CHAPTER 2

THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

A. Four men approached the elephant in the dark of the night, anxious to examine this strange, much talked about creature. In pitch darkness one touched its trunk and decided that it was like a huge snake. Feeling its leg the second concluded that it was like a huge pillar, while the third touching its ear was convinced that it was like a fan. The fourth, approaching it from behind was certain that it was like a massive throne.

This all too familiar story underlines facts often forgotten:

1. When the subject is 'mammoth' it is not possible to take its full measure.
2. Individual conclusions depend on the individual angles of approach.
3. While each conclusion was 'true' for a part, it was 'false' in the light of the whole.
4. If only some form of light had been used, the conclusion would have been closer to the truth.
5. If all four men had shared their initial impressions, facile and false conclusions would not have been made.

Keeping in mind the mammoth, multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the subject 'drama' this chapter examines four different approaches to drama. Following the suggestion that it is important to first "try and answer the question, what is the work of art" (Grace 1965, 189) before exploring its usefulness and how the usefulness may be best exploited in the classroom, this chapter undertakes an examination of the unique qualities of drama.

DEFINING DRAMA: FOUR ANGLES OF APPROACH

The previous chapter showed that the four angles of approach were already seminally present in the teachers' perceptions of the relevance of drama. Now they are examined in more detail as part of a larger phenomenon.
1. Drama As Literature - Literary Critics

Aristotle, the father of dramatic criticism in his *Poetics* called drama "the imitation of an action" but since critics are divided in their opinion as to what he meant by "imitation" and by "action", one turns for a more explicit definition to the great lexicographer Dr. Johnson. In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, he says "a dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect" (27). As a literary man, he asserts the primacy of the text or the 'verbal' element and relegates all other dimensions to the secondary position of mere 'concomitants' or accompaniments. No self-respecting actor would accept 'recited' as a flattering or even adequate description of the thespian art and any stage designer, musician or choreographer would take offence at the rather condescending tone which suggests that their work is marginal not integral to the design of the whole. With due respect to this 'great cham' of English literature, it might be argued that it was perhaps this inadequate perception of the medium of the theatre that prevented his own play *Irene* from being a success.

This dichotomy between drama with its emphasis on the text and theatre with its emphasis on performance seems to run through the whole gamut of literature on the subject (Hinchcliffe 1972, 12), so that even in a standard volume such as *English Drama : Select Bibliographical Guides* (1975) the editor Stanley Wells asserts his belief that theatre experience is 'fundamental' to the study of drama (viii) and pages later, Allardyce Nicoll declares that he is "of course concerned specifically with drama, not with the theatre" (279) though in a later work Nicoll concedes, "Drama however having one foot in the theatre is only half a literary form..." (1978,199).

2. Drama As Performance - Theatre People.

Conflict is obviously the essence of drama and seemingly of all dramatic criticism. Inevitably, there is the traditional pitched battle between those who consider drama as literature to be read and those who see it as a blueprint for performance. Unlike Dr. Johnson who declares in his
Preface that "a play read affects the mind like a play acted" (27), there is the embodiment of the attitude of theatre men in the following statement:

A play comes to life only when it is performed. A play is printed words, a piece of stage literature until it is spanked into breath by the joined effort of a cast and an audience, brought into squalling reality and a claim upon actual existence through the birth-pangs of its opening night (Izard and Hieronymous, 1970).

Mahesh Dattani playwright and theatre person asserts, "If it cannot be staged, it is not a play. Period". Hema Mandanna declares that if a play is not actable, "Looking at it practically, it won't be a play at all." (interviews 4&11).

Tyrone Guthrie drawing from his wealth of theatre experience declares that "the script of a play, even of a great play, a masterpiece, is still only a part of the raw material of the performance." (1959, 17). Peter Brook endorses this view when he says "the word is a small visible portion of the gigantic unseen formation" (1972, 15).

No definition is sacrosanct, for all is grist that comes to the critics' mill. Esslin argues that the definition of drama must include those on radio, television and cinema screens as well. To refuse to accept this would be to behave like the contemporaries of Gutenberg who insisted that only a handwritten manuscript was a book because printing was a strange and new concept (1976, 12).

Quoting the Oxford Dictionary definition of 'drama' "a composition in prose or verse, adapted to be acted on stage, in which a story is related by means of dialogue and action and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume and scenery as in real life; a play", Esslin dismisses it as "longwinded and clumsily put ... [and] downright incorrect". Among other things he objects to the word 'composed' because it rules out improvised drama like the Italian Commedia dell' arte, to the word 'dialogue' for it rules out even the mimed masterpieces of a Marcel Marceau and to the word 'stage' because it excludes drama conveyed by the electronic media (1976, 9-11).
Strangely enough, he does not object to the word 'adapted' which suggests drama is 'adapted' with a few cosmetic changes from some other genre, or the word 'story' which suggests a looser structure than 'plot', or the word 'related' because drama does not narrate events but re-creates them. Drama is the word made flesh on stage. Esslin calls drama "an event designed to capture and hold the attention of those for whom it is intended" (1987, 136), thus shifting the emphasis to the audience.

3. Drama as a Rehearsal for Life, and as Therapy - Psychologists and Educationists.

Drama travels from page to stage to screen with accompanying modifications but it is really an instinct deeply rooted in life:

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances:
And one man in his time plays many parts...

As You Like It (2.7. 139-142)

Margaret Lowenfeld in "Drama and Childhood Play" speaks of a child's instinctive mimetic preparation for the drama of life, "As early as children think of 'life' at all, they may 'play-train' themselves to fit into it". Quoting Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle she concludes, "Children repeat in their play everything that has made a great impression on them in actual life, that they thereby abreact the strength of the impression and so to speak, make themselves masters of the situation" (1972, 51).

Introducing psychodrama, J.C. Moreno uses familiar theatrical terms such as 'role' (from Latin 'rotula' or rolls on which actors' parts were written) and 'catharsis' to explain therapeutic acting out under controlled conditions. As he points out, it is a "movement away from the written (conserved) drama and toward the spontaneous (psycho) drama,..." The catharsis aimed at, is primary catharsis in producer-actor-participant rather than the secondary catharsis in the spectators aimed at by the theatre (Moreno 1972, 139).
4. Drama as a Resource for Language Learning - Language Teachers

A whole range of activities come under the banner ‘drama’ by the time we reach the English classroom. This is why Susan Holden calls drama "a generic term for all activities which involve the concept of ‘let’s pretend’ " (1981, 8).

Most ELT experts see nothing sacrosanct about a text and consider it no sacrilege "to experiment, dismember, transform and discard them" (Maley 1989, 11), when the purpose has been served. Alan Maley, distinguishes between the study of literature as a "cultural artefact" with its emphasis on plot, characterisation, theme which constitutes the literary critical approach, and "the use of literature for language learning" (1989, 10). Harold Fish, following his example suggests "playing with plays" (Fish 1989, 68) in order "to increase the intensity of interaction between a learner and a text" (69). These teachers are trying to shift the emphasis from the product to the process of learning and using the language in the classroom. The accent is on spontaneity and improvised script rather than a prescribed text.

Discourse analysts focus attention on usage, applying the techniques of conversational analysis to make a systematic and sustained study of dialogue in drama (Coulthard 1977, 170-171). Coulthard adds the caution that some of the rules and conventions of dialogue in drama are very different from that of conversation in life. Once again, the emphasis is on learning to use language - a pragmatic approach.

B. THE INHERENT QUALITIES OF DRAMA AS AN ART FORM

No art can be reduced to a neat formula - it defies definition. Hence it is best to turn to "the thing itself" and look at its many facets. Many of the qualities are common to the other arts while quite a few are unique to this genre. This examination is made to understand the complexity and wealth of this art form, in order to exploit its tremendous potential in the classroom.

1. Drama Is a multidimensional art form:

The words of a play may seem flat and unimaginative to a casual reader, but the verbal element is reinforced by aural and visual elements
which are perceptible only to those who go to see the play or those with powerful visual and auditory imaginations.

a. The Aural Dimension: Besides the actual sound of the words or the verbal element one can identify the following features:

i) The paralinguistic features: the human voice with its range of stress and intonation can add vitality and reveal meaning in words that seemed inscrutable before.

Macbeth : If we should fail?
Lady M : We fail!
But screw your courage to the, sticking place
And we'll not fail. Macbeth (1.7 59-61)

Bartholomeusz in his book Macbeth and the Players records the many and varied interpretations of Lady Macbeth's phrase "We fail", based on variations in stress and intonation, ranging from the traditional rising inflection and stress on the second word suggesting the impossibility of failure to the quietly stoic and fatalistic downward inflection given to the line by Fanny Kemble (1978, 110).

ii) Distinctive voices: This is created not only by the unique quality and timbre of the each actor's individual voice, but also the 'idiolect' peculiar to the character - his choice of vocabulary, his own individual logic and natural speech rhythms. Thus, one recognizes Othello's deep, rich resonant voice with its sweeping rhythms and exotic images evoking strange, romantic worlds, casting a spell over the audience as it did over Desdemona. Iago's cold, metallic machinations and earthy obscene images provide the counterpoint. In Shaffer's Amadeus the ominous silence of the scheming Salieri is thrown into relief by the sibilant, hissing whispers of the 'Venticelli' or rumour-mongers.

iii) Music: In Amadeus, Mozart's sublime music is offset by his grating, infantile giggle, while in The Glass Menagerie music conjures up dream-like memories from Tom's past and the single flute is
enticingly nostalgic in *The Death of a Salesman*. Starting with 72 beats to the minute like regular heart beats, the throbbing of drums in *Emperor Jones* rises to a crescendo before dying away at the end of the play, conveying the fear of Brutus Jones pursued through the forest.

iv) Other sound effects: These can be electrifying on stage like the famous knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* (2.2.65), the sound of Borkman’s footsteps pacing up and down like a caged animal in *John Gabriel Borkman* (act 1) or the cries of the women signaling Jocasta’s death in *Oedipus Rex*, while the cries of screaming carnivorous birds and soft percussive sounds provide the atmosphere of *Suddenly Last Summer*. The mesmeric quality of the ‘equus’ noise echoes hauntingly through *Equus* and gunshots signal the close of *The Wild Duck*, *Hedda Gabler* and *All My Sons*. As for the sound of Nora slamming the door, it was to send reverberations through the length and breadth of Europe for a long time.

v) Silences and pauses: Paradoxically, silence can often be more eloquent than words but it is difficult to ‘hear’ the sounds of silence on the page. A silent observer, often overlooked in reading adds poignancy to a scene as when Laura stands a mute witness while Tom and Amanda quarrel (sc.7). Silence weighs heavily in *Waiting for Godot* where speech becomes a kind of desperate defence against the encroaching silence that threatens to overwhelm the characters:

(Long silence)

Vladimir : (in anguish) Say anything at all!

Estragon : What do we do now?

Vladimir : Wait for Godot

Estragon : Ah!

(Silence)  

*Waiting for Godot* (act 2)
Silence is even more eloquent when it is unusual as in the scene where Madame Ranevsky in *The Cherry Orchard* (act. 3) stands listening to Lopakhin's plans for cutting down her beloved orchard that he has just bought.

"My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar/And I must pause till it come back to me."

(From *Julius Caesar*, 3.2. 111-112)

— declares the skillful demagogue Antony in his funeral oration. Like his creator Shakespeare, he is the master of the pregnant pause. He pauses, listens, gauges the temperature of the rabble and proceeds to wreak ‘havoc’.

The pauses in Pinter’s plays loom ominously, suggesting menace and the breakdown of human communication.

These aural signifiers can easily be overlooked as the eye races over the words without actually ‘hearing’ the voices or the other sounds that reverberate in the play.

b. The Visual Dimension: The word ‘theatre’ comes from the Greek *theatron* a place where one goes to see... For this reason, Diderot the philosopher and writer often went to the theatre with his ears plugged to see the play. It is this strong visual impact of every play that made Bentley conclude that "In the theatre we may not be led by the nose: we are led by the eyes". (1965, 168). In the theatre, so much is conveyed at a glance that the dramatist uses this shorthand technique while writing. This leads to confusion while reading. Though the eye can be bewildered by irrelevant details, the telling detail can make a world of difference.

i) Age and appearance of the characters: These may be supplied in stage directions but the pale italics are often overshadowed by the bolder print of the dialogue. Besides, for anchoring memory, one picture is worth a thousand words in terms of economy and effectiveness.

ii) Setting and properties: Noel Coward when he was asked his opinion of the production of *The Seagull* in New York 1938, is said to
have replied "I hate plays that have a stuffed bird sitting on the bookcase screaming 'I'm the title, I'm the title, I'm the title'" (Senelick 1982, 243). But, the stage setting, concrete and visible, can communicate much of the ambience of the play. Menacing steel girders dwarf and threaten Willy Loman's tiny home in *The Death of a Salesman*, the cosy comfort of Nora's home turns to stifling claustrophobia in *A Doll's House* as it does in the middle-class drawing room settings of many of Ibsen's plays such as *Ghosts, John Gabriel Borkman* and *Hedda Gabler*. The enclosed backyard of the Keller home protected from the outside world by lines of poplars, seems appropriate for a man whose "world had a forty-foot front" which ended with his home and immediate family (act 3).

Visible objects on stage, often overlooked in reading, can take on the power of symbols like the fragile, brittle glass collection in *The Glass Menagerie*, the vulnerability of the make-shift "pondonk" pitched in the muddy and inhuman expanse of the South African landscape in *Boesman and Lena*, or the dazzling rays of the golden sun desecrated by the conquistadors in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, or the unobtrusive but cumulative effect of the bread, hearth, spinning wheel and white boards in *Riders to the Sea*.

iii) Mime, gesture, dance and ritual: The effects of these are also difficult to imagine while merely reading the text. Even before the words are spoken, mime conveys so much to the watching audience. Nora opens the door, invites the errand boy to bring in the Christmas tree and the parcels, tips the boy extravagantly, judging by his pleased reaction and we are well into the play *A Doll's House* centred around the character of Nora (act 1). Mime produces a spectacular effect in depicting the ascent of the Andes and the massacre of the Incas in Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (act 1), while the ritual slaying of Thomas Becket at the still centre of the turning wheel formed by the
swords of the four Knights in *Murder in the Cathedral* (part 2), makes him another "Lamb of God", a type of Christ figure, slaughtered for the salvation of mankind. It has all the ritualised grace of the Eucharistic Celebration.

Gordon Craig called gesture and dancing "the prose and poetry of action" (1962,180). This "poetry of action" or dance is used effectively in many a play. Nora's "tarantella" (act 2) serves to convey her agony and fear while Lena's defiant dance (act 2) in the aridity of the mud flats is her unspoken challenge to Boesman and her affirmation of life. Shakespeare’s comedies like *As You Like It*, often end with a dance emblematic of the harmony of existence and the reminder that all upheavals have ended (5.4).

iv) Costume: Hamlet’s dark mourning clothes single him out, accent his melancholy and is a rebuke to the glittering court (1.2). The transformation of the bedraggled flower girl in *Pygmalion* and Lear’s descent from king to beggar are all signposted by changes in costume. In royal ermine robes Lear is the arrogant king at the start of the play. In act 3, he stands "a bare forked animal" (3.4.113) while the storm rages on, within and around him. Clad in "fresh garments" (4.7.121) he regains his humanity and tastes a moment of reconciliation and happiness with his daughter Cordelia before death snatches her away from him forever.

v) Lighting: Surrealistic lighting creates the lurid atmosphere in the central scene where Blanche is raped by Stanley in *A Street Car Named Desire* (sc. 10). Lighting provides a contrast between the bright sunny deck associated with Mildred and the inferno of the ship's furnaces where Yank stokes coal, in *The Hairy Ape* and Shaffer's *Black Comedy* presents us with the brilliant comical reversal of light
and darkness where the light is dark enough for the characters to stumble around in, and the dark is light enough for them to see by.

**c) The fourth dimension:** A painting has two dimensions, while sculpture has three. Drama adds a fourth dimension - time. An artist of the theatre must therefore consider not just the stage picture, but "the stage moving picture" (Brook 1972, 114). It is not enough to group characters like statues but the movement and changes have to be choreographed to convey meaning and reflect changing relationships.

In Genet's *The Balcony*, the bishop in the fantasy looms larger than life, magnificently robed. Then, stripped layer by layer of every vestige of authority, he stands exposed, vulnerable, shivering and impotent.

Brecht uses the opposite movement in *The Life of Galileo* in the scene where Cardinal Barberini is being robed when he assumes the office of Pope Urban VIII. As the man of science and admirer of Galileo, is robed, before one's very eyes, he is visually transformed into a tyrant of the church who gives the Inquisitor permission to use torture to make Galileo recant (sc. 10).

All this rich "world of eye and ear" is often overlooked because most readers are used to the novelist's technique of stepping in with detailed description and analysis of character, "novels have made us lazy" declares B.V. Karanth (interview 7). It is a fact that if the power of the imagination is seldom exercised, it is bound to atrophy.

**2. Drama is the most complete, complex and memorable mode of communication.**

Bernard Shaw once expressed his frustration at the fact that, "There are fifty ways of saying 'Yes' and five hundred ways of saying 'No' but only one way of writing them down" (McRae 1985,1).

Linguistic features (words and their structures), para-linguistic features (stress intonation etc.) and extra-linguistic features (gestures and movements) can bring out the nuances and complexities of meaning in a play. As in life, there is a complete synthesis of the senses and different
signals fuse synchronically in a powerful pastiche of impressions. "I am tied to the stake and I must stand the course" declares the Duke of Gloucester in King Lear as he sits tied to the chair. His words, the short snappy taunts of Cornwall and Regan, the sight of him torn and bleeding, left to "smell his way to Dover" all fuse into a powerful statement on the bestiality of man reinforced by the suggestions of the Elizabethan sport of bear-baiting (3.7).

"When we look at a picture, theoretically we become deaf, we only have eyes. When we listen to music we often close our eyes, we only have ears," but in drama as in life, our "radar receivers" are on the alert and we see, hear and even "touch" (Barrault 1972, 27). Eyes and ears, heart and body unite in opening the what Blake calls "doors of perception" and the details are transmitted not in a linear fashion as in a novel where description is followed by analysis, but simultaneously. The onus is on each individual to interpret the signals aright.

The famous banquet scene in Macbeth (3.4) begins with a flourish of trumpets and due ceremony. Everything is in order, or so Macbeth thinks. As this scene splinters into chaos and confusion, it becomes emblematic of the disorder Macbeth has brought upon himself and the realm by killing the anointed king. The movement from slow, formal grace to haste and confusion speaks for itself especially, in the context of the Elizabethan concept of world order and 'the great chain of being'.

In Julius Caesar (1.2), the "lean and hungry" Cassius draws Brutus aside to induct him into the conspiracy. The flourish and shouts offstage as the people hail Caesar add urgency to his plea. When the procession returns with Caesar at its head, Caesar draws Antony aside to voice his distrust of Cassius. As the two groups glare balefully at each other across the stage, there is a foreshadowing of what is to come. The battle lines are drawn visually and verbally.

The verbal and other sense impressions fuse to create intensity, or contradict each other to produce irony, humour and complexity. At the
Capulet ball, Romeo catches sight of a face and form that turns his world upside down. Moving closer to this vision of loveliness he declares: "If I profane with my unworthiest hand / This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this" (Romeo and Juliet 1.5 95-96). As the scene proceeds, the language is packed with the imagery of saints, shrines, pilgrims and religion, but what is happening is a far cry from holy worship. These 'saintly' words are but the cues to flirtation and Juliet responds in a manner far from saintly. This is why in analysing the discourse of drama, the context is vital to understand what is really happening.

"The throstle with his note so true, / The wren with his little quill' The finch the sparrow and the lark..."

— sings Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream (3.1.130-133) The words suggest the sweet trilling of little birds and are no indication of the humour of the situation. To appreciate the scene, one needs to see the uncouth rustic with the ass' head and hear him braying out a travesty of the song while the ethereal Titania wakes up with the incongruous line "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?"

In Mother Courage and Her Children, there is fine Brechtian irony, for while spirited martial music speaks of the glory of war, helpless peasants are slaughtered before our very eyes. The ears respond to the glory and the eyes to the horror of war. These fine, complex effects are lost or misunderstood in reading for, "when we analyse a drama, we must first place emphasis on the thing being done, next, the thing being thought, and in view of these — last, the thing being said" (Styan 1975a, 143).

3. Drama is an art that has the quality of immediacy and demands participation.

Painting, sculpture, poetry and fiction, all provide us with completed artifacts and no matter how 'creative' the response of the viewer or reader, it does not change the quality of the thing per se. Drama invites its reader
or audience to complete the act of creation. The circuit of communication set up between actors and audience is almost palpable and can affect the quality of the performance, even the play itself, a fact to which Anne Jellicoe bears witness. She described how her own play appeared good on one night, not so good on another night, obscene in one town and perfectly innocent in another, "The play will indeed be a different play, in Bath or London according to the audience with whom we see it" (Jellicoe, 1967, 9-10).

A poet to use Shelley's words in the "Ode to Skylark" can spend his time with his head in the clouds,

"Singing hymns unbidden
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not". Hence he can afford to recollect his emotions in tranquillity, "but drama! It is like touching a bare, live wire! Try distancing yourself from that..." (Dattani 1992). A play, in order to live must "commune in its own time, through its own medium, for its own community" (Styan 1975 a, 1). This is the greatness of Shakespeare, that he kept his eye so firmly on his immediate audience that he is for "all time."

The novel may deal with the past in a reminiscent mood, but drama represents the events, recreates it in the eternal present, which is here and now. On stage, it is always the present. The past is telescoped or implied or even made co-present as in The Death of a Salesman. The characters must carry the weight of the past and the implied future which is "embryonic in the present" (Langer 1959, 311). This is why actors are continually being reminded to act "in perspective". Keller in All My Sons may seem a good family man and a friendly jovial neighbour, but he is responsible for the deaths of 21 pilots and he knows it just as surely as he knows that his partner is still rotting in jail while he has got away scot-free by telling a lie. Ibsen's Nora may be a "doll-wife" to her husband, but she has had the courage to break the law to save her husband's life and has been quietly paying back borrowed money for years. The weight of the
past, made 'visible' on stage through the talent of the actor/actress, is 'invisible' to the reader unless he is unusually sensitive. It is only in retrospect that one becomes aware of the weight and volume beneath the tip of the iceberg.

4. **Drama is an art that is confined in space and time and therefore seeks concentration of effect.**

An essay may be a short monograph or an elaborate treatise, a poem may be a two line epigram, a fourteen line sonnet or an endless epic. Novels vary in length as do the sizes of paintings and sculptures which range from miniatures and murals to mammoth monoliths. But a play is confined spatially and temporally. This is no reference to Aristotelian unities but to the fact that all stage action has to take place on that "wooden O" and must not exceed "the two hours traffic" of the stage. This is dictated by the physical needs of the audience. "Cabin'd cribb'd and confin'd" as drama is, infinite possibilities are opened up by "the dramatic simultaneity, the synaesthesia of the senses and perceptions" (Styan 1975a, 4) which makes it possible to pack in so much into so little space.

Three sinister figures crouch over a cauldron, then whirl around it to the accompaniment of rhymed incantatory lines rising to a crescendo. They set the mood, cast a spell, introduce the theme of evil, rivet the attention of the audience with the mention of Macbeth's name and disappear into the obscuring fog. Just eleven octosyllabic lines that constitute this powerful opening scene, eliminate the need for any philosophic disquisition on the ugly but mesmeric, enticing quality of evil with its ambiguity and its power to perplex the human mind so that "fair is foul and foul is fair" (*Macbeth* 1.1).

"A character is not a role" says Bentley "unless it is conveyed quickly and at great velocity" (1965, 171). Just one scene is sufficient for Shakespeare to convey the measure of the man Claudius, "the mighty opposite" to be pitted against the philosopher prince. That he is a formidable antagonist to be reckoned with, becomes obvious as one listens to his carefully prepared, nicely balanced grief and joy over his brother's
death and his own marriage to his brother’s widow, his deft suggestion that it was done for the good of the country with the approval of the council, his efficient handling of the impending invasion, his graciousness to the son of a favoured councillor and his diplomatic handling of a difficult and recalcitrant ‘son’ (*Hamlet* 1.2).

This density of effect demands a reciprocal concentration of attention from the audience, "It is a characteristic of drama as of no other form of literature that it makes an absolute and sustained demand on our attention" (Dawson 1970, 12). One cannot put it down and pick it up again like a novel without losing continuity and concentration. Strindberg in his preface to *Miss Julie*, objected to the break half-way through the performance for the threads of the play are cut... (1976, 99). Scenes gain from being framed by the incidents just before and after, and in the theatre, one cannot flip over the pages of memory if the spell is broken and attention wanders.

In the classroom, the spell (if it was ever cast in the first place) is broken as the “two hours traffic” of the stage is cut up and distributed over the course of an academic year like the ritual dismembering of the dying god of Greek fertility ritual. There is this tragic difference, that the play, unlike the god, will never be made whole and rise again in the mind of the student, who inters the fragments in the examination.

5. *Drama is an art, religious in its origin and a collective experience even today.*

Whether one recalls the thousands of spectators gathered in ancient Athens to witness the celebration of Dionysus, or the ritual enactment of the liturgical calendar in the medieval churches, or the origin of drama as described in the *Natyashastra*, the religious origin of the art is inescapable. "Over the centuries, the Orphic rites turned into the Gala Performance - slowly and imperceptibly the wine was adulterated drop by drop" (Brook 1972, 49-50). But, despite the secularization and profanation of the process, the sense of occasion persists, and spectators come "to forget self .... to witness the concerns of others....to dream.... [and] for purification" (Barrault 1972, 25). Esslin goes so far as to call theatres
"secular cathedrals, [and] cathedrals religious stages" for both religious ritual and drama use similar means (heightened language, spectacular visual effects, costume, masks, formalized movements etc.) to achieve their objectives "in dramatic terms: catharsis, in religious terms: communion, enlightenment, illumination" (1976, 28).

A vast gulf separates the cushioned comfort of a modern theatre from the more spartan stone theatre of Epidaurus, but the power of drama still comes from the intensity of the communal experience. Caught up in the magic of the theatre, diverse individuals in the audience become one unit, which is why Nicoll suggests that the collective term "audience" is more appropriate than the plural "spectators" (1978, 20) Reactions are infectious and collective laughter and tears reinforce the sense of enjoyment, participation and sharing. Canned laughter used in television is the artificial substitute of the same. There is a story apocryphal or otherwise, about a mad king of Bavaria who demanded a performance for an audience of one, but such a demand was considered proof of his madness (Nicoll 1978, 16). Yet no one seems to consider it madness to make the study of drama a lonely, solitary experience for the student, when the very nature of the art militates against such an isolated approach.

6. Drama Is an art that calls for both emotional involvement and intellectual detachment and plurality of perception.

There are stories of the woman who shouted to the actor who played Othello, "You fool, can't you see that she is innocent" and of the yokel who offered Burbage his horse when he cried out, "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" in a production of Richard III, but in general an audience is aware of this "doubleness of response" (Leech 1970, 205) demanded of it. One may weep at Oedipus' plight, but one also admires and assesses the power of the dramatist's poetry and the skill of the actor, for "drama can exist only at some point between the two poles of complete identification and complete detachment" (Dawson 1970, 40).

Stanislavski who insisted on complete emotional identification with the role, also emphasized iron self-control. Brecht seeking to replace
einfühlung (empathy) with Vertremdung (alienation), discovered that it was no easy task to remove the magical emotional theatre of childhood and replace it with the adult rational theatre of debate. In this matter, the child is not just the father of man, but his "siamese twin" (Bentley 1965, 163). To sever emotion from the intellect is to kill the life of drama. Brecht found to his dismay that in spite of all efforts to depict Mother Courage as a war profiteer, she always insinuated herself into the hearts of the audience who sympathized with her as a victim, bearing witness to Maugham's conviction "The audience does not think with its brain, but with its solar plexus" (Nicoll 1978, 21).

The true dramatist according to Keats is the "chameleon "who takes as much delight in portraying an Iago as an Imogen. He may have his preferences, his own point of view but drama demands that the dramatist play the devil's advocate to himself. Brecht found himself arguing so passionately for the Pope in The Life of Galileo that he is quoted as saying "I seem to be the only one in the country still arguing for the Pope" (Esslin 1976, 99). Shakespeare played the devil's advocate so well that one is never sure whether Shylock is the hero or villain. This is perhaps why Milton turned to the epic form "to justify the ways of God to man," for in the dialectics of drama, the devil may have walked away with the applause. Guthrie remarks on this quality of all art when he says, "If the objective meaning of a work of art were known, there would be no point in its existence. It exists merely to suggest many ways in which an undefined truth may be approached." (1959, 139).

Drama encourages a plurality of perception, yet one encounters dogmatic didacticism and a single 'accepted' interpretation in the classroom. The approach veers between two extremes, either an emotional, personal approach to the characters as living historical persons, or a Brechtian extreme of cold rational analysis which often results in a stringent examination of form and structure with the language of the play placed under a linguistic microscope. Trapped between the two extremes, the play dies an unnatural death.
6. Drama is an all embracing art that encourages co-operative creativity.

Styan (1975b, 6) gives a very succinct, diagrammatic representation of all the art forms that fuse into the complexity of drama. It might be added that drama spills over into the realm of science as well.

**A WAY OF LOOKING AT THE INGREDIENTS OF A PLAY (Styan 1975b, 6)**

Glynnie Wickham, speaks of his efforts to outline the contents of the drama course at the University of Bristol. A "geographical" survey of the terrain revealed a landscape dominated by the peaks of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Schiller and Strindberg — all claimed by the realm of literature. A study of the great theatres of antiquity and its modern counterparts found him encroaching on the territory of architects and archaeologists; stage technology, he found was the preserve of science and as for the study of audience response, it lay in areas claimed by sociologists and psychologists. "Drama in short, was not a subject; simply a collection of fragments, more or less interesting and all peripheral to sounder disciplines already in existence" (Wickham 1972, 168).
Yet, change the perspective and one realises that the strength of drama is that it cuts across all disciplines and emphasizes collective creativity. Even the playwright, by his own admission has left behind the solitude of the study to incorporate insights from actors and directors in his writing. As for the theatre, it is according B.V. Karanth "community effort" (Interview 7).

This further bolsters the suggestion that drama is best studied in a manner that takes advantage of the collective skills and perceptions of a group without sacrificing the uniqueness of the individual response.

7. Drama is an art that deals with the concrete and the specific.

Drama may deal with abstract and philosophical ideas, but the medium demands that they be expressed in concrete terms. Even such an abstract concept as the choice between good and evil, is physically embodied in Dr. Faustus. As the protagonist inclines first towards the good angel and then more and more obviously towards the suggestions of the bad angel, one can see the choice in slow but visible motion (sc. 5):

"I always proceed from the individual," Ibsen is quoted as saying (Bentley 1965,58) while Chekhov insisted on the visual concrete detail of loud checked trousers for Trigorin in The Seagull, objecting to Stanislavski's portrayal of Trigorin in impeccable white trousers. Stanislavski finally acknowledges that the vulgar clothes, so obvious to the audience would serve to suggest that Nina fell in love with her own idealistic image of the man rather than the reality (Stanislavski 1980b, 93).

A novelist "may see events through the medium of other men's minds, the dramatist allows us to see other men's minds through the medium of events" (Bentley 1964, 4). It is the specific action that renders the essence of characters as when the disinherited and the dishonoured Cordella kneels to her father, driven mad by the daughters to whom he had given everything (King Lear 4.7.58).

Instead of pontificating on the dilemma of obedience to a king's decree clashing with obedience to a divine law, Sophocles gives us the frail Antigone confronting King Creon; instead of expounding on the theory of
humours or analysing the melancholy disposition of the philosopher prince, Shakespeare merely provides three young men as foils to Hamlet. One sees Fortinbras the confident sanguine man of action and decision, Laertes who is impulsive and choleric, prepared to kill without scruples and Horatio, calm, composed, phlegmatic, the voice of reason and sanity.

However, every great dramatist though he concentrates on the Individual, seeks through the individual to represent the universal and the timeless. In the classroom, one witnesses two extremes again - a tendency either to concentrate entirely on the concrete, to discuss and argue about individual characters as if they are living historical entities or, to "abstractize" and philosophize about the play without realizing that the two aspects cannot be separated without destroying the very fabric of drama.

8. Drama is an art that has democratic appeal, instructs and entertains at the same time

Seeing the world led astray by lust and greed, Indra and the other gods approached Brahma the creator with a request that he create a kridanlyyaka (a toy), one that could be both seen and heard, as a distraction for the multitude. Brahma protested that he had already fashioned the Vedas to guide them but Indra pointed out that the shudras were prohibited from even learning the Vedas. Give the world a fifth Veda, accessible to all, he pleaded, and Brahma created drama. Hence, Sage Bharata in the Natyashastra insists that drama is kridanlyyaka (an entertaining toy) and veda (enlightenment)

This dual nature of drama has existed side by side in all countries. In England, the medieval mystery cycles ranged from the awe inspiring mysteries of Creation to Doomsday, yet it did not preclude laughter. Profundity and profanity are yoked together quite comfortably when Mrs. Noah insists on creating a scene before entering the ark and Mac the shepherd tries to pass off a stolen sheep as a new born baby on the first Christmas night when the angels sang "Gloria in Excelsis Deo".

Everyone hates theatre that has a "palpable design" on the audience for as Guthrie points out, "I believe that the purpose is ill served by
consciously using the theatre as a moral, social or political platform. It cannot avoid being all three" (Guthrie, 1953, 349). In the classroom this dual nature of drama is forgotten and the instruction is rubbed in, while the entertainment gets rubbed out.

Nowadays, there is a tendency to see drama as the preserve of a few intellectuals, but it is the most democratic of art forms, its form is accessible to everyone from the professor to the peasant, from the young to the aged" (Stanislavski 1980b, 199). To enjoy poetry or the novel, one has to be literate, to enjoy classical music or opera one has to be fairly sophisticated, to enjoy art one must have an eye for colour and form, but the theatre is accessible to all. One does not have to read James' *Daemonologie* or Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* to respond to the evocative power of the opening scene in *Macbeth*. The groundlings, the citizens, lords and gallants flocked to see it. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, hailed as an enigma by baffled critics, found an immediate response when performed before an audience of prisoners at the San Quentin penitentiary in 1957. Even the most complex plays can be distilled into a simple, memorable, moment of theatre. Peter Brook recalls directing Sartre's *Huis Clos*. Though he has forgotten the details, "the central picture of the play - the hell made up of three people locked in an eternal hotel room is still with me" (Marowitz, Milne and Hale 1965, 165). One does not have to be an existential philosopher to be haunted by the image of two tramps waiting by a tree for someone who never comes. Every heart that has experienced despair, guilt and sin will echo the question "To be or not to be..." the despairing cry "Macbeth has murdered sleep", and the realization "Faustus must be damned."

The rich ambiguity and complexity of these plays ensures its effectiveness in a class of heterogeneous students. For example, as Dr. Ramaswamy points out, *Hamlet* can be explored at the level of a "whodunit" or as the ultimate statement on the philosophy of life and death (interview 15).
9. Drama is an art that expresses and affirms accepted social values and sometimes questions them.

When Britain, battered by bombardment, needed to revive national morale Olivier's production of *Henry V* served the purpose. In occupied France, Anouilh's *Antigone* served to focus the nation's pride and resistance by pitting Antigone-France against Creon-Hitler.

Popular drama can function not only as "an expressive element of culture (monitoring morality) but as an instrumental aspect of culture (determining the prevailing morality)" (Goodlad 1971, 193). It may hold up role models to be emulated, endorse a set of values or sound the clarion call for change as did the social plays of Ibsen and Shaw.

Peter Brook points out that censorship is a tribute to the latent power of the theatre to challenge the status quo, which is why, "even when the written word is free, it is still the stage that is liberated last" (1972, 111). The reason as he points out, stems from the fact that when many are gathered in one place, and concentrate their attention on one action or idea, "a dangerous electricity" is generated. It has been asserted, not without validity, that the French Revolution began with Beaumarchais' play *The Marriage of Figaro* and not the fall of the Bastille. He dared to question feudal rights as Athol Fugard's South African plays *The Island*, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and "Master Harold" ... and the Boys question apartheid. All these plays were banned for being subversive.

This aspect of drama is not entirely new. In 416 B.C., Athenians devastated the little island of Melos, massacring the men and enslaving the women and children. Haunted by the horror of such wanton and wholesale slaughter, Euripides wrote *The Trojan Women* which focuses on what is considered the greatest moment of Greek glory, the sacking of Troy by Agamemnon. But, the brightest moment of triumph is eclipsed by the carnage of war, the desecration of shrines, the degradation of the victors and the desolation of the victims. The heartbreak of Hecuba and the Trojan women sounds more clearly than any clarion call to arms. As a condemnation of war in unequivocal terms, it is relevant even today.
This is drama as a potent instrument of change and as a forum for discussion, often overlooked by students and teachers who find this aspect irrelevant in the frenzied race for marks in the examination.

10. Drama is an art that is permanent and ephemeral, fixed and fluid.

The printed text is 'fixed' or permanent in a sense, but every production is a new interpretation and as for the individual performance, it changes minute by minute, depending on variable factors such as the inspiration of the actors and the response of the audience among other things. The play is ephemeral in this sense, "writ on water" according to Guthrie, dying "almost without a trace on the last night of its run" (1959, 146). Paradoxically enough, precisely because of this transient quality, it rises like a phoenix from its ashes, reincarnated anew in a form that is relevant for the time. So each time there is a 'revival', a play is brought to life in a new form and hence never becomes 'dated' like old movies or television serials.

This fluidity or flexibility is a quality often lost in the rigid parameters of the classroom.

11. Drama is an art that focuses entirely on man

Forster in *Aspects of the Novel*, insists that drama is not "so deeply committed" to the claims of human beings and that human beings "have their great chance in the novel" (1962, 149). This sounds like a case of special pleading for as Bentley points out "man is the centre of all art, of dramatic art he tends to be the centre and circumference" (1965, 39). Painting and sculpture can produce landscapes and abstract forms. Even the poem, essay and novel can shift their focus to other things, like the beauty of nature etc, but in drama, the spotlight is trained relentlessly on man, living, interacting, coming into conflict with himself, his fellowmen and his God. No other art celebrates man as completely as drama;

"Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these / is man ..." sings the chorus of *Antigone* written by Sophocles. Other art forms may be created by man using paint, stone or words, but drama uses the
medium, of the actor, his body, his voice, his charisma. Other performing arts also use man as the medium but most of them tend to single out one aspect of man - his voice in music, grace of movement in dance, but drama uses the 'total' man, his whole being: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension how like a God!..."

This chapter used an oriental folk tale to suggest some of the misunderstandings that arise when men try to deal with something massive, complex and unknown 'in the dark'.

Part A. examined and established the four angles of approach to this complex, multidimensional art while Part B took a detailed look at the inherent qualities of drama as an art form. This was undertaken in the hope of removing the 'blinkers' so that one may perceive better the potential of drama in the classroom. These perceptions also serve as the substratum on which the alternative pedagogy is built in the next chapter.