the research took, leading one to critics and writers; actors and directors; educationists, psychologists and sociologists; to teachers and students, often filled with, "Blank misgivings of a creature / Moving about in worlds not realised".

However, one thing was realised, the need for an integrated approach, incorporating all these perceptions in order to maximize the advantages of studying drama in the classroom.

E. AN OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE IN THE FIELD OF TEACHING DRAMA IN THE CLASSROOM.

While there are many books on the use of drama for language learning and creativity, the numbers dwindle considerably when it comes to the teaching of a play as an artifact. This is not entirely surprising as ELT (English Language Teaching) with its functional thrust, has been receiving attention while TEL (Teaching of English Literature), has been emerging as a distinct field demanding attention only in the last decade or so. In fact "there seems to be far less clear thinking about the teaching of literature than about almost any other recognized 'subject'" (Brumfit and Carter 1986, 22).

Two distinct strands can be traced in the studies that are available on the subject of teaching or studying drama. One strand includes the many foreign experts on the subject and the other is to be found mostly in the
form of articles and seminar papers from English teachers in India. It is necessary to examine these two strands separately and at some length to justify the need for this research on the teaching of drama in the classroom.

In books on the teaching of literature such as those by Moody (1971) and Taylor (1981), one can find the seeds of an approach to drama which Moody labels as a more complex and difficult genre than the novel (64). Moody goes on to advocate the 'workshop' mode of study as the most likely to succeed in the classroom. However, the method outlined is necessarily sketchy since the study of drama is only a small part of a whole approach to the teaching of literature.

Evans in *Drama in English Teaching* (1984) examines the potential of drama in the English classroom, in chapter 1, "The Perimeters and Parameters". She then follows it up with suggestions for creating the right climate for drama in the classroom and exercises to improve speaking and writing skills. She even suggests going beyond the text (93) to other texts and to the mass media (150). However, her main concern is with dramatic activity to promote perception and so she speaks of dramatizing the tales of Greek heroes (95) or The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole (98) etc. When she does concentrate on the study of a drama text such as *Macbeth*, (109-119) and later *Romeo and Juliet* (131-132) the outline of the method is extremely sketchy.

Mc Rae in *Using Drama in the Classroom* also examines the potential of drama in the classroom and emphasizes the importance of the student actually "hooking" on to the text. He also suggests the usefulness of discourse analysis in the study of drama. Both of these suggestions cannot be undervalued. He is one of the few to consider the practical problems of classroom dynamics and to offer some suggestions to facilitate group work. However the basic assumption that he makes - that there will be space and time for complete rehearsals of plays (34) render the suggested method highly impractical in the Indian context. One can at best adapt and adopt some of the individual techniques that he outlines.
Kelsall in *Studying Drama: An Introduction* (1985) uses an approach similar to the one used by critics who analyse the elements of drama as the chapter headings themselves suggest - "Action", "The Empty Space", "Genre", "Character" etc. Short extracts from plays are analysed to illustrate the importance of the subtext (Stanislavski 1961, 159) but he does not actually seek to outline a method of studying a play in the classroom, despite the title.

Pickering in *How to Study a Modern Play* (1988) is primarily concerned with the study of a modern play. But he offers suggestions that can be generalized and applied to most plays. He stresses the importance of skimming through the whole play first and dividing the play into manageable units for intensive study. Advocating a 'workshop' mode of studying a play, he outlines some excellent techniques to explore the different elements of the play. However, in advocating these techniques, he is clearly envisaging small compatible and dedicated tutorial groups with time and space at their command. He does not have to and therefore ignores the whole problem of large numbers of students who will remain uninvolved if they are to serve as spectators while a chosen few engage in imaginative improvisation and play reading.

In *How to Study a Renaissance Play* (1988) Coles outlines a method consisting of six steps summarized below:

Step 1. Read the play and consider the overall pattern and effect.
Step 2. Look at the opening scenes and achieve a sense of what the play is about.
Step 3. Choose a scene from act 2 and clarify the impression of the play and its development.
Step 4. Choose a scene from act 3 and begin to look more closely at the principal characters in the play.
Step 5. Choose a scene from act 4 and look closely at the language of the play.
Step 6. Choose a scene from act 5 and see how the play's issues are resolved and try and draw together the threads of the analysis.
Coles admits that it is not "an infallible guide to the play" (9) but the method seems to lack a reasoned basis and appears impressionistic. Why should a scene in act 3 furnish a better picture of the characters than any other? Why should act 4 be particularly appropriate for examining the language of the play? No rationale is provided and if the individual interpretations of the three plays provided as examples seem satisfying enough, it is because the author knows which particular scene to choose in order to illustrate his purpose. The method therefore presupposes a complete knowledge of the text.

Peter Reynolds in *Practical Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare* (1991) has some down-to-earth suggestions for 'de-mystifying' (5) the study of Shakespeare and breaking free "from the force-feeding teacher-centred situation which is unproductive because it is one way traffic" (6). However, many of the 'practical' suggestions are extremely impractical, given the constraints of the Indian classroom with its lack of space, time and flexibility but no lack of numbers. His section on the 'Rites of Passage' or the prelude to the study of Shakespeare includes a change of clothes, breathing exercises on the floor, limbering-up exercises and energetic tag games. In his suggestions for the study of *Hamlet* (67-75), students throw insulting phrases drawn from the speeches of the three men in Ophelia's life (Hamlet, Polonius and Laertes), at a blindfolded 'Ophelia' to bring alive the concept of bullying. This is followed by an exercise in which students lie on their stomachs and chorically intone the lines that describe Ophelia's death (73). This he adds, is to be followed by a more "conventional approach" (74) which is not elaborated upon at all. No one can deny the brilliant suggestiveness of some of the techniques but equally, no one can deny how impractical these seem in the context of our overcrowded classrooms. The greater fault however lies in the fact that while an approach is indicated broadly and some techniques explored, these techniques are not systematized to form part of a method.

In his paper presented at the TELI seminar (1991), Hyderabad, Don Salter the British expert analyses three major problems in the
teaching of drama - the teacher's deification of Shakespeare, the pedagogic orthodoxy of the lecture method where the teacher is seen as omniscient and the examination with its excessive reliance on the essay answer. A shift from the thematic approach to the "enactment approach" (5) is his suggested cure for all these evils. He pleads the case of "practical drama" which he feels should be included "as part of legitimate academic study" (9). He suggests that a student commentary on the staging and acting of a scene from Shakespeare presented in the form of Director's notes or a prompt copy could take the place of an essay in the examination. No one denies his claim that this could be "just as 'scholarly' or academically rigorous as the traditional essay" (5), but one cannot help but wonder how thousands of our students who have never seen the inside of a theatre are going to cope. More important, this approach places too great an emphasis on the performance dimension to the exclusion of all others. The performance dimension, this research posits is only one aspect, though an important one, in this holistic approach to drama in the English classroom.

V. Bharathi and Girdhar Rao from the University of Hyderabad carry the 'enactment method' to its logical conclusion by describing in their paper, (presented at the TELI Seminar 1991) a full scale production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Admitting the constraints of the classroom, they advocate techniques such as playreading, using illustrative material and "acting out within available limits" (10). However these remain random techniques and not part of a methodology.

Dr. P. Rajani of Madras Christian College reiterates that "a true interpretation of a play comes through only in performance" (4) and insists that "a good teacher must possess the ability to lift a play from the page, to imaginatively envisage a performance when all that is available is the printed word" (3). He insists that a play should be "effectively read" and since "a teacher would experience difficulty in assuming voices" (7) it is suggested that students be included in the play reading. The use of gestures to complement meaning is advocated (8-9) and it is suggested
"that the other adjuncts of drama like lighting, stage-setting, costume, sound etc. could be "explained" and lectures given on the social, political and religious background, author's style and contribution to drama (10). All this suggests a method which is essentially teacher centred and the student remains on the periphery.

Dr. Susan Oomen of Stella Maris College, Madras in her paper "Approaching the Classroom", shifts the emphasis to the student and emphasizes the need for student autonomy. However from the sample workout provided on A Doll's House it is obvious that her programme is geared specifically to the needs of post graduate students of literature, presumably at a more advanced stage in the learning process. The method outlined deals with the larger issues of the play, but does not suggest ways of getting the student to grapple with the play in a systematic manner. It takes for granted a degree of sophistication and familiarity with the dramatic genre that is hardly realistic at the undergraduate level.

Dr. Chandrika B. of All Saints College, Trivandrum in her paper (1991) speaks of some of the problems of teaching drama and advocates the use of quiz, discussion, written assignments and audio-visual aids as important classroom techniques without systematizing their use into a method.

Barbra Naidu of St. Joseph's College, Bangalore in her paper (1992) gives us a very graphic and exciting description of one of the more innovative techniques of exploring drama, that of interviewing a character in a play. But, as she herself admits, "it remained at the level of a technique" and it needs to be explored, adapted and incorporated into a comprehensive classroom strategy for studying drama.

One finds a plethora of York's Notes, Brodie's Notes, Barron's Notes on individual dramatic texts. These, by providing tailor-made paraphrases of the plot, thumbnail character sketches, thematic analyses etc, are geared to meet the needs of the examination. They are potentially dangerous and subversive because they serve as 'substitute texts' inviting the student to take the easy way out and avoid the play altogether. With their pre-digested matter to be conveniently regurgitated in the examination
paper, they preclude thinking and undermine all efforts made in the classroom to effect that vital encounter of the student with the text. This method of ‘studying’ a play does not enable a student to cope with other plays for it merely retails information about the play in hand. Further by advocating a single accepted interpretation of the play, it denies the notion of pluralistic perception.

Our very own *desi* versions of these, such as the *MCC Digest* and *Subhas Digest* go one step further and predict the likely examination questions with uncanny accuracy each year. These provide and encourage uniformity in the student responses, undermining the notion of the plurality of perception as something desirable.

So in the final analysis, it would appear that many foreign experts on the teaching of drama have provided us either with isolated techniques, a method without a convincing rationale or just a broadly outlined approach. Others have provided us with methods and techniques that are impractical given the constraints of the Indian classroom. As for the teachers of drama in India, they give us tantalizing glimpses of effective but isolated techniques or rather sketchy outlines of methods, sometimes too sophisticated for the average undergraduate student.

What this survey of literature on the teaching of drama has served to highlight is a lacuna in this field. Therefore there is scope for a research such as this, which is firmly entrenched in the reality and constraints of the Indian undergraduate classroom, yet seeks to enrich what seems to be an impoverished study of drama by:

i) viewing drama holistically as language, literature, life and performance.

ii) formulating the aims and objectives of studying drama in the English classroom in the light of this enriched definition of drama.

iii) translating an open, experiential, communicative and integrated approach into a concomitant method which in turn is spelt out in terms of consistent techniques.
iv) keeping in mind while formulating the method, the problems encountered by teachers and students while studying drama in the classroom.

v) allowing for the constraints of the Indian classroom.

F. TOOLS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

Since this research is based on classroom experience and it seeks an integrated approach to the study of drama, naturally enough it has had to draw on more than just books and periodicals. Hence this section lists the tools used in this research.

1. Books

Besides the books on the teaching of a drama text, already mentioned in the previous section, this research used insights gained from language experts such as Duff, Maley, Dougill, Holden and Evans; from literary critics such as Wilson Knight, Spurgeon and Dover Wilson; from theatre men such as Stanislavski, Brecht, Craig and Brook; and from psychologists and educationists such as Moreno, Lowenfeld, Heathcote, and Bolton.

Some insights from discourse analysts such as Coulthard and semioticians like Elam and Esslin are subsumed (in a highly simplified form) into the method outlined in chapter 3. These have been simplified, perhaps even oversimplified since it was felt for instance that the complexity of the subject and the technical jargon of semiotics might prove too formidable and esoteric for the undergraduate student who is the focus of the research (Appendix B).

2. Articles In Journals

Those professional journals that deal with the study of English in the classroom such as the ELT Journal, Theory Into Practice, The Modern English Teacher, and Practical English Teaching proved useful especially when it came to the chapter on classroom strategy.

3. Talks, Seminar Papers and Unpublished Dissertations

Talks by eminent men of the theatre or teachers of drama such as B.V. Karanth, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani and Dr. S. Ramaswamy, and seminar papers presented by teachers of English were also used because
they echoed similar concerns and provided a wealth of experience.

4. A Field Survey of Teachers and Students through Questionnaires.

335 students and 35 teachers from 7 colleges were surveyed through questionnaires (Appendix C) on the teaching of drama. The two separate questionnaires (one for teachers and another for students) were formulated to provide mirror images of the current classroom situation with regard to the teaching of drama. The questions were framed to elicit information and provide insight into such aspects as:

i) the relevance of the study of drama in the classroom.
ii) the strengths and weaknesses of the existing pedagogy.
iii) attitudes to the study of drama and the evaluation system.
iv) responses to the texts currently prescribed.
v) suggestions for improvement.

The responses were studied and the observations triangulated through interviews. The findings dictated the direction of the research.

5. Interviews

The interviews conducted were of two kinds. One set of interviews, were follow-up interviews with teachers on the basis of their responses to questionnaires:

i) to obtain further information and clarification.
ii) to follow up leads on innovative teaching strategies.
iii) to establish facts that everyone knows, but is nowhere specifically stated, especially with regard to valuation.

The other interviews were discussion interviews with eminent teachers, with theatre personalities, those involved in educational drama and a psychologist, to provide insight into the different angles of approach, the different dimensions and possibilities of drama that this study seeks to integrate.

6. Experience In the classroom

Besides valuable perceptions gained from colleagues and students of other colleges, twelve years of teaching drama in the classroom, and
sharing problems and insights with colleagues in the same department underlie the suggestions made in this research.

One of the techniques with regard to the interviewing of a character in a play could be examined in some detail thanks to the recordings of classroom interaction made available by the teacher concerned.

G. A NOTE ON THE CONVENTIONS OF QUOTATION USED IN THIS RESEARCH

1. All quotations central to the argument, from plays and from secondary sources are acknowledged, using the Author-Date System (*MLA Handbook*, 1988, 179-181) for convenience and great economy of space.

2. Chapter 1, "All Is Not Well" which is based on the responses to the questionnaire, uses quotations verbatim from the students, complete with grammatical and lexical idiosyncracies to retain that authentic flavour which all teachers will recognize.

3. Quotations from *Hamlet* that provide most of the chapter titles, are scattered freely throughout the dissertation along with well known literary quotations. These are not footnoted as they are too well known to require acknowledgement.

This chapter has "bounded in a nutshell", the argument, the aim and scope, organization, origin and tools of research. It has undertaken a bird's-eye view of the work already done in the field of teaching drama in the classroom in order to establish the lacuna that this research seeks to fill, and ended with a note on the conventions of quotation used in this dissertation to facilitate further reading.
CHAPTER 1.
“ALL IS NOT WELL”

A. A strange object from outer space landed on the earth. Physicists and astronomers circled it, guessing at its composition, structure and function. All efforts proved futile for the object defied classification and analysis. Finally a man walked up and asked “What’s your name?” “Ralph”, came the prompt reply (Rivers 1975, 11).

This apocryphal story cited by Rivers in his book on research methodology, reminds us of the tendency to overlook the most obvious and direct methods in this age of sophistication. This chapter anchored in the reality of the classroom is an analysis of some of the problems of studying drama which surfaced in a field-survey of 335 students and 35 teachers through questionnaires (Appendix C) and follow-up interviews. While many of the problems were identified as such by both teachers and students, others manifested themselves when the responses were scrutinized and tabulated. The perceptions gained from the survey dictated the direction of the research and prepared the ground for an alternative approach to the study of drama in the classroom outlined in chapter 3. As Brumfit points out, “proposals for effective teaching must rely heavily on feedback mechanisms which can only come from typical students in typical schools [colleges] with typical teachers” (1985, 26).

While many of the problems analysed are common to all teaching at the undergraduate level in India, other are peculiar to the teaching of drama. Not all of the problems suggest solutions, but this study was undertaken in the conviction that before looking for solutions, one must identify and examine the problematic areas in the study of drama.

B. THE PROBLEMS OF STUDYING DRAMA IN THE CLASSROOM

1. The demolition of the distinction between drama and the other genres, especially the novel.

After many years of studying drama in school and college, when a student exclaimed in response to the questionnaire, “I still don’t know what
a play is," the statement was brushed aside as the modest disclaimer of
one who recognized the complexity of the genre. However a question
framed to elicit information on plays popular with students, unearthed the
unexpected fact that many students really cannot distinguish between,

a) a play and a novel.
b) a part of a play and the whole.
c) a television serial and a play for the stage.

As evidence, there are students who remember studying the following
'plays' : Huckleberry Finn, Mill on the Floss, Jane Eyre and of course
The Man-eater of Malgudi. Others mistaking the part for the whole, claim
to have studied Pyramus and Thisbe. Others, perhaps more
sophisticated, claim to have enjoyed the 'plays' Malgudi Days and The
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (television serials aired by the
Doordarshan).

It is a hoary tradition to blame everything on the syllabus because it
merely lists the names of the texts to be studied and the marks allotted,
without making any other distinction between the genres:

I Year : A Modern Play : All My Sons - Arthur Miller
(25 marks)

II Year: A Shakespearean Play : Hamlet (20 marks) + 2
annotations of 5 marks each.

However, if one is honest, one must admit that the fault is not in the
texts or the syllabus but in the pedagogy. At least the syllabus clearly
labels them as plays, which apparently is more than the pedagogy has
achieved. Asked whether the classes on drama were perceived as different
from the classes on the novel, students replied with an emphatic "No", "Nil",
"Same". Other responses ranged from the puzzled (or ironic?) "They are
said to be different", to the accusatory, "Our lecturer has not the capacity
to...". Responses included the grammatically sound, "I had not felt any
appreciable difference," to the grammatically unsound but convincing "I did
not found any difference."

In general, the teacher reads the text, explains it and 'discusses' it,
accenting plot construction, character and theme in exactly the same manner as with the novel. The examination then annihilates any remaining vestige of difference between the genres. The questions set on drama sound exactly the same as those on the novel:

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<tr>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Drama</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Sketch the Character of</td>
<td>a) Sketch the character of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vasu/Natraj etc</td>
<td>Hamlet/Claudius etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Comment on the title, <em>The Man-eater of Malgudi</em></td>
<td>b) Comment on the title <em>All My Sons</em></td>
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<td>c) Write short notes on:</td>
<td>c) Write short notes on:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rangi</td>
<td>Ophelia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sen, the Journalist</td>
<td>Fortinbras</td>
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<td>The Forest Officer</td>
<td>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern</td>
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 Needless to say, no real difference is expected, or found in the answers. On being interviewed, teachers admitted that a mere plot summary secured the student the fundamental right to pass, maybe even a first class if the answer was well written. In such a context it is hardly surprising that students cannot distinguish between a play and a novel.

2. A multidimensional art is reduced to a unidimensional one, the play text is severed from the theatre.

The divorce of drama as literature and as theatre is often a fait accompli in the context of the classroom, with teachers insisting that students need to know nothing about the Elizabethan stage to understand or appreciate a Shakespearean play (interview 5), or that the theatrical element has to be "eliminated" before it is taught. The same teacher when interviewed, insisted on "abstracting lines" from the play (interview 2). But with the "abstracting" process, disappear all the concrete visual and aural elements which are integral to the impact of a play. These elements (chapter 2), so vital to the understanding of drama must be considered, for every play is an assault upon the senses. Styan decries the growing tendency to read a play like a novel, untangling the literary threads to arrive at a literary conclusion. The inevitable result of such a process he
concludes, is that the elusive essence of the play "would have escaped" (1972, 1).

"Palpable theatrical life exists on the printed page if we are prepared to discover it" (Vena 1988, 2), but having no real experience of the theatre, the students invariably have eyes that see not, ears that hear not, hearts that neither care nor understand.

No doubt, modern plays do print stage directions constituting what Roman Ingarden calls the "Nebentext" or subsidiary text as opposed to the ‘Hauptext’ or main text (Esslin 1987, 80). Yet this 'secondary' text is often of primary importance as at the end of A Doll’s House where the sound of a door slamming shut kills all expectations of a happy ending raised by Helmer’s voiced hope of "the greatest miracle". Waiting for Godot ends with Vladimir and Estragon freezing into silent immobility in the face of what Lucky in his "think" calls "divine aphasia divine athambia, divine aphasia". However, this is suggested by the stage direction or subsidiary text while Estragon’s articulated words "Yes, let’s go" suggest determined movement and action after interminable waiting (act 2). But, as B.V. Karanth, renowned director and theatre person points out, it is natural that stage directions are overlooked in reading because italics do not stand a chance against the bolder print of the main text (interview 7).

Kirtana Reddy of the Asian-American Theatre Project Los Angeles, underlines this concentration on the words to the exclusion of everything else:

The drama we studied in college, was so restricted to the words on the page that our imagination was simply not stimulated...I also wonder whether the people who taught us drama in college were aware of the scope of the play, the possibilities beyond the words. We tend to get stuck with the words... (interview 17).

3. The lack of any theory informing the practice of teaching drama.

One of the greatest problems in the teaching of drama lies in the fact that there are no officially articulated aims and objectives for teaching drama and no recommended pedagogy. Inevitably, each teacher falls back
on her own resources and formulates her own methods, or "tends to repeat uncritically teaching methods which the teachers themselves experienced as students" (Beard 1970, 14) following footprints in the sands of pedagogic time.

No doubt, ideas about learning and the needs of students "change as the world changes, and the procedures - if they are to convince students of their relevance and authority - will need to change too" (Brumfit 1985, 88). However, as Brumfit goes on to add, the pedagogy must carry conviction. But doubt not conviction was the key word with students and teachers when questioned about the pedagogy. "I am more confident of the elements of prose and grammar ... with drama you are never sure... you feel uncomfortable" (interview 14). This honest doubt however, was more reassuring than many of the stated credos about teaching drama. The descriptions given below are culled from student and teacher responses to questions on pedagogy, and bear witness to the random, hit-or-miss methods employed in the drama classroom.

* One teacher gives an elaborate introduction to the Elizabethan age, theatre and concept of tragedy while another plunges into the play without much ado.
* One reads the whole play aloud in class, while another entrusts the play reading to students.
* One uses an audio tape to ensure that the students ‘hear’ the characters, while another insists on silent reading.
* One promotes discussion, while another dictates notes.
* One begins with a global view of the play, another attacks it piecemeal.
* One consciously avoids a line by line paraphrase, another labours along with a word by word explanation.
* One suggests that the examinations be ignored altogether, another never allows the students to forget it.
* One encourages plurality of perception, another insists on playing it safe with the ‘accepted’ interpretation.
* One insists on familiarizing the student with the plot before
plunging in, while another insists on maintaining the suspense.

* One insists that the play be approached as theatre, another insists that it be studied as a poem.

In short, there are as many methods as there are teachers. No doubt each teacher is the expert in her own class, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong in a variety of teaching methods. All one asks for is a rationale for the method - a little method(ology) in the individual madness, based on an understanding of the problems of studying drama in the classroom, the nature of drama itself and the aims and objectives of studying it.

4. Innovative techniques are used on an ad hoc basis, not as part of a method.

Sensing the inadequacy of traditional methods to teach drama, many teachers attempt to supplement the lecture-method with audio-visual aids, or use innovative teaching techniques in the classroom which is certainly a welcome change for all concerned. But these, unless employed as part of an informed method, can compound the problems. For example, many of the students had seen at least one video version of *Hamlet* and found it extremely memorable and exciting. However, some of them, obviously unprepared for the notion that every production is an interpretation of the play, found the "differences" either jarring or confusing. To sum up the reaction in the words of a student who sounds confused in more ways than one: "It still more confused me". A little preparation before seeing the video film, and some discussion afterwards could have ironed out some of these problems and proved extremely fruitful.

Even more troubling was the attitude of students who did not notice any difference at all and thought the video version an excellent substitute for reading or studying the play and used it as "revision " for the examination.

Clearly, if a technique is to be effective, it must have clear objectives and must be refined to achieve those objectives. Further, it must be a part of a whole method and should not be used in a random fashion.
5. Plurality of perception discouraged/encouraged without the ratification of the text.

Unlike the novel where it is usually possible to hear the authorial voice above the babble of other voices, in the dialectics of drama, it is difficult to detect the distinct voice of the dramatist who "like the god of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails..." (Joyce 1956, 215). However exaggerated this picture of the distant dramatist may seem, no statement in a play can be attributed directly to the dramatist, every statement must be taken 'in character.' One may equate the voice of Chris Keller condemning his father for the lack of social responsibility, with the voice of Miller the playwright. But in the context of the play, Chris is indicted too, for his lack of compassion and his holier-than-thou attitude. One may speculate on Shakespeare's views on Jews, Jew baiting and the so called Christian principles in the context of *The Merchant of Venice*, but one can never be sure of his personal stand for the very nature of drama militates against dogmatism of any kind.

Yet, from student responses one gathers that most teachers descend as from Mount Sinai to engrave what they considered 'the message' of the play on the tablets of student memory.

In some cases however, one finds that the fault lies equally with the students. In this scientific age of computers and objective type questions, they are conditioned to think in terms of one right answer to every question. Plurality of perception is seen as neither right nor desirable. Consequently, many students complained about indecisive discussions and about teachers who were not 'sure' of their interpretations. Frustrated in their attempts to reduce *Hamlet* to a formula, unable to pluck out the heart of its mystery, they dismissed it for the very reason *Hamlet* has exercised such a fascination for four centuries: "*Hamlet* is still an enigma" they complained, "the message is not clear," it is "abstruse" and "ambiguous". They would certainly have been puzzled by the Keatsian concept that "a man must be capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts,
without any irritable reaching after fact and reason”.

On the other hand, plurality of perception may be precious, but if every interpretation offered is accepted gratefully without the ratification of the text, it leads to another problem—a state of utter confusion. When opinion veers like the weather vane, confused students are bound to take the only ‘safe’ path pointed out by that infallible ‘guide’ - the MCC Digest, which delivers the mystery of Hamlet neatly packaged in a few dozen pages in terms that are unequivocal and unambiguous. After all, the ‘context’ of each line in the Hymesian sense (Coulthard 1977 42-51) restricts the possible interpretations of the text and the ‘subtext’ (Stainslavski 1961,159). The student must learn to negotiate meaning with reference to the text, the only way in which he can sharpen his own reading and comprehension skills.

6. Heavily content-based, teacher-centred activity, promoting dependence instead of independence.

The only one to benefit from a lecture is the lecturer, has become the watchword of communicative teaching. As long as the current line-by-line paraphrase system is employed in the teaching of drama (or for that matter, any genre), followed by the dictation of notes, the student is at the fringe of the learning process. Standing literally and metaphorically between the student and the text, the teacher can obscure the text and prevent direct student interaction with it. How distant such a method seems from the art of the theatre which invites audience participation to decode and interpret the semiotic signals from the stage. Students surveyed, using the language of the theatre insisted, “We want a dialogue, not a monologue”.

Brumfit points out that "It needs to be argued forcefully that literature teaching is about abilities, not knowledge..." (1985, 109). Elsewhere he argues, "Particularly, we need to recognize that we cannot claim to be teaching specific books; rather we are teaching attitudes and abilities which will be relevant to the reading of any major works of literature." In other words, what we teachers have to accomplish is to "create conditions of
successful learning" (Brumfit 1985, 118) and the only way this can be done is to enable a student to come to grips with the play on his own terms.

Open discussion to lay bare the processes by which one negotiates meaning, comparison with other texts, and introduction to the conventions of literature will help accelerate the autonomy of the student and make him independent of the teacher. Every text, then serves the purpose of opening doors, revealing infinite wealth and 'realms of gold' to use a phrase from Keats' sonnet on Chapman's Homer.

7. Idolatry In Bardolatry or the teacher's deification of Shakespeare and the classics.

The 'deification' of Shakespeare and the texts prescribed was identified by many of the students and one of the teachers as being a very real obstacle to the true appreciation and understanding of the plays, which are distanced by the aura of mystery and the mystique that surrounds them. Worshipping at the altar of Shakespearian genius, the teacher-priest, often goes into a trance-like state, oblivious of the fact that the intended disciples have made a mental exit from the oppressive temple, either overawed or alienated by the power and perfection of the 'deity'.

Excessive reverence can weigh heavily even on willing acolytes. Hushed by the fear of committing academic sacrilege, students are intimidated, prevented from interacting with the text, and questioning it on their own terms. Without this hands-on experience, there is no effective learning. Others respond with hostility and this hostility was much in evidence as students condemned teachers who quoted critics ad nauseam and lingered over favourite soliloquies ad infinitum. Govinda Rao, teacher and theatre-person insists that a teacher must not "indulge in scholarly disquisition" (interview 16). This indulgence and cultivation of obscurantism can give the impression that the enjoyment of the play is an esoteric gift, denied to the less fortunate. Marowitz, condemns such academics, "Obsessed with every grain, every wart, every follicle to be found in the collected works [of Shakespeare]". In their obsession with the minutiae of
the play, he points out that "Not only do they not see the forests for the trees, they are often too fascinated by the sap on the bark even to see the trunk" (1991, 5)

Therefore teachers need to tone down a microscopic, myopic examination and find new and informal ways of approaching the text. The dazzle that surrounds a deity may blind the disciple or frighten the stranger who dares to approach.

8. Ridity, predictability and lack of variety in teaching techniques.

"Exciting techniques excite teachers, and their excitement may communicate itself to students, but learning needs to be calm, slow and steady at times" (Brumfit 1985, 100). From the survey however, it would appear that the all-pervasive lecture method ensures that the process is only too calm, slow and steady at all times. Students confessed to sweet slumber stealing over their senses as the lecturer soliloquized on the dais.

This monotony is alien to the very nature of drama which thrives on suspense and variety. One is constantly kept guessing by the dramatist about what is going to happen, how it is going to happen or how the characters are going to react when it happens. Even when all these facts are known, one still goes to see the production of a well-known play because there is still the 'surprise' element of the individual director's vision or actor's interpretation of a role.

Yet, drama classes, inflexible and predictable, kill student interest and the play in the process, as the inevitable curtain of sleep descends. A change of pace and tempo, a break in the monotony could revive flagging interest dramatically, and ensure more effective learning.

9. A large, heterogeneous batch of students, combined with a lack of space and flexitime.

The present system of education, erected largely around the concept of the lecture has been accused, not without reason, of polishing pebbles while dimming diamonds and trampling underfoot the humble clods of earth. Every lecture is inevitably pitched at the level of the average student and leaves the two ends of the spectrum dissatisfied and frustrated. An
examination of the student responses revealed that students in the same class varied substantially in their intellectual and linguistic abilities, ranging from those who enjoyed *Hamlet* "because it is a ghost story" to those who recognized that "there is a touch of Hamlet in each of us", from those who could barely articulate their thoughts to those who were eloquent and persuasive. Inevitably, there were complaints about the lack of sufficient explanation or too much of it. To tax students beyond their capabilities leads to a sense of inadequacy and frustration while to underestimate their abilities will kill all initiative and interest, leading to boredom.

Sachi Madhavan in her unpublished dissertation uses Aesop's fable of the hare and the tortoise to illustrate the point about such classroom situations. "The hare", she says, "is the classic case of the gifted underachiever." It would not have slept and lost the race if it had been pitted against another hare instead of a tortoise (1988, 26). No doubt, this applies to every genre that is studied in such classrooms, but the problem is aggravated in the case of drama, partly because of the complexity of the genre, the length of the text and the fact that there is only one play prescribed. There is none of the variety of texts as in the case of poetry or prose pieces prescribed for study. If one poem or prose piece is too challenging, there is another that is simple enough to satisfy those less talented and besides, such pieces are not interminable. Further, from the point of view of the examination, each student can choose to answer questions on those texts that one finds conducive. To adapt the apt analogy of the race between the hare and the tortoise - if the hare keeps his wonted pace, then the tortoise can never hope to catch up and the longer the race, the greater the distance between them. If the text is explored at the pace of the reptile, then the hare must have recourse to slumber. The problem is to find how the study of drama can provide a race that is challenging and satisfying to both the hare and the tortoise.

The perennial problem of numbers in the classroom and the consequent lack of space, render impractical some of the 'practical' approaches advocated by foreign experts, with breathing exercises on the
floor and energetic tag games (Reynolds 1991). "Cabin'd cribb'd and confin'd" as we are in claustrophobic classrooms, we are further restricted by rigid time-tables, with the bell tolling the death-knell of any enthusiastic activity that exceeds an hour at a time. This rules out even more ambitious suggestions of full-scale play productions often made by foreign experts. Bounded as one is by finite space and time, how does one encourage participation and explore the infinite possibilities of drama?

10. The lack of motivation.

"This is crucial. There never has been a theatre where attendance was compulsory" (Robinson 1980, 98). People go to the theatre because they want to, because of a compulsion from within, not from without. In the classroom however, to use the language of the theatre and Sartre, there is "No exit". This is why one student cried out in response to the questionnaire, "I hate drama, I was compelled to do it." This sense of compulsion, reinforced by the constant emphasis on instruction and didacticism at the expense of entertainment can be extremely de-motivating, and one remembers Shaw who refused to allow any of his plays to be edited as set text books, on what he claimed were purely humanitarian grounds (Boulton 1983, 174).

If the students see the relevance of drama or if the text itself is rewarding and gripping enough, or if they enjoy the process of exploring the text, students can be motivated, and all obstacles overcome. This was obvious from the fact that a far larger percentage of students seem to have enjoyed Hamlet rather than All My Sons inspite of teachers asserting that the latter play was closer to the students' experience and linguistic capacity.

Everything is relative, and when there is no motivation, any text can appear too long. Students objected to the apparent 'length' of All My Sons, the lack of sequence (so much for Miller's well-knit plot), the confusion of motives and the fact that "there is no proper ending". Poor Joe Keller seems to have died in vain. This shows that many students prefer the challenge of a more difficult and rewarding text to that of an easier and
more accessible one. The crucial factor is the motivation, which seems to have been very high in the case of *Hamlet*.

11. Working In Isolation.

Drama by its very nature is designed to be a collective experience. Stanislavski calls the essence of the art "collective creativeness" (1980b, 32), and this concept was reiterated by every single theatre person interviewed. B.V. Karanth calls it "a community effort" (interview 7), Mahesh Dattani insists that it is "always a sharing experience" (interview 4) while Jyoti Makija emphasizes "the give and take" of working together on a play (interview 9).

Yet, tradition-bound as our educational system is, it is a familiar sight to see children sit with their arms around their books, each one working in well-defined isolation as if it is a crime to learn from one's peers. The social dimension of drama is seldom exploited in the classroom. Teachers too when interviewed, expressed their diffidence about working alone on a complex play. Most of them expressed a desire for some feedback and a sharing of doubts and insights in the hope of formulating a more relevant pedagogy (interview 18).

12. Keeping track of numerous characters and incidents.

The students pointed out that the language of drama with its multiple layers of meaning is difficult enough, but the difficulty is compounded by the fact that there are "far too many" characters with strange names who are all strangers when the curtain goes up on the text. In the first two scenes of *Hamlet*, one meets or hears of Francisco, Bernardo, Horatio, Marcellus, the ghost of Hamlet the Elder, Fortinbras the Elder and Younger, Claudius, Polonius, Laertes, Hamlet, Gertrude and for good measure Cornelius and Reynaldo. It is difficult to concentrate on what is being said and why, when one does not know who is speaking to whom, and who they both are anyway.

The novel introduces characters at a more leisurely pace and in the theatre, physical appearance, costume and speech characteristics would help to anchor memory as in real life, where one remembers the girl in the
pink dress, with the frizzy hair or affected accent.

Even more difficult, according to the students, is the problem of keeping track of the events or what Stanislavski calls "the line of through action" (1961, 253) Yet teachers seem oblivious of this vital need to keep track of characters and events before one tries to explore the finer nuances of the play.

3. The language of drama.

When a woman says "My saree is torn", it could be a simple statement of irrefutable fact, an indication that she needs time to change into another saree, a hint that her husband should buy her another, or an accusation that no one really cares about her. Thus, as Hymes points out, in the analysis of conversation, one has to remember the participants, the topic, the setting in terms of time, space and occasion, the key or the spirit of the conversation and of course the purpose of the conversation. This is what constitutes the context (Coulthard 1977, 42-51). In addition it must be remembered, that in dramatic dialogue in addition to the addressor and addressee, the dramatist is addressing "the superaddressee" a term used by Barthes for the audience (Page 1992, 16) This can often produce complex ironic effects as when Aegisthus is told by the chorus to confront the two young strangers, "No news is sure at second hand; / better find the truth by asking man to man." The audience knows, as the chorus does, that restes will tell him the truth, man to man — with a sword (The Choephoroi).

This iceberg effect of dramatic language, demands that one looks beneath the words to the "subtext" (Stanislavski, 1961, 159), or what is really being communicated under the surface of words. As one student put it, it is not easy to get "into the real play, beyond the text". In a novel, the novelist often verbalizes the text and subtext for the reader, but in drama one has to use one's knowledge of human beings and the world, and the context of the words to guess at the subtext. When the playwright composes, he works from the feelings to the words, while the student must learn to reverse the process and from the words arrive at the feelings beneath.
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Further, the language of drama carries a sense of urgency and concentration because it must communicate immediately and with great economy. Other artists need to worry only about expression, but the dramatist must worry about impression, or the effect on the audience. This is why the language of drama is seldom leisurely, seldom purely narrative, reflective or analytical. As one student sums up, "In drama classes we have to give importance to each and every line and dialogue." To sustain this continual concentration is another major difficulty in studying drama.

In Shakespearean plays, the dense metaphorical language, topical and classical allusions and archaic language can be intimidating, leading to the reiteration which echoed again and again in the student responses to the questionnaire, that a Shakespearean play has to be 'translated' before it is understood. As one teacher pointed out, in modern plays the use of slang, dialect and colloquialisms lead to "the students' inability to match it with conventional notions of acceptable literature". In this sense, good literary texts "may indeed be misleading as linguistic material for learners" (Brumfit 1985, 120). It may lead to the kind of naïve observation made by one student: "His [Miller's] English is not up to the level (sic)."

Further, the language of drama is meant to be spoken, and unless the student has an alert auditory imagination and 'hears' the lines with stress, intonation and the right pauses, he may miss all the undertones and overtones packed for instance into the following seemingly innocuous conversation between husband and wife about the itinerary of their royal house-guest.

*Macbeth*: My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

*Lady M*: And when goes hence?

*Macbeth*: To-morrow, - as he purposes. *Macbeth* (1.5.59-61).

The language of drama was identified by teachers and students as the single greatest problem in studying drama in the classroom. This difficulty inevitably led to the teacher usurping the function of the student in the classroom.
14. **The loss of continuity and the fragmentation of the play.**

On December 24, 1926, the drama critic of the Times reviewed a production of *Macbeth* which tried to combine fidelity to Shakespeare’s text with realistic and elaborate sets. The inevitable result was that the curtain descended no less than 22 times, destroying concentration and leading to the complete fragmentation of the play (Bartholomeusz 1978, 226). One can well imagine what happens to the ‘two hours traffic’ of the stage stretched out over the whole year. Cut and hacked (often arbitrarily) to fit into an hour or two a week, with long breaks in between, the play begins to take on a surrealistic quality with no beginning and no end, stretching on "till the crack of doom" (*Macbeth* 4.1.117).

Teachers (interviews 13, 16) commented on the fact that the global view of the play was seldom undertaken. The closely knit play, with careful foreshadowing and ironic echoes of earlier lines and events, so easily recalled in the theatre are lost, "melted / As breath into the wind" (*Macbeth* 1.3.81-82).

It is no easy matter it was observed, to sustain student interest and preserve that intensity and continuity over a protracted period of time. By comparison, the poems and essays and grammar lessons seem mercifully brief, making time management easier (interview 13). However the leisurely pace seems to suit the novel which thrives under such conditions.

15. **Bypassing the text altogether.**

"There is no substitute for a close encounter with the text" (Bartholomeusz 1978, 271). But while teachers argue passionately about whether a given text should be exploited for language learning, literary appreciation, theatre experience or preparation for life, the students seem to realise that the simplest and most sensible way to tackle the trauma of examination is:

a. to analyse previous question papers (for the same question turns up with surprising regularity even in the same paper).

b. to read the text in a select manner keeping the expected questions in mind.
c. to study the bazaar guide which does both of the above.

d. substitute a. and b. with the teacher's notes or a video version of the play

50% of the students interviewed openly admitted that they used the **MCC Digest** and some of their choice statements are appended below with the implications in parenthesis.

[* "I used to read once, take it as a story and prepare for my exam": – (A nodding acquaintance with the text will do.)

* "Guide helped a lot. Remembering some of the teachings in class helped a bit". – (The guide was more useful than the teaching.)

* "I could not understand anything if I had no digest". – (The pedagogy did not help.)

* "[I use the guide] because examiners look for stereotype answers to their questions." – (Examiners do not appreciate originality.)

* "You won't believe it, even though I love drama classes and drama in general, I bought an English guide for my exam. Prior experience told me that this was the wisest thing to do 'cos this is what people who get more marks eventually do, and maybe its what the university expects." – (Original perceptions do not fetch high marks. It is better to play it safe.)

(Note: All the statements are reproduced verbatim).

If students are dissatisfied with the examination system, teachers are disillusioned. "I have lost all faith in the examination system" (Interview 13), sums it up from their angle. 24 out of 25 teachers who had valued papers were dissatisfied with the answers expected and 18 of them objected to the questions on the grounds that they were vague, misleading, closed or stock questions asking for corresponding answers. A mere plot outline procured the necessary marks, teachers admitted and variations in the grade came from variations in linguistic ability. With indignation, many pointed out that the brighter and more perceptive students who were original in their thinking or went beyond the text, often fared worse than those who served up the predigested matter in the **MCC Digest**. The apparent golden rule of the examiners being, familiarity breeds content, because it eliminates the
need to read the whole answer.

The problem is, that there is no incentive for the student to read the text when the examination does not demand an encounter with the text and the pedagogy does not ensure the same.

16. Inadequate and differing perceptions of the relevance of drama in the English classroom

Many of the teachers viewed drama as a genre to be exploited for the teaching of language, providing "real language situations". "examples of contemporary spoken English" or "a useful resource for teaching language". Others saw it as a major genre of literature to be analysed and appreciated against a background of English literature. Yet others saw it as a rehearsal for life and therefore "socially relevant" because "it reflects a vital part of life as we live it".

The dimension of the theatre, if it was seen as relevant at all, was alluded to only indirectly, almost as if it was something to be ashamed of, or on the fringes of perception. Drama it was acknowledged, has "a presentness" "a quality of felt life" "the visual dimension" and "the spatial factor."

These attitudes were mirrored in the students who ranged from those who saw its utility value, "In talking it helps me (sic), " to those who saw its philosophic value showing the link and continuity with earlier centuries, "their problems are still our problems". Many however ignored the question on the relevance of drama altogether, and others stated in categorical terms that drama was not relevant to them because the pedagogy was too "theoretical" "confusing", "difficult to follow". Obviously pragmatic in their approach, they insisted that they could "see no use in the future", "no use anywhere", "not connected with the course material", "not relevant to science/commerce students", and that they were "not going into the media".

All of these statements point to a very narrow perception of drama and its relevance in the classroom. Yet another student dismissed the relevance of drama on the grounds that "it was relaxing and good fun", 
proving Bertrand Russell's conviction that the Augustinian concept of
education is too deeply ingrained within us to be easily uprooted. Like the
ascetic Saint Augustine in his *Confessions*, our educational system
condemns "pernicious blithsomeness" and insists on the notion that if
education is to be fruitful, it must be painful. A sad reflection on the joyless
system that appears masochistic (Russell 1984, 35).

However what was remarkable when the tabulation of the responses
was complete, was the poverty of the Individual responses and the wealth
of collective wisdom, providing one more justification for the "collective
approach" to the study of drama outlined in chapter 3.

At the National Seminar on the Teaching of English Literature in India
held in Hyderabad between March 7 and March 12, 1991, many of these
problems were echoed by teachers from other parts of India. This section
therefore moves out in widening concentric circles to include national and
international perceptions on the problems of studying drama in the
classroom. Dr. Chandrika B. of All Saints College, Trivandrum speaks of a
survey she conducted in which 50% of her colleagues "failed to notice any
difference between the teaching of drama and other genres". She
underlines the student addiction to the "masterpieces in digest form" which
never seemed to collect dust in the library and concludes that "where
secondary pre-cooked material makes the way easier", the student will
inevitably turn to it. (1991)

Dr. Rajani of Madras Christian College established the fact that
"Drama is taught in virtually the same way as one would teach a poem or
a piece of prose fiction . . . as something to be read for an examination.
A line by line explication of the text is provided and the students are
instructed to underline passages for annotations. Important questions are
discussed and the job is considered to have been satisfactorily performed"

Professor Don Salter, the British expert in the same seminar admits
"It is clear that the experience of University teachers in India......closely
mirrors that of teachers in Britain". He argues passionately for the shift from
"the thematic approach" to "the enactment approach" (1991).

V. Bharathi and A. Girdhar Rao from the University of Hyderabad carried this thought to the logical conclusion and described 50 days of discovery and excitement during the rehearsal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Commendable and satisfying as the experience seems to have been to all concerned, it is hardly a practical solution to be offered to every teacher beset by problems such as the lack of space, time and no lack of numbers.

The survey has highlighted some of the problems of the studying drama in the English classroom. It has consciously avoided looking at the problems peculiar to individual texts such as the length of *Hamlet*. Add 36 lines to *Hamlet* and it is twice the length of *Macbeth* Dr. Ramaswamy pointed out (interview 15). This sheer length can be self-defeating and cause "fatigue" (Brumfit 1958, 117). However these problems are consciously set aside and only those problems common to most dramatic texts are considered.
From the analysis of the problems, it is evident that most of the problems stem either from the constraints of the system, the pedagogy employed (how drama is studied) or the inadequate perceptions of the relevance of drama in the classroom (why it is studied), which in turn stems from narrow perceptions of the nature of drama (what is drama). Working on the principle that one must first seek to know the nature of something before deciding why it is useful or how it can be used, the next chapter examines the question "What is drama?", viewing this multifaceted, multidimensional art from varied angles.